

IN THIS ISSUE

[Featured Artist Slideshows](#)

[Aboriginal Art goes Overseas:
3 Continents, 3 Exhibitions](#)

[What's Happening on the
Aboriginal Art Directory...](#)

[Artist Slideshow Trial](#)

[Mapping the Aboriginal Art
Industry](#)

[Do you have an Aboriginal art
exhibition, event or artwork
you would like to promote?](#)



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ABORIGINAL ART DIRECTORY LINKS

[Aboriginal Art Directory](#)

[Vendors](#)

[Artists](#)

[Artist Slideshows](#)

[News](#)

[Resources](#)

[Vision](#)

[Authenticity](#)

[Ethics](#)

[Sponsors](#)

[Subscribe](#)

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ABORIGINAL ART NEWS LINKS

[Aboriginal Art News](#)

[Exhibitions](#)

[What's On?](#)

[Events](#)

[Industry Corner](#)

AboriginalArtDirect #1

Dear David,

Welcome to the first issue of *AboriginalArtDirect*, the Aboriginal Art Directory Newsletter. It's been an exciting and challenging first four months for the Aboriginal Art Directory and we are thrilled to be able to bring you the first edition of our monthly newsletter. Our goal is to provide you with a thought-provocative newsletter on the events and trends in the industry.

In this edition our **feature article** by respected Aboriginal art journalist Jeremy Eccles examines three different exhibitions in three different continents and discusses the current and ever-changing ways in which Aboriginal art and artists are received and appreciated, nationally and globally.

We would also like to introduce some **new Aboriginal art features** including our **interactive vendor maps**, now enabling you to navigate our comprehensive list of art centres, commercial galleries, auction houses and museums by geographical location. You can also now browse and learn more about Australian Aboriginal art and artists through our featured **Artist Slideshows**.

We hope that you enjoy our first issue of *AboriginalArtDirect*.

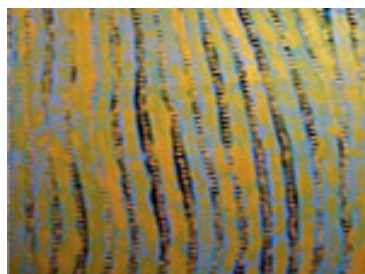
Kind regards,

The Aboriginal Art Directory Team



Karrinyara (Mt Wedge) featured in the [Emma Daniel Nungaravi Slideshow](#), courtesy of [Ngurratjuta Iltja Ntjarra Art Centre Many Hands Art Centre](#)

FEATURED ARTIST SLIDESHOWS:



[Mavis Napanjina](#)



[Ronnie Tiampitiinpa](#)



[Nellie Marks Nakamarra](#)

FEATURE ARTICLE:

Aboriginal Art goes Overseas: 3 Continents, 3 Exhibitions

By **Jeremy Eccles**

The intercontinental trio are the first big commercial showing of Aboriginal Art on barks in London, courtesy of Josh Lilley Fine Art September-October 2007; the imminent opening of Utopia - The Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye in Osaka, Japan at the invitation of Professor Tatehata, director of its National Museum; and finally, as part of the 'G'day USA Australia Week' in America - LA's Museum of Design, Art and Architecture (MODAA) showed a mix of Aboriginal art and contemporary Aussie architecture.

Has anyone thought of doing that in Australia?

Rarrk London: Aboriginal Barks on the Thames in London

Amazingly, a London audience got its first real taste of contemporary bark art in September last year after centuries of thinking "ethnographic" whenever they saw a slab of stringybark covered in ochre. Young gallery owner Josh Lilley of [Josh Lilley Fine Art](#) planned a military style campaign for this 90 piece display of Maningrida art - buying works over 18 months, holding a small show a year ahead, putting artefacts on sale at Olympia Art Fair, encouraging an NT Tourism-sponsored trip for several journalists, and mounting the eventual show at the ultra-trendy Thames-side Bargehouse Gallery, a gritty ex-warehouse that was everything that Australia's urban-chic galleries try NOT to be!





The result was a lot of sales establishing prices for the top Mawurndjuls of £24,000 (AUD\$55,000), press coverage ranging from the enthusiastic to the neanderthal, and a burst of interest from the venerable British Museum, which both bought a work or two and would like to display them beside work from its massive storerooms (going back to the mid 18th century) in a big Australian show planned for 2010.

Did Josh Lilley's funky presentation do anything to contemporise the art? He certainly thought so: "*People have suggested to me two separate websites for Aboriginal and Western art. But I wanted to pull in the same audience and the same critics for both scenes - and I think the result was really positive. There's been a little shift in the way London looks at non-Western art*".

And the grunge setting? [Maningrida Arts and Culture](#) art director, Apolline Kohen felt great artworks got lost in the huge fourth storey room without the support of a clean white background. "*But [Owen Yalandja's Yawkyawks](#), given distinctive lighting against red-brick walls looked sensationally dramatic, I thought*". And both the [National Gallery of Australia](#) (in its Indigenous Triennial) and the [Annandale Galleries](#) in Sydney have subsequently offered a more 3D vision of Arnhemland sculpture as a result. It'll be interesting to see how Kohen herself presents the work when another Maningrida show opens at the [African Muse Gallery](#) in Paris in May.

Utopia: the Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye goes north to Japan

Group shows, especially community shows used to be the norm in earlier days of Aboriginal art. But this - stretching a point to its utter limits - may have been pre-Pearson thinking! Increasingly community art advisers are developing and showing individual stars - 'artists' in the Western sense; and we have to assume that the communities themselves are in agreement with the trend.

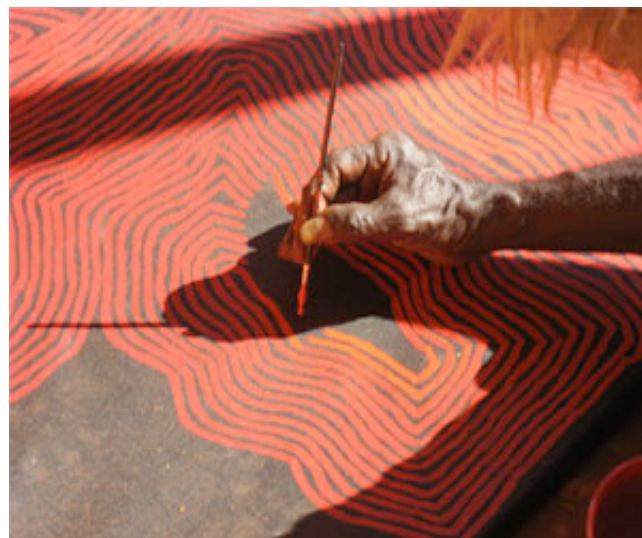
Not that it was ever a problem at Utopia, where [Emily Kngwarreye](#) was always a star even during the brief existence of a community art centre on her diffuse cattle station. Her earliest dealers, Rodney Gooch, Chris Hodges and Donald Holt all recognised her uniqueness, encouraged, bought and showed her works solo. In 1998, Margo Neale at the [Queensland Art Gallery](#) curated a solo show for Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne galleries; and now she's doing it again for Japan and Canberra (where the show will return in August). Actually Neale says it's bigger than 1998 by 30 pictures; though it's not the first solo show overseas for an Aboriginal artist, as has been claimed - both [Clifford Possum](#) (at London's ICA) and [John Mawurndjul](#) (in Basle and Hannover) were ahead of Emily.

What is special is her selection for Tokyo's new National Art Center, which will be presenting Emily at the same time as Modigliani Le Primitif in June and July. "*They got a million visitors for Monet last year - let's see how many come for Emily!*", enthused the curator. The impact of this exhibition could indeed be serious if Margo Neale achieves her objective of "*tracing Emily's stylistic development so a Japanese audience completely new to her can see how she got to where she did*".

Aboriginal Art + Australian Architecture at MODAA, California

The idea for this combination had come from Wolfgang Schlinke, who retired as a CEO of an American finance company with an interest in tribal art, but found a new home in Aboriginal art following trips to communities in the Deserts, The Kimberley, Tiwi Islands and Arnhemland in 2005 and 2007. Schlinke now offers private tours of his [Tribal eARTH Gallery](#) in the Hollywood Hills and intends two public shows each year.

This first one - [AUSTRALIA CONTEMPORARY: Aboriginal Art + Modern Architecture](#) shows 56 artworks from 50 different artists - classics like [Gloria Petyarre](#), [Helicopter Tjungurrayi](#) and [Ronnie Tjampitjinpa](#); also some courageous buys of works by the less well-known Carol Hapke, Jacky Atjarral, Mary Elizabeth Moreen and Tarku Rosie Tarco. The important thing for Schlinke was that they all matched architectural icon Glen Murcott's credo of "*touching the earth lightly*".



Certainly Peter Stutchbury of Stutchbury and Pape architects thought it such an interesting challenge that he carefully sifted through his portfolio to submit images of three buildings he felt were based on the same landscape-orientated thinking that underwrites indigenous art. Max Pritchard was the other practice involved.



Why all this coverage of international effort? Partly it's the quiet during the heat and the wet at the beginning of the year in Australia; partly we're just happy to report the international impact Aboriginal art is making. Then again, the relative novelty of indigenous art in Osaka, LA and London does allow the organisers of shows there to 'break the rules'. In Australia we have developed 'rules' over the last 25 years that the art that has been commercially shown is based on the community art centre as both a social services unit and a place for the maintenance of a threatened culture. But rightly or wrongly, that latter aspect has diminished in importance in the 21st Century - the introduction of a Western system of values saying that a canvas is not only a cultural artefact, it has a cash price, has inevitably changed the way the game is played.

Of course, it still depends on the situation at any remote art centre - is a [Kitty Kantilla](#) or a [Paddy Bedford](#) recognised as first among equals? Does a system exist for the profits of a star artist's endeavours to be shared amongst fellow artists and family? So, in the same building in Danks Street

Sydney, you've got gallery [Aboriginal & Pacific Art](#) standing by community art; while a gallery like [Utopia Art Sydney](#) will invariably show the works of one artist alone - [Gloria Petyarre](#), [Eileen Napaltjarri](#) or [George Tjapaltjarri](#) on its pristine white walls. Actually both have pristine walls - there's no grunge in our city galleries as they offer the message to buyers that this is Australian art as contemporary as Brett Whitely or Tim Storrier - plus a bit of something Other!

A Message from the Author:

Let me introduce myself. My name is Jeremy Eccles, and I am a long-time writer about Aboriginal art and observer of indigenous culture. I first discovered the vibrancy of Aboriginal culture on Groote Eylandt in 1984 at one of the great Aboriginal Cultural Foundation dance festivals. The visual arts came a little later while teaching radio at CAAMA in Alice Springs in 1987, before Emily Kngwarreye had even touched her first canvas. Since then I've travelled to remote communities to listen to artists and art coordinators, followed the Telstra Art Award prizes, and visited numerous commercial galleries and specialist art auctions before beginning to write for magazines like the Australian Art Market Report, Art & Australia and Art Monthly. I have also enjoyed making a film for the ABC and penning catalogue essays - basically letting indigenous art take over my life!

But it's a funny old business - not always as optimistic and cooperative as the art so often is. So it's a delight to be able to report this month on three international projects involving Aboriginal art, all of which have been initiated by the foreigners involved.

We hope you enjoy this first issue of Aboriginal Art Direct,

Jeremy Eccles

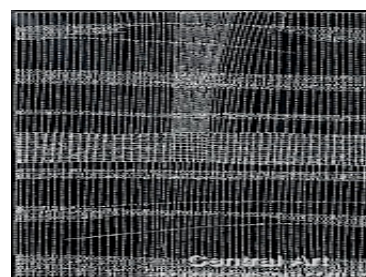
What's Happening on the Aboriginal Art Directory

Artist Slideshow Trial

The Aboriginal Art Directory website now offers Artist Slideshows. During February and March we will be trialling this feature on the website and promoting several exceptional artists. Throughout the trial we will highlight works from Aboriginal art centres, Australian and international galleries and individual artists. Browse and learn more about Australian Aboriginal art and artists through our featured Artist Slideshows.

View slideshows: <http://www.aboriginalartdirectory.com/artists/slideshow/>

Read more: [Aboriginal Art Directory Slideshows Trial](#)



Mapping the Aboriginal Art industry

The Aboriginal Art Directory is excited to announce the integration of Google Maps into our website. The Aboriginal Art Directory now displays interactive vendor maps on almost every page on the website, allowing you to navigate and locate galleries geographically closest to you in addition to viewing national and international maps of Aboriginal art centres, commercial galleries, Western Desert Mob members and museums.

View maps: <http://www.aboriginalartdirectory.com/resources/map/>

Read more: [Mapping the Aboriginal Art industry](#)



FOR GALLERIES:

Do you have an Aboriginal art exhibition, event or artwork you would like to promote?

The Aboriginal Art Directory now offers email alerts to be sent out to our targeted Aboriginal art community database. If you have an exhibition or event coming up or an artwork you would like to get out there to as many Aboriginal art enthusiasts as possible, please enquire at our [ArtDirect email blast](#) webpage.

Let us know what is happening in your Gallery?

Update us with your latest gallery and Aboriginal art news. Simply add our email address mail@aboriginalartnews.com.au to your mailing list and database. Looking forward to hearing from you.

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