country in mind

Five contemporary Aboriginal artists
Kuntjil Cooper
Alkawari Dawson
Mabel Juli
Garry Namponan
Rusty Peters

Country in mind: Five contemporary Aboriginal artists
Foreword

A while ago, I came across a striking image of Indigenous artists at work at Papunya. A half-finished painting lay on the ground; artists were working on it at one end, while at the other a dog was curled up asleep on the canvas. From inside the museum (where paintings are treated as fragile and precious) or from within the conventional studio system (where art is made in laboratory or factory-like conditions), this image of casual domesticity was disorienting.

Reflecting on curator Joanna Bosse’s approach to contemporary Aboriginal artists, I now see this image differently. The painters were ignoring the dog on the canvas because their attention was fully focused on developing another section of the painting. The dog was there in the first place because it was impractical, even undesirable, to exclude daily life from the process of painting. This was certainly an unfamiliar approach but, in the end, the subject of the photograph was the task of painting. And this, I think, is the nub of Country in mind: if it is a commonplace for non-Indigenous artists to reflect on the intricacies of studio practice, the dailiness of art-making and its social or communal networks, why do we so rarely approach the work of Aboriginal artists in such terms?

The artists in this exhibition declare an engagement with community and place, but they also demonstrate an ongoing reflection on materials, process, scale, meaning and self-expression. These latter qualities are not subsidiary components to the more familiar figures of identity or genius loci, they are an integral part of the presence and character of the art.

I’d like to thank the artists and their representatives who have worked with the Potter to present this exhibition, and the many private lenders in Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth who have generously loaned work to the museum. We are grateful to Michael O’Ferrall for writing an essay for this catalogue and for the valuable insights he brings to the artists’ work. Finally, I express my appreciation of Potter staff across all divisions who have undertaken the necessary work to bring together and present the work of these five artists.

Dr Chris McAuliffe
DIRECTOR, THE IAN POTTER MUSEUM OF ART
Country in mind: Five contemporary Aboriginal artists presents the work of five outstanding artists: Kuntjil Cooper, Alkawari Dawson, Mabel Juli, Garry Namponan and Rusty Peters. Artists were selected following fieldwork research in several Aboriginal communities that was undertaken as part of a larger research project centring on collaborative modes of curatorial practice. The subjective and personal basis of the exhibition is worth acknowledging; these ‘in the field’ experiences have defined Country in mind as a particular kind of curatorial exercise.

Seeing an artist’s ‘studio practice’ (to use conventional terms) is always an enlightening experience: one learns about materials, tools, and the scale of things. Visiting the vastly different localities of Aurukun on Cape York Peninsula, Queensland; Kununurra and Warmun (Turkey Creek) in the East Kimberley, Western Australia; and Irrunytju (Wingellina) in the central desert region of Western Australia, I also learnt about the place of art in the lives of the artists. The specificities of the landscape, spiritual and religious knowledge, past/present histories, political and personal situations, and the social networks of art centres and cooperatives, all give shape to the meaningfulness and the possibilities of art making. Country in mind brings together artists across generations, media, geographies and cultural nations.

My interest has been to focus on the particularity of each artist’s practice and its development over time; very early works by several artists have been included to flesh out long-standing themes and formal strategies; multiple artworks of the same subject offer opportunities to compare and contrast in order to better appreciate stylistic innovation, repetition and development. Both biographical and visual methodologies for understanding artworks are employed by grouping artists who have familial and stylistic relationships with others who do not. Two artists of the same generation who work closely together at Irrunytju Arts, Kuntjil Cooper and Alkawari Dawson, are placed side by side, while, more speculatively, the formal relationship between the archetypal paintings of Gija artist Mabel Juli and the figurative sculptures of Wik artist Garry Namponan is explored and tested.

Anthropologist John von Sturmer, writing about the failings of non-Aboriginal Australia’s engagement with Aboriginal people, has argued for an understanding that transgresses Aboriginal culture as an exotic spectacle to take into account the ‘life-within’ the individual. Artists, dancers, musicians and writers all give form to what we can describe as ‘interiority’. But we seldom consider the work of Aboriginal artists in these terms. Too often the ‘cultural divide’ surfaces to unsettle and disorient, ultimately displacing the artwork to itself become the subject. Country in mind encourages viewers to consider the particularities of the artists’ materials and processes, the substance of their histories and the intimacy of their subject matter, allowing the shared ideas and emotions that are brought into play by these artworks to define the common ground between artist and viewer.

The inextricably linked themes of Dreaming, country and selfhood surface repeatedly in the work of these five artists and are the conceptual drivers for their practice. The title Country in mind describes a sense of the translation that occurs when an artist makes a work of art – when visual form is given to what is meaningful in an artist’s world and the various strata of their experience – but also that an individual’s ties to country manifest in a personalisation of that landscape. The idea of a double register has emerged as a thread that intersects the artworks in the exhibition: the personal and the universal, the collective and the individual, symbolism and abstraction, the seen and the unseen, celebration and tragedy, the (living) past within the present. These dualities register simultaneously as possibilities for approaching and understanding the artworks.

The seminal exhibition Blood on the spinifex, curated by Tony Oliver and held at the Potter in 2002–03, had as its subject the history of massacres perpetrated by frontiersmen in the East Kimberley against the families of the Jirrawun Arts collective. Gija artists for the first time communicated these painful personal histories to the wider public. The exhibition was my first encounter with Rusty Peters’s work, and his emblematic painting Blackfella murdered in Australia, 2002, set Peters apart as an artist whose interest is to extend his subject matter into areas of broad universal significance.

Country in the mind; the mind in country | Joanna Bosse CURATOR
Peters’s metaphysical interests are most powerfully declared in his monumental 12-metre painting *Waterbrain*, 2002 (Art Gallery of New South Wales), which describes the development of the human soul. Included in *Country in mind* is its sequel, *Spirit float away*, 2003 (cat. no. 27), in which Peters depicts the soul awaiting its rebirth after leaving the body. Balanced, unified and ambitious, Peters’s compositions consistently contain a sense of the generative, and are often anchored by his employment of the formal strategy of positive and negative space, where elements in his compositions mirror and support each other to visually communicate Peters’s philosophy of ‘two laws, one big spirit’.

Where Peters’s oeuvre is expansive in its subject matter, Mabel Juli’s focus is narrow; she revisits key episodes of her *Ngarrangkarni* (Dreaming) and in doing so builds visual threads that reveal the reinvigoration of iconography over time. Three key narratives are represented in the six large ochre paintings in *Country in mind*. Juli’s minimal paintings focus on the central characters of her *Ngarrangkarni* whose visceral presence remains in the geographic features of her country. In *Gelingkenayin*, 2004 (cat. no. 15), the seen, recognisable features of the landscape morph into figurative motifs that embody the unseen character of place. Juli’s solitary motifs place the viewer in a direct and intimate encounter with the subject as we become the ‘other’ to which they speak; implicit witnesses to Gelingkenayin as he turns with hope to look for his dog, the forbidden love of Karngin the moon, and the lonely old woman who calls out to her dog.

Wik sculptor Garry Namponan also produces arresting archetypal figures. Of a younger generation than the other artists represented in *Country in mind*, Namponan’s visual language combines knowledge of traditional forms of material culture with more ‘conventional’ art techniques learnt since his early twenties. Carved largely from one piece of locally sourced milkwood timber and painted in ochres and acrylic paints, Namponan’s birds, dingos, sharks, people and camp dogs are contemporary representations of figures of potent religious and spiritual significance. Often life-sized and painted black, white, grey, red and yellow, these finely carved sculptures have considerable presence and, depending on the detailing of each figure, have a sense of stillness or poised animation. Namponan’s instinctive rendering breathes life into his protagonist, *Dingo*, 2004 (cat. no. 22), with its fierce gaze and off-centre stance.

The viscerally charged paintings of Alkawari Dawson and Kuntjil Cooper, pulsating with the energy of women’s business, are political statements of ownership and the right to self-representation. Not content to wait for council or government support, in 2001 Cooper and Dawson were part of a group of senior women from the tiny desert community of Irrunytju who generated the funds for art supplies via an entrepreneurial venture. These two recently emerged artists employ well-established strategies of concealment and revelation to enact their intimate relationship with country. Using rich layering, and shifting between macro and micro visual descriptions, Alkawari Dawson evokes the drama and panic of a night-time ambush in her key Dreaming *Kalaya Wati* (Emu Man) (cat. nos 8, 9, 12). In contrast to Dawson’s loose and expressive style, Cooper uses methodical mark-making to produce indexical mind-maps of the creative journeys of ancestral sisters as they move through the landscape of her country, journeys and events that crucially influence the way that Cooper herself sees and knows her country.

As a guest of Irrunytju Arts in June 2005, I witnessed the sitting of the High Court in the dusty, red soil of Ngaanyatjarra Lands. A large swathe of land was ‘handed back’ to traditional owners. The oddness of this spectacle (and its poignancy) was a stronger version of the disjunction one can experience when seeing works by Aboriginal artists on display in the pristine environments of the museums and galleries of a metropolis. Both are merely the tip of the iceberg. I encourage viewers of *Country in mind* to look beyond the resonant signs and symbols in the artworks to consider the fulsome potency of these aesthetic and intellectual statements of self-representation.
In 1993, the late Noel Sheridan, then director of Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, and Garry Proctor, coordinator of the Warburton Arts Project, organized the first public exhibition of paintings from the Warburton community. As a prelude to organizing the exhibition, Sheridan visited the community and traveled to sites outside the main township. His response to this experience, and the change from the asphalt, brick, concrete and glass landscape of urban Perth to the open skies and constantly shifting perspectives of the Warburton Ranges, was palpable and (in his inimitable style of reportage) Sheridan wrote in his catalogue essay a perceptive account of his responses to the visit:

*The sense of the relativity of distance within this journey was something that could not be brought to Perth. After a while there seemed to me to be no middle ground to the experience of this landscape; things were either very far away or microscopically close ... Scale too was disordered: some huge rock might be a detail in an account that had as its source some cluster of tiny pebbles; the footprint of an animal was often bigger than the animal ... There was no question but that we [Sheridan and the accompanying Aboriginal artists] were seeing the same thing – but the sensation.*

Sheridan’s use of the word ‘sensation’ (he went on to say) was linked closely to his understanding of the painter Cezanne’s revolutionary paintings of the Aix landscape as being based on the construction of a visual formulation different from straight landscape depiction, in order to bring out the metaphysical and organic relationship to the land. While visiting Aix itself, Sheridan (as a painter himself) began to understand the challenge, as Cezanne saw it, of resolving the apparent dichotomy between the surface appearance and what lay beneath. He concluded that Cezanne’s process was driven by a desire to create an ‘order’ to resolve the anxiety of not being able to satisfactorily link the purely physical and visual, and the underlying spirituality of his subject.

Anxiety, it seems to me, is a critical and necessary primary response of any first-time visitor to an unfamiliar landscape (especially in the Warburton area). This is equally true for many other distinctive land ‘scapes’ in Australia where the horizon line is immense, but where foreground and background are often undistinguished by changing features. And where the shifting movement of the sun’s light radically transforms features large and small, and conspires to create a disconcerting, powerful sensation of disorientation.

From an Aboriginal perspective, an ‘ordered/oriented’ view of surroundings is integrally linked to a core cosmology and personal sense of place (the field of ‘sensation’ used by Sheridan). Place – not as in a tradable block of land, a tourist destination, a passport, a citizenship certificate, a photo or painting of a grand panoramic landscape carefully composed to maximize the depth of field and central vanishing point, but as a deeply felt, emotionally anchored relationship of identity. Especially for an artist, the understanding is of being within the land and a relationship which revolves around a psychic and emotional interaction.

For much of the last half century, the history of Aboriginal art and artists has been concerned with the struggle to create a viable space and recognition within the totality of Australian art and culture. This has encompassed firstly the recognition of a social and political equality and a move beyond oppressive, paternalistic and institutionalized management. Land rights, maintenance of separate languages, education, health, recognition of cultural customs, and self-management are areas that formed, and still form, specific foci of this struggle. Many Aboriginal artists, doubling as spokespeople, have frequently been a critical contributing element in voicing and shaping these issues. From the relatively isolated areas of Arnhem Land and the central desert regions, the traditional conventions, stylistic particularities and potent socio-religious dimensions of the art have played powerful roles in politicizing core cultural issues and sensitizing the wider Australian public to them. Much of this push was projected under a collective umbrella, with the emphasis placed on the communalities of visual expression and its socio-spiritual links. Where the art was linked closely with traditional ceremonial practices, the role of the artist as collective interpreter was and remains of paramount importance. Paintings, from the time of the bark petition presented to the Commonwealth Parliament in the early 1960s by Yirrkala artists, have been used in many land rights claims; perhaps the most famous being the immense canvas prepared...
by Walmajarri and related artists for their demonstration of land ownership in the Great Sandy Desert to the south of Fitzroy Crossing.

Yet, as subsequent generations of artists have emerged, with many establishing lifestyles as ‘full-time’ artists, distinctive elements of personal expression and interpretation are today, undeniably, a core ingredient across the area of Aboriginal art. Aboriginal artists working from more localized traditions are increasingly exploring the intersections between the personal and the collective, maintaining a dialogue across cultural differences but, at the same time, interrogating their own personal layered responses to their own land, cultural underpinnings and history. This exemplifies an important expressive shift by the artists and requires of the viewer consideration of what Joanna Bosse describes in her introduction as a ‘life-within’ – a personal/emotional response.

Each of the artists included in this exhibition deals with different aspects of this multi-layered field, where outside observations are taken as a starting point for different inner journeys of reflection, and re-examination of their traditions/home country, but at the same time exuding a particular attention to use of materials and the sheer physicality of subject matter. In some works the materiality of the surface, colour and composition reflects a spontaneous response, in others the narrative or specific subject become only the top layer of a more emotive psychological response.

The artists Kuntjil Cooper and Alkawari Dawson live at Irrunytju (Wingellina community) and carry both historical and cultural links with Warburton, though both communities operate separate artists’ cooperatives. The Irrunytju artists first started exhibiting from 2001 when they formed their cooperative. Located almost at the intersection of the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia, the community includes both Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra language groups who maintain close links with several other small individual community centres located throughout the Great Victoria Desert, and the Warburton and Peterman ranges.

If both artists, as senior law women, paint about their Tjukurpa (Dreaming) sites, their individual approach to their canvases and subject matter shows strongly divergent approaches, exemplifying one element of Bosse’s notion of ‘double register’ where the personal, individual inclination of the artist overrides the otherwise formal and collective idioms shared within a wider cultural context. On first approach, Alkawari Dawson’s canvases exude a character of shimmering, exuberant overlays of colours and semi-formed shapes that challenge the constantly shifting viewer’s eye as it attempts to grasp the edges of her compositions. In Kalita kalita, 2004 (cat. no. 11), circles and semi-circles overlap and intermesh, and brilliant colours and thick brush-strokes superimpose themselves on one another in a pulsing rhythm threatening to spill out of the painting. The painter’s choice of colours also tests the viewer to balance and separate out the intensity of pink, orange, red and blue as they jostle one another for dominance. Perhaps we can begin to grasp something of the meaning behind Noel Sheridan’s use of the word ‘sensation’ to describe the organic character of Dawson’s work and her animated response to her surrounding landscape.

In contrast, the careful, schematic divisions of colours and forms used by Kuntjil Cooper defuse the restlessness of the same colours used by Dawson, with the composition Tjilara nyinanyi, 2002 (cat. no. 3), epitomizing the artist’s strategic and expressive approach. Coloured spaces are laid against each other (rather than the overlapping used by Dawson), outlined and separated to achieve a mesh of circular forms and twisting lines. This skeletal structure gives the composition the flat, surface feel of a patchwork process where forms intersect but never overlay one another. In this and other paintings by Cooper one may sense her concern for a balanced combination of the inherited graphic ‘order’ of her ceremonial painting with the intimate familiarity with the surface details of her subject locations. Rather than an ‘overlay’ of forms, symbols and colours the artist sees the spaces that link surface and an underlying older skeletal structure.

The 1980s works of Rover Thomas, Paddy Tjamitji, Jack Britten and George Mung Mung not only mapped out the intense physical and spiritual dimensions of the vast Kimberley region of north-west Australia for the first time, but, undeniably, through their exploration of different visual schematizations, established a contemporary and definitive individual base-line for artists from the region. It is not unthinkable today to talk of an East Kimberley style, or to recognize core conceptual parameters established by the 1980s painters.
For subsequent artists from the East Kimberley region, the weight of these painters is undeniable, but, equally, offers a guiding challenge to add further highly personal, artistic explorations. Mabel Juli and Rusty Peters are two such artists whose works, while building onto the foundations of their fellow painters, take distinctive turns in both subject matter and graphic solutions. Though based firmly on the Ngarrankarni (Dreamtime) and the spiritual underpinnings of the physical features of their landscape (the hills, rocks, flora and fauna), there is also a strong thread in both artists' work that contains elements reflecting highly personal responses and interpretive visual explorations.

Mabel Juli’s sparse compositions with foregrounded images on an empty background oblige the viewer to search the simple images for meaning. The inspiration behind her paintings frequently relates to Dreamtime narratives of great drama: taboo, and unresolved love and loss. The starkness of her images is a considered distillation of key visual elements occurring in the dramatic narratives, revealing the artist's highly contemplative and deeply felt consideration of the subject matter. The representations are like the tip of an iceberg, and, for the artist, a starting point from which to explore and pinpoint, through her choice of singular imagery, the psychological, iconic dimensions of the underlying story. They appear almost as minimalist distillations – elemental transfigurations reduced from a vast landscape of external forms and living beings into a single focus point.

Much of Rusty Peters’s work to date has, equally, been concerned with analysing the underlying drama of forces embedded in his daily landscape and the metaphysical questions of birth, death, and the spirit. Spirit float away, 2003 (cat. no. 27), is a profound and highly original inner exploration and metaphysical summation on the essence of human life, death and regeneration. The circular egg shape centered in the composition, with its shadowy half-obliterated fragmented forms, is a dramatic suggestion of elemental, amoebic life floating in a vast universe of possibilities (coincidentally, in Hindu mythology, the cosmos began as an egg-like form, from which sequentially emanated the division of water and earth, the sky, night and day, and finally organic life). If his other paintings in this exhibition deal more directly with physical manifestations of the Kimberley landscape, Peters brings an incisive eye to every composition and extracts the maximum dramatic impact: as in Jawoorroowan – Kookaburra and Peregrine Falcon Dreaming, 2004 (cat. no. 29) – a powerful composition whose physical elements have been formally 'abstracted' from a boab tree and mountain range, or in White water – Dinil-wawun-wawun-ngari-awanema, 2005 (cat. no. 30), where the tension in the composition hangs off the strategically placed counterbalance of the white semicircle.

At first glance, Garry Namponan’s sculptured dogs and birds sit, perhaps, somewhat tangentially with the other works in this exhibition. They provide, however, a timely reminder of the importance of three-dimensional forms that have existed within different regional traditions of Aboriginal art. His choice of wood is, firstly, a natural outcome reflecting the predominantly treed landscape of his homeland area of Aurukun, situated on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula. Figurative wood sculptures were first made in Aurukun between the late 1950s and early 1960s, and incorporated into performances of traditional ceremonies. In this context, they can be seen as a modern adaptation and evolution where newer generations of artists have responded to the older forms of dances and references contained in the accompanying song cycles. To Namponan, his choice of figures is inspired not only by the dominant animals and birds in his immediate environment, but relates directly to the totems of his family and the magical transmutations from human figure to birds, animals and fish that are contained in the Dreaming narratives. They stand, therefore, as a strong confirmation of identity, linking the self with a sense of place, and the expression of his own continuity within the totality of his living environment.

Each of the artists in this exhibition expresses in their choice of surface texture, subject matter and compositional strategies, different and original resolutions. The challenge to the viewer of their works, is to look for Sheridan’s ‘sensation’, not from some external, pre-determined model of perception, or matched against a topographical verisimilitude, but from inside each artist’s view where external forms and internal reflections are deftly explored.

Kuntjil Cooper

**LEFT** Tjilara nyinanyi 2002 cat. 3

**BELOW** Minyma Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Sisters Dreaming) 2006 cat. 5
ABOVE  Kuntjil Cooper  *Minyma Kutjara Tjukurpa* (Two Sisters Dreaming) 2006 cat. 6

RIGHT  Alkawari Dawson  *Untitled* 2002 cat. 9
Alkawari Dawson

LEFT Kalaya Wati Tjukurpa (Emu Man Dreaming) 2006 cat. 12
BELLOW Kalita kalita 2004 cat. 11
Rusty Peters

LEFT Turtle and crocodile 1998 cat. 26
BELOW White Water – Diniil-wawun-wawun-ngarri-wanema 2005 cat. 30
Both images © Rusty Peters/Licensed by VISCOPY, Australia, 2006
Mabel Juli

ABOVE Gelingkenayin 2004 cat. 15

RIGHT Karnkiny Ngarrangkarni (Moon Dreaming) 2006 cat. 18
Garry Namponan

LEFT *Dingo* 2004 cat. 22

RIGHT *Tri-coloured camp dog* 2006 cat. 25
Artists’ biographies

Kuntjil Cooper

When I am gone my grandchildren will be able to understand their culture when they see my paintings. I want white fellas to respect Anangu culture. When they see these important paintings they will know the Tjukurpa is strong, the Anangu are strong. I want the paintings to be treated with respect … I paint every day, working, working, to tell these stories.

Kuntjil Cooper is a senior Pitjantjatjara artist and spokeswoman for Irrunytju Arts, Wingellina, WA. She was born around 1920 at Irrunytju rockhole and during her early years lived a semi-nomadic life in the desert country around Irrunytju. Cooper began painting in 2001 and exhibited the same year at Artplace, Perth. Her work has been included in around twelve group exhibitions at Aboriginal and Pacific Art Gallery, Sydney; Artplace, Perth; Marshall Arts, Adelaide; and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne. Major group exhibitions include *Western desert satellites*, Art Gallery of Western Australia (2006); *Desert mob*, Aruluen Art Galleries, Alice Springs (annually 2002–06); *Trust*, Tjulyuru Cultural and Civic Centre, Warburton, WA (2003); and *19th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin (2002). Cooper is represented in the collections of the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria. Kuntjil Cooper is represented by Irrunytju Arts.

Alkawari Dawson

Ngayuku nguru [my country] is Warburton way, near the ranges … There are creeks with kapi [water], good country. Early days we walk around. Long time.

Senior Ngaanyatjarra artist Alkawari Dawson was born around 1930 at Tjun Tjun rockhole, near Warburton, WA. As a child she lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle with her family in the country around the Warburton Ranges. Dawson attended school at the Warburton mission before meeting and marrying her first husband. She later married Nyakul Dawson (also an accomplished artist) and moved to Irrunytju. Although no longer married to Nyakul, Alkawari remains in Irrunytju where she lives and works. Dawson made her first acrylic painting in 2001 and exhibited the same year at Artplace, Perth. Her work has been included in around twelve group exhibitions at Artplace, Perth; Marshall Arts, Adelaide; and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne. Significant group exhibitions include *Western desert satellites*, Art Gallery of Western Australia (2006) and *Desert mob*, Aruluen Art Galleries, Alice Springs (annually 2002–06). Her work is represented in the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, and the Queensland Art Gallery. Alkawari Dawson is represented by Irrunytju Arts.

Mabel Juli

I started painting when the old girl [Queenie McKenzie] was here – she was the one who taught me to paint. She told me “you try that painting” … I was reminded of all those stories from my mum and dad like Gelingkenayin Hill and the old woman singing out for her dog. Those stories come from my country [Darrajayn, south-west of Turkey Creek].

Mabel Juli is a senior Gija artist, singer and dancer. She was born around 1933 at Five Mile, near Moolabulla Station, south of Warmun (Turkey Creek) in the East Kimberley, WA. Juli’s brother is fellow artist Rusty Peters. As a young girl Juli worked at Springvale Station, her mother’s country, and later at Bedford Downs Station and Bow River Station with her husband. After encouragement from Rover Thomas in the 1980s, Juli and other women started painting at Warmun. In 2001, Juli was awarded the Centenary Medal for service to the arts. Juli first exhibited her work in 1994 and has been included in over thirty group exhibitions held in Australia and overseas. Major group exhibitions include *True stories: art of the East Kimberley*, Art Gallery of New South Wales (2003); *Beyond wings*, Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide (2002); and *Das Verborgene im Sichtbaren* (The unseen in seen), Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, Germany (2001). She held a two-person exhibition with Patrick Mung Mung at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne (2006) and a solo exhibition at Kaliman Gallery, Sydney (2004). Juli’s work is represented in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Artbank, the National Gallery of Victoria, and the Queensland Art Gallery. Mabel Juli is represented by Warmun Art.
Garry Namponan

Art making has always been a part of my life. I like it a lot. Because my dad [Angus Namponan] was a painter and a carver too, I learnt from him. I will always be a painter and carver.

Garry Namponan was born in 1960 at the Presbyterian mission at Aurukun, on the western coast of Cape York Peninsula, Qld. His clan is Apelech and his language groups are Wik-Alkan on his Father’s side and Wik-Ngathan on his Mother’s side. His traditional homelands are south of Aurukun: Aayk, Kirk River and Cape Keer-Weer, which is the location of his family home. Namponan works across a range of media including sculpture, printmaking, book illustration and painting. Namponan studied art at the Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Northern Territory, in the early 1980s. He is one of the leading carvers of the Wik and Kugu Art and Craft Centre at Aurukun. Since 2002, Namponan’s work has been included in around ten group exhibitions in Australia and Germany. Major exhibitions include *Imagine... the creativity shaping our culture*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne (2006); *Storyplace: Indigenous art of Cape York and the rainforest*, Queensland Art Gallery (2003); and *Native title business*, Queensland Museum, and touring nationally (2002–05). The artist has worked on a number of government and public art commissions including *Kank inum – Nink inum* (Old way – New way) for the Commonwealth Government (2002). In 2006 he participated in a print-making workshop at the Australian Print Workshop, Melbourne. Namponan’s work is represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria; the National Maritime Museum, Sydney; and the Queensland Art Gallery. Garry Namponan is represented by the Wik and Kugu Art and Craft Centre.

Rusty Peters

We all have the one spirit, this spirit in our hearts is the same. When white people talk we don’t know about their things. And when we talk they don’t know about us. That is why we ask each other about our different cultures ... but it is really the same spirit.

Rusty Peters (Dirrji) was born in 1935 at Springvale Station, south-west of Warmun (Turkey Creek), WA. He is a senior Gija man of Juwurru skin. Peters grew up learning traditional law and working as a stockman on Springvale Station, and later became a renowned horse breaker at Mabel Downs. With other senior Gija artists Hector Jandany and George Mung Mung, Peters moved to Warmun and helped establish the school, taking groups of boys out bush as part of the Gija cultural program. In 1989, Peters moved to Kununurra and worked as an assistant at Waringarri Arts, where he assisted his long-time friend Rover Thomas. Peters began painting large canvases in 1997 when Freddie Timms established the Jirrawun Aboriginal Arts group at Crocodile Hole. He and fellow Jirrawun artists now live and work in Kununurra and Wyndham, where they are building a customised gallery and studio. Peters is vice-president of the Jirrawun Arts Board. Peters has held solo exhibitions at William Mora Galleries, Melbourne (2006, 2004, 2002 and 1999), and at Grantpirrie Gallery, Sydney (2003, 2002). In 2002 he completed a project with artist Peter Adsett titled *Two laws, one big spirit*, at 24HR Art - Northern Territory Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, and touring nationally (2002–04). Peters’ work has been included in several key exhibitions including *Parallel lives: Australian painting today*, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Melbourne (2006); *Jirrawun in the house: a contemporary experience from the East Kimberley*, Parliament House, Canberra (2005); *True stories: art of the East Kimberley*, Art Gallery of New South Wales (2003); and *Blood on the spinifex*, the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne (2002). Rusty Peters is represented by Jirrawun Arts.
## Catalogue of works in the exhibition

Dimensions are given
height before width before depth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Kuntjil Cooper</strong></th>
<th><strong>Alkawari Dawson</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mabel Juli</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1** *Tjarpita* 2001  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
127 x 126 cm  
Collection of Acclaim Exploration Limited, Perth | **7** *Arlapapu* 2002  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
122 x 204 cm  
Collection of the Malone family, Melbourne | **13** *Gelingkenayin* 2000  
ochres and pigment on canvas  
100 x 140 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne |
| **2** *Minyama Tjuta Tjukurpa*  
(Seven Sisters Dreaming) 2002  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
180 x 182 cm  
Collection of Lindy and Eddie Tamir, Melbourne | **8** *Kalaya pulkana (Big emu)* 2002  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
86 x 110 cm  
Collection of Violet Sheno,  
Cav Fine Art, Melbourne | **14** *Karnkiny Ngarrangkarni* (Moon Dreaming) 2000  
ochres and pigment on canvas  
100 x 140 cm  
Collection of Rudi Pilotto, Melbourne |
| **3** *Tjilara nyinanyi* 2002  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
131.5 x 143 cm  
Collection of the Malone family, Melbourne | **9** *Untitled* 2002  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
86.5 x 109 cm  
Laverty Collection, Sydney | **15** *Gelingkenayin* 2004  
ochres and pigment on canvas  
140 x 220 cm  
Collection of Vasili Kaliman, Sydney |
| **4** *Wermilla and Mituda* (Wermilla and Mituda rockholes) 2004  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
120 x 184 cm  
Collection of Mr ME and Dr BE Eckermann, Adelaide | **10** *Untitled* 2003  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
105 x 76 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne | **16** *Marranji and Jiyyirriny – Old woman singing out for her dog* 2005  
ochres and pigment on canvas  
220 x 140 cm  
Collection of Ian and Elizabeth Constable, Perth |
| **5** *Minyama Kutjara Tjukurpa*  
(Two Sisters Dreaming) 2006  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
138 x 145 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne | **11** *Kalita kalita* 2004  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
129 x 201 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne | **17** *Marranji and Jiyyirriny – Old woman singing out for her dog* 2005  
ochres and pigment on canvas  
100 x 140 cm  
Collection of Michael and Carol Casper, Melbourne |
| **6** *Minyama Kutjara Tjukurpa*  
(Two Sisters Dreaming) 2006  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
104 x 141 cm  
Laverty Collection, Sydney | **12** *Kalaya Wati Tjukurpa (Emu Man Dreaming)* 2006  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
143 x 86 cm  
Collection of Jennifer Hillman, Sydney | **18** *Karnkiny Ngarrangkarni* (Moon Dreaming) 2006  
ochres and pigment on canvas  
213.5 x 122 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne |
| **19** *Marranji and Jiyyirriny – Old woman singing out for her dog* 2006  
ochres and pigment on canvas  
91 x 120 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne | | |
Garry Namponan

20 *Jabiru* 2003
synthetic polymer paint on milkwood
142 x 35 x 40 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

21 *Sea eagle* 2003
synthetic polymer paint on milkwood
42 x 85 x 61 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

22 *Dingo* 2004
ochres on milkwood
40 x 18 x 70 cm
Private collection, Brisbane

23 *Tri-coloured camp dog* 2005
ochres on milkwood
23 x 11 x 44 cm
Collection of Jo Lane and Peter Houghton, Melbourne

24 *Jabiru* 2006
ochres and synthetic polymer paint on milkwood
140 x 40 x 50 cm
Courtesy the artist and Wik and Kugu Arts and Crafts Centre, Aurukun

25 *Tri-coloured camp dog* 2006
ochres and charcoal on milkwood
58 x 103 x 13 cm
Courtesy the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane

Rusty Peters

26 *Turtle and crocodile* 1998
ochres and pigment on canvas
122 x 135 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

27 *Spirit float away* 2003
ochres and pigment on canvas
diptych: 180 x 300 cm;
each 180 x 150 cm
Collection of Ian Smith, Adelaide

28 *Gooloongoorroon country – Katie Yard* 2004
ochres and pigment on canvas
122 x 135 cm
Collection of Harvey Bierman, Melbourne

29 *Jawoorroowan – Kookaburra and Peregrine Falcon Dreaming* 2004
ochres and pigment on canvas
diptych: 122 x 270 cm;
each 122 x 135 cm
Courtesy HLB Mann Judd, the artist and Jirrawun Arts, Kununurra

30 *White Water – Dinil-wawun-wawun-ngarri-wanema* 2005
ochres and pigment on canvas
122 x 135 cm
Private collection, Melbourne
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country in mind

Five contemporary Aboriginal artists