



Kudditji Kngwarray

(Indigenous Australian, ca. 1928 - 2017)

Biography

Kudditji Kngwarray was born around 1928 in Utopia, a community in the Eastern Desert about 230 km north east of Alice Springs, and was family of the famous Indigenous artist Emily Kam Kngwarray. He was one of the elders of the Anmatyerre language group and an important custodian of many important Dreamings, which are the important sacred stories of the Australian Aboriginal tribes. He has painted for over twenty five years.

Kudditji is one of the first established male artists from Utopia and is known for his large dynamic paintings, saturated with colour and paint. His paintings represent his traditional country around Boundary Bore, the country for which he is a custodian. Boundary Bore is located just off the Ooratippra Creek in the southeast of the Northern Territory, a distance of about 1200km south-southeast from Darwin. As a painter Kudditji mixed his colours directly onto the canvas, layering his paint into a patchwork formation. Where from a distance his work appears to be of uniform coloured blocks, up close a wide range of colors. Often the intensity of his works will change throughout the day as different light sources draw out different colours and elements, while others recede.

When he first started painting, Kudditji painted his Emu Dreamings in a precise 'dot painting' style. As a traditional custodian of his country and of the Emu story, for which he was responsible, Kudditji Kngwarray was responsible for the initiations of the younger men of his tribe. Although not much detail is given about aspects of this initiation, it is generally understood that this involves the practical teaching of hunting the Emu as well as the spiritual story of the Emu ancestors. Kudditji considered it his obligation to continue this story in correlation with an intimate physical and spiritual knowledge of the Anmatyerre country. The latter is what the viewer now can find transferred onto the canvas. While painting, the artist could be heard singing - his way of infusing his works with stories of the land; the ancestors, hunts, travels and the food and water of Anmatyerre country.

Over time Kudditji began to experiment with acrylic paint, to move beyond the traditional pointillist style that he had used before 2003. He switched to the more abstract My Country style, consisting of coarse blocks with saturated colors in different tones on a black background. Taking a heavily laden paint brush and sweeping broadly across the canvas in stages, he began to evoke lyrical images of Country. These paintings can be seen as a representation of Kudditji's birthplace, whose land and sky changes throughout each day and season and are conveyed in shape and color. He accentuated the colour and form of the landscape, the depth of the sky in the rainy season and the reds and oranges of the shimmering summer heat.

These ground-breaking paintings express Kudditji's intimate knowledge and love of his country in a richly textured and highly innovative way and are reminiscent of the later work of his famous kinswoman Emily Kam Kngwararray. It is not sure who first started painting in this style.

Due to his deteriorating health, Kudditji was forced to stay and paint in one place in Alice Springs; in the last few years he hardly created new works.

Ever since Kudditji began to exhibit his abstract work in 2003, his star steadily rises in the international art world. Kudditji's work is represented in major national and international collections and Kudditji has gained worldwide recognition for his powerful interpretations of his ancestral Dreamings.

Kudditji Kngwararray passed away in January 2017.

Selected Collections

Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
Hank Ebes Collection, Melbourne, Australia
Artbank, Sydney, Australia
Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia
R.M. Barokh Antiques, Los Angeles, USA
Sarrita King Collection, Australia
Corrigan Collection, Sydney, Australia
Luciano Benetton Collection, Venice, Italy
Guilleman and Sordello Collection, France
Mbantua Gallery Permanent Collection, Alice Springs, Australia
Gillian & Watson McAllister Collection, Sydney, Australia
Fondation Burkhardt-Felder Arts et Culture, La Grange, Motiers, Switzerland

Selected Exhibitions

2021

Desert Colours 2021, Incinerator Art Space, Sydney, Australia
Fondation Burkhardt-Felder Arts et Culture, Moitiers, Switzerland
Across the Top 2021, Art Mob - Aboriginal Fine Art, Hobart, Australia

2020

Origins: Australian Aboriginal Art from the SmithDavidson Collection, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2019

Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art: A Curated Selection, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2018

East meets West, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2016

Spoilt for Choice – a director's choice exhibition, Kate Gwen Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Singing Up Country, Kudditji Kngwarreye, Sydney, Australia
Solo: Kudditji Kngwarreye - A master painter there is only one of him, Melbourne, Australia

2015

Signs and Traces. Contemporary Aboriginal Art., Zamek Culture Centre, Pozan, Poland
From the Vaults – highlights from the Collectors Gallery, Kate Owen Gallery, Sydney, Australia

2013

Sky and Desert, Foundation Burkhardt-Felder Arts et Culture, Switzerland

2012

The Colourists: Kudditji Kngwarreye and Lorna Napurrula Fencer, Japingka Gallery', Perth, Australia

2013

Sky and Desert, Foundation Burkhardt-Felder Arts et Culture, Switzerland
Solo: *Kudditji: Landscapes in the Family Tradition*, Houston, USA
Solo: *The Master Returns*, Sydney, Australia

2010

Utopia: Eastern Anmatyerre Artists, Brisbane, Australia

2009

Reves Aborigines, Musee Arts et Histoire de Bormes-Les-Mimosas, Bormes-Les-Mimosas, France

2008

From the Air, Brisbane, Australia
Black & White: Inspired by Landscape, Sydney, Australia

2006

Arken Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, Denmark
Solo: *Masterwork*, Melbourne, Australia

2005

Solo: *Waterhole Aboriginal Art*, Danks Street, Sydney, Australia
Solo: *Colours in Country*, Art Mob - Aboriginal Fine Art, Hobart, Australia
Fresh from the Central Desert, Canberra Grammar School, Canberra, Australia

2004

Two Senior Men', Art Mob - Aboriginal Fine Art, Hobart, Australia
Australian Exhibition Centre, Chicago, USA
Heartbeat - Living Country, Wentworth Hotel, Sydney, Australia
Solo: *Waterhole Aboriginal Art*, Sofitel Wentworth Hotel Exhibition, Sydney, Australia

2003

New Paintings, Melbourne, Australia

2002

The Contemporaries, Contemporary Artspace, Brisbane, Australia

1999

New Paintings, Melbourne, Australia

1992

Solo: *Tjukurrpa*, Museum fur Volkerkunde, Basel, Switzerland

1991

Central Australian Aboriginal Art & Craft Exhibition, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

1990

Art Dock, Contemporary Art from Australia, Noumea, Australia

Selected Art Fairs

EXPO Chicago, Chicago, USA
KunstRAI, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Art Cologne, Cologne, Germany
PAN Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands