

Aboriginal Art Circular

The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia
Volume 6, Number 1

Spring 2003

Exhibit Weaves Tradition and Innovation

A touring exhibit of baskets and other works woven by Aboriginal women from the desert begins May 2 and continues through August 16 at the Kluge-Ruhe Collection. *Manguri Weaving* represents the variety of fiber arts produced by Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunyatjara (NPY) women who first started weaving in 1995.

The exhibit blends traditional elements, such as the *manguri* (a circular hair ring used to stabilize a wooden dish carried on the head) with innovative design (baskets incorporating native grasses, seeds, feathers and introduced materials like wool). One artist, Kantjupayi Benson, even created a camp kitchen, replete with woven pans and cups.

Central and western desert women have long made objects combining fiber and hairstring: hairstring belts, head bands and skirts. Basket weaving has emerged as a new art form. The first major basket exhibition was held in Alice Springs in 1996. *Manguri Weaving* includes many of the first baskets and examples of continuously evolving styles. Central to the exhibition is a recreated camp featuring a woven "sculpture" of a woman making a basket.

Most of the materials for baskets are collected on bush trips. They take two or three days to complete, often beginning with a circle fashioned from grass, twigs, feathers or plastic bread bags.

Unlike wooden bowls, they are not primarily functional objects. *Manguri Weaving* stresses the contemporary nature of these baskets and their importance in providing much needed income and meaningful employment to Aboriginal women in remote areas.

The opening for *Manguri Weaving* takes place on Friday, May 2 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.



Kantjupayi Benson *Grass Basket with Feathers*, c. 1997
Copyright courtesy Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunyatjara Women's Council

DC Gallery Exhibits Indigenous Art From QLD

The Embassy of Australia and the State of Queensland are working together to bring an exhibit to Washington D.C. to introduce U.S. audiences to the vibrant and diverse Indigenous art of this northeast Australian State.

The show, which will be held at International Visions Gallery on Connecticut Avenue in Woodley Park from June 18 to 29, coincides with a visit to Washington by the Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie.

Some of Queensland's finest artists, including Fiona Foley, from Fraser Island, and Rosella Namok, from Lockhart River, will be represented in the exhibit, which is titled *Story Telling: Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art from Queensland Australia*. Several artists will accompany the show to explain the stories behind the works and attend a reception on June 26.

The exhibit has been curated by a team of experts including Jennifer Herd, head of the Indigenous Visual Arts School at Griffith University, Avril Quail, senior Indigenous curator with Queensland Art Gallery and Leilani BinJuc, Torres Strait cultural officer. Freelance curator Bettina MacAulay is also assisting, as are Kluge-Ruhe curators Margo Smith and Julia May.

Support for the exhibition comes from the Indigenous Export Project Team, a government agency aimed at developing Queensland's Indigenous arts and crafts industry to its full potential.

Two associated lectures will be held at the Smithsonian Institution on June 18 and 25. For lecture information call 202 357 4282 or 244-0234.

International Visions Gallery
2629 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington D.C. 20008 (202) 234-5112
Tuesday - Saturday 11 - 6, Sunday 12 - 5

400 Peter Jefferson Place, Charlottesville, Virginia 22911 (434) 244-0234

Current Exhibit

May 2 - August 16, 2003

Object Lessons

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Aboriginal Art

Manguri Weaving

A Touring Exhibition of Weavings by Women of the Central and Western Deserts

Opening Reception

Friday, May 2, 2003
5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Upcoming Events

Slide lecture

Dr. Diane Bell

Professor of Anthropology at George Washington University

**Person and Place:
Making meaning of the art of
Australian Indigenous women**

Friday, June 20, 2003 7:00 p.m.

Reservations required (434) 244-0234

Children's Programs

Dream Weaver

Basket making project for children
ages 7 - 12

Saturday, May 17, 2003
12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

Reservations required (434) 244-0234

Tucker Box Tours

Midday tours of the exhibit followed by lunch and a discussion in the gallery, 12:15 - 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 14, 2003
Thursday, June 12, 2003
Wednesday, July 9, 2003

Reservations required (434) 244-0234

Diane Bell will Discuss Women's Art

Diane Bell's contributions to Australian anthropology are far-reaching. After completing her fieldwork in the community of Warrabri, NT, she wrote *Daughters of the Dreaming* (1983), an ethnography about the ritual life of Aboriginal women. With its publication, Bell emerged as a leading feminist anthropologist.

Bell received a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Australian National University in 1981. She is currently a professor of Anthropology and the director of Women's Studies at George Washington University in Washington D.C. From 1989-98, she was the Henry R. Luce Professor of Religion, Economic Development and Social Justice at Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Bell's interests include the rights of Indigenous women, Indigenous land

rights, human rights, Indigenous religions, violence against women, and writing feminist ethnography.

She has published widely in journals of anthropology, art, history, law and Women's Studies. Her books include *Generations: Grandmothers, mothers, and daughters* (1987); *Religion in Aboriginal Australia* (coedited 1984); and *Radically Speaking: Feminism reclaimed* (coedited 1996). Her most recent book, *Ngarrindjeri Wurrurarrin: A world that is, was, and will be* (Spinifex Press, 1998), won the NSW Premier's Literary Award.

Dr. Bell will speak at the Kluge-Ruhe Collection on Friday, June 20 at 7 p.m. The title of her slide lecture is "Person and place: Making meaning of the art of Australian Indigenous women." The program is free but reservations are required. Please call (434) 244-0234.

K-R Welcomes Snow

We are pleased that Jessica Snow will join the Kluge-Ruhe Collection as our 2003 summer intern through the Institute for Public History at UVA. Jessica will research paintings and objects from the central Arnhem Land communities of Maningrida, Milingimbi and Ramingining. She will produce a publication containing documentation of the works and information on the artists and clans. The Kluge-Ruhe Collection has the best representation of works from central Arnhem Land in the world.

The publication will be shared with the art-producing communities, who will verify the information and add documentation. This undertaking is part of a larger effort to improve the documentation of the Collection and return cultural heritage information to Indigenous communities.

Jessica is a graduate student in Art History at UVA with a research interest in Italian Renaissance art.

"Proof" is Positive

The message delivered by the feature film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, which recaps one of Australia's saddest chapters in its treatment of Indigenous people, is both heartrending and hopeful.

The story, written by Doris Pilkington, follows three "half-caste" girls who are removed from their Aboriginal mothers by the Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia in 1931. They are placed in an "orphanage" with other girls who have been punished severely for running away. Molly, Gracie and Daisy, ranging in age from 14 to 8, manage to escape, walking the 1200 miles back home to Jigalong. Along the way they elude the authorities and survive harsh desert conditions. It is a story of remarkable strength and longing for family and country. Incredibly, it is also a true story.

The film sticks very close to the facts with Kenneth Branagh portraying A.O. Neville, the Protector of Aborigines, who aspired to rid Indigenous people of their

Hours and tours

The Kluge-Ruhe Collection is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free guided tours take place each Saturday at 10:30 a.m. No reservations are required.

The gallery will be closed April 28 - May 1, 2003 to change exhibits and July 4, 2003 for Independence Day.

The offices of the Kluge-Ruhe Collection are open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Study Center may be used by appointment during office hours.

Our Mission

The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia promotes learning about Australian Aboriginal art and culture through an integrated program of collection management, exhibition, education, research and publication. We are committed to building mutually beneficial partnerships with Aboriginal artists and communities to better represent their art and knowledge in each aspect of our program.

Aboriginal Art Circular is a publication of the Kluge-Ruhe Collection, University of Virginia and is distributed free as a public service to those interested in Aboriginal art and culture. To be added to our mailing list call (434) 244-0234 or e-mail kluge-ruhe@virginia.edu.
Editors: Margo W. Smith and Julia S. May
Header: Anatjari Tjakamarra
Copyright courtesy Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd, Sydney.

Aboriginal appearance in three generations. Despite the racism that drove such programs, the film ends on a positive note. We see footage of Molly and Daisy, now old women, walking in their country. Although they endured multiple removals by the authorities, it is good to see them home at last.

The stories of Australia's "Stolen Generations" remained largely unknown until the publication of *Bringing Them Home* in 1997. That a feature film has addressed this subject is very encouraging. This movie is not to be missed.

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