

VINCENT LINGIARI ART AWARD

NGAWA, NGAPA, KAPI, KWATJA, WATER



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The Vincent Lingiari Art Award was established in 2016 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the historic Wave Hill Walk Off and 40 years since the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT)* 1976 was enacted by the Australian Parliament.

On the 23 August 1966, Vincent Lingiari, Gurindji leader and head stockman at Wave Hill Station led workers and their families to walk off the cattle station in protest against unjust working and living conditions. The stockmen and their families relocated to Wattie Creek in a strike that was to last nine years. The Walk Off and strike became much more than a call for equal rights; it soon became a fight for the return of Gurindji Lands. The Walk Off attracted national and international attention to the atrocious treatment of Aboriginal peoples and their campaign for land rights.

After persistent struggle, lobbying and negotiation, the Gurindji secured a lease over a small portion of their traditional lands for residential and cultural purposes. In 1975, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam poured red dirt into the hands of Vincent Lingiari to symbolise the return of what has always been, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

One year later, the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT)* returned Aboriginal reserves and mission land in the Northern Territory to traditional land owners. It established the Central and Northern Land Councils, as well as a process through which their members could secure Aboriginal Freehold Title to their traditional land. Today, Aboriginal people own almost half of the land in the Northern Territory.

The Vincent Lingiari Award honours the leadership, courage and strength of Vincent Lingiari and all those who have fought for their land rights.

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STATEMENT BY LESLEY TURNER

When the Central Land Council and Desert called for entries in this award, I said that exhibition of their artwork would send an urgent message not to take water for granted in a world where water rights are shaping up as the new frontier.

Their message is not only urgent but powerful. And delivered beautifully. I congratulate all the entrants for their stunning artwork on the theme of this, the third Vincent Lingiari Art Award: Ngawa, Ngapa, Kapi, Kwatja, Water.

We are in fact now at the new frontier. As CLC Chair Sammy Wilson has astutely put it, "Water is the new land rights."

In the last 12 months or so, we've seen stark examples of our people demanding rights to adequate and sufficient water for their communities, for their next generations, their culture, and their country and its plants and animals, sometimes in the face of what can only be described as officially sanctioned massive water misuse in our arid environment.

The Laramba community north-west of Alice Springs has taken a Northern Territory Government department to court over the state

of the community's water quality, which contains uranium at almost three times the level that is considered safe to drink. "If that was a white town, they would have got the water fixed," CLC executive member Robert Hoosan reckons.

The CLC has joined with the other NT land councils to call for a Safe Drinking Water Act to provide legally enforceable drinking water quality and security standards.

We've teamed up with more than 50 other groups calling for a Climate Change Act for a legally binding pathway to net zero emissions in the Territory by 2050. Because "our people are on the frontline of climate change," according to another CLC executive member, Michael Liddle. "A falling water table and reduced rainfall are threatening our drinking water and the plants and animals."

But the water rights frontier is nowhere more clearly drawn than on the Singleton Pastoral Lease, an hour south of Tennant Creek. There, the NT Government has granted a private company, Fortune Agribusiness, a free licence to draw 40,000 megalitres of water each year for 30 years to grow fruit and vegies, largely for export. The CLC has demanded a halt to this

alarming development pending a review of the decision and an independent peer review of the water management plan the government has asked the company to complete.

As my predecessor CLC chief Executive, Joe Martin-Jard, pointed out if the government can't already see it, we're dealing here with "a very precious, finite resource that is likely to dwindle even further due to climate change and more frequent droughts."

Indeed, senior knowledge holder Donald Thompson, who grew up and worked around Singleton is not alone in saying he's "worried that the country will dry out, and with no water there'll be losses of all the animals and wildlife."

"We're worrying about life," Maureen O'Keefe, who also grew up in the region, told a CLC meeting on the matter at Tennant Creek. In other words, we have a very real and present existential threat here on the frontier. "We have climate change, and we don't have rainfall every year," said Ms O'Keefe. "I've been crying for this country. All the springs will be dried out. All the cultural sites will suffer."

So might small Aboriginal-owned Centrefarm horticulture projects in the vicinity if they are starved of water going instead to Singleton. Because, while its poor management represents a huge risk to our people, good management of water can conversely represent opportunity, including economic opportunity.

We are fighting at this new frontier of water rights with different weapons. To the policy, advocacy and legal efforts, and enunciation of the opportunity costs, can be added the example of the community working group at Alpururulam in the far east of the CLC region. Working with the CLC's community development unit, the group has committed \$140,000 of Alpururulam's community lease money towards a project to address significant water problems there.

We seek solutions while targeting causes. I am pleased to say that Alpururulam's battle for better drinking water seems headed for a happy ending at long last, thanks to a \$4.4 million Aboriginals Benefit Account grant.

Art can take the message of water threats and our water rights to different audiences. CLC chair Mr Wilson puts it plainly: "We have

chosen this year's theme, of the award) to spread the word that water rights *are* land rights."

My counterpart at Desart, Philip Watkins, notes that "the award has always been unashamedly political."

Desart and the CLC established the Vincent Lingiari Art Award in 2016 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the historic Wave Hill Walk Off and the 40th anniversary of the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act, 1976.

Since 1976, the CLC has won back large areas of land for its traditional owners. Yet without secure access to adequate and safe water, their existence on this land is at risk.

The Aboriginal land rights and contemporary Aboriginal art movements share the same roots. They evolved at the same time in the NT and drew strength from the same sources. So, it is appropriate – and a pleasure – for the CLC to again work with Desart on this third edition of the Vincent Lingiari Art Award, named of course after that pioneer of land rights at Wave Hill.

Both Aboriginal land rights and the art movement have contributed greatly to Australia's contemporary national identity.

Certainly, art can be boldly political, or it can and does work in such less than overtly political ways. It can seep into the national consciousness. It can reach people who might otherwise be out of reach and touch us in unexpected ways. That is its real beauty. At the very least, it can provide great enjoyment while we face our many challenges, of which big problems with water are but one.

Enjoyment I'm sure the entries in the award this year will provide you as they have me. I again commend and thank the artists.

I also thank the Peter Kittle Motor Company and Newmont Australia whose generous support helps make the award possible.

Lesley Turner
Chief Executive Officer
Central Land Council

STATEMENT BY PHILIP WATKINS

Werte!

I would also like to pay respect to the Apmereke-artweye and Kwertengerle of Mparntwe and to the Traditional Owners of the countries of those reading and visiting this exhibition in person or online.

Central Australian Aboriginal people have always revered water through strong social and cultural links to this life sustaining resource. The landscape, its waterways, soakages and water holes all with their own names are the creation of ancestral beings as told in the Tjukurpa stories for Ngawa, Ngapa, Kapi, Kwatja, Wwater, that traverse the central desert.

We see this in the artwork in this exhibition.

Imelda (Yukenbarri) Gugaman's work *Winpurpurla* depicts a tjurnu (soakwater) in her mother's country south of Balgo, in the Great Sandy Desert and is "an inta (living water) place, so it always has good water." Gugaman's work speaks to the cultural respect for and sharing of this tjurnu.

Mervyn Rubuntja's painted steel panel installed outdoors, surprises

us with its subject matter painted from memory of now destroyed landscape and waterways in suburban Mparntwe, (Alice Springs). His work *Rock Wallaby Dreaming*, an important and sacred site for Aboriginal people, represents the damage done to this site by the built environment and the ongoing threat to water quality through Fracking. "Important locations for us Aboriginal people are being built and drilled and we are concerned about our health, worried that the water will go bad," he says. Anyone familiar with Rubuntja's work will know his commitment to his call for the end of Fracking, for the health and well being of the people, the water, and the land.

It comes as a heavy realisation that our water rights are not protected. Land rights do not mean water rights and again Aboriginal people find themselves in the fight for their survival as big agrifarming, and mining continue to exhaust water availability and destroy water quality.

Ngawa is Precious, by Lucy Tanami reflects the beauty water brings to country, 'the land is not a wasteland of barren deserts. When it rains, the wildflowers are in bloom. There are beautiful colourful features of

wildflowers surrounded by a pool of water. Water is very precious, Indigenous people rely on water for many generations."

Within the different cosmologies of Aboriginal people across the country, water is not separate to land Mary Napangati's work *Tjutalpi* represents soakage waters at Tjutalpi, east of Kiwirrkura community. "In ancestral times a group of men and women of the Napangati and the Napanangka kinship subsections travelled to this site. While at Tjutalpi, they performed the dances and songs associated with the area."

Marlene Rubuntja's soft sculptural work *Water Gives us Life* is a reflective and joyous piece, "how the bush used to be bright green when there was good rain....how the coolamon would be full of food after the rain...how our stomachs felt good when we walked in the bush and ate the good food after the rain."

Trees and animals provided information to desert people on where to find water, Cynthia Burke's wood sculpture *Kapi tjukurla* demonstrating significant etching techniques, represents the story of water. "The sculpture is made from

the tree that shows us the way to the water, they are one and the water flows around them and in them, just like the lines of my etching. And the circles represent the waterholes where we find the water."

I see many changes from my own experience of travelling throughout the territory visiting country and relatives, the land and river-beds, are dry there are less bushfoods, we've seen animals dead at dry water holes, the temperatures remain consistently high throughout summers, climate change is having a huge impact on Central Australia. Aboriginal communities, the artists in this exhibition, are at the forefront of this impact and without water rights we will lose all the gains we have made through the land rights movement. We need water rights. As CLC Chair Sammy Wilson says, "Water rights are the new land rights" and here we are again fighting for our sovereign rights as First Nations Peoples.

Through water rights we can fulfill our custodial responsibilities to care for country and keep culture strong by passing on the knowledge to healthy young people. This is keenly

observed in Robert Fielding's work *Kupi Kupi* (whirlwind). "*Kupi Kupi* is a weather prediction, a synoptic chart of our changing future. Our manta is ailuru (dry), the wild flowers no longer bloom. We need kapi (water) to survive, we are kapi. The weather we know is changing and this will affect the way we live on country, the way we are."

As you view these works consider your own life, and what the impact on your families would be fighting for water rights, fighting for your country, fighting for the right to survive.

Ngawa, Ngapa, Kapi, Kwatja, Water is an exhibition that highlights the existential threat to Aboriginal people, to all people, if we continue to show this precious, life giving resource no respect with no chance to survive the intense climate, geological, big agriculture, and mining industries' pressures.

Water is Life - Stand up for Water Rights!

I want to thank all the artists for the work in this exhibition, the works with their aesthetic beauty pull no punches on the importance of the theme and the political

statement they make.

The Vincent Lingiari Art Award is testament to the bravery and determination of Vincent Lingiari and the Gurindji, and Desart is honoured to once again, with our partners the Central Land Council and Tangentyere Artists to present this award. I would like to thank the Central Land Council delegates for their choice of winner and to this year's judge Hetti Perkins, whose Arrente country this exhibition is held. I also extend my gratitude to the sponsors of this award, Peter Kittle Motor Company and Newmont Australia.

Kele!

Philip Watkins
Chief Executive Officer
Desart



Adrian Jangala Robertson

Yalpirakinu, 2021

Acrylic on canvas
61cm x 30cm

Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists

Ngapa, water, is literally central to Adrian Robertson's entry *Yalpirakinu*, as you would expect from an artist from the Western Desert.

Born at Papunya, Robertson has enjoyed strong artistic influences throughout his life, including that of his uncle, the late Darby Ross Jampijinpa, and his mother, the late Eunice Napangardi, both well-known artists. Robertson himself has worked out of Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists studio since 2002.

His work consistently depicts the desert mountains, ridges and trees of Yalpirakinu, in his mother's country.

The water hole at the central base of the dry, possibly bushfire-burnt peak in his entry conjures for the viewer the welcome to be felt by anyone coming upon this source of life in such a beautiful but forbidding landscape.



Billy Tjampijinpa Kenda

Two Camels Drinking Water, 2021

Acrylic on canvas

20cm x 46cm

Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists

Billy Tjampijinpa Kenda's artwork has a sense of calm and balance about it. Certainly his entry *Two Camels Drinking Water* has that strong sense, courtesy of its expanse of water, *kapi*, seeming to swell the desert landscape. The water is a feature, clearly slaking the thirst of the two camels calmly drinking. Not in this work, the truck, car, plane, helicopter, even flying saucer traffic often enough now playfully included in Kenda's landscapes to counterbalance the calm.

From Jay Creek, the Bindi Mwerre Anthurre artist says, "I always see lotta cars, on the Hermannsburg road. That's what I'm thinking about. I think about all them cars." That's the modern reality.

But frequently interacting in his work with these subjects are the animals that have always been there, plus some introduced ones such as camels. Kenda thinks and paints about change in the country but also the underlying continuity, like the ebb and flow of water in a desert landscape.



Charles Jangala Inkamala

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) The Gap, Going South, Road and Train Road, 2021

Acrylic on canvas
21cm x 91cm

Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists

That Charles Jangala Inkamala experiments with perspective in his artwork, combining aerial and ground views in the one piece, is strikingly evident in his entry *Alice Springs (Mparntwe)*, the Gap, Going South, Road and Train Road.

His intricate line work captures the multitude of angles in the rock layers of the ancient land, powerfully portraying the geological story of its shaping.

The water, *kwatja*, seems to flow from the rock layers, as of course it does on the ranges themselves with decent rain, now criss-crossing the road and railway line.

Prior to joining Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists, Inkamala primarily worked with graphite and coloured pencil, coloured markers and ball point pen.

His water colour-esque application of acrylic paints instead in his entry, and his use of ultramarine blue, are ideal for the subject of the entry and the theme of this art award.



Cynthia Burke

Kapi Tjukurla, (detail) 2021

Itara – River Red Gum

141cm x 32cm x 24cm

Maruku Arts

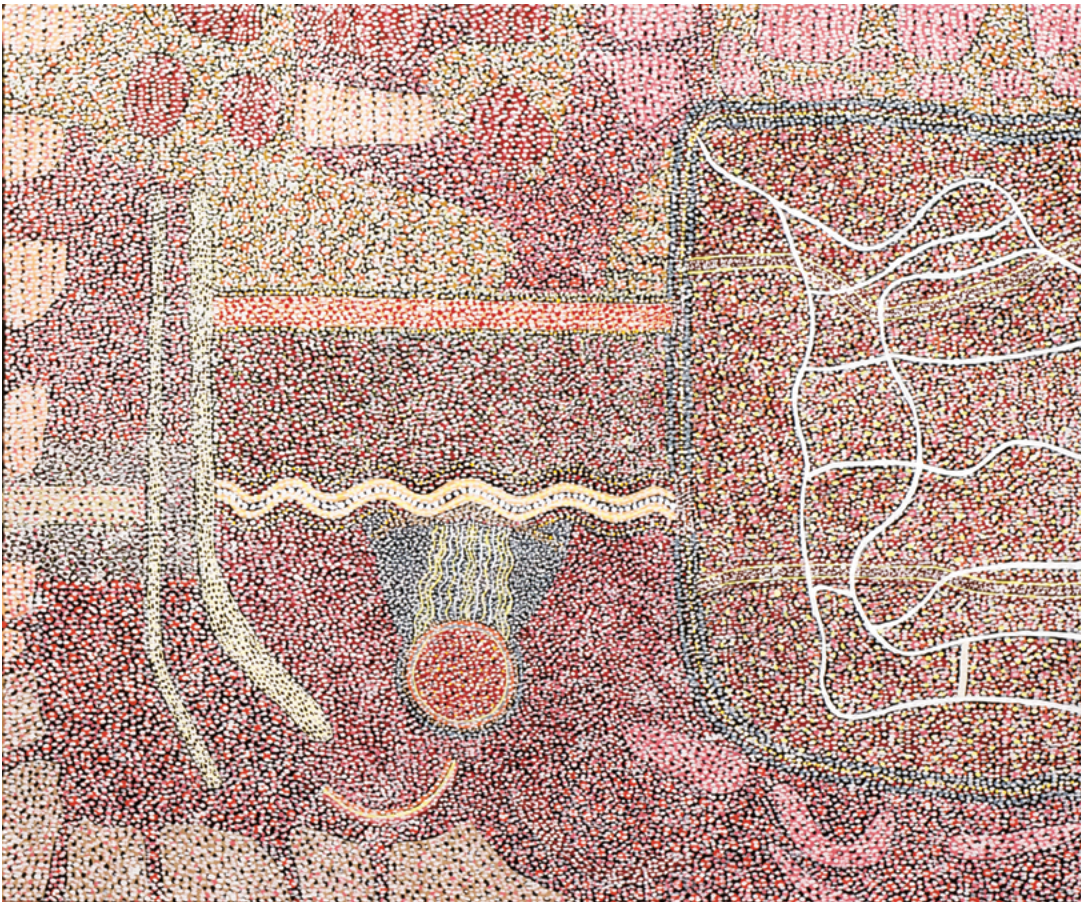
The intricate and ingenious entry by Maruku Arts artist Cynthia Burke is unique, certainly in this award, yet based on a woodworking technique now common in the Western Desert and using age-old cave, ground and body painting symbols.

The story her entry *Kapi Tjukurla* tells is equally intricate yet metaphorically solid, despite being about water, *kapi*.

Burke explains, "The sculpture represents the trees that lead us the way to the water and the water is within them and around them, even if we can't see it; their roots still touch it. The sculpture is made from the tree that shows us the way to

the water; they are one and the water flows around them and in them, just like the lines of my etching. The circles represent the waterholes where we find the water."

Burke's work has been exhibited interstate and overseas, a Telstra NATSIAA award finalist and collected in two major Australian museums.



Dennis Nelson Tjakamarra

Kalipinya, 2021

Synthetic polymer on canvas
76cm x 91cm

Papunya Tjupi Arts

The work *Kalipinya*, from Dennis Nelson of Papunya Tjupi Arts, tells the story of an important storm making ceremony. *Kalipinya* in fact refers to both a water dreaming site north of Kintore and a powerful storm of lightning, thunderclouds and rejuvenating rain, filling rock holes, claypans and creeks, the artist's statement explains, emphasising that the storm has the power to bring new growth, new life.

The statement continues: circles represent *kapi tjukitji* (rock holes) and the meandering lines the rain water flowing throughout the country. Background dotting represents the rejuvenating effect

the rain has on the land, nourishing bush food plants and providing easy access to water.

The ultra-concentrated dotting in this intense yet subtle work might even be the rain itself!

Nelson's work has been widely exhibited in the NT, interstate and overseas in USA and Germany.



Doris Bush Nungarrayi

Pilkati anta rumiya (Snake and goanna), 2021

Synthetic on polymer on linen
122cm x 152cm

Papunya Tjupi Arts

Doris Bush's account of her entry *Pilkati anta rumiya (Snake and goanna)* is as dynamic as the work itself.

The Papunya Tjupi Arts painter says of this epic struggle by the waterside, "Snake this one, at the water. He's trying to bite and eat that one over there. And that over there is coming to look at him. 'What happened here?' This one, he is, 'ooohhh!', sneaking up intending to bite.

This one, two men standing, over there is another, watching this the snake, see? After that, that one over there stabs him with a spear. Went and got that goanna too and ate it.

Yeah, finished like that; that's how I made this one by the water."

Bush's bio points out she frequently paints vivid memories, stories and dreams. Her work has been very widely exhibited interstate and overseas and a finalist in the Telstra NATSIAA awards.



Grace Robinya

Raining at Laramba, 2021

Acrylic on linen
91.5cm x 111.5cm

Tangentyere Artists

Grace Robinya is known for figurative paintings frequently featuring her signature clouds and accompanying sheets of rain. Born in 1942, through these works she tells a lifetime of experiences, including her time at Coniston and Napperby stations, where she and her husband worked and raised their family. Robinya now lives in Alice Springs and paints as a member of Tangentyere Artists. But she often returns to Laramba community excised from Napperby, depicted in her entry *Raining at Laramba*.

Of her entry, Robinya says simply, it's, "raining again over the hills, Coniston way. It's always raining, summertime, when stockmen mustering. Makes those hills look blue in the north. Raining, raining, all the time raining. Clouds are coming." Simple, but perhaps with some irony, given Laramba's severe water quality problems.

Robinya's work has been included in no less than 55 exhibitions since 2006, and a finalist in five significant awards, including the Telstra NATSIAA award.



Hayley Coulthard

Kuprilya, Kwatja Kumia Inthurra
(*Kuprilya, The water is so sweet*), 2021

Earthenware and Underglazes
47cm x 29cm x 20cm

Hermannsburg Potters

Hayley Coulthard's entry *Kuprilya, Kwatja Kumia Inthurra* (*Kuprilya, the Water is So Sweet*) is a ceramic history of Hermannsburg water.

The widely exhibited and collected Hermannsburg Potters' artist explains, "There was a drought, and no running water. At Kuprilya there is good water (catchment) and people decided to make a pipeline from there to Hermannsburg. All the Western Arranta people worked really hard digging the trench for the pipeline. Back at Kuprilya, we have a special rock there, Cloud Rock. When people come and rub the rock, all the clouds come and bring rain.

"The old lady (on the pot) is rubbing the rock saying 'Kwatja Pitjai!' (Rain Come!). Then, on 1st of October 1935, the pipeline was finished and the water came to Hermannsburg, into the big tank. The kids heard the noise of the water coming into the tank and they were dancing around saying, "Kwatja! Kwatja thaalama!" (the water is running!).



Helen Nungarrayi Reed

Ngapa Jukurrpa, 2021

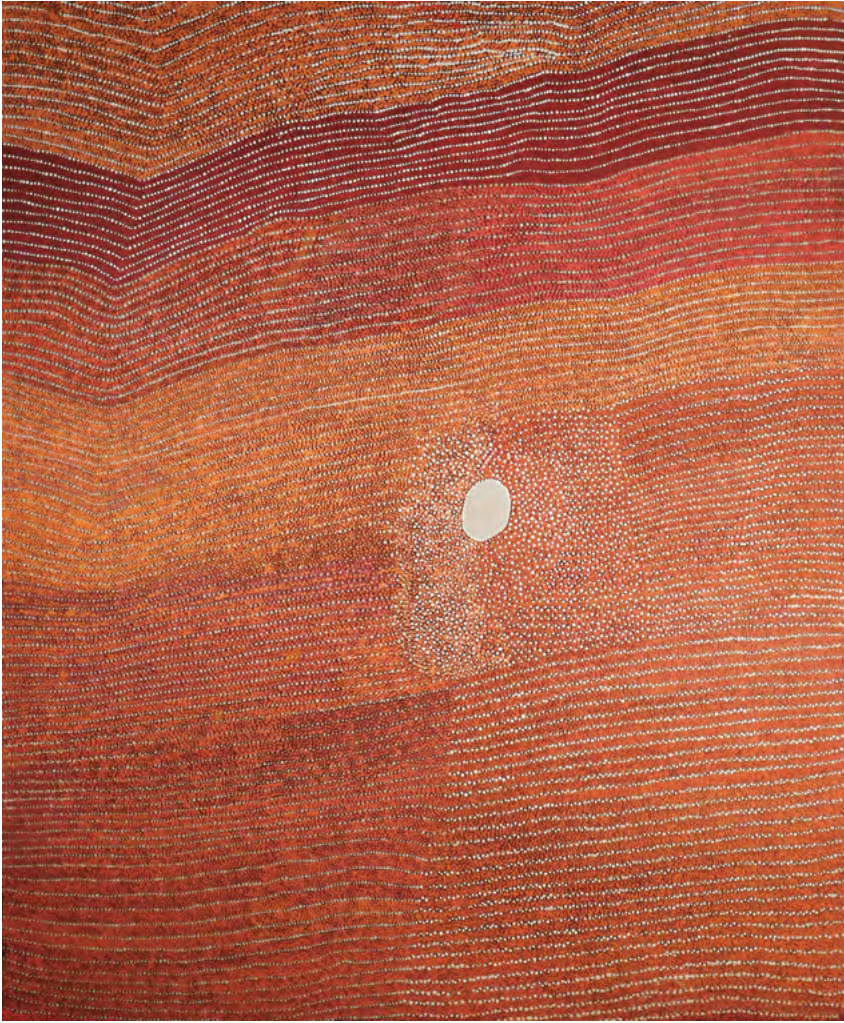
Acrylic on Belgium linen
152cm x 107cm

Warlukurlangu Artists

Helen Reed's *Ngapa Jukurrpa* (water dreaming) is associated with Lupul, a rock hole south of Kintore, where the Nyirrpai-based artist grew up.

The painting describes how the rainbow serpent made large storms as it travelled through the country, creating the plants and animals which flourished after the downpours.

The site and the dreaming are also connected to the *Kungka Kutjara Jukurrpa* of two women who performed ceremonies in hair string skirts. The songline links many Aboriginal groups across the cross-border region of South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.



Imelda Yukenbarri Gugaman

Winpurpurla, 2020

Acrylic on canvas
122cm x 102cm

Warlayirti Artists

In the story behind Imelda Yukenbarri Gugaman's entry *Winpurpurla* (bushtucker), the water seen shimmering at its centre is truly cause for celebration. As it is when water is found in the Great Sandy Desert dunes here so respectfully portrayed.

The story tells of three groups of women who travelled to Winpurpurla, a living or permanent water place in the artist's mother's country, the desert south of Balgo. They came to collect bush raisins, and bush tomato (*kumpupatja*) which, when exposed to the sun and ready to harvest, change to the off-white colour around the water in the painting.

The women stood singing, then kneeled down reverently at the water's edge. The people living at Winpurpurla welcomed them, sharing the water, the food, the joy.

Gugaman has shared her artwork in many, many exhibitions, interstate and internationally, and long shared her expertise on Balgo's Wirlayirti Artists Board of Directors.



Joseph Williams

Speaking to Country, 2021

Acrylic on found sign
90cm x 60cm

Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and
Culture Centre

Whether it's the text or the subtext, the story in Joseph Williams' suitably provocative entry *Speaking to Country* is one about water.

The underlying message needs no interpretation. Translated, the words shimmering above say,

Speaking to Country

I will tell you, they are coming to ruin our land, our country, our water, the people.

We, the people feel sorry for the land, for the future we should hold the country strong.

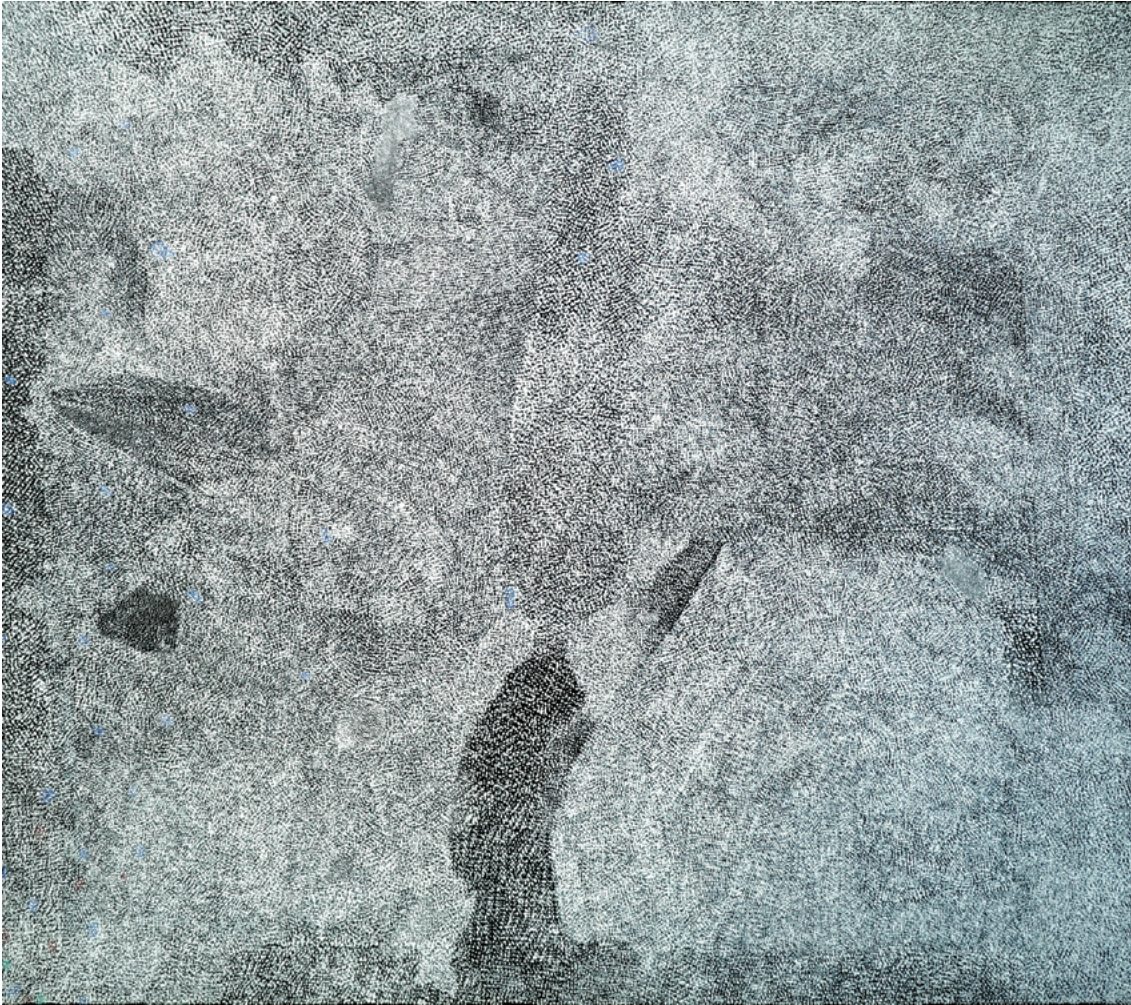
The water for us is resourceful.

Water, water, water.

Water is for the people, for the animals, for the country.

Forever.

Williams is a master carver working out of Tennant Creek's Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre. But as his entry attests, he works experimentally in various media, often mixing them: photography, sculpture, painting, poetry. His works have been in 12 group exhibitions since just mid 2017, including at the Sydney Biennale in 2020, as a member of the Tennant Creek Brio, collective.



Judy Long

Water among edible grass seeds, 2021

Acrylic on linen

122cm x 107cm

Arlpwe Art & Culture Centre

Water among edible grass seeds is the title of Judy Long's entry, and it seems she has meticulously, individually painted every seed depicted.

A member of Arlpwe Art & Culture Centre in Ali Curung, Long knows the importance of edible seeds to Aboriginal people through time. And the importance of water to ensure the grasses grow and seed sufficiently.

This elder of the community and speaker of three local languages before English, explains in translation, "Edible seeds are important to the Indigenous people

as they formed a large part of their diet. Many grasses bear edible seeds. The seeds are collected and traditionally ground using a large and small stone to make a flour and this flour is mixed with water to make damper. Even if they are strong, they can only grow if they have enough water."



Kathleen Rambler

My Father's Country, 2021

Acrylic on linen

122cm x 122cm

Artists of Ampilatwatja

A member of Artists of Ampilatwatja, Kathleen Rambler says of her entry *My Father's Country*, "I use bright colours and attention to detail to express the love and joy that I have for the country closest to my heart." She is particularly inspired by changes to light and colour in the sky. Witness her entry in the last Vincent Lingiari Art Award.

In her current entry, dramatic weather appears to have arrived above Rambler's father's country. A storm seems to have hit, signalled by massive lightening against dark

cloud. So, the water in this work has a stored up quality, about to boil over.

Rambler is critically aware in her artwork how land has sustained her people for generations. It relies on re-charges from such storms. Meanwhile, she herself evidently needs no reinvigoration, having exhibited often and widely interstate and internationally since 2012.



Leah Leaman

Following the Waterways, 2021

Acrylic on Belgian linen
61cm x 122cm

Karungkarni Art and
Culture Centre

For a Central Australian artist, Leah Leaman's entry *Following the Waterways* is quite unique in telling a story that includes the saltwater, the coast.

Working out of the Karungkarni Art and Culture Centre based in Kalkarindji, Leaman's paintings frequently reveal her love of fish and fishing in rivers and waterholes, of wetland broilgas and bush flowers. But she says *Following the Waterways*, "tells the story of two very special couples that lived with my family. They followed the waterways by foot all the way from here (Kalkarindji) to the coast, even to parts of WA on the Kimberley

coast. They journeyed with their beloved dogs, billycan, hook spear and a rolled up little calico swag. Never getting lost, they were the last of their kind."

Leaman's artistic story of water is one of a kind in this award.



Lindy Brodie

First Trip to Grandfather's Country with Ranger Mob, 2021

Acrylic on canvas
91cm x 91cm

Barkly Regional Arts

Barkly Regional Arts artist Lindy Brodie's bio points out that in her artwork, "human intervention constantly makes itself known with the presence of trains, planes, cars and people." But in her entry *First Trip to Grandfather's Country with Ranger Mob* it is the ducks that first grab the viewers' attention, a sure sign of decent water and of happy circumstances.

The work depicts Brodie's first trip to this country with Indigenous rangers, past old Singleton Station where her grandfather once worked. The rangers and traditional owners make tea and dinner on

country rendered healthy from plenty of rain.

They're making the most of it, maybe ... Singleton station is where the NT Government has granted a licence to take 40,000 megalitres of water annually to grow fruit and vegetables, much of it for export, raising deep traditional owner concern about community water, biodiversity and sacred site impacts. Human intervention on an industrial scale.



Lucy Tanami

Ngapa is Precious, 2021

Acrylic on Belgian linen
61cm x 122cm

Karungkarni Art and
Culture Centre

Working from the Karungkarni Art and Culture Centre in Kalkarindji, Lucy Tanami says of her entry *Ngawa is Precious*, "The land is not a wasteland of barren deserts. When it rains, the wildflowers are in bloom. There are beautiful colourful features of wildflowers surrounded by pools of water. Water, ngawa is very precious. Indigenous people have relied on water for many generations.

"The elders tell stories of how they survived living on water, travelling through many countries searching for it. Indigenous elders also survived because they can identify animals and birds who rely on water too."

With this in mind, Tanami's vibrant work might be read on at least two levels: as depiction of those wildflowers surrounded by water pools; but also perhaps as a map of the many countries her elders have traversed, following the water.



Marie Shilling

Looking for Minklepah after the rain,
2021

Acrylic on canvas
36cm x 46cm

Tapatjatjaka Arts

Marie Shilling's work celebrates the joy and bounty that follows big rains in the sand hill, rocky ridge and desert oak country around Titjikala.

"Everyone is happy because the *Minklepah* (bush tobacco) will start growing," she says. "We wait for a while then go to the bush and find it everywhere. Really big bushes growing near the rocks and up on the rock hills.

"All the ladies out looking for *Minklepah*. The *tjitji* (children) go to the rock hole for swimming, the river is full. Water everywhere makes us happy."



Marlene Rubuntja

Water Gives us Life, 2021

Soft sculpture made with bush dyed recycled woolen blanket. Embellished with wool and cotton. 68 cm x 199cm x 31cm

Yarrenyty Arlttere Artists

Yarrenyty Arlttere Artists' acclaimed soft sculptor, Marlene Rubuntja says of her entry, *Water Gives Us Life*, "A long time ago water gave us life in the bush; without that water we would die.

But now we go to town, to have junk feed and cool drink. Everyone is dying really bad way.

I was thinking to do this sewing for looking for bush food, to look backwards to remember how we used to do things, in a good way. How the coolamon would be full of food. And how our stomachs felt good when we walked in the bush

and ate the good food after the rain."

Rubuntja was the inaugural Vincent Lingiari Art Award overall winner in 2016 and a two-time finalist in the Telstra NATSIAA awards. She has an exhibit list five pages long, and eight short film credits. Her work is collected in three state galleries.



Martha Poulson

Patterns of Landscape, 2021

Acrylic on linen
107cm x 92cm

Arlpwe Art & Culture Centre

Arlpwe Art & Culture Centre member Martha Poulson's technique is intriguing given her entry is quite lifelike. Her artist statement says, "When creating patterns of landscape, she explores colour interactions and paint layering in an abstract manner. She always tries to capture the very essence of her environment. Sometimes, more than a picture of a real landscape, she depicts her relation to it, with great attention to the changing qualities of light and colours."

It's probable that the different waves, bands or layers of colour amongst and under the vegetation

in her entry entitled *Patterns of Landscape* are influenced on the ground not only by soil and rock types but also by that critical essence or ingredient of the arid environment: water, in the water table. A lover of the bush and hunting and gathering food around her home of Ali Curung, Poulson is clearly alive to this natural colouration and her relation to it.



Mary Napangati

Soakage waters at Tjutalpi, 2020

Acrylic on linen
153cm x 122cm

Papunya Tula Artists

Member of Papunya Tula Artists, Mary Napangati knows the importance of water from lived experience deep in the Western Desert.

Napangati was born near Lake Mackay on the Northern Territory-Western Australia border, circa 1955. Her family lived near Lappi Lappi, a rockhole about 90kms further north-west into remote WA, until they walked in to Mt Doreen cattle station in western NT. Napangati was approximately ten years old.

Her entry depicts the soakages at Tjutalpi, east of Kiwirrkura community, back in WA. From her colours used in the backdrop, this is unmistakably a desert location. Yet the line work suggests Napangati knows where each and every soak at the site can be found. Perhaps from walking around there as a child.



Mervyn Rubuntja

Rock Wallaby Dreaming, 2021

Acrylic exterior paint on metal
110cm x 5 cm x 224cm

Iltja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre

In Mervyn Rubuntja's entry *Rock Wallaby Dreaming*, the *kwatja*, water, is unseen. But it is there in the artist's memory, in the dreamtime and deep underground in danger of damage from hydraulic fracturing drills, or fracking, for gas.

The prominent member of the Iltja Ntjarra Art Centre in Alice Springs says of the landscape nevertheless beautifully depicted in his entry, "It's all dried up. In the past, a river with water used to go through there. The Wallaby dreaming may still go through, but it too is compromised", says Rubuntja.

"Important locations for us Aboriginal people are being built and drilled and we are concerned about our health, worried that the water will go bad," he says.

Rubuntja's work has been widely exhibited interstate and overseas, a finalist in the Telstra NATSIAA awards and is part of major Australian collections including at the National Museum and Parliament House in Canberra.



Nita Ferguson

Tjintjira (Salt Pan), 2021

Acrylic on canvas

123cm x 91cm

Tapatjatjaka Arts

Nita Ferguson's painting traverses her country, from her birthplace near Kulgera, on the Northern Territory/South Australia border, to cattle stations such as Erldunda, Kulgera and Henbury, where her family lived and worked for rations.

She recalls accompanying her stockman father as he collected salt from tjintjira (salt pans) when she was very young.

"It was a long way from the stockyard and would take all day to get there," she recalls. "We had to carry water in cans to make sure there was enough to drink for the men and the animals. The water was mostly dried up and only salt left.

If there was any water lying around I always wanted to go and put my feet in it but my father would get very cross with me and tell me to get away or I would burn my feet.

He would shovel up the salt from the top of the salt pan and bag it up. Many bags and bags were filled and then loaded up on the camel wagon and taken back to the station. The salt was unloaded and stacked in the meat house. After cutting up the killer they would salt the meat and hang it."

In the days before refrigeration salt beef formed part of the station workers' rations because it would keep for a long time.



Nyinta Donald

Start of Inbetween Days, 2021

Acrylic on linen

51cm x 122cm

Tangentyere Artists

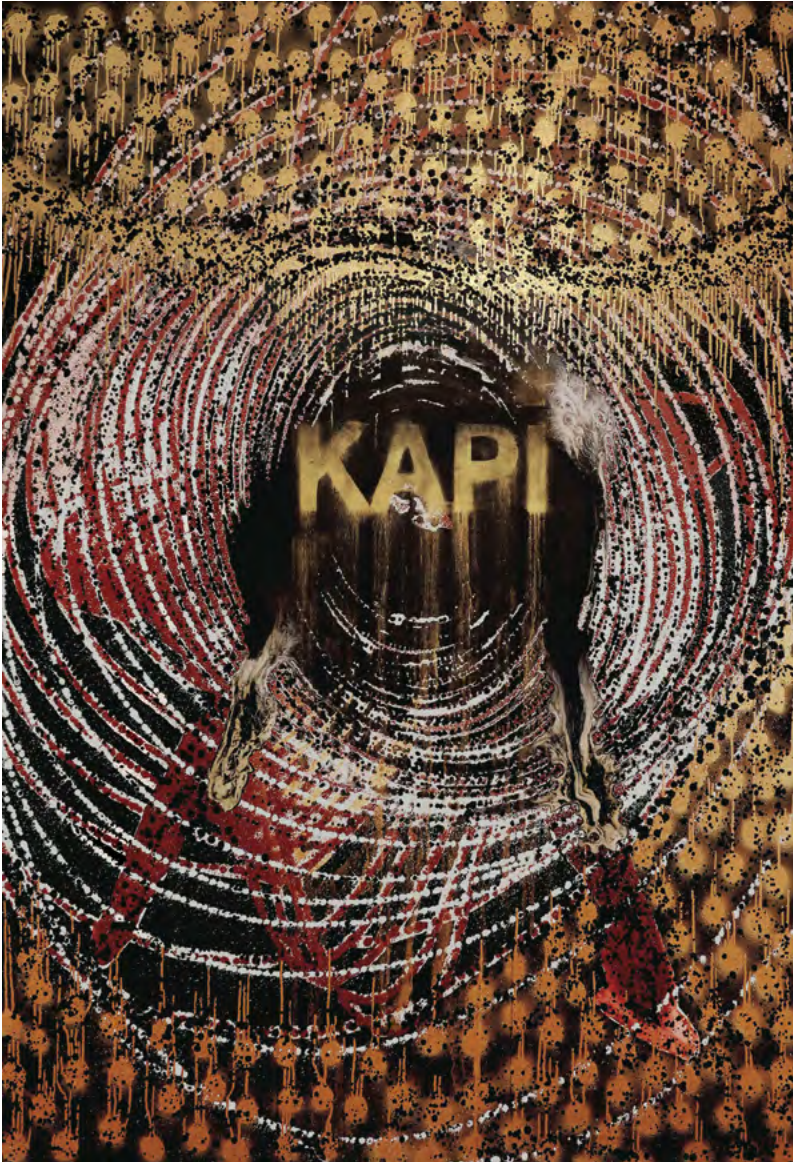
The water, the flowing creek, in Nyinta Donald's entry *Start of Inbetween Days*, has an historical resonance, but it also seems a symbolic division of time between the old days and the new.

A member of Tangentyere Artists in Alice Springs, Donald often paints history. Here, she depicts camp life just prior to the movement of many of her forebears into missions and reserves because of a long series of early twentieth century droughts.

Before the droughts, camping families enjoyed bountiful bush tucker brought by good rains. But among the native animal species are invading species, a sure sign of

many tumultuous things to come. Family members point to this future over the water.

Donald's work has been in over 20 group exhibitions since 2016. It is collected in the Art Gallery of South Australia.



Robert Fielding

Kupi kupi (whirlwind), 2020

Synthetic polymer, aerosol and
natural pigment on canvas
200cm x 150cm

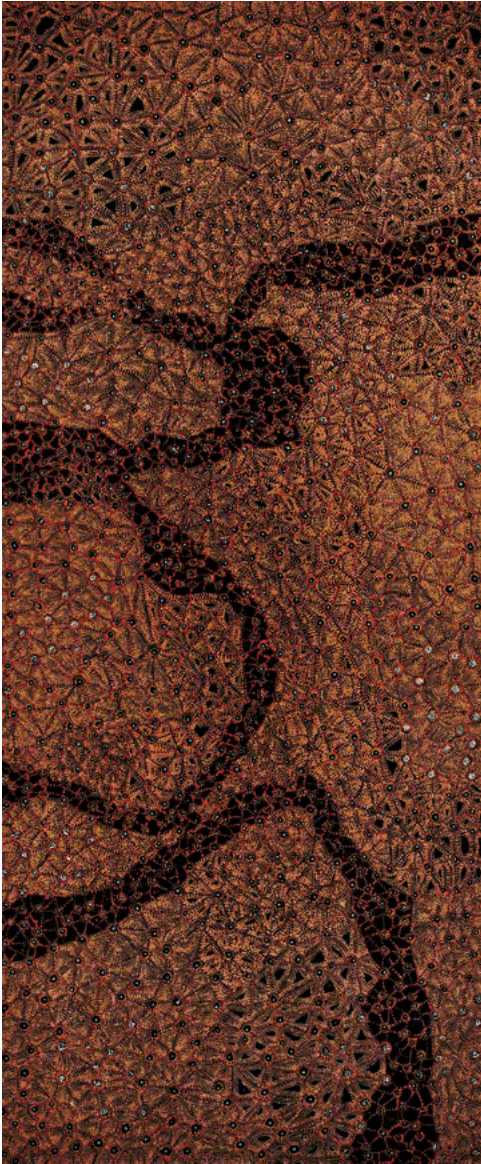
Mimili Maku Arts

The powerful, almost apocalyptic,
entry from Mimili Maku artist
Robert Fielding, *Kupi kupi*
(*whirlwind*), is about more than
water. It's about climate change.

Says Fielding: "*Kupi kupi* is a weather
prediction, a synoptic chart of our
changing future. Our *manta* (land)
is *ailuru* (dry), the wild flowers no
longer bloom. We need *kapi* (water)
to survive. We are *kapi*. The weather
we know is changing and this will
affect the way we live on country,
the way we are."

If not careful, we will spiral down
into a black hole, he and his artwork
seem to be saying.

In works that often express his
views on the tensions between
community life and such global
concerns, Fielding has exhibited
solo and in groups interstate and
overseas. He has been a Telstra
NATSIAA award winner twice and
finalist another two times, among
his other accolades.



Sabrina Nangala Robertson

Jukurrpa (Water Dreaming), 2021

Acrylic on Belgium linen
183cm x 76cm

Warlukurlangu Artists

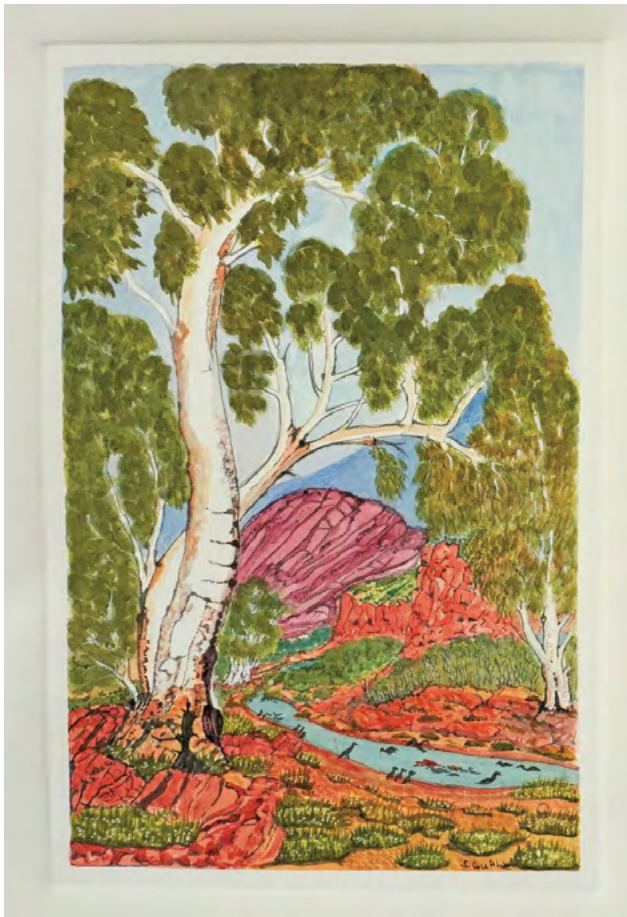
Sabrina Robertson tells a tale of two rain makers, two rain storms and a water site in her father's country in the Tanami Desert, a couple of hours west of Yuendumu.

Two Jangalas sang the rain, unleashing a giant storm that collided with another storm from Wapurtali at Mirawarri, carried by a *kirrkaranji* (brown falcon).

The two storms travelled across the country from Karlipirnpa, a ceremonial site for the *Ngapa Jukurrpa* (water dreaming) near Kintore, and passed through Juntiparnta.

When the storm became too heavy for the *kirrkaranji*, it dropped it at Pirlinyarnu, also known as Mount Farewell, where it formed an enormous *maluri* (clay pan).

All that is left of it today, is a *mulju* (soakage) which attracts hundreds of *ngapangarlpa* (ducks) after rains.



Selma Coulthard

Window of Time, 2021

Watercolour on Arches
watercolour paper
43cm x 62cm

Iltja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre

Selma Coulthard's poignant entry *Window of Time* speaks for itself.

But the accomplished Iltja Ntjarra Art Centre watercolour and acrylic painter speaks eloquently to the issue too, "I have called this work *Window of Time* as I wanted to depict what I envision the landscape to look like after years of fracking (hydraulic fracturing for gas), especially its impact on water, causing contamination and depletion.

"As seen through the first window, the landscape is rich and full of life; but it's depleted and used up when peering through the second window. This is how I see the

landscape looking after all water resources are used up ... Dead! But it doesn't have to be this way; we still have time to change this picture."

Coulthard's work has been exhibited interstate and in Paris and is in state gallery collections in NSW and Queensland.

CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL

The Central Land Council is a Commonwealth corporate entity. The CLC operates under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and it is also a Native Title Representative Body under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

The CLC covers an area of 750,000 square kilometres in the southern half of the Northern Territory. In the CLC's region, traditional Aboriginal landowners own more than 400,000 square kilometres of Aboriginal freehold land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*. This represents more than half of the almost 780,000 square kilometres of land covered by the CLC.

The CLC is governed by 90 Aboriginal people elected from communities in the southern half of the Northern Territory. While the legislation governing the CLC is only for the Northern Territory, many of the CLC's constituents' traditional country extends across state borders.

The CLC traces its origins to the history of the Aboriginal struggle for justice and their rights to their traditional land.

This history includes the famous strike and Walk Off by the Gurindji families at Wave Hill cattle station in 1966. The strike drew international attention to the dispossession and disadvantage of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

In February 1973, the Commonwealth set up a Royal Commission under Mr Justice Woodward to inquire into how land rights might be achieved in the Northern Territory. The commissioner's first report in July 1973 recommended that a Central and a Northern Land Council be established in order to present to him the views of Aboriginal people.

After considering Justice Woodward's final report, the Whitlam Labor government drew up a Land Rights Bill, but was dismissed before the law was passed.

The Australian Parliament eventually passed the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* on the 16th December 1976 and the law came into operation on 26th January 1977.

It transferred title to most of the Aboriginal reserve lands in the Northern Territory to its traditional owners and gave other traditional land owners the opportunity to claim land not already owned, leased or being used by someone else. The major townships in the region, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek were excluded.

Today Aboriginal people own almost half of the land in the Northern Territory.

www.clc.org.au

DESART

Desart is the Association of Central Australian Aboriginal Art and Craft Centres. Established in 1992, and incorporated in 1993, it now has 36 independently governed Aboriginal art and craft centres as members, who in turn collectively represent approximately 8000 Aboriginal artists.

Desart is directed by a 10 member Aboriginal executive committee elected from its art centre members. Desart's region of operations cover an area of 1221 million square kilometres extending from the southern part of the Northern Territory into the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) region of South Australia and into the Ngaanyatjarra region of Western Australia.

Desart is a collective voice for Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres on matters of shared interest and delivers programs to members that support the development and maintenance of strong governance, administration and infrastructure. It prioritises opportunities for its membership to promote their art and crafts locally, nationally and internationally and to further their ability to remain autonomous and sustainable Aboriginal businesses.

Desart's programs and services recognise art centres are a vital part of community life in remote central Australia and its mission is to provide support so they grow and remain stronger for art, for culture and for country.

www.desart.com.au

TANGENTYERE ARTISTS

'Relha ntjaarraka kangkentge urrikaapuma pmara Tangentyere Artists.'

[The many ladies are proud working together at Tangentyere Artists]

Statement (in Western Arrernte) by the artists of Tangentyere about Tangentyere Artists Art Centre.

Tangentyere Artists are part of Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs. The Council was established in the 1970s for and by Aboriginal people, and is now the primary service provider for 18 Alice Springs housing associations, known as town camps.

Many Aboriginal Alice Springs residents longed for an art centre to call their own, to challenge the private dealers and carpet baggers plaguing the town.

Tangentyere Council's art service was first established in 2005, initially providing targeted skills development workshops and some outreach services across a range of town camps. Through the Tangentyere Council Executive, town camp residents were striving for a full time art centre to meet their needs.

Today, with a purpose built gallery, studio and administration, and a professional development program, Tangentyere Artists is the hub for arts activities across Alice Springs town camps.

The art centre mission is to provide innovative, effective and sustainable art programs that foster and support the aspirations and decisions of town camp people. As a not-for-profit organisation, Tangentyere Artists return one hundred percent of proceeds to the artists and their services.

As Jane Young, East Arrernte woman, town camp resident and artist, who commenced painting with Tangentyere Artists in 2005, explains:

'Everyone knows Tangentyere Council, and because it's Aboriginal owned and directed, everyone trusts Tangentyere Council, so they wanted their art centre to be a part of Tangentyere. It was the best thing, you know? It was the right place for all of us – we are all welcome here: all cultural groups, all languages, all the people!'

'Now, Tangentyere Artists means Town Camp artists are learning new things every day, and at the same time, keeping their culture strong.'

www.tangentyereartists.org.au

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