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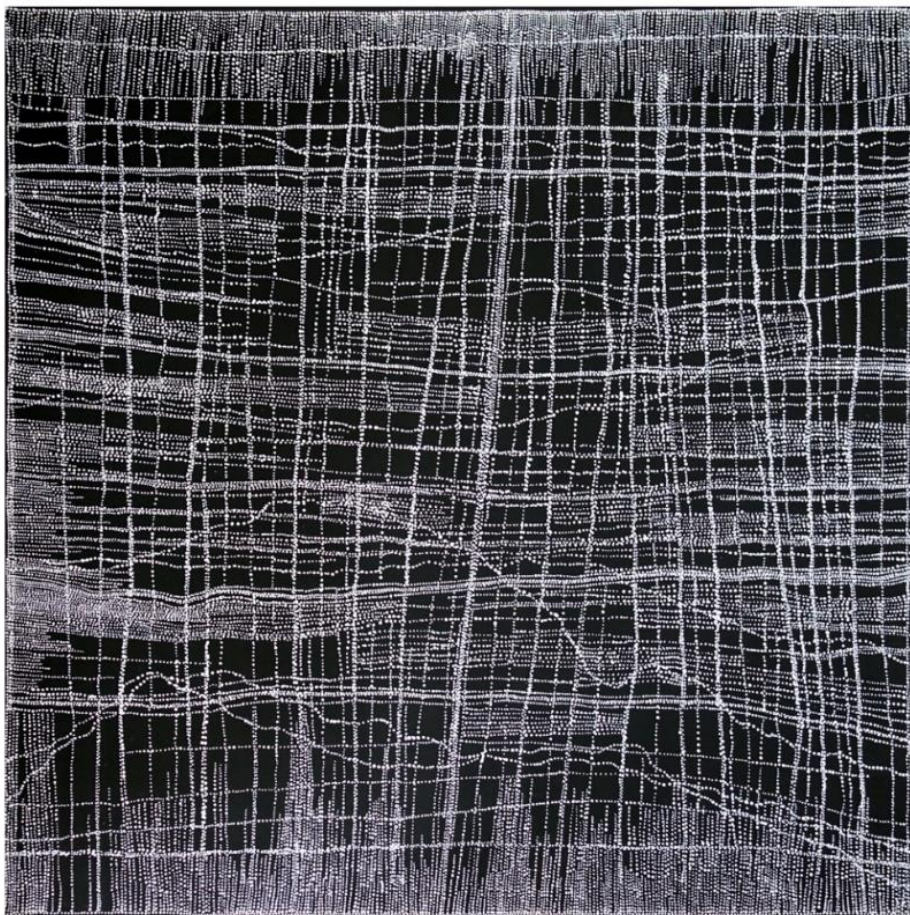
Preface

Dorothy Napangardi is internationally regarded as one of the leading exponents of the contemporary Aboriginal art movement and has held numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout Australia, the United States and Europe.

Her serenely beautiful paintings merge minimalism with stories of her ancestral country, Mina Mina in ways that reverberate across the broad domain of visual

language. Apart from the formal elegance her paintings communicate ideas of travel, myth and spirituality. The spatial impact of her work is expansive, flowing and ethereal in feeling.

Tracing a period of time from 1987-2013 this is an autobiographical journey of Dorothy Napangardi and Roslyn Premont – two close friends told through the storybook of Roslyn's photos, notes and memories...



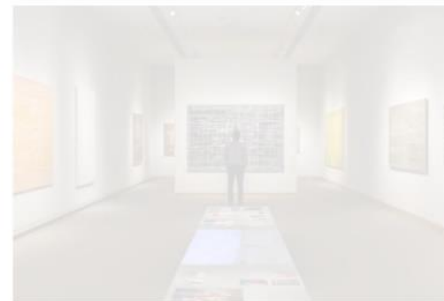
Mina Mina 2006
152 x 152 cm Cat No: 11024DN

Honouring

The Honouring of Napangardi

Dorothy Napangardi tragically passed away on 1 June 2013. In respect to Aboriginal culture, all work was held back for 5 years. In conjunction with Gallery Gondwana Alice Springs, the following exhibitions 'Honouring Dorothy Napangardi' then take place.

The Seattle Art Museum [SAM], shows the magnificent, extensive collection of Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan with a very in-depth immersion into the artist's career and life.



Coose Art Gallery, has a retrospective show in their Redington Gallery, Sydney, NSW called 'Dorothy Napangardi: A Retrospective'.

Honouring and Remembering the Art and Life of Dorothy Napangardi

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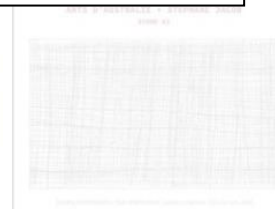
ISBN: 978-0-6487650-0-4

In Paris, the Paris



In Fremantle Western Australia, Japingka Gallery has a retrospective spanning her career from 1997-2011.

In Oudenburg, Belgium Artspace 'De 11 Lijnen' has a carefully curated exhibition by Dr Griet Dupont.





Statement by
Dorothy Napangardi

*All of
our dancing
belongs there ...
when I paint
I think of
the old days,
as a happy
little girl
knowing my
grand-father's
Dreaming ...*

Art and Life

Honouring and Remembering the art and life of Dorothy Napangardi

Dorothy Napangardi was born at *Mina Mina*, a significant site approximately 700 km north-west of Alice Springs, near the great salt Lake Mackay, 400km north-west of Yuendumu in the western desert, Northern Territory. Her father was Paddy Japanangka Lewis, of the Pintupi language group and her mother was Jeannie Napururrla Lewis, of the Warlpiri language group. As with all desert people born in the bush, the exact date of her birth was uncertain, but it was estimated in the 1950s.

Dorothy lived what she describes as an idyllic life, sleeping under the vast desert skies, not constrained by walls and specific orientations of seeing. It is a 360 degree outlook, not framed in any way. Here she developed the keen observation of the hunter/gatherer and spent evenings sharing stories. This love of country never left her. Brilliant at hunting goanna, echidna, honey ants, witchetty grubs as well as collecting various bush foods, seeds and berries, she was never happier than when she spent the day out hunting.



Dorothy estimates she was about 11 years old when her extended family was forced to leave their homeland because of the encroaching pastoralists and miners competing for their precious water sources. They were taken to Yuendumu, a government settlement that had been established to receive desert people. Her father, Paddy Japanangka Lewis was an intelligent, capable bush man and hated the confinement of

this forced environment. He attempted to return the 400 km journey on foot with his family but was turned back. Eventually, when the outstation of Nyrripi was created

west of Yuendumu, they moved there as this was closer to their traditional homeland of *Mina Mina*.

As often was the custom then, Dorothy was promised to marry a much older man, Wimmitti Jampitjinpa. She was to become his second wife as he was already married to Rene Robinson Napangardi. For many years Dorothy couldn't conceive so Rene gave Dorothy her son, Mark. Soon after Dorothy fell pregnant and later had 4 daughters of her own, Maria, Delores, Julie (aka Shirley) and Sabrina. In the mid '80's, the whole family moved to Alice Springs where Dorothy was to live for the rest of her life. Some years later, she remarried a European man, Eddie Ebborn with whom she had a daughter Annette.

When Dorothy started painting in the late '80's, she used feathery strokes and vibrant colours and her subject matter consistently primarily of 'mukati', the bush plum and 'yuparli', the bush banana, two important food sources that grow throughout the desert. In 1991, she was awarded 'Best Painting in Western Media category' at the Telstra Aboriginal Art Award which is now in the collection of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin and in 1998 the Northern Territory Art Award with an example of spatial depictions of bush food and country. 1999 she received the Highly Commended at the 16th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award, Darwin NT Australia. In 2001, Dorothy was awarded 1st prize (overall category) at Telstra Aboriginal Art Award in Darwin with a painting titled 'Salt on Mina Mina 2001' that has been recognised as a masterpiece. The eyes of the world were on her.



Yuparli (Bush Banana) 1997
122 x 36 cm Cat No: 2151DN
Exhibited in the MCA Survey Show 2002

Painting in her own studio in Alice Springs from the mid '90's allowed Dorothy to develop her practice in her own individual way, away from the influences and confines of a large group. Gallery Gondwana created a Studio especially for her as she desperately wanted a quiet space where she could paint without interruption and noise and have lots of space. There wasn't an art centre for Alice Springs residents and, in fact, in the early-mid '90's very few art centres existed in communities at all. Dorothy's studio opened up to a few close friends such as Polly Napangardi Watson. Later on, Dr George Tjapaltjarri, Walala Tjapaltjarri, Barney Campbell Tjakamarra, Barbara Napangardi Reid, Gracie Pwerle Morton and Mitjili Napanangka Gibson formed the Studio Group. It was a wonderfully happy, creative environment that resonated with music that she particularly loved.

In 1999, after an epic journey back to her homeland as an adult, with a convoy of aunties and traditional owners to 'dance up country' in ceremony, Dorothy returned with a huge amount of subject matter, inspiration and confidence. The ensuing work marked a major shift in her painting style. She continued to develop her practice with subsequent paintings that were more minimal, stylised abstractions, creating a shimmering field and leading finally to the pared black and white for which she is most known.

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Installation view Survey Show 2002. Image courtesy MCA

Dorothy had the honour of being the 2nd aboriginal artist to have a survey show at the MCA (Museum of Contemporary Art), Sydney. Curated by Vivienne Webb 'Dancing Up Country - the art of Dorothy Napangardi' from December 2002 - March 2003 showed paintings for a decade up until 2002. In 2003, this successful exhibition toured Vietnam and then Malaysia.

Dr Christine Nicholls, art critic and academic, had lived in Lajamanu for many years and was a fluent Warlpiri language speaker. She had followed Dorothy's career, interviewing her on many occasions and introduced her to the MCA in 2001.

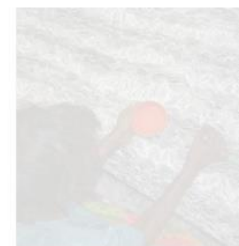
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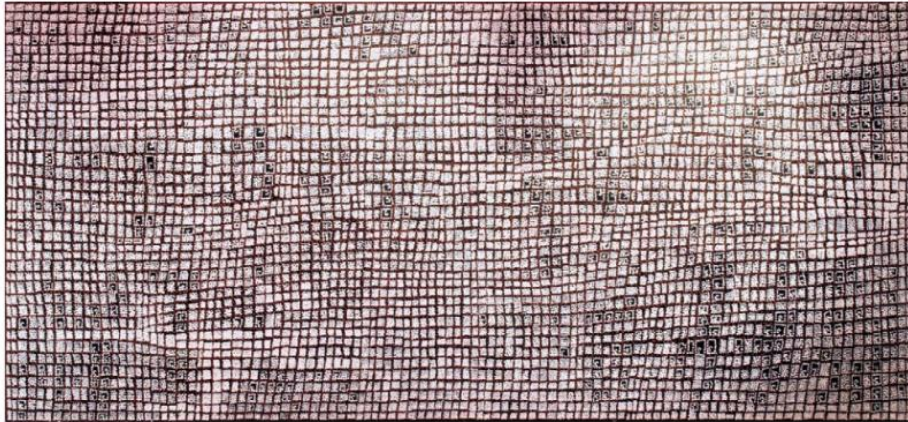
to the high initiates it may contain many levels of ancestral knowledge that is unique and predates everything else.

Without any traditional iconography from her familial lines, she has her own innovative language to portray her country. Dorothy's paintings are created by an intricate network of lines that collide and impede on top of each other creating a play of tension and expansion, transporting the viewer, through a myriad of intersections. Her view is constantly changing: one painting giving an aerial perspective; the next as if she has placed a microscope to the ground.



Micro vs Macro

Micro vs Macro in aboriginal art ...



In recent times, there has been recognition about the relationship of aboriginal art and the microscopic world around us. A recent 2018/2019 exhibition presented *Stories and Structures – New Connections* (curated by Dr Jenny Whiting from Microscopy Australia), presented new works that display the parallels between Indigenous artworks and the natural structures seen in the microscopic world.

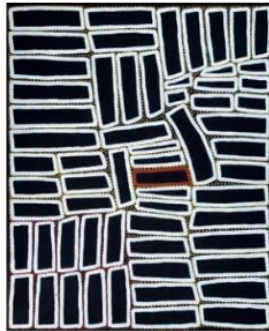
This micro world versus the macro world around us, has been evident since the start of the aboriginal art movement. The awareness and insight of the world around us by the Aboriginal people and the interpretation of it in Aboriginal art is something that we, at Gallery Gondwana, acknowledged and witnessed in the works of many of our Studio artists since the 1990s.

In particular, Dorothy Napangardi was acutely aware of the world around her. A superb tracker, her depiction of country from an aerial perspective, reduced to an abstract concept has a relationship to her macro view of the world. Her eye for detail studies the minutiae of everything.

Unlike yet similar, the paintings of her friend Walala are of the same region. Dorothy and Walala were close neighbours, as her country Mina Mina is part of that huge salt lake system of Lake Mackay, where Walala had continue to live a nomadic existence until his family of 9 people walked out of the region in 1984.

If you used a microscope to look more closely, more intimately into the paintings of Dorothy, we would see Walala's paintings, a micro view of country.

These designs might seem pure abstraction from the western eye but they are deep with meaning. Early days we used to see old hunting shields with similar designs incised into them which these days we find only in museums and rare collections.



Karntakurlangu 2009
(top)
198 x 91 cm
Cat No: 13943DN

Tingari Cycle 2005
(middle)
122 x 152 cm
Cat No: 9243WT

Karntakurlangu 2009
(left)
152 x 152 cm
Cat No: 13960DN

Mapping Country

Mapping Country ...

Aboriginal people have been mapping their country for millennia through song cycles that provide an oral way of mapping, as well as using the stars to navigate their way around country. It is no accident that their ceremonies are filled with songs. Specifically, a song has to be "sung right" and it is in these songs that the mapping of country is found. A 'song cycle' is more than a beginning and an end, it is composed of 'sites', and include ceremonial locations, food, trees and plants, and everything contained within that land. Dorothy's paintings are imbued with a sense of spirituality and knowledge of caring for country, passed on through song cycles.

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Sandhills of Mina Mina 2004 (top)
76 x 152 cm Cat No: 8483DN

Salt on Mina Mina 2004 (bottom)
122 x 91 cm Cat No: 8478DN

Sandhills 2009 (right)
76 x 122 cm Cat No: 13825DN

Sandhills

A Study on Sandhills

Central Australia is sand country. A landscape always moving, a shifting sea of sand dunes, cloaking and revealing, sculptured by winds, ephemeral in nature.

Sand has a significant presence and is a subject constantly found in the artwork of Dorothy Napangardi. Her keen and intimate knowledge of her country finds her experimenting on how to present it in her works. Her ability to capture movement in what appears to be just simple dots, imbues the artworks with a life of their own.

In this selection of works, Dorothy paints how sandhills and sand dunes move across her country.

In the works on the right you can sense the movement of sand across the landscape, each interpretation an insight into the artist's mind and her thoughts.

These delicate and lyrical works interpret how the winds blow the sand across the landscape, which is forever changing. This movement of sand dunes highlights the difficulty of finding a passage through the dunes.



Aerial view of sand country and dunes.

Dorothy's use of colours, either stripped back to a minimalist palette or woven with the colours of the desert and the desert rain, depict the movement of sandhills. Outside of her interest in the reduction of colour in her black and white sandhill paintings, she also used ochre colours of brown, yellow and reds.

Whilst Dorothy does not use natural ochre pigment itself in her paintings, she references ochre, by including some of the colour tones in her paintings. As well as her trademark monochromatic works, Dorothy would delicately introduce single lines of ochre colours through the canvas. The grey/blue colours that are on occasion introduced make reference to water and soakages.

Ochre is the name given to a group of natural earth pigments containing iron oxide which is a valued resource. Used in ceremony for body adornment and for decorating shields and other such implements, ochre comes in a range of earth colours that include red, yellow, brown, and white and has always been traded from one region to another. The most prized is the red ochre from Karrku (the local word for "ochre"), a mountain near Nyrripi in the western desert.

A Study on Sandhills... pages 13-24

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Sandhills 2003 (top left)
122 x 91 cm Cat No: 8250DN

Sandhills 2003 (bottom left)
91 x 91 cm Cat No: 8248DN

Sandhills 2000 (top right)
46 x 46 cm Cat No: 4353DN

Sandhills at Mina Mina 1999 (centre right)
31 x 91 cm Cat No: 4134DN

Karntakurtangu Jukurrpa 2004 (bottom right)
41 x 122 cm Cat No: 8567DN



In the major work (above) the artist expressed the

*chaotic, ever moving sands blown
endlessly by the wind, changing the
landscape of sandhills and blocking off
easy access to Mina Mina*

She absolutely loved the effect and experimented on several monumental paintings with the same intensity and feel.

In these 'preliminary' explorative studies the artist has interspersed lines with waves, at times mixing the paint palette with ochres and grey blue on a muted blue background and on black background on the other two works.

Sandhills of Mina Mina 2009 (top)
305 x 91 cm Cat No: 13917DN

Sandhills 2009 (middle left)
76 x 61 cm Cat No: 13919DN

Kana-kurlangu 2001 (middle right)
36 x 28 cm Cat No: 7554DN

Sandhills 2004 (bottom)
91 x 31 cm Cat No: 8566DN

Small works 'esquisses'



Salt

A Study on Salt

Australia has abundant salt lakes and claypans. There are places where the dried salt lakes stretch into the horizon. It is embedded in our landscape and intrinsic to aboriginal culture.

In many of Dorothy's works, salt is depicted in many forms, from the tightly packed dots *Salt 2000* (on the opposite page), to the movement of lines of dots in *Salt on Mina Mina 2006* (on this page).

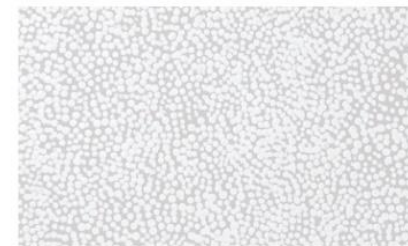
Yet there is more to salt than meets the eye. We can see the fascination that salt has on the artist as we delve deeper into the micro view of salt and the crystalline nature of salt.

Since technological advances, mankind has been able to go deeper into the world of atoms and electrons. Already there is some great footage of salt at the atomic level, with the basic salt structure of sodium chloride (NaCl), commonly known as the halite or rock salt crystal structure, showing cubic lattice characteristics. In desert lakes, salt crystals form as salt water evaporates.

When you look at some of Dorothy's other works, there is a definite lattice like allusion as seen in the extracts below.



Salt on Mina Mina 2006 (top)
91 x 152 cm Cat No: 9629DN



In this intense painting titled *Salt*, 2000 the artist has painted a 'salt maze' using an ochre brown background. It is when you look at the photo below looking down at the salt lake from the surrounding brown sandhills, you realise this work could easily be titled 'Standing on sandhill looking down at salt lake' (a salt lake that is probably the size of a small country in Europe!). There are many salt lakes in Dorothy's country.

When it's filled with water, there are so many waterbirds, shells, sea animals there hovering around it. Like seagulls and the seabirds, kestrels and things like that. It's not really an inland sea.

A Study on Salt... pages 25-30

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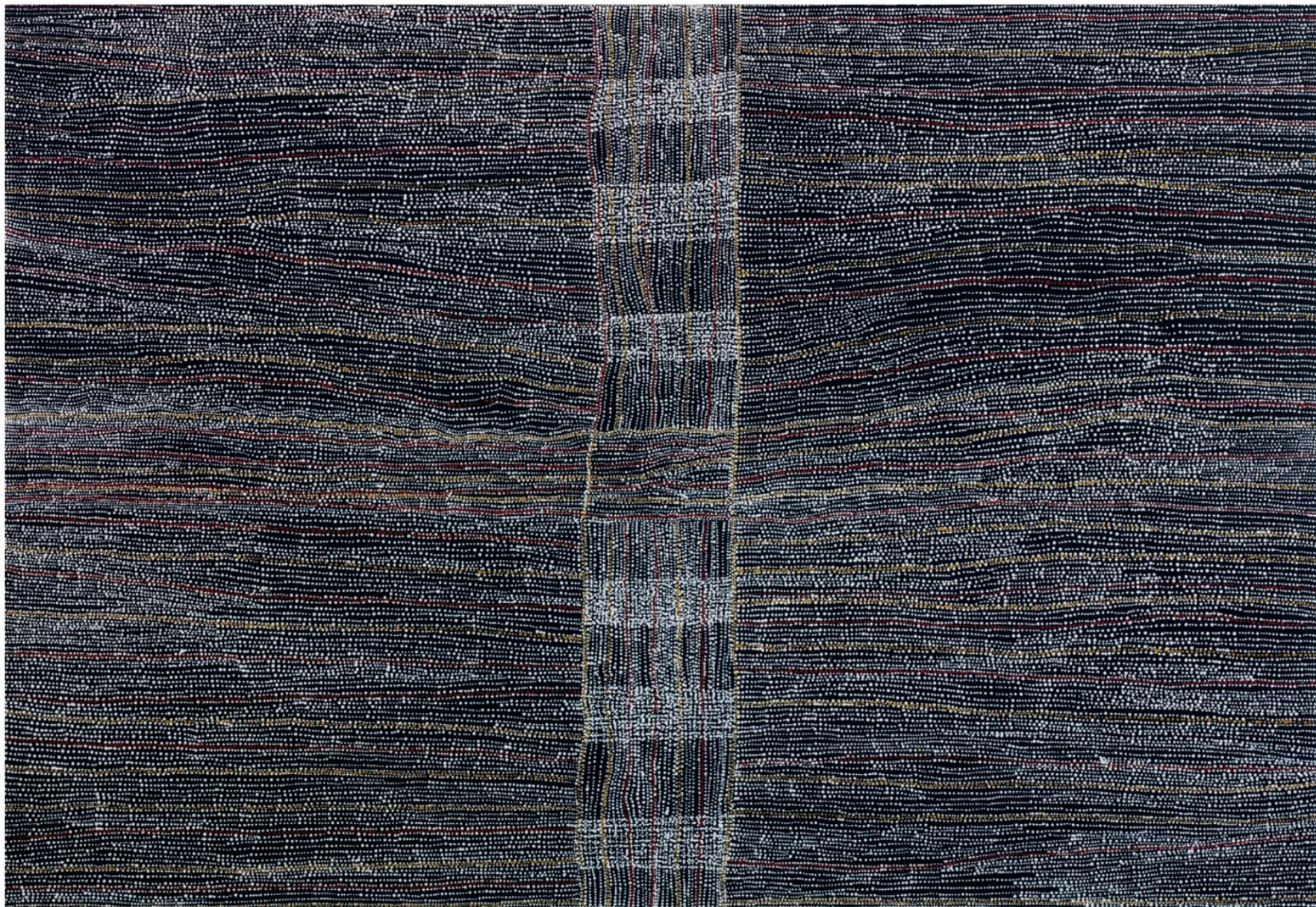
Mina Mina

The Story of Mina Mina

The Warlpiri Women's Dreaming based at Mina Mina is an extended oral narrative about a large group of women of all ages who paint their bodies with the appropriate Women's Dreaming designs, then joyously dance and sing their way across the desert, holding karlangu, or digging sticks, implements closely associated with Indigenous women, continuously fluffing up clouds of red dust as they make their way east towards Janyinki.

Mina Mina is a sacred site associated, with many important creation events and song cycles that contain information on how to care for the land. It is salt lake country with endless sandhills, claypans and desert oak trees, situated in the western desert of Australia.

The artist's fascination with a rather rigid geometrics, coupled with nonlinear movement creates a fascinating visual illusion, pulling the viewer across and into the canvas. It is her ability to keep the viewer continually engaged whilst reading her work that sees Dorothy Napangardi receiving the recognition that she does.



Mina Mina 2011
244 x 168 cm Cat No: 14205DN

Father's Country

2008 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art – My Father's Country ... Beyond Mina Mina

The 2008 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art entitled *Handle with Care* exhibition presented a range of contemporary art practice in Australia that drew our attention to the fragility of life, our culture and, of the environment.

Source: Christine Nicholls, 2008 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: *Handle with Care*; Curator: Felicity Fenner



The paintings of Warlpiri artist Dorothy Napangardi are evocations of place and childhood memories relating to her early upbringing on her extended family's vast estate close to Mina Mina, on the periphery of Warlpiri country. Napangardi's extraordinarily beguiling compositions are born of those early years. Until recently, Napangardi's most celebrated, 'signature' works of art were usually monochromatic representations of that familial estate.' Mesmerising compositions, often black and white and grand in scale, Napangardi's works collectively represent the artist's fragile connections with an unavoidably idealised past. These earlier beautiful, harmonious works represent the Mina Mina of Dorothy Napangardi's imagining, as seen through a glass, darkly.²

Napangardi still vividly recalls her family's sudden, forcible rupture from those ancestral homelands. When she was a young child, Dorothy and her family were 're-located, beyond the boundaries of their country to the recently established government settlement at Yuendumu. Dorothy's father, Paddy Japanangka, an intelligent and single-minded man, determined that the family, including several very young children, would walk back to their own country, some 400 kilometres away. This 'return to country, proved to be shortlived. Eventually the family was removed to Yuendumu on a permanent basis, where they lived as displaced persons.

For Warlpiri people, land-based identity is critically important: it is through land that stable identity, the 'self', is shaped, reshaped, created, maintained and re-created. In the case of Dorothy Napangardi, colonising forces cruelly interrupted that process of identity formation.

Since those early days Dorothy Napangardi has rarely returned to her own country; its remoteness and inaccessibility rule out frequent visits. There is no road and the area is accessible only by four-wheel drive. The arduous drive requires a convoy of vehicles, multiple spare tyres and numerous large jerrycans of water. Notwithstanding such difficulties, Napangardi recently returned to Mina Mina with her father. On that trip, Japanangka educated his daughter about the country immediately adjacent to Mina Mina, over which she holds proprietary rights.



The Story of Mina Mina... pages 31-42
Father's Country... pages 43-46

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Mina 2007

(page 43 top left)
152 x 198 cm
Cat No: 9818DN

Beyond Mina Mina 2008
(page 43 bottom left)
91 x 76 cm
Cat No: 13730DN

Beyond Mina Mina
(Bilby Dreaming) 2007
(top)
152 x 76 cm
Cat No: 9848DN

Beyond Mina Mina 2006
(bottom)
198 x 122 cm
Cat No: 9749DN

Rain, Plants and

Rain, Plants and Food

This selection of works (opposite and on this page) offer a great insight into Dorothy's experimentation and willingness to explore the depiction of "Country".

From the early floral bush food designs, that included her lyrical and evocative painting of the bush banana, which won her Best Painting in European Media at the '8th National Aboriginal Art Award' in Darwin NT Australia, Dorothy was not scared of experimenting with new ideas and design.

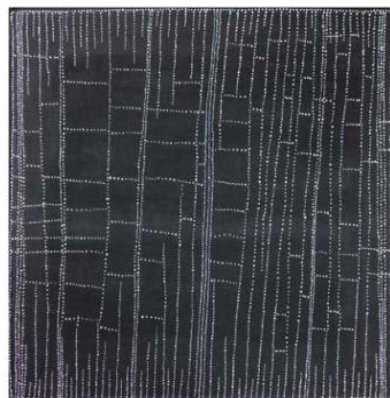
The works *Mukati Dreaming* (cat 3120DN) and *Women's Dreaming* (cat 3093DN) are paying homage to the bush plum and the country where they are found growing. In the tendril-like roots of the painting, you can see the ideas of the women dancing found in her paintings *Karntakurlangu* (Karnta - mean women, kurlangu - means 'belonging'). The three paintings on the opposite page, down the far right, allude to landscape, the rich scallop-like shapes reference the skin of reptiles and hints to the plants that grow lush when it rains.

Dorothy's passion for bush food have been evident in her early works. Amongst the food that she would hunt, were goannas and perenties, a popular food among the Aboriginal people of the Central Desert region (ref Douglas Lockwood story of *The Lizard Eaters*).



The work *My Country* (1997 - Cat 2551bDN), depicts the landforms found in her country. It is unusual and at first glance would look like rockholes on salt country. If you look closely at the scales of a Perentie (pictured on Dorothy shoulder) there is a hint in the shapes seen on the skin. This work alludes to the Perentie, and even the entrances to the burrows of lizards that live in the Central Desert. Her keen eyes and experimentation based on what she saw around her found their way into her paintings.

From her colourful floral and bush food paintings and after her epic trip back to country in 1999, Dorothy's paintings saw dramatic changes, using mainly a minimalist palette, as seen in the examples here *Mina Mina* (cat 13962DN), *Shifting Sands of Mina Mina* (cat 7877DN) and *Salt on Mina Mina* (cat 7771DN).



Food

Rain, Plants and Food... pages 47-52

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Mina Mina
92 x 92 cm

Shifting Sands of Mina Mina 2003 (page 47 middle)
61 x 61 cm Cat No: 7877DN

Salt on Mina Mina, 2003 (page 47 bottom)
91 x 91 cm Cat No: 7771DN

Mukati Dreaming 1999 (above left)
92 x 92 cm Cat No: 3190DN

Women's Dreaming 1998 (above middle)
30 x 60 cm Cat No: 3093DN

My Country 1997 (above bottom)
60 x 30 cm Cat No: 2551bDN

Karntakurlangu (Women's Dreaming) 1999 (top right)
123 x 34 cm Cat No: 4017DN

Karntakurlangu (Women's Dreaming) 2000 (bottom right)
61 x 31 cm Cat No: 5625DN & 5630DN

Print Making

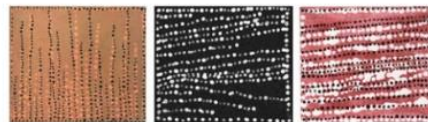
Print Making – An international artist/printer collaboration

In the summer of 2004 a major international print exchange project occurred between Crown Point Press (CPP, United States), Port Jackson Press (PJP, Australia) and Gallery Gondwana (Australia).



Dorothy Napangardi drawing on the plate for the image Sandhills, National Art School, Sydney

Under the guidance of senior master printer maker Dena Schuckit (CPP) and Belinda Fox (PJP) at the National Art School in Sydney, Napangardi tried her hand at various printmaking techniques and settled on aquatint as the primary technique. The results from this collaboration was a series of eight beautiful editioned works. She then travelled to San Francisco to sign the editions and attend the launch of this project at the prestigious Crown Point Press studio [pictured on the right with Dena Schuckit in San Francisco].

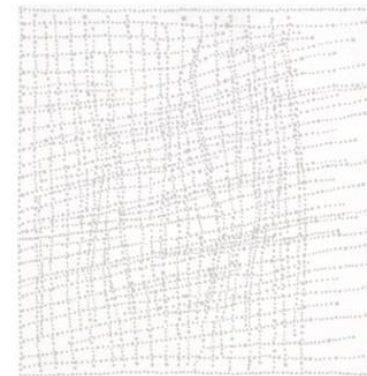
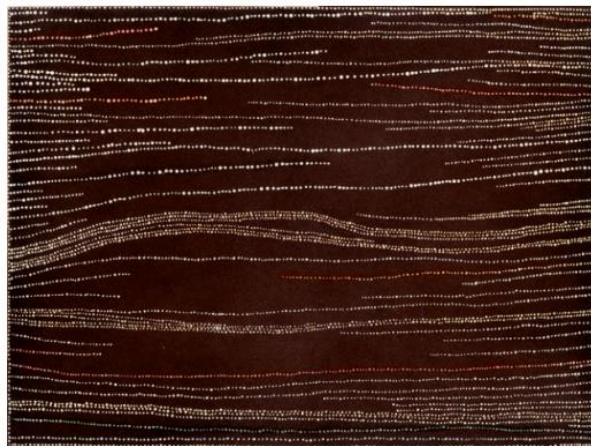


Karntakurlangu Jukurrpa 1 (top left)
Cat No: DN-10 *Limited edition Etching*
Image: 46 x 59 cm Paper size: 63 x 79 cm

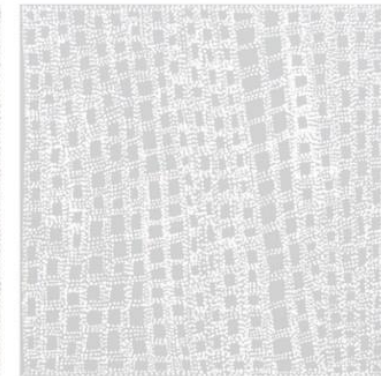
Kana-kurlangu Jukurrpa (top right)
Cat No: DN-11 *Limited edition Etching*
Image: 46 x 59 cm Paper size: 63 x 79 cm

'Etching Suite' - Spinifex Country, Salt, Sandhill Country (middle)
Cat No: DN-16, DN-17, DN-18
Image: 12 x 10 cm Paper size: 22.2 x 22.8 cm

Sandhills (bottom right)
Cat No: DN-15 *Limited edition Etching*
Image: 45 x 60 cm Paper size: 65 x 78 cm



Salt on Mina Mina (left)
Cat No: DN-22



Karntakurlangu Jukurrpa (right)
Cat No: DN-19

Images: 44 x 44 cm
Paper Size: 57 x 78 cm
Limited Edition Etching
Printer: Belinda Fox
at Belinda Fox Studios,
Melbourne, VIC

Dorothy took to the printing process like a duck to water. She loved the challenge of etching and looked forward to returning to the Australian printmaking community. Dorothy was an enjoyable artist to his studio. He had a clear vision of his mind around everything in the printmaking process, regarded and

In addition to some stunning Northern Editions (NT) and Belinda

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Alice Springs Australia
www.gallerygondwana.com.au

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Salt on Mina Mina
Cat No: DN-25
Limited Edition Screen Print
Produced: Basil Hall Editions, Darwin, NT



Dorothy signing the screenprint of Mina Mina (Memories of Country) (DN-24, seen on page 42) produced in Northern Editions Darwin.



Spinifex
Cat No: DN-4.1
Image: 20 x 25 cm Paper size: 36 x 40 cm, Studio/Printer: Northern Editions, NTU, Darwin, NT, Australia



Salt
Cat No: DN-4.2



Salt Country
Cat No: DN-4.3



Karntakurlangu Jukurrpa
Cat No: DN-4.4



Statement by
Roslyn Premont

*I want
to take you
on a journey
to introduce you
to the person
behind
the art...*



Dorothy's World

Introduction to the Insider Glimpse...

I pay my respects to the traditional owners of Dorothy Napangardi's country – past, present and future.

I want to take you on a journey to introduce you to the person behind the art, so you can visualise and understand more about her nature, her family and her life. I am going through my photos and jottings and all the paperwork that I kept, despite my friends and colleagues questioning why I didn't just toss it all out. This is my diary to you and in honour of my dear friend Dorothy Napangardi.

It is about the period, the influences, the family, the passions, the drive... the recollection keeps stretching on and it can't be contained as photos stimulate memories. My fingers dance on the keyboard, like her dots dancing across the canvas. I've decided to let it flow. And a little like when Dorothy knew her canvas was complete, I will know when this story is complete.

I am loving the process. I can still feel her spirit around, as I reminisce to my friend and colleague, Colin Leel, who is helping me with this book. I show him photos, and the stories therein, he can sense the breath catch in my throat and a tear well up in the corner of my eyes...

I write for Dorothy's family and grandchildren, so they can share in these memories, for the many collectors and friends who had the opportunity to meet and share part of her life and for those new to Aboriginal art and eager to know more. I hope this will deepen your knowledge and help you to understand more about the rich culture and beliefs of Australian desert people, and in particular, about this extraordinary, brilliant and kind person that was Dorothy Napangardi.

This is a tale of two women, our shared history and the people and influences around us at the times.

Roslyn Premont



An insider glimpse into Dorothy Napangardi and her world...

Looking back by founder of Gallery Gondwana, Roslyn Premont

If my memory serves me right ...

As I write this there is a big lump in my throat as I still deal with the enormous void in my life losing my dear friend, Dorothy Napangardi, suddenly and far too young at the time of her passing 1 June 2013.



We had grown to know each other very well since our first meeting in 1987 and had a very close collaboration both professionally and personally.

Photo by Dorothy Napangardi.

Much has been written about Dorothy's prodigious career and her oeuvre is becoming increasingly recognised on the world stage. Wonderful survey shows and retrospectives are honouring her genius.

Dorothy was a grandchild, an important figure in the care for car in this ends had the same background.

Sam
was an

Although a quiet woman, she was not forceful. Alongside her, she was not a personal communication. Remarkable.

I remember with dismay thinking that I must digest that I am working with a legend, an artist who will have her place in history like Van Gogh or Gauguin in time and that my grandchildren will know that I worked with her.

Who would have guessed when we were sitting laughing and filming a project for an architectural firm wanting to put a submission forward using her designs on screens (that would open and shut to provide shade and project shadows on the foreshore of Sydney) in late January 2013, that a few months later she would no longer be with us. She just loved this kind of thing. With a twinkle in her eyes she said those screens opening and shutting, that is like my paintings, in and out.

In late April 2013 we were invited by Ermenegildo Zegna to attend the Wool Awards where Chris Hemsworth was wearing one of Zegna's new ties that had two of Napangardi designs. She was feted, seated on the front row and treated like a star with the after party decorated with screens of her paintings. The respect and acknowledgement that she received from these, and other world class designers, was very touching. The brothers Zegna made a special effort to shake her hand and congratulate her on her brilliance. It was a little overwhelming but a lot of happiness. We sat in the rooftop bar in the beautiful hotel they organised for us overlooking all of Sydney harbour and had a toast to this wonderful collaboration.

The 'Sandhills' carpet at the Convention Centre in Brisbane had not long been completed. She was enjoying the challenge of new ways of creating – she was on top of her game.

Dorothy's World... An insider glimpse...

Honouring and Remembering the Art and Life of Dorothy Napangardi

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The company of fellow painters in the gallery

Apart from Dorothy, our walls were dripping with sensational paintings initially by people we had known and liked but then broadened and grew. Just imagine that this was the early period of Emily Kame Kngwarreye paintings ... totally brilliant!

My brother from another mother, Philip Fouligny and Bryce Ponsford, Manager Gallery Gondwana – expert in the field and passionate about art [are pictured] as we opened our rolls of 'magic carpets' of sublime beauty that had been delivered earlier from the community of Utopia, in the Eastern Desert where Emily was custodian. The two Emily paintings here are approximately 90 x 121 cm.

This photo of Tess Matthews and myself is in front of my own Emily painting at Vatu Sanctuary, a house with a lot of art history in Alice Springs.

Rodney Gooch from CAAMA owned this house and as he represented Emily, she would often paint there when in Alice Springs. I went to buy Emily paintings, loved the house and bought it and called it Vatu Sanctuary. I am wearing Emily silk superbly cut into a dress by my close friend, designer and artist Linda Jackson Napurrurla.



Gondwana Studio

The Gondwana Studio – the early days.

After 5 years of operation, Gallery Gondwana needed more space and influenced by Dorothy's desire to have a quiet space to paint, in 1995 we took over the big lofty 1st floor premises at the back of the gallery for the gallery studio. This also provided an outdoor area between the two premises, which was used for drying canvases among other things.

This expanded how Dorothy could practice. She had space for very large work and could have several works on the go at the same time, allowing her to expand on her ideas and explore movement with the works.

Dorothy loved to work on monumental sized canvas as she could do her country justice. Over an expansive area, she could express how the wind moved the sand, how salt encrustations sparkle, how to recognise indentations of water soakage areas and trace their underground paths. She often sang the short song cycles that contained the important knowledge of this country alternating at times with country and gospel music.

To conceptualise her large paintings, she would do smaller versions to experiment with space and at times colour. The excitement leading up to a large painting was palpable.

Combine great talent with a strong work ethic and love of what you do and voilà – an artist who consistently strives to produce a great body of work. Dorothy was very committed to her practice. She treated her studio as her workplace and she would be waiting for us to open, bright and chirpy with new music tapes and CD's. Studio Assistant, Geoffrey would settle her in, make her a cup of tea and ask what paints she would like that day. If working on a canvas, Dorothy would often sit back and watch with her cuppa and then settle in. She had a very delicate rhythm which felt musical as she created and wove her wonderful sense of movement – an opening and a shutting ... There were evenings whilst closing the gallery that one of us would say 'has anyone seen Dorothy?' because the light is still on in the Studio and she would be there – sometimes just watching the canvas.



Gondwana Artists

The Studio (1995-2012)



History in the making from the beginning there was a group of artists that painted in and for the Gondwana Studio. They were like-minded artists, often part of an extended family group, and similar country. The Studio was an artist colony, where they were supported in their practice. It was also inspirational and produced a huge number of magnificent works.

- Dorothy Napangardi and Polly Napangardi Watson
- Dr George Tjapaltjarri
- Barney Campbell Tjakamarra, Walala Tjapaltjarri and Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri



From my archives I am showing paintings by artists who shared the studio in the same week.

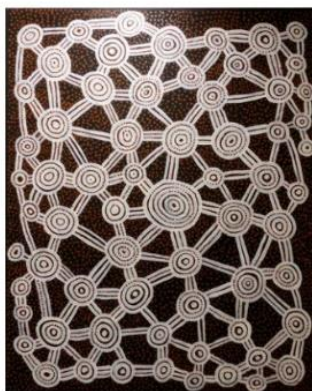
I find it fascinating how the two Napangardi (top row) had a similar research into form and content, using the same palette of soft ochre tones.

The Snake Dreaming paintings by Dr George (middle row) vibrate and energise as if wanting to leave the restrictions of canvas or paper, their content bursting forth.

The bottom row depicts three individual painting approaches to the secret/sacred Tingari Cycle by three different artists.

Other key artists included Mitjili Napanangka Gibson, Julie Nangala Robinson, Gracie [Purle] Morton, Barbara Napangarti Reid, Linda Syddick Napaltjarri and occasional family members of the above whilst visiting Alice Springs including Walala's brother Warlimpirrnga (left cat 2504WL 152 x 122 cm).

Over next few pages we will be introducing you more in depth to the Gondwana Studio artists.



Walala Tjapaltjarri

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travelling to Lake Mackay, telling their story.

Family Album



The complete version of this publication:

Honouring and Remembering the Art and Life of Dorothy Napangardi
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Contact:

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