



Warakurna: *All the Stories Got into our Minds and Eyes* is an exhibition featuring works from the Warakurna Artists art centre that charts the history of the Ngaanyatjarra lands. Western Desert artists across central Australia are well known for *Tjukurrpa* (Dreaming) paintings, which tell the stories of creation through symbols and dots. Produced over the last two years, the paintings featured in this exhibition use a figurative style to recreate scenes of everyday life and people, allowing a wide range of stories to be told, both historical and contemporary.

Warakurna lies near the meeting of the borders of Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia, some 300 kilometres west of Uluru. The Warakurna community has a long history of artistic expression and comprises about 180, mostly Ngaanyatjarra, people who refer to themselves as *Yarnangu*. Warakurna Artists is a thriving art centre and the heart and soul of the community.

Donated to the Museum by Wayne and Vicki McGeoch, the Warakurna paintings are the creative vision of a group of artists including Eunice Yunurupa Porter, Judith Yinyika Chambers, Dianne Ungukalpi Golding, Jean Inyalanka Burke and Dorcas Tinamayi Bennett. These artists are not just making art, they are recounting incidents and remembering people that have impacted heavily on their lives, including the coming of explorers, prospectors and missionaries, the building of roads, missile testing, the return to their homeland and the setting up of their own community.

The emergence of the history painting movement at Warakurna coincides with broader changes taking place in the Western Desert – the last representatives of a generation to have grown up living a fully traditional life are passing on. There is a growing desire for *Yarnangu* to remember the people who left an impression on their lives and to pass this knowledge on to their children.

A new kind of history is being forged in the Western Desert. Collectively the works in this exhibition reflect Warakurna people's desire to tell their own story in their own way. *Yarnangu* are claiming their heritage and art is playing an important role in this.

Warakurna: All the Stories Got into our Minds and Eyes is on display in the First Australians Focus Gallery from December 2012 to November 2013.

FEATURE

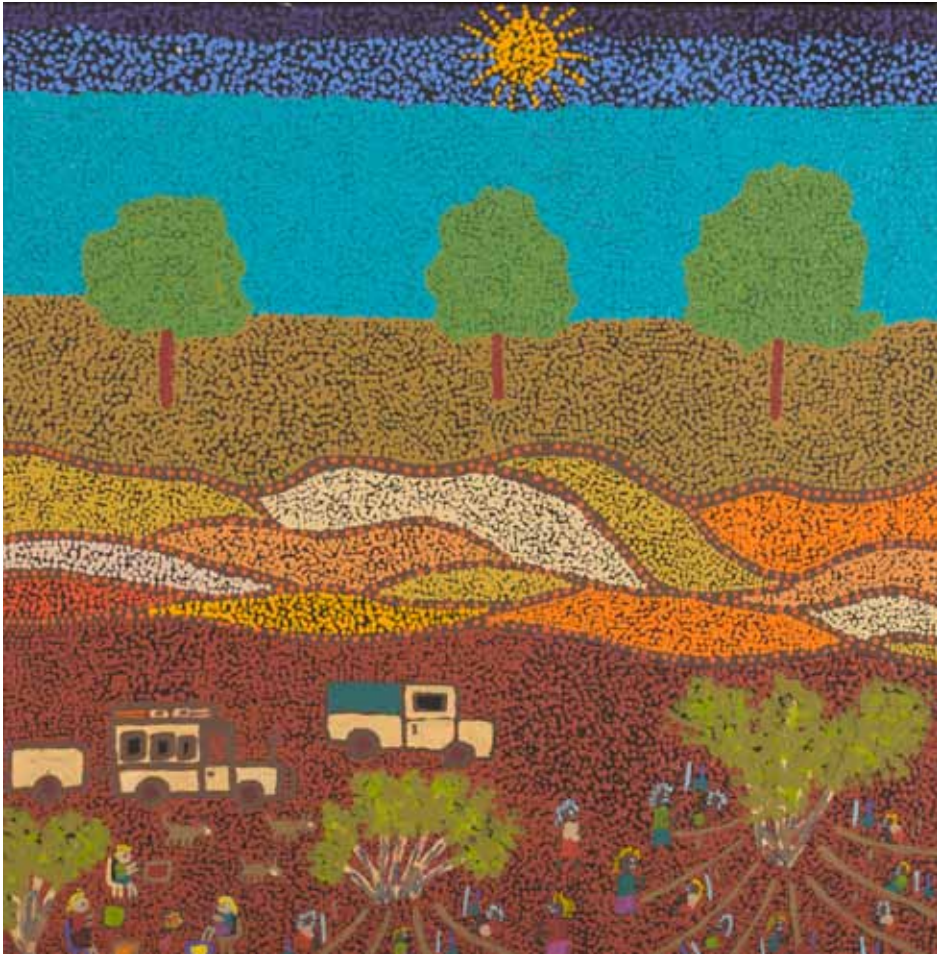
Warakurna

All the Stories Got into our Minds and Eyes

This exhibition of unique works documents a new art movement emerging from the Western Desert community of Warakurna.

BY PETER THORLEY, CURATOR, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAM

TJITJI (CHILDREN) PERFORM THE LUNGKARTA INMA (BLUE-TONGUE LIZARD DANCE). PHOTOGRAPH BY EDWINA CIRCUITT. MATERIALS USED BY WARAKURNA ARTISTS. PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM ACKER. DALLAS SMYTHE PAINTING A COLLABORATIVE WORK AT CIRCUS WATERS. PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM PEARN. A PAPA (DOG) MAKES HIMSELF COMFORTABLE. PHOTOGRAPH BY EDWINA CIRCUITT. YURLIYA, RAWLINSON RANGES. PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM ACKER. COURTESY WARAKURNA ARTISTS.



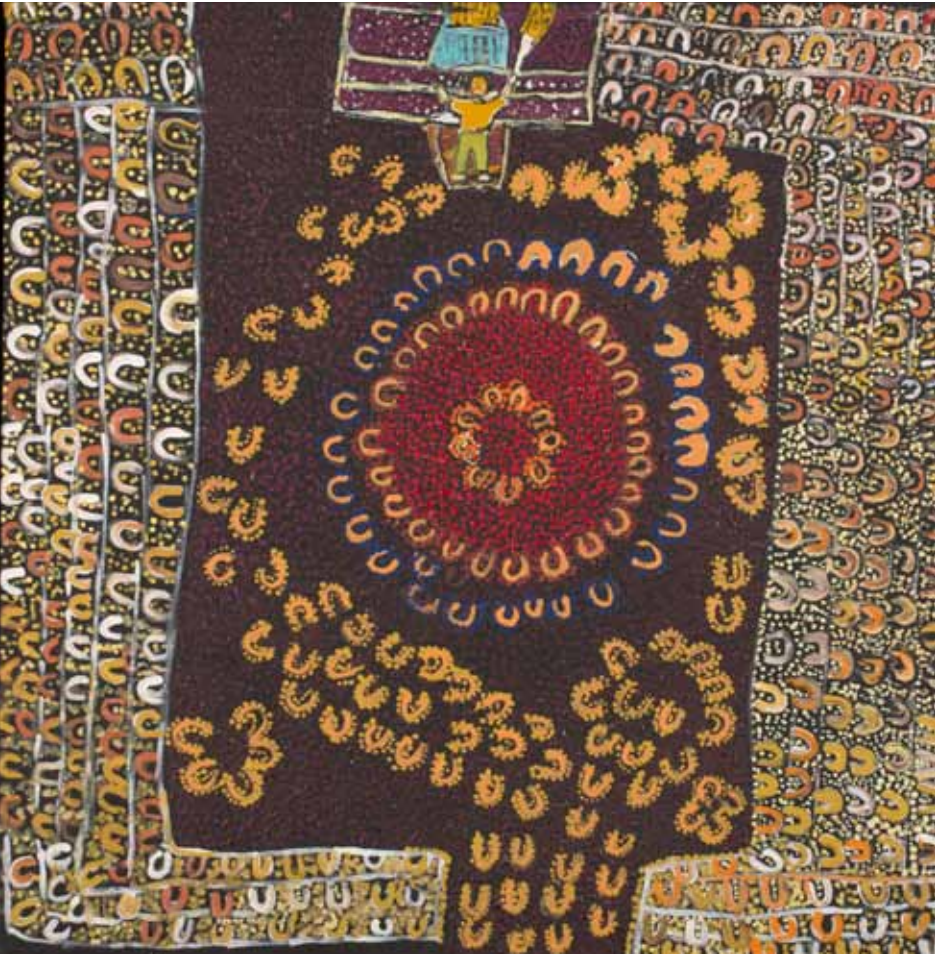
Making Paintings, Purnu and Tjanpi

BY ROSHANNA YINGA WILLIAMSON

‘We make all kinds of things in Warakurna. We do painting at the art centre, make *purnu* carvings at home and *tjanpi* baskets and sculptures,’ says artist Roshanna Yinga Williamson.

Williamson was born in 1987 and grew up in Jameson, 200 kilometres south-west of Warakurna. She moved to Warakurna to live with her husband. Williamson is an emerging artist and regularly paints the *Tjitji Kutjarra* (Two Children) Dreaming story near Jameson.

Williamson’s painting shows a typical scene of women working together in the bush. On the left is a group of women sitting together under a tree, painting. In the centre and right foreground, women are using digging sticks and shovels to extract roots for artefact making. To the left of centre, Williamson has painted two four-wheel drive vehicles, used for transport and to take the raw materials and finished artworks back to the community.



2000 Sydney Olympic Games Opening Ceremony

BY EUNICE YUNURUPA PORTER AND JEAN INYALANKA BURKE

This collaborative painting by Eunice Yunurupa Porter and Jean Inyalanka Burke captures one of the defining moments of the 2000 Sydney Olympics. The painting shows the Warakurna community as being fully engaged with the wider world in which they live, rather than seeing themselves as confined to a remote corner of the desert.

Porter and Burke describe their painting: ‘Ladies from Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands visited Sydney and performed in the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games

opening ceremony. Two hundred ladies from Central Australia performed a story about being frightened of bushfires. They ran across the stadium to where there was a large “Sun” puppet. Nicky Webster and a man from Bangarra Dance Company came up from behind the ladies into the centre of the stadium. There were lots of people taking photos. There were also men and women from the Top End’s Yirkala community and Pacific nations such as New Zealand. You can see Cathy Freeman lighting the Olympic flame.’



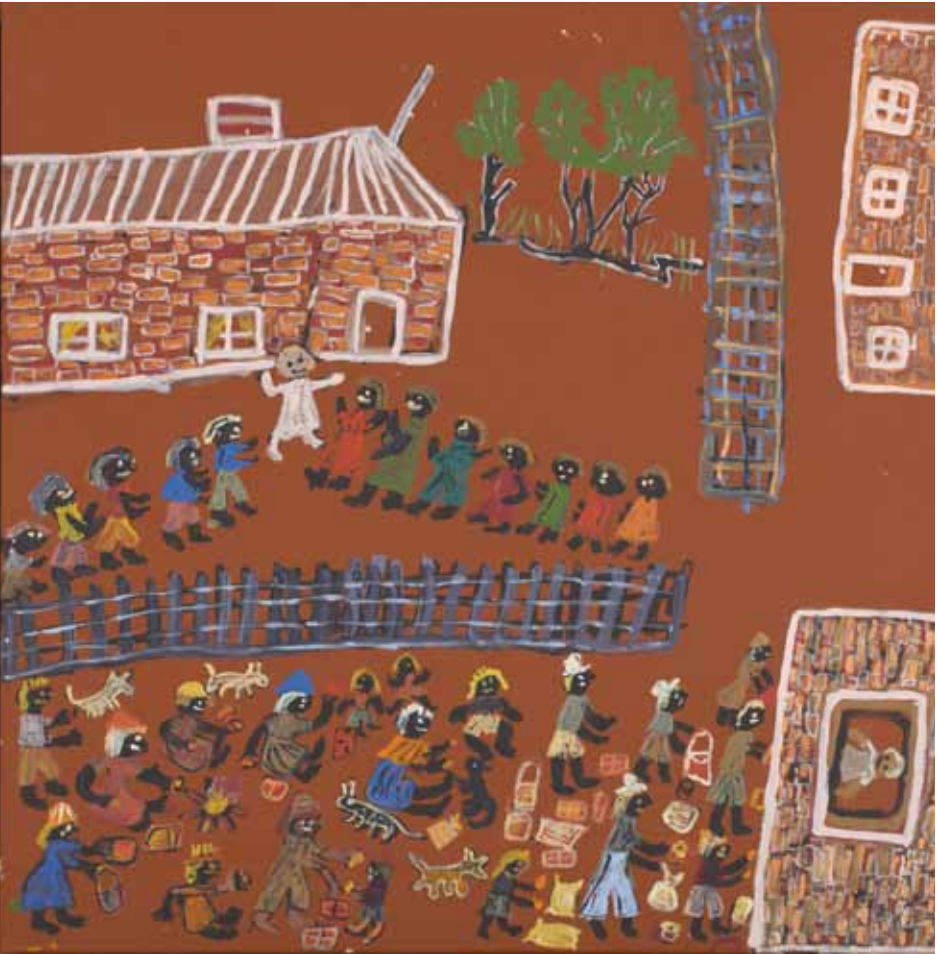
Giles Weather Station

BY DORCAS TINAMAYI BENNETT

Dorcas Tinamayi Bennett was a very young child when she first walked through the country at the base of the Rawlinson Ranges near the Giles Meteorological Station. Her memories of the early days of the weather station are reinforced by stories told to her by her mother, artist Nyurapayia Bennett: ‘They were bringing the steel on trucks from Woomera or Adelaide. They put it in the ground, making the frame of the buildings that are there now.’

This painting shows the layout of the meteorological station. Bennett has included the older corrugated tin sheds on the site. Over the years, with many changes of staff, the original function of these buildings has been forgotten. ‘There was one tin shed. It was the shop for all the whitefella workers there,’ said Bennett. The shop has long since closed and the tin shed now houses gym equipment.

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Waiting for Shop

BY EUNICE YUNURUPA PORTER

Eunice Yunurupa Porter was born at Wirrkural, near Lulpu on the road between Jameson and Warburton (220 kilometres south-west of Warakurna). As a young girl she walked with her family to Warburton Mission where she lived for many years. In this painting Porter depicts a typical scene from Warburton.

‘Every day they (*Yarnangu*) would wait for the shop so they could change *papa-ku* skins (dingo pelts) with the shopkeeper and get some food or rations. In wintertime people would sit around a fire and wait while all the *tjitji* (children) played nearby.’

The shop was next to the mission school. At this time in the late 1950s boys and girls would attend school together then go to their separate dormitories in the evening. The dormitory system was abandoned in 1960 and children stayed with their families in the camps around the mission.

Porter recalls that *Yarnangu* and *Piranpa* (whitefellas) worked together to quarry the stone from the Brown Range close to Warburton, which was used to build the mission, school, dormitories and shop.