## Marina Strocchi

A Survey 1992 - 2014



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Sun Trumpet, 2003, acrylic on linen, 91 x 107 cm, Collection John Eager

### The unconventional artist: Marina Strocchi

Professor Sasha Grishin AM, FAHA

"My father did not speak for two weeks after the dismissal of Whitlam - after spending WWII as a partisan fighting in Piedmont - he was in disbelief that there was no revolution. He blamed the lack of piazzas in Australia for that".

You can recognise a painting, print or drawing by Marina Strocchi at twenty paces, the style is unconventional – something naïve in its demarcation, generally warm in its colour palette, finely worked in its detail and frequently tinged with a touch of humour – yet there are no close look alikes, her work does not remind you of somebody else's art. There are a number of fellow travellers, including the CoBrA group working the best part of a century earlier, Jean Dubuffet's art brut, some of Melbourne's Roar artists working in the 1980s, some aspects of Australian Indigenous art and the work of some naïve and outsider artists. These are all artists working in parallel trajectories, rather than specific sources or influences. She is an unusual artist whose path to art and through art has been unusual and continues to be a long way off the beaten track.

Marina Strocchi was born in Melbourne, on 28th December 1961, and was brought up in the now affluent suburb of Armadale receiving her schooling in neighbouring Malvern, first at St Joseph's Primary School and then at Kildara College. Her childhood was dominated by the larger than life figure of her father, Giacomo Strocchi, a native of the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy, who came from a small town near Ravenna. He was a self-educated man, the son of a communist, who as a youth described himself as a Christian Socialist. He was a precocious reader and a metal worker by trade, who fought with the partisans during the war and was decorated for bravery before migrating to Australia in 1952. He operated a panel-beating garage in North Fitzroy and was active in the political life of his community, for example, he was a leading member of the North Fitzroy Resident Action Committee who successfully fought the Victorian Housing Commission to stop them from destroying and redeveloping the Brooks Crescent precinct.<sup>2</sup> Marina was brought up with a strong sense of social justice, a belief in the power of collective action, and from her childhood remembers communist film nights, large Italian weddings and the lively community which surrounded her father.

Her mother, Nona May, came from an Australian middle class family of Irish/English/Scottish origins, who owned a barber's shop and tobacconist in Toorak for thirty years. After she married, she spent most of her time looking after Marina and her older brother Jack. She found pleasure in gourmet cooking and spent her time sewing, whilst coping with her husband who carried the trauma of war and migration. Looking back on her childhood, the artist recalls with a smile "apparently I was reluctant to be born, I like my comfort zone and was happy where I was" and later she developed a love of horse riding and wandering the streets, looking in old trinket shops and the occasional commercial art gallery. At home she had books on Cézanne and Matisse and she remembers vividly visiting *Realities*, Marianne Baillieu's adventurous gallery in Jackson Street, Toorak, and seeing memorable exhibitions of the work of Fred Williams, Murray Walker, John Wolseley and John Firth-Smith. At school, at Kildara College, she had an inspiring art teacher, Gillian Savage, a painter trained at the Prahran College, who over a couple of years guided her in her photography and drawing and kindled in her the thought that she could one day become an artist.

In 1979 Marina Strocchi embarked on a four year Bachelor of Art degree at Swinburne Technical College, where she studied in the trade-based Graphic Design School and gained a commercial proficiency in screenprinting and developed a passion for life drawing. It was in these formative years, that at the age of nineteen, she left home and embraced Melbourne's explosive live music scene, lived with artists involved with filmmaking, and in 1982 embarked on her first trip overseas, where she spent a couple of months in Japan, the Philippines and Hong Kong, as part of a Swinburne College organised trip. If there was a single defining event in her early formation as an artist, then it was one which happened almost by chance. A friend invited her to come to the opening of Roar Studios in June 1982 in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, where she was introduced to many of the Roar artists, including David Larwill, Jill Noble, Mark Howson, Mark Schaller and Pasquale Giardino, all of whom soon became her friends, as well as to Wayne Eager, known as Iggy in the art scene, who was to become her lifelong partner. A She befriended many of the artists and became a frequent visitor to their studios, openings, musical events and parties. Reflecting on this later, she observed that "the place had a really good energy, it was a really good place and I felt excited to be there and I 'got it' and there was the birth of the idea that one day I could paint, but at the time I simply lacked the confidence ... Roar came out of a time when the Gough Whitlam heritage had taken root and there was pride in Australian culture and a receptiveness to change. A change that came through community action and collective energy." 5 She was aware of the conceptual tendency in Australian art, epitomised in the work of someone like John Nixon, but felt that this was not relevant for her art practice, while the collective energy of Roar, made up of strong individual artistic personalities, including a number of talented women artists, was a community which appealed to her. Roar became for her part of her art training, where her awareness of art grew dramatically, as the artists around her were excited by art and CoBrA artists, naïve and folk artists, including Alfred Wallis, Sam Byrne and Henri Rousseau, tribal art and outsider art, as well as by Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee and Joan Miró, Art books and magazines were plentiful and in wide circulation and there was a general generosity of spirit as young artists were excited in sharing their discoveries. At the time she supported herself working as a freelance graphic designer and photographer.<sup>6</sup>

In December 1984 she embarked on her first trip to Europe, a trip which was to last for over two years. In part she wished to reconnect with her Italian roots and spent a couple of months visiting relations in Florence and Ravenna, but also in part she wanted to experience the European tradition of art and spent much of her time visiting churches, museums, palaces and villas. All of this time she was making sketches and drawings in her notebook as her scope of visual literacy started to expand dramatically. From Italy she shifted to France, where she stayed in Paris for much of the next two years<sup>7</sup>, working in various jobs including babysitting and waitressing. In 1985, from the balcony of the place where she worked as a babysitter, she had a perfect aerial view of Christo and his team wrapping the Pont Neuf, the oldest bridge in Paris. While in Paris she also completed a Certificat de Langue française at the Sorbonne University. While her exposure to art was immense, she popped over to London and was blown away by the newly installed Rothko panels at the Tate and visited Spain and Portugal, she did increasingly find herself being drawn to the lower levels at the Louvre, with the displays of ancient art, rather than to the upstairs displays of the masterpieces of academic art. She was also excited by the newly opened Picasso Museum, by the Musée de l'Homme and the Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, and was impressed by Jean Dubuffet's late works, which she saw in his posthumous exhibition at the Centre Pompidou. Late in 1986 she set off on her journey home, returning through the United States and Mexico, looking at museums along the way. including those in New York and Mexico City, as well as folk art in Ario de Rosales in the Mexican state of Michoacán. She phoned her father from the Chelsea hotel in New York in 1986, he died the day before Christmas Day of that year. Marina Strocchi returned to Australia in January 1987.

The five years, 1982 to 1987, were Marina Strocchi's journeyman years, what in German was evocatively called the "Wanderjahre", where the young artisan, trained in his or her craft, travelled widely, gaining experience along the way, before embarking on their professional career, Although the late Gabrielle Pizzi had exhibited Papunya paintings at Roar Studios shortly after they opened, Strocchi did not see it. However, on return from Europe, she was completely transfixed on seeing Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula's Bush tucker story (1972), which had been acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria in 1987 and was prominently displayed at the top of the escalator in the St. Kilda Road building. This was her first major introduction to Aboriginal art and in a sense a life-changing experience, it struck a chord and fuelled a hunger to see more Indigenous art. In a sense her experience of art in Europe and Mexico widened her perception of what art was about and with her eyes opened to new art, she could then see more clearly the art which was to be found in her own backyard. At about the same time, she discovered the Government Gallery in Bourke Street in central Melbourne, where there was art and craft objects from remote communities and another shop in Chapel Street Prahran which sold shields and other artefacts from PNG. These discoveries were shared with the Roar artists group. Strocchi found employment working with people with intellectual disabilities at the art room at Kew Cottages, in 1988 she was the artist-in-residence with Melbourne's Moomba Festival, designing and printing three hundred banners for the parade, and then was artist-in-residence at the Redletter Screenprint Workshop in Brunswick and continued to make commissioned posters for various community groups.8 In 1990 she travelled to India where she furthered her interest in traditional music, as well as the art, crafts and architecture in regional areas.

In the hot summer of 1992 Marina Strocchi's life and development as an artist saw a dramatic change. David Larwill and her future partner Wayne Eager, with whom she had formed a relationship some months earlier, had both spent time in Alice Springs and had visited the remote communities in central Australia and urged her to go for a visit. In January 1992 she travelled to Alice Springs, visited Uluru and Kata Tjuta, and as part of this five week journey went to Haasts Bluff (Ikuntji), dropped off by a colleague who was working at the Northern Territory Open College. In her own words, Strocchi recalls "I was parachuted into Haasts Bluff and the community absorbed me."9 There had been a new community centre built with funds through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) from the Bicentennial celebrations, but there was no one to run it and it was simply locked up. Up until 1986 Papunya Tula had included Haasts Bluff on field trips and some of the people were painting, but the whole process had come to a standstill. Strocchi while on this short visit initiated a couple of impromptu art workshops using some of the materials which she had brought with her and others provided by NTOC. At the same time in her diary she started to paint small watercolour sketches of the incredible landscape which surrounded her. On returning to Melbourne, Eager supplied her with a stack of tiny sheets of paper and in a giant leap of faith she commenced on her first series of paintings, based on the dramatic and inspiring landscape which she had jotted down in her diary during her short visit. The gouaches which survive from this period, including Mt Zeil I (p.22) and Untitled VIII (p.119), both of 1992, demonstrate an artist surrendering to the awe-inspiring landscape forms and the deep colour saturation. Although highly figurative, they cannot be described as naturalistic or literal works, with the perspective tilted, the shapes are solid, the colour is intense and the blobs of vegetation are liberally sprinkled over the ground. Although these may be her earliest paintings, they are works of a relatively mature artist aged in her early thirties, one who had been seriously immersed in art for more than fifteen years. In retrospect she calls them somewhat 'Philip Guston-ish' in appearance,

Haasts Bluff in the early 1990s was a remote community and shortly before Marina Strocchi's visit the first telephone was installed, a public phone in a booth in the centre of the settlement, and Strocchi's number was scribbled on the wall

of the phone booth. Shortly after this the phone calls began, where anyone in the community would deposit a twenty cent coin and dial the number and Strocchi would phone back, using the telephone number of the booth. These phone calls continued in the months after her first visit, first enquiring 'when will you be coming back', then two women from the community, Daisy Jugadai Napaltjarri and Ester Jugadai with members of their family, came to Melbourne in mid-1992 and stayed with Strocchi. Finally a community meeting at Haasts Bluff formally invited Marina Strocchi to come for three months to establish the community arts centre. She and Wayne Eager locked up their respective studios and set out for the western desert, travelling from Alice Springs to Yuendumu Sports and arrived at Haasts Bluff two days later at night. Remote communities have their own sense of time and this three month visit, during which they established what was to be known as the Ikuntji Art Centre at Haasts Bluff, lasted for exactly five and a half years.

At the same time as setting up the studio in the centre and running the administrative functions, Marina Strocchi completed paintings for two solo exhibitions, the first one held in the small room at the Roar Studios in 1995, which was her first solo exhibition, and the second at Nellie Castan Gallery in 1998, also in Melbourne, a gallery which has continued to exhibit her work until its closure in 2013. These gouaches and small oil paintings, essentially continue in the vein of the 1992 paintings, but with a number of significant developments. The tentative nature of the mark making witnessed in the earlier pieces has largely vanished and in a strong gouache, *Haasts Bluff II* (1995) (p.119), the forms are clearly demarcated and the individual elements of the vegetation have been picked out. In broad terms it is a transition from painting purely an observed reality to painting a known reality. The eye is allowed to guide the mind from the sensory impression to a more cerebral reality, from the temporal to a more timeless reading of nature. The landscape has also become more animated and inhabited, as if the artist has to some extent deconstructed it – or pulled it apart – and then has reassembled it, in her own manner, but still roughly true to the observable forms in front of her. Running an arts centre in a remote community was, and still remains, a full-time around the clock occupation, with competing demands of the community as well as that from the stream of non-local inhabitants and visitors. For Marina Strocchi, her own painting practice was something of a touchstone on sanity, a private piece of her own reality, a sort of refuge.

Strocchi's small oil painting, *Memory Hill* (1997) (p.119) references the little round hill just outside of Haasts Bluff, which has a small missionary cemetery and the rarely flowing Archie Creek near it. It is a place of considerable significance for both Christian and traditional ceremony. The painting retains the recognisable peculiar contours of the landmark, but also brings out a sense of strangeness of the site, almost like the revelation of a mystery or a fairy tale. If one compares the small oil painting *Mt Zeil II* (1997) (p.23) with the gouache painting of the same subject matter of five years earlier, the transformation from the optical to the more conceptual landscape becomes quite apparent. In the oil painting, the colour intensity, if anything, has been heightened, the forms simplified with the floating clouds appearing as tangible and corporeal as the land masses below them. Initially Strocchi painted as a visitor to country and now she had become a local, and what had been an observed reality was now being depicted as a known reality. Technically she had also become a more proficient painter. One could speculate that she may have chosen to work in oils, in part because it was the medium of the serious artist, as preserved in Roar Studios folklore (although by then Larwill had swapped to acrylics), but oils were not to remain for long in Strocchi's technical repertoire and virtually all of her subsequent paintings are realised in gouache or acrylic.

Together with Wayne Eager, having successfully launched the Ikuntji Art Centre, she published a book on Ikuntji art in 1995 (reprinted in 2001)<sup>10</sup> and organised a touring exhibition of art from Haasts Bluff. In 1999 Strocchi commenced work

as a field officer with Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd and she also lectured at the Batchelor Institute, curated and toured exhibitions, conducted workshops as well as fulfilled various commissions. It was in this period, 1999-2001, that a major development occurred in the style and morphology of Marina Strocchi's painting. Already in the gouache *Scribe's Notebook* (1999) (p.31) and in the metre long acrylic on linen painting *Big Country* (2001) (p.37), there is a marked flattening of the picture space, with a map-like or aerial perspective adopted in the view point. A coloured gesso ground was laid down first, on top of which narrative forms are depicted with a strong sense of linear articulation and the quality of pattern developed. The colours are generally flat and frequently monotone and are rarely descriptive, but chosen more for their design and ornamental qualities. The paintings also now possess a sense of narrative, the telling of a story with an assembly of ideographs or graphic symbols, such as tractors, mining machinery, bicycles, cows, railway lines, trees, trucks, goannas and birds, and it is up to the viewer to make sense of them. In many of these paintings there is a mixture of references to mining activity, outback farming, to boats and coastal mangroves as well as to life in the outback. They are busy narrative paintings, where the linear demarcation, the vertical and horizontal grid, the limited palette and the sense of flatness may relate to the artist's long emersion in screenprinting where these properties are characteristic of the medium.

From 2001 to the present, Marina Strocchi started to exhibit annually, sometimes with up to three solo shows in any one year,<sup>11</sup> exhibiting in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane, Darwin, Alice Springs, Adelaide as well as in Idaho in the USA. Her work also started to appear in group exhibitions, prize exhibitions and in national and international curated and touring shows - in short - her paintings were being noticed. Many of these paintings possess a sense of humour, such as Red Tractor (2003) (p.52) and the large painting Truck Stop (2004) (p.119), measuring roughly two metres square. They are 'eventful' paintings, full of small incidents and anecdotal episodes, in the same sense as occurs in in naïve art, where much is observed with an 'innocent eye' for a viewer to discover and to interpret for themselves. In the highly politicised terrain which surrounds the discourse on Indigenous art in Australia, a non-Indigenous artist being accused of being influenced by Aboriginal art is paramount to an accusation of heritage-theft or plagiarism. In the assessment of her partner, Wayne Eager, the role of Indigenous art in her practice is one of encouragement, rather than influence. He writes "Marina's paintings are arrived at through an appreciation of the landscapes of remote Australia. Living in close proximity to Aboriginal artists and having spent many years working for the artists has been a great encouragement to paint. The unbridled energy, lack of self-consciousness and the organic manner with which the desert artists paint has and always will be an inspiration to her."12 On a rather basic level, it would be impossible to confuse a Strocchi painting with an Aboriginal work, they look and feel completely different and draw on different cultural backgrounds. Marina's artistic vision and that of the Aboriginal artists of the Western Desert are related; they could be termed parallel visions. Both are inspired by the same landscape with the mountains, hills and the sense of vastness, the grasses and animals, the same activities and the lifestyle. Her art belongs to a western. European tradition of art making, albeit, one which respects and finds inspiration, rather than influence, in the work of Aboriginal artists.

In some of her more recent paintings, *Territoryscape* (2009) (p.90), *Coober Pedy* (2011) (p.93) and *The Cycle* (2012) (p.119), all quite large acrylic paintings on linen, the tendency towards pattern making is more pronounced as a rhythmic energy animates the small images and rounds them together as if into a self-contained world of a microcosm found within something resembling a floating magical carpet. Although many of the earlier ideographs have remained, and in the paintings based on Coober Pedy a recognisable reality has been depicted, there is a greater tendency towards abstraction. The patterns of trees and of different grasses, sometimes disrupted by a railway line or a road, create a tight, essentially two-

dimensional self-contained grid. There is still much activity in these paintings with closely observed detail, but the restrained sense of movement, the careful manipulation of the largely monochrome palette points to a distilled maturity. Her excursion in etching and lithography in 2006<sup>13</sup> may also have added to the growing discipline in her art. There is also a growing subtlety in the palette and the resolution of surfaces of her paintings with frequently very carefully worked borders.

The artist frequently employs the term 'pictographs' when speaking of her recent art, in the sense we may associate this with Egyptian hieroglyphs as abstracted pictorial drawings which summarise the physical phenomena of the seen world and may allude to the spiritual phenomena of the world that is not visible. In very recent work, there may also be a reference to someone like Adolph Gottlieb and his imaginary landscapes. What also appears in the more recent paintings is an interest in the more permanent patterns in nature, rather than a focus on the ephemeral, an assembly of shapes, which have been distilled from natural forms, such as grasses, algae or boulders, which appear in some of her remarkable paintings, including *Green Algae* (2013) (p.103) and *Boulders* (2014) (p.102). In her worldview, nature is cyclical and in her paintings, almost magically something appears where there could have been nothing and all life continues to regenerate and to develop.

When I recently asked Marina Strocchi on how she perceives her own development over the past couple of decades of painting, she observed: "I went backwards, not forwards in time, my line is organic, it is a felt thing." <sup>14</sup>

- 1. Marina Strocchi, email to the author, 22 October 2014
- 2. K. Hargreaves, This house not for sale, Melbourne, Centre for Urban Research and Action, 1975, p.28
- 3. Marina Strocchi, taped interview with the author, Melbourne, 29 October 2014
- 4. For the most comprehensive account of the Roar group and the famous opening see Denise Morgan, ROAR Re-viewed: 30 years on, Macmillan Art Publishing, 2012
- 5. Marina Strocchi, taped interview with the author, Melbourne, 29 October 2014
- 6. Her clients included Tempo Magazine, Sharon Kolski Graphics and Caulfield Council, and she designed the poster for Peter Watkin's film The journey, as well as record covers for Nick Cave's From Her to Eternity and In the ghetto and The Moodists self-title album
- 7. She did make a couple of short return trips to Italy during this time
- 8. One of her poster, Music of Migration, was a finalist in the Festival d'Affiches de Chaumont in Paris
- 9. Marina Strocchi, taped interview with the author, Melbourne, 29 October 2014
- 10. Marina Strocchi, Ikuntji: Paintings from Haasts Bluff 1992-94, Alice Springs, IAD Press, 1995
- 11. For example, in 2011, Marina Strocchi held solo shows in Brisbane, Idaho in the USA and in Sydney
- 12. Wayne Eager, Biographic note on Marina Strocchi, October 2014
- 13. Marina Strocchi worked at Northern Editions, at the Charles Darwin University at Darwin in 2006
- 14. Marina Strocchi, taped interview with the author, Melbourne, 29 October 2014

### The painting instinct

#### Sioux Garside

Delacroix said

The first virtue of a painting is that it is to be a feast for the eyes

The joyful compositions that Marina Strocchi began to paint in the mid 1990s were about seeing and feeling the world surrounding her. She was living at the time in one of the most beautiful and remote landscapes in Central Australia at Haasts Bluff, near Papunya. This country deeply embedded with spiritual and cultural meaning for Aboriginal people became the inspiration for her paintings. *Ayers Rock* (1992) (p.18) is one of her first representations of this iconic landscape. *Road to Ayers Rock* (p.119) is another memory-based work, painted in a naturalistic style with a sweeping perspective, vibrant colour and simplified forms. Undaunted by the monumental scale and wide skies of this ancient land the early gouaches *Mereenie Range IV* (p.119) and *Mount Zeil* (p.119) are painted with an instinctive feeling for the rhythmical contours of unfolding mountain ranges and the luminosity of the iron rich desert.

The dotted tree saplings and flattening of desert ridges into simplified planes of pink, orange and red in *Mt Zeil I* (p.22) is reminiscent of the flattening of space in the landscape compositions of Australian painter Fred Williams. However Strocchi's representational viewpoint of the landscape gradually shifted focus from gazing at the land to conveying a sense of complete immersion in a reconstructed conceptual space. She believes that her intense interest in looking at Egyptian art was a turning point. "The hieroglyphics are layered like lines of text and I think that's how the perspective changed. It became a flat plane." A sense of embodiment in the figure and ground of the canvas would lead her to experiment with pure abstraction and the evolution of a personal language of symbols. "I am drawn to organic forms of nature and in art. My work references nature and it is the qualities of nature that I aspire to in my work". *Saplings II* (p.109) is a monochromatic field of trees drawn from nature that repeat and expand into an abstract pattern that occupies the entire ground of the canvas. *Pink Three* (p.27) is a free and intuitive exploration of figure and ground while *Pipes* (p.27) employs a sinuous meandering line to carve out shapes and symbols in flat pictorial space.

The finest of Strocchi's pure abstractions have a tangibility and physical presence melding pure form with symbolic colour. *Orange Drawing* (p.43) is just such a beauty. A thick orangey red line constructs space and creates form embedded in a textural layered white ground of satisfying richness. Meaning is embodied in these paintings as Strocchi has sought to make her paintings expressive of inner feeling. The contemplative resonance of *Homage to IN* (p.42) and *Tribute* (p.42) with their elegiac forms (suggestive of boulders and bones) employed in a delicately brushed ground of subdued tones of grey, white and earth pigments reach beyond the pleasures of the eye to convey emotion. Paintings such as these serve as an affirmation of the American painter Philip Guston's declaration that "Everything means something. Anything in life or in art, any mark you make has meaning and the only question is, 'What kind of meaning?'" When asked about these two paintings Strocchi explained that they were painted in memory of an artist she had known, Inyuwa Nampitinpa saying "My works are not like her art at all, but the loose circular shapes are an echo from where she worked".

The influence of precursors in art history is not of particular concern to Strocchi however she credits Inyuwa, Shorty Lungkata Tjungurrayi, Charlie Tjararu Tjungurrayi, Johnny Warangula and Yala Yala Gibbs as some of the greatest artists she most respects and admires. As the founding co-ordinator of the Ikuntji Art Centre and later a field worker for Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd she spent the best part of a decade working alongside some of the finest central desert artists including Long Tom Tjapanangka and Makinti Napanangka.

To respect but not to follow is Strocchi's aim. Her substantial achievement is to find through the process of painting the freedom to leave expectations aside by trusting hand and eye to come together instinctively. In this regard she is in accord with Guston's desire to be the first painter to create without convention or tradition. "We are primitives in spite of our knowing," he said. "So much preparation for a few moments of innocence-of desperate play. To learn how to unlearn." The unselfconscious ease and flow that central desert artists bring to their painting is a quality that has been much appreciated by many artists especially her partner painter Wayne Eager and acclaimed artists lan Fairweather, Roy Jackson and Tony Tuckson, all of whom Strocchi greatly admires.

From the beginning of her twenty-two years in the Northern Territory, Marina Strocchi has observed and recorded the subtle qualities of seasonal flora and fauna in her paintings such as *Woolly Butts* (p.47). A flourishing diversity of spinifex, desert oaks, ghost gums, mulga plains, blossoms, birds and native mammals have formed the subject matter of her distinctive tapestry-like paintings. Through rhythmic repetition these elements of the nature world were interwoven into patterns of great delicacy and movement. Her storytelling is informed by her familiarity and long association with the desert and its peoples. The humorous juxtaposition of native animals alongside explosions of rabbits or other feral species like cats, camels, foxes and donkeys serve to remind us of the devastating changes that have been wrought on the sensitive ecology of the desert by mining and European exploitation of desert lands. Over the past two decades Marina Strocchi's imaginative ability has resulted in the making of a lively and expressive body of conceptual narrative paintings. The painting instinct is alive in her work.

Quotes by the artist from correspondence with the author, November 2014

## Marina Strocchi – traveling works

#### Georges Petitjean

Marina Strocchi's work reflects on a life of traveling to numerous places in the world, amongst which northern Italy, Paris, Mexico and India, and encountering people from different cultures and backgrounds. She often stayed for lengthy periods of time at several of the cities and countries she travelled through and had the opportunity to forge friendships with residents of these places, absorbing the art and culture as she went. This resulted in a deeper understanding of place and people. In her native Melbourne, and later in Central Australia, it was interactions with her partner in life Wayne Eager and other artists associated with Roar, with which she developed an affinity in retrospect, which enabled her to define and refine her own style. These travels and encounters, together with her time in Melbourne, form the backdrop to her distinct paintings.

Earlier works – gouaches on paper – dating back from her first visits to the 'red centre' reveal a fascination and deep awe for the magnificence of the omnipresent surrounding red ranges and spinifex-dotted plains. There is no apprehension however; there is a distance between the landscape and the artist. This distance will slowly dissolve with time spent in desert communities and Alice Springs. Strocchi, since 1992, has adopted Central Australia as her home, and in doing so also became part of that country.

These early Central Australian landscapes are recognisable depictions of particular sites and are not entirely without evoking the watercolours of Albert Namatjira and the Hermannsburg School. Although drawing on naïve imagery, the adopted view follows the great European landscape tradition. Sensual, feminine forms predominate and reveal a growing individualistic approach in the translation of the natural scenery into painted pictures.

Many of Strocchi's post-2000 paintings are, as it were, traveling diaries. They record the landscape, but always the landscape in some state of movement as if it was shown through the window of a driving car. Or at least a landscape that is, through being filled with life, imbued with a sense of abundant activity. Camels, plants, fish, birds, wild cats or dogs all bring a lively presence to the landscapes. Her colour palette is restrained. The almost tangible rhythm and playful sense of movement in these pictures is achieved by a flat view denying perspective, grid patterns and repetition of the several graphic elements.

Strocchi's experiences whilst living in several desert communities and meeting Aboriginal people opened new windows in her work. Subsequently new visual experiences merged with sources such as the naïve painters Henri Rousseau, Alfred Wallis and the Australian Sam Byrne. With her own hieroglyphs and organic forms, Strocchi analysed, and distillates a new, highly individualistic language.

Marina Strocchi's lively pictures reflect to some extent the geographical and social conditions in which they were produced. Work from 1992 onwards came about in a climate of daily contact with indigenous artists from Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Kiwirrkura amongst other places. During the many years that she spent in the desert communities of Haasts

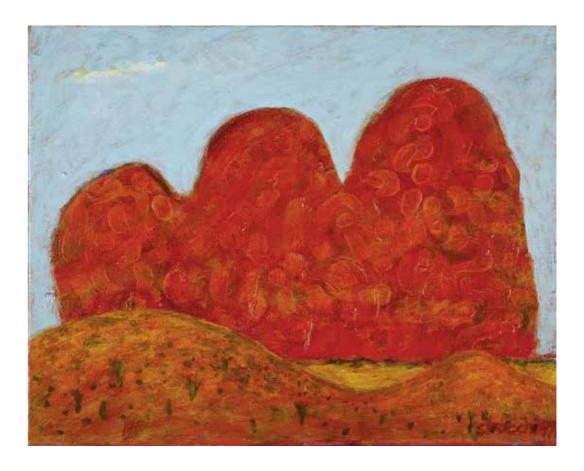
<sup>1.</sup> Night Studio A Memoir of Philip Guston by Musa Mayer, Thames and Hudson 1988, p.171

<sup>2.</sup> Ibid, p.83

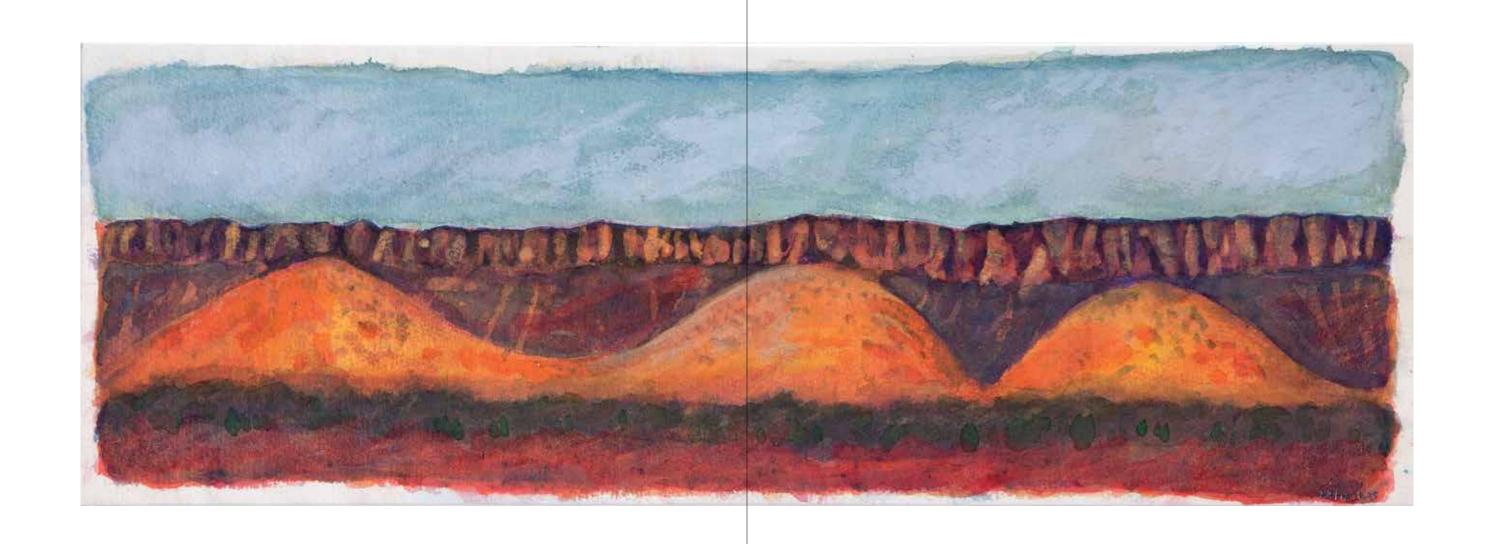
Bluff and Kintore where she worked as an art coordinator, facilitator and field worker, she forged many lasting friendships and relationships with Aboriginal people. Her profound admiration for the art from Western Desert artists not only resulted in publications (see biography), but also painted homages, such as those to the late Inyuwa Nampitjinpa.

More recent work reflects a greater affinity with the land. The artist sits clearly comfortable in the new living environment, enough to call it 'home'. In *The Kitchen* (2002) (p.51) the artist paints her Alice Springs home, testifying this intimacy. Her oil and acrylic paintings and sketches are intimate immersions into a country in which different travels, lived and imagined, merge into a new, playful and vibrant whole. Boats are juxtaposed with road trains, tractors and camels. The fauna and flora is abundant and evocative of several places in the world. Ned Kelly's armour becomes another hieroglyph amongst others. Perspective is ignored in favour of a newly invented rhythmic recording of signs, symbols, and hieroglyphs or just doodles. Designs and ideograms present in this fresh iconographic repertory are derived from a wide range of sources. They are juxtaposed in rows and grid-like patterns, enhancing their map-like quality.

Strocchi's pictures visually retrace journeys. A visual memory and vocabulary acquired during a lifetime of traveling and absorbing art, and crystallising both, has culminated in a distinct style. These pictures remind us that visual impressions amassed during travels leave no one unaffected.

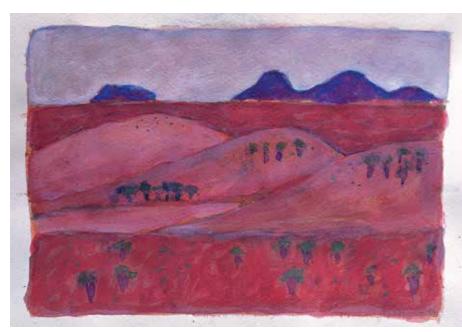


The Olgas II, 1997, oil on linen, 33 x 38 cm, Private Collection

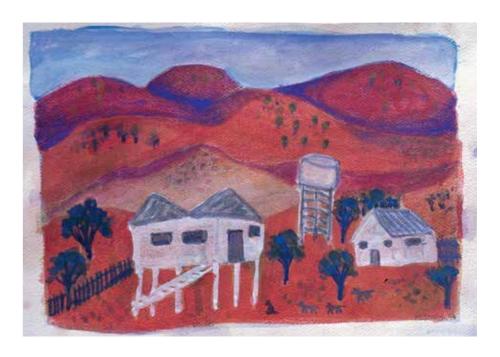


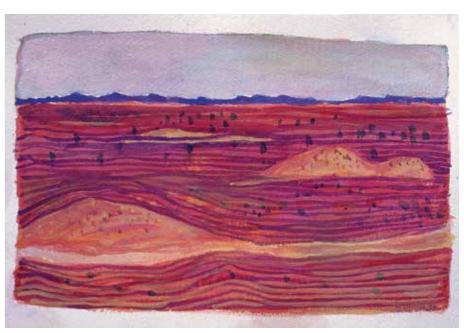
Mereenie Range, 1995, gouache on paper, 39 x 72 cm, Collection Nikki Gemmell

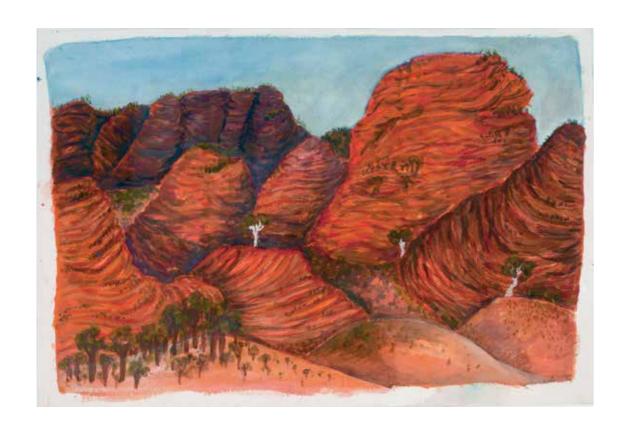




^ Ayers Rock, 1992, gouache on paper, 19 x 27 cm, Collection Sioux Garside v Other side of Round Hill, 1995, gouache on paper, 19 x 27 cm, Private Collection





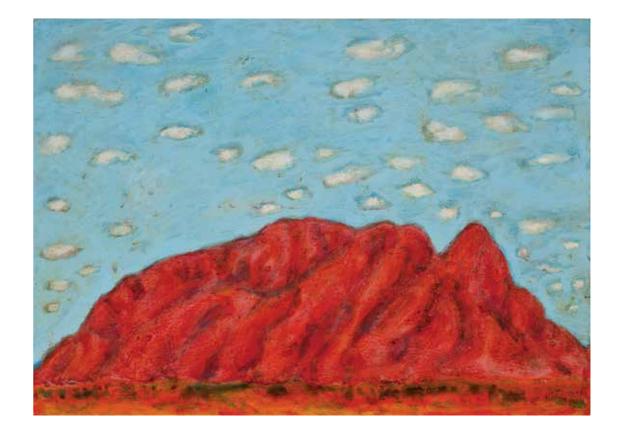




Muruntji Way I, 1995, gouache on paper, 56 x 76 cm, Collection Daphne Eager

The Olgas II, 1995, gouache on paper, 56 x 76 cm, Private Collection





Mt. Zeil I, 1992, gouache on paper, 27 x 32 cm, Collection Tania Douglas

Mt. Zeil II, 1997, oil on linen, 38 x 48 cm, Private Collection





Tarrawarra II, 1997, oil on linen, 28 x 43 cm, Collection lan Rogers

Mereeni Range II, 1997, oil on linen, 33 x 53 cm, Private Collection







v Contraption I, 2000, gouache on paper, 19 x 27 cm









Peru, 2000, gouache on paper, 19 x 27 cm

Pink Two, 2001, gouache and acrylic on paper, 19 x 27 cm

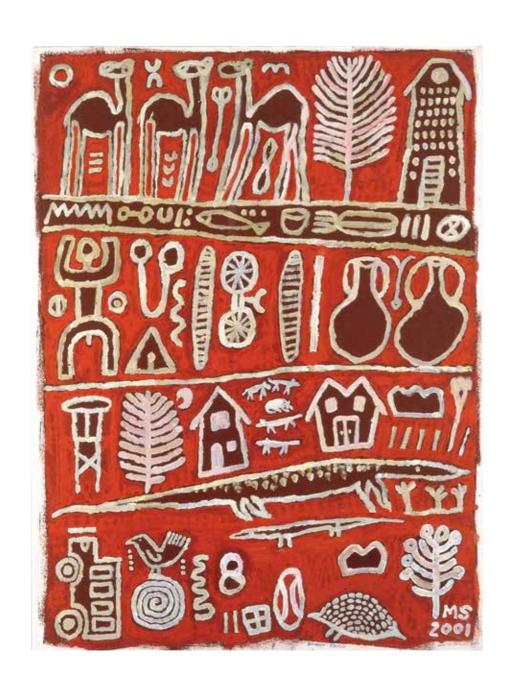






^ Out Bush, 1999, gouache on paper, 15 x 48 cm, Collection Wayne Eager v Scribe's Notebook, 1999, gouache on paper, 11.5 x 28 cm, Private Collection

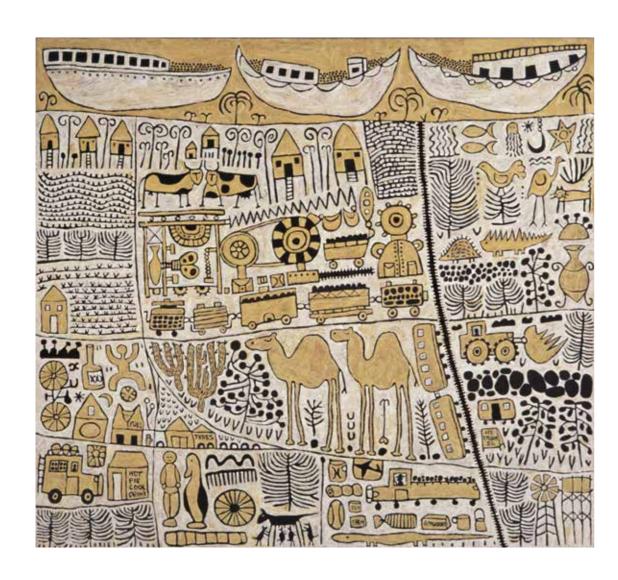
Rory's One, 2001, acrylic on paper, 10 x 20 cm, Collection Liesl Rockchild

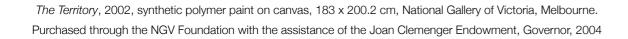




Another Picnic, 2001, acrylic on paper, 75 x 55 cm, Private Collection

Peach, 2001, acrylic on paper, 29 x 41 cm







Tennant Creek, 2002, acrylic on linen, 180 x 200 cm, Private Collection





Amgoori, 2002, acrylic on linen, 152 x 168 cm, Private Collection

Big Country, 2001, acrylic on linen, 86.5 x 109 cm, Collection Araluen Arts Centre Alice Springs





Canary Yellow, 2001, acrylic on paper, 32 x 40 cm

Cooper Pale, 2001, gouache on paper, 55 x 75 cm, Private Collection

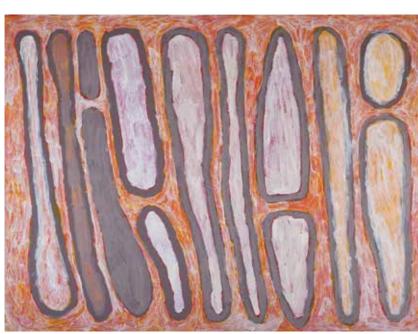




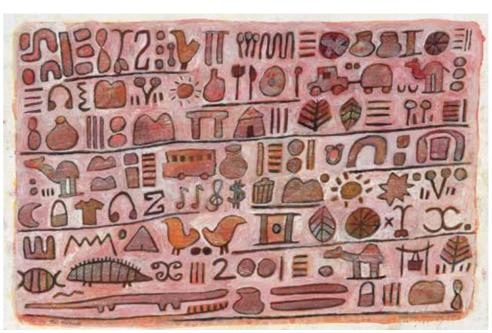
Haasts Bluff, 2001, gouache on paper, 55 x 75 cm, Private Collection

Full Bloom, 2001, gouache on paper, 55 x 75 cm, Private Collection

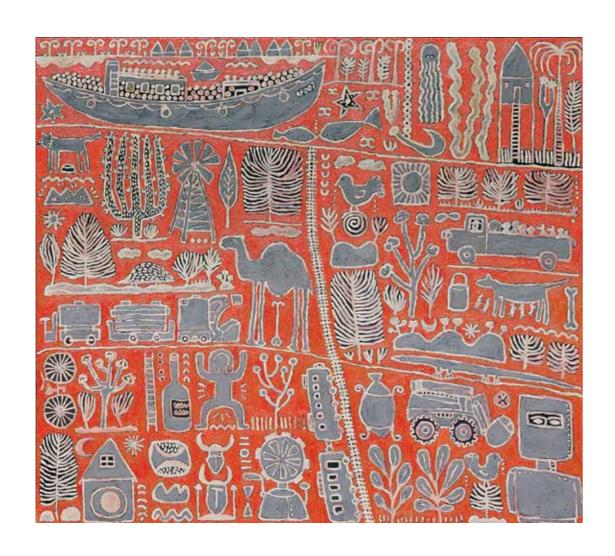


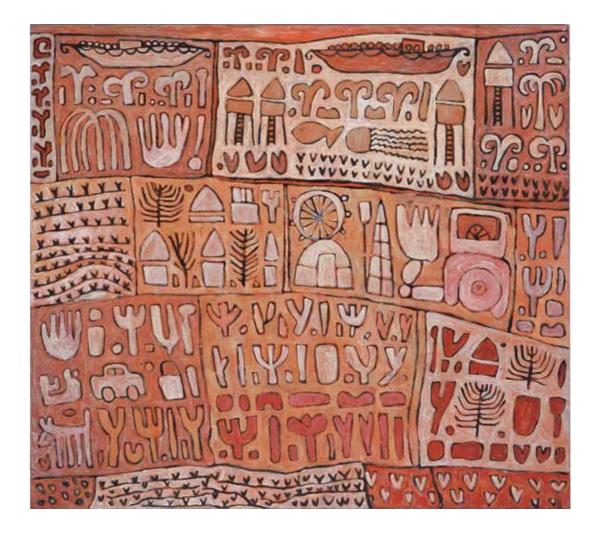






^ Orange Drawing, 2002, acrylic on paper, 29 x 41 cm, Private Collection v The Message, 2001, gouache and acrylic on paper, 38 x 56 cm, Private Collection

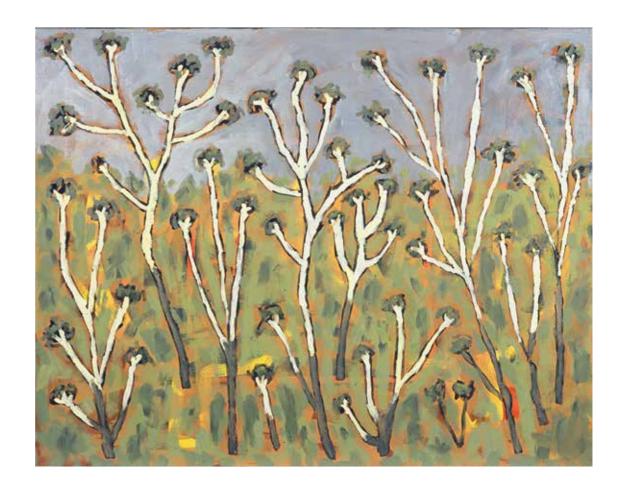




Big Country II, 2002, acrylic on linen, 137 x 152 cm, Private Collection

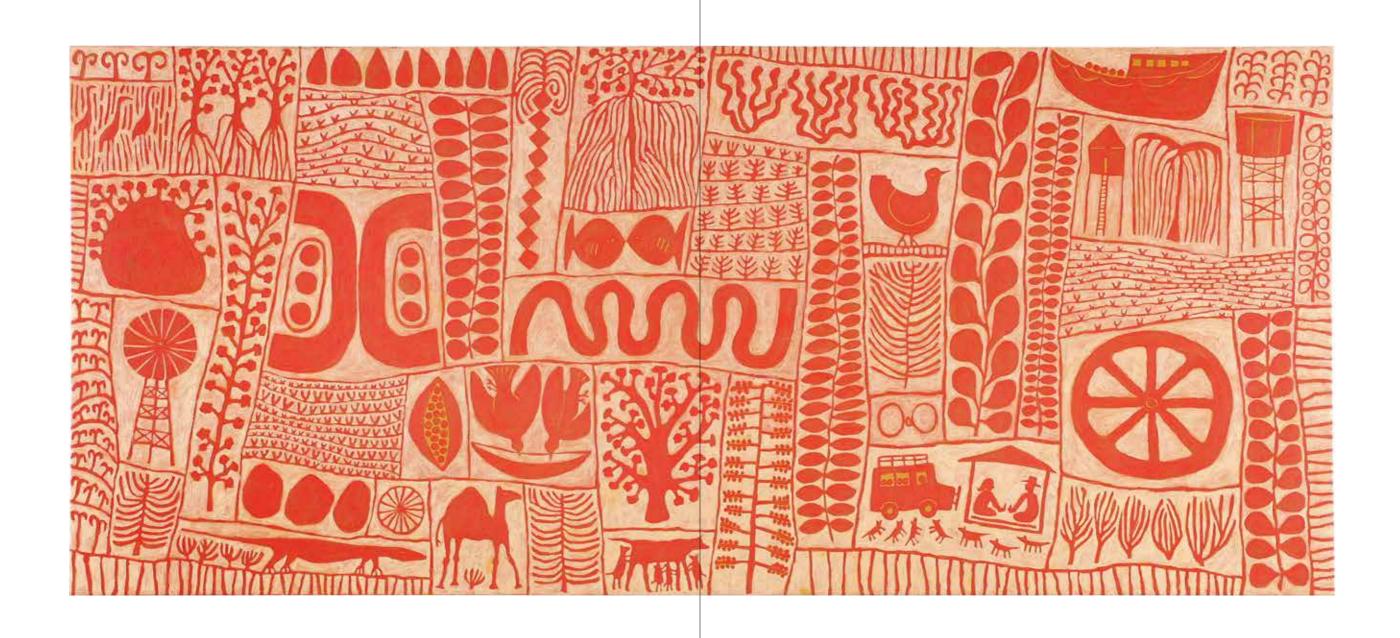
Cooper Red, 2002, acrylic on linen, 137 x 152 cm, Private Collection





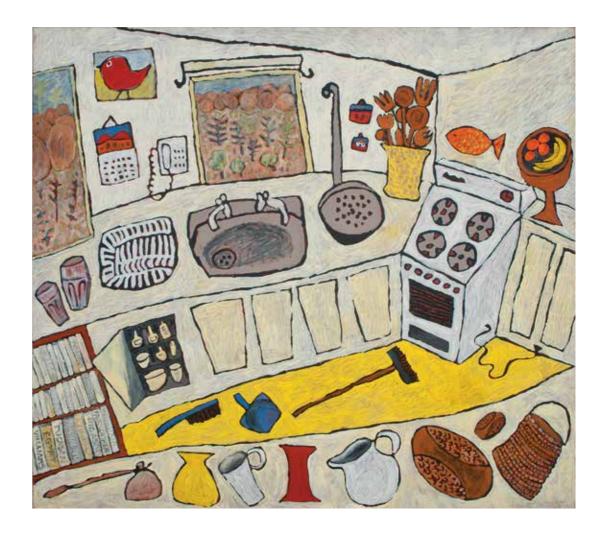
Fish, 2001, acrylic on paper, 50 x 65 cm, Private Collection

Woolly Butts, 2002, acrylic on linen, 91.5 x 106 cm, Collection Tania Douglas



Big Red, 2005, acrylic on linen, 122 x 284 cm, Private Collection

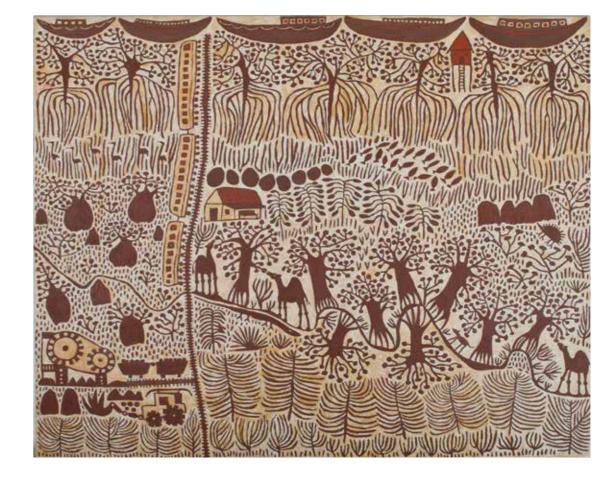




The Dry, 2003, acrylic on linen, 183 x 213 cm, Private Collection

The Kitchen, 2002, acrylic on linen, 122 x 137 cm, Private Collection

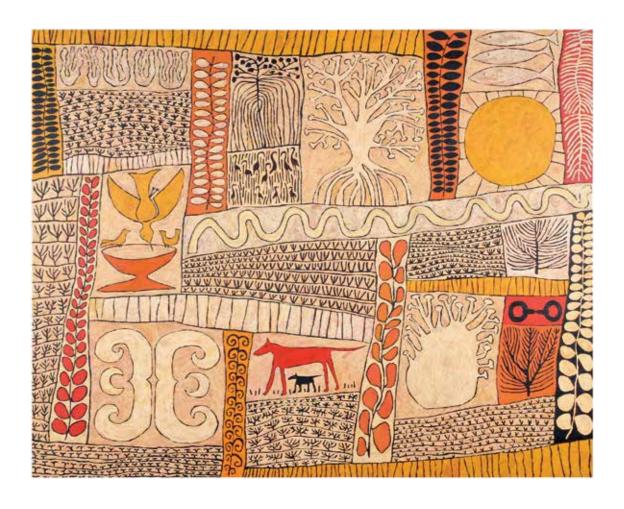




Red Tractor, 2003, acrylic on linen, 107 x 122 cm, Collection Rupert and Annabel Myer

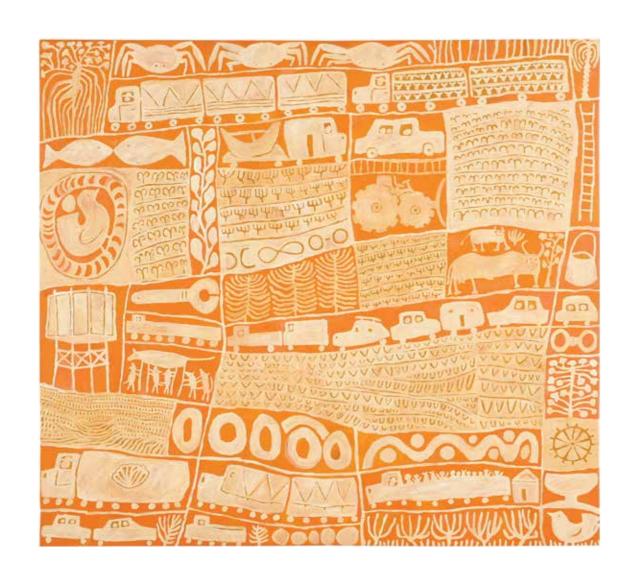
Roadside Stop, 2003, acrylic on linen, 183 x 214 cm, purchased 2004, MAGNT Acquisition Fund, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Collection





Big Day Out, 2005, acrylic on linen, 152 x 167.5 cm, Private Collection

Black Dog, Red Dog, 2005, acrylic on linen, 198 x 229 cm, Private Collection





Crosstown Traffic, 2005, acrylic on linen, 152 x 167 cm, Private Collection

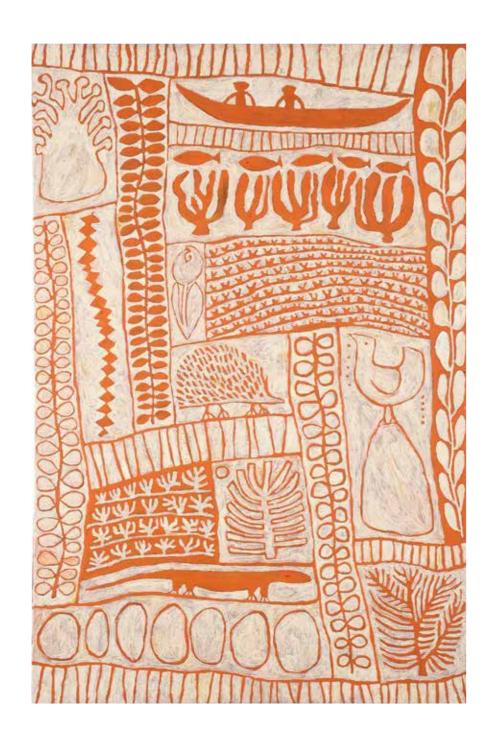
The Territory, 2003, acrylic on paper, 58 x 76 cm, Collection Broken Hill Art Gallery



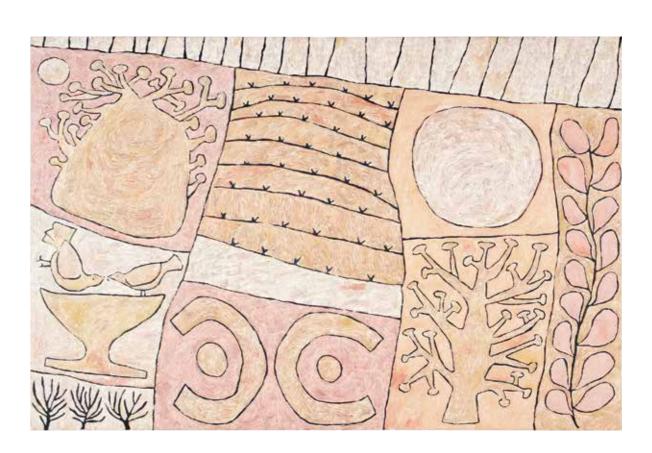


Brancusi Palms, 2003, acrylic on paper, 76 x 57 cm,
Charles Darwin University Art Collection – acquired by purchase through the CDU Foundation, 2010

Star Trek, 2005, acrylic on linen, 31 x 40 cm, Private Collection

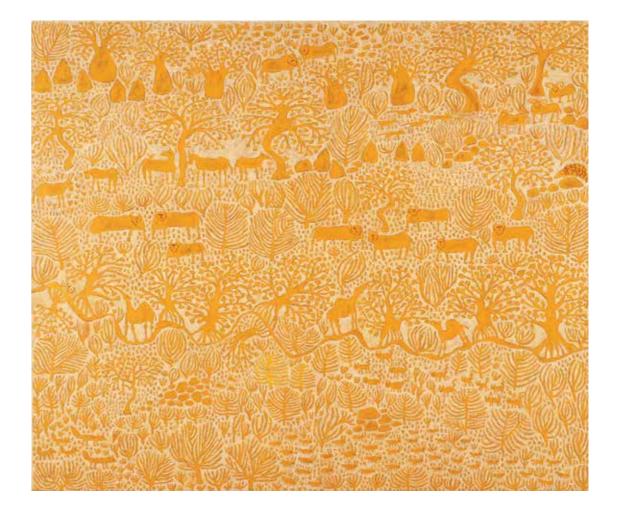






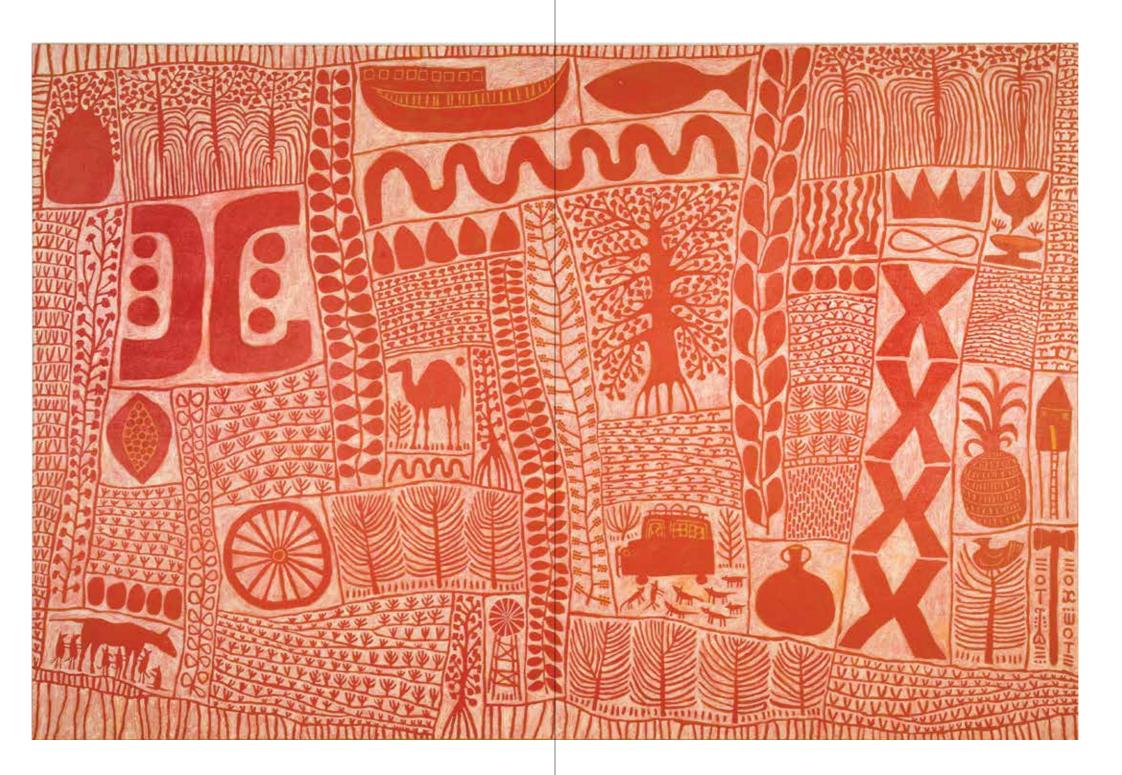
Full Moon, 2005, acrylic on linen, 122 x 160 cm, Private Collection





Camels, 2004, acrylic on linen, 122 x 152 cm, Private Collection

Territory Ferals, 2005, acrylic on linen, 182 x 200 cm, Private Collection



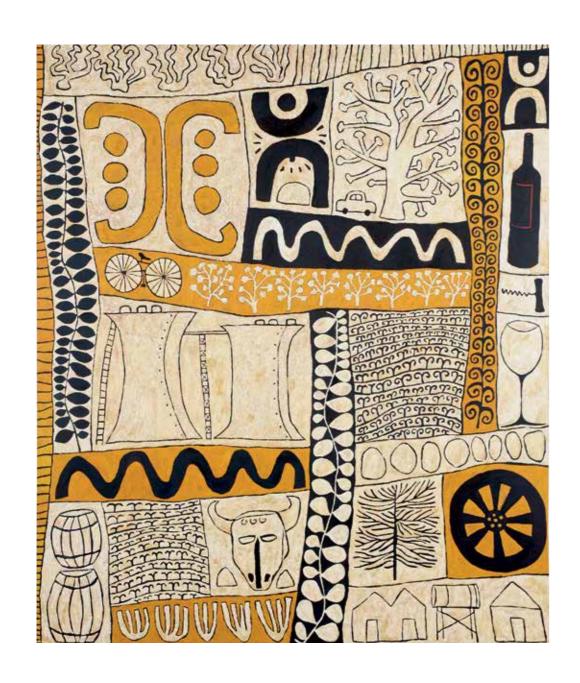
The North Country, 2006, acrylic on linen, 200 x 300 cm, Private Collection

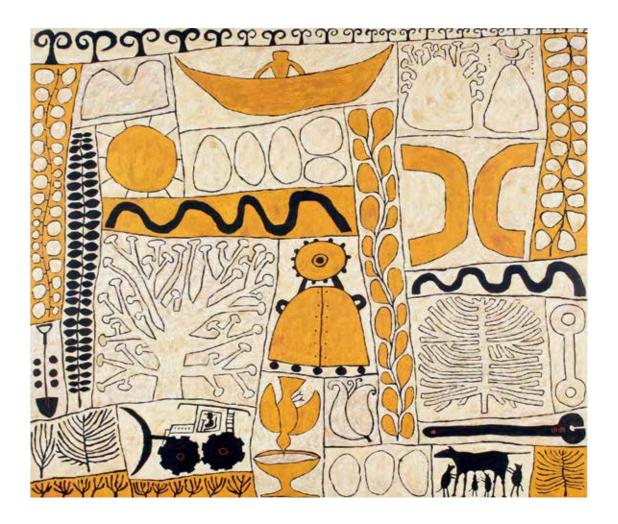




Red Sun, 2005, acrylic on linen, 122 x 137 cm, Private Collection

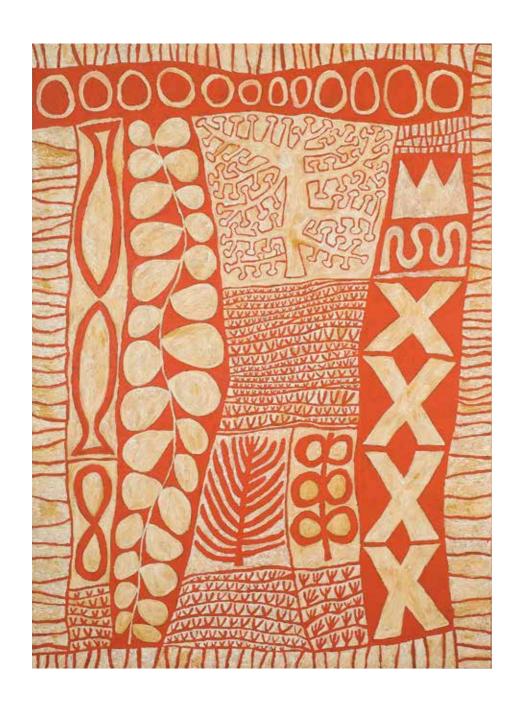
Red Fish, 2005, acrylic on linen, 61 x 66 cm, Collection Amanda Frith





Sideways, 2005, acrylic on linen, 213 x 283 cm, Private Collection

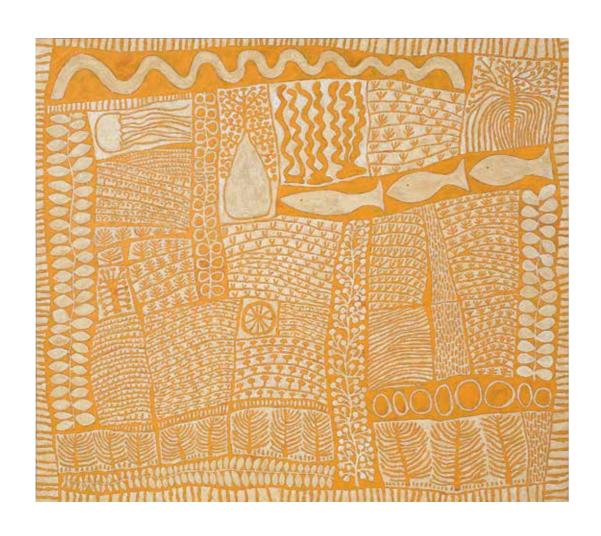
Yellow Sun, 2005, acrylic on linen, 183 x 199 cm, Private Collection

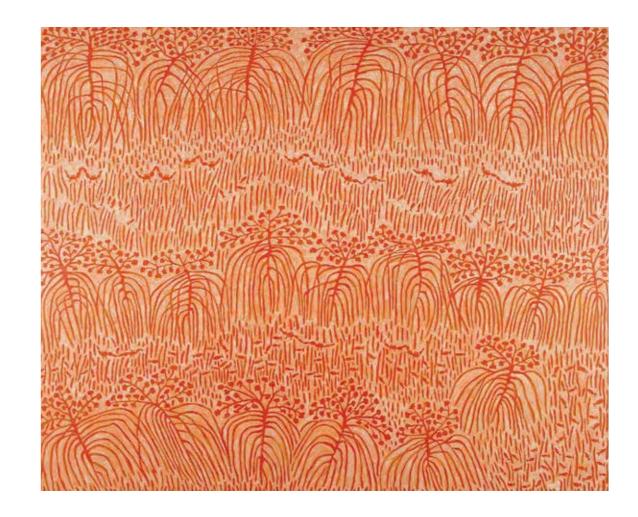




Queensland, 2006, acrylic on linen, 167.5 x 122 cm, Private Collection

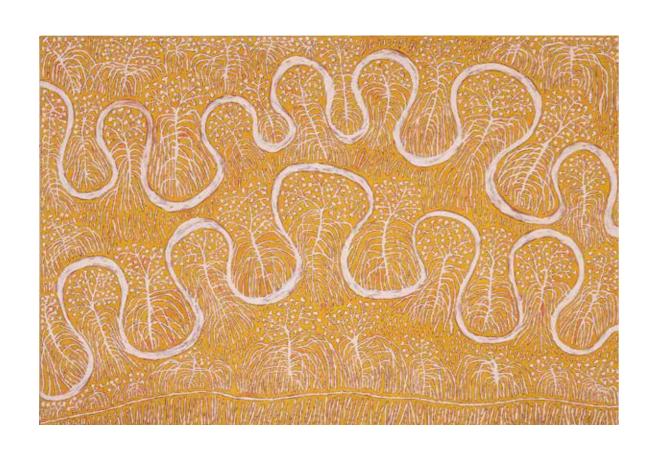
Red Four X, 2006, acrylic on linen, 175 x 200 cm, Private Collection





Three Fish, 2006, acrylic on linen, 175 x 200 cm, Private Collection

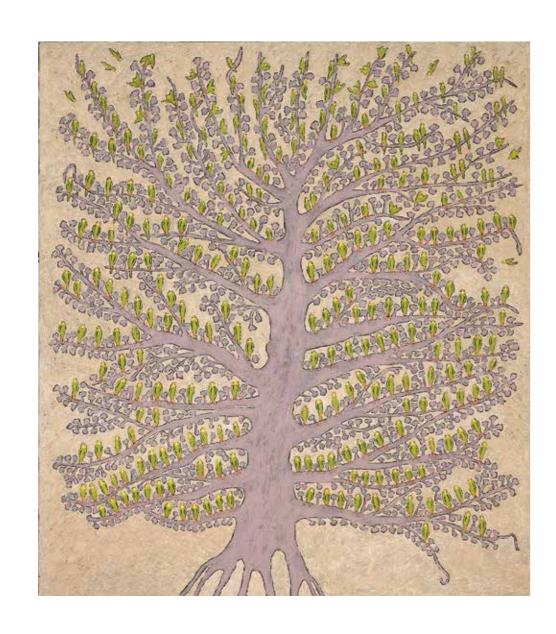
Mangroves, 2007, acylic on linen, 175 x 200 cm, Private Collection





Mangrove Creeks, 2007, acrylic on linen, 134 x 195.4 cm, Private Collection

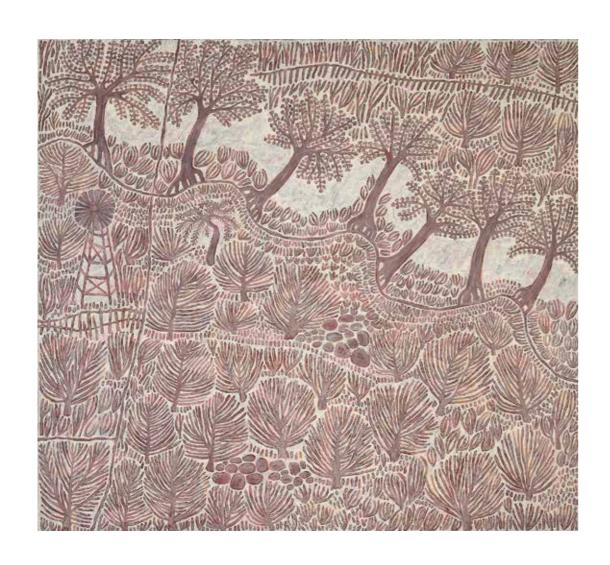
Near Darwin, 2007, acrylic on linen, 30 x 30 cm





Budgie Tree, 2007, acrylic on linen, 137 x 121 cm, Private Collection

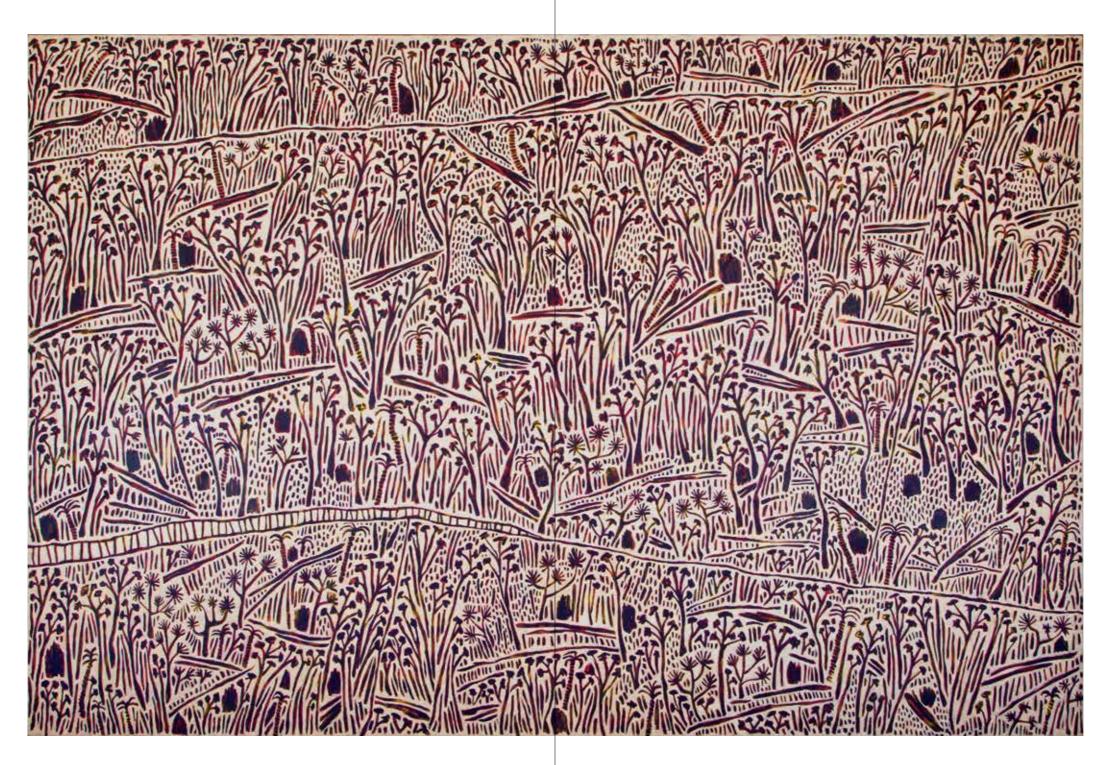
Yellow Tree, 2007, acrylic on linen, 137 x 137 cm, Private Collection



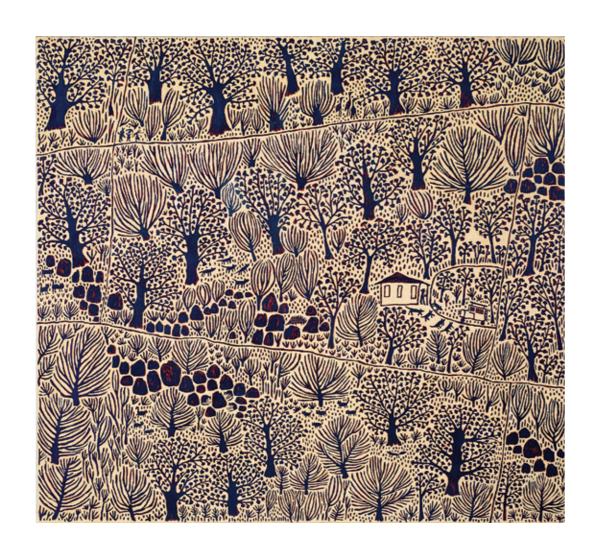


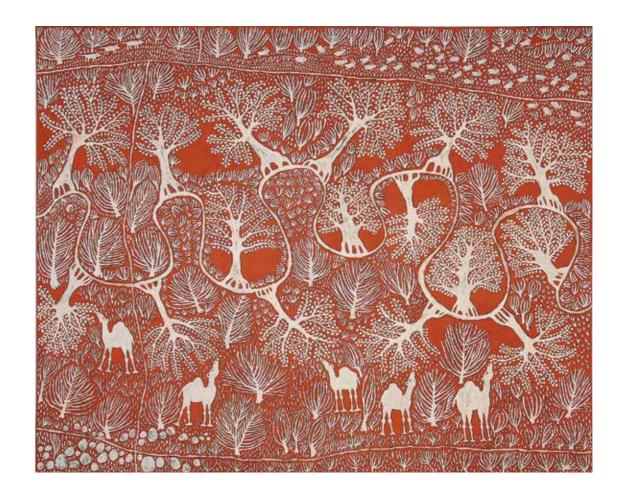
Kakali Bore, 2007, acrylic on linen, 182 x 199 cm, Private Collection

Out Bush II, 2007, acrylic on linen, 175 x 200 cm, Private Collection



Top End Scrub (State II), 2009, acrylic on linen, 200 x 300 cm





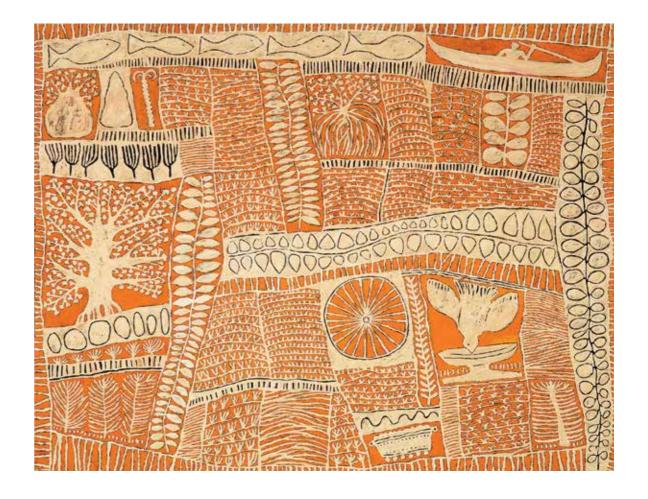
The Visitors, 2008, acrylic on linen, 139 x 199 cm, Private Collection

Regal Creek, 2007, acrylic on linen, 198 x 228 cm, Private Collection



Out Bush Again, 2007, acrylic on linen, 150 x 300 cm, Private Collection

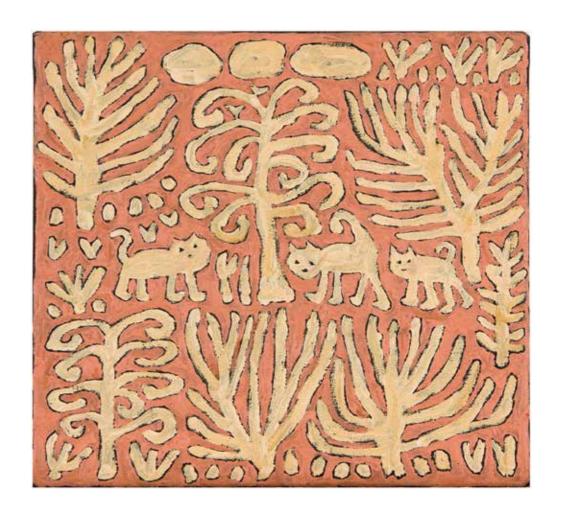




The Homeland, 2008, acrylic on linen, 139 x 199 cm, Private Collection

The Homeland II, 2008, acrylic on linen, 153 x 183 cm, Private Collection

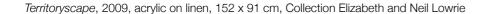




Three Rocks, 2008, acrylic on linen, 21 x 21 cm, Collection Faye Alexander

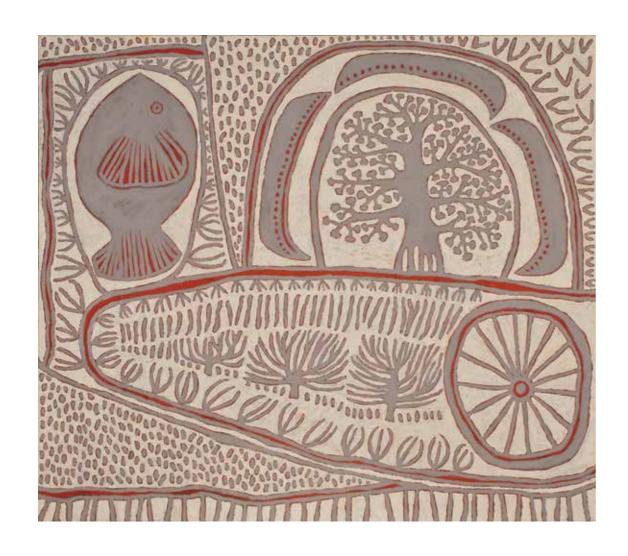
Three Cats II, 2008, acrylic on linen, 30 x 30 cm, Collection Lumyai Eager

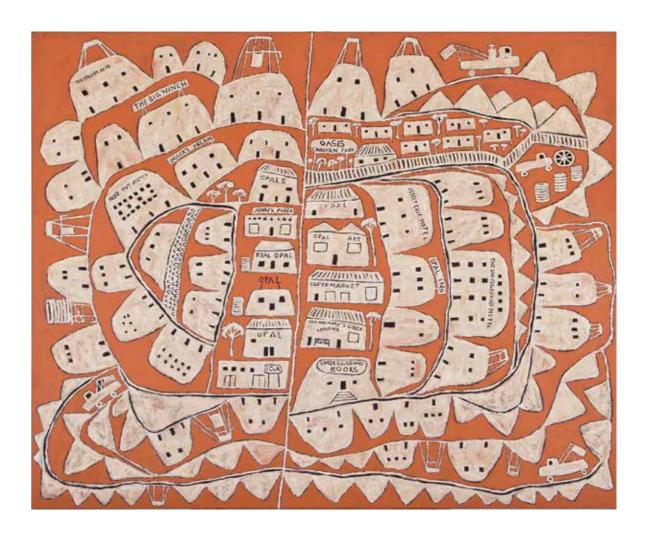






Yellow Sun III, 2009, acrylic on linen, 80 x 62 cm, Private Collection

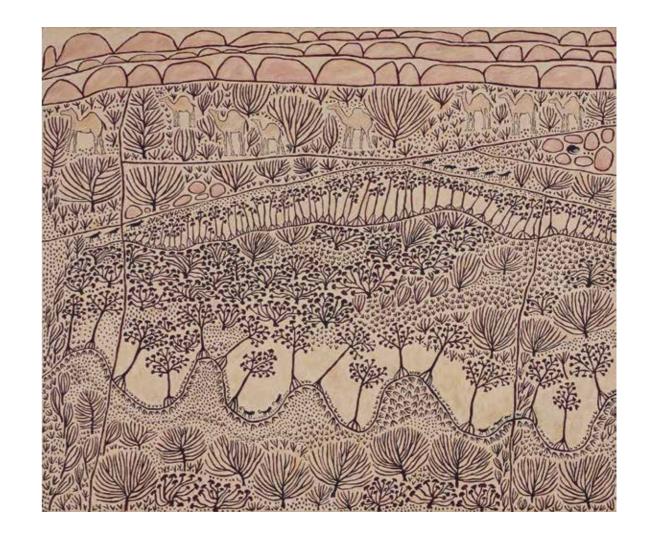




Fish, Wheel and Tree, 2010, acrylic on linen, 80.5 x 92 cm

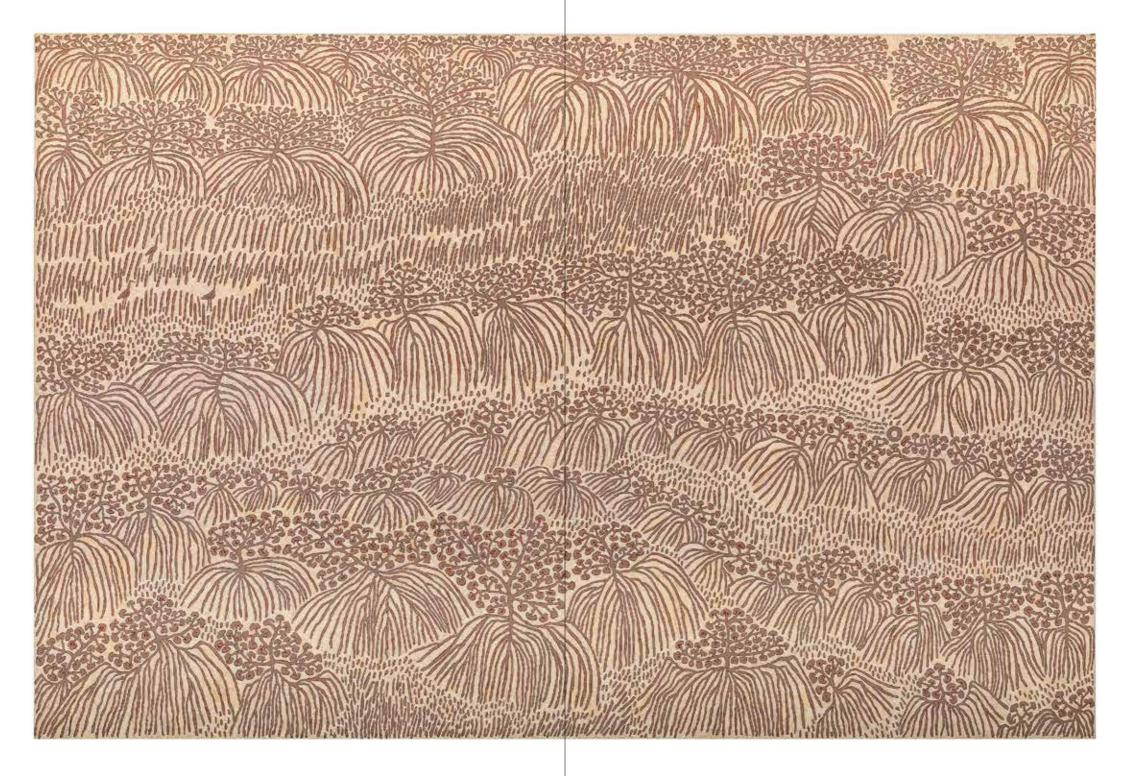
Coober Pedy, 2011, acrylic on linen, 122 x 138 cm



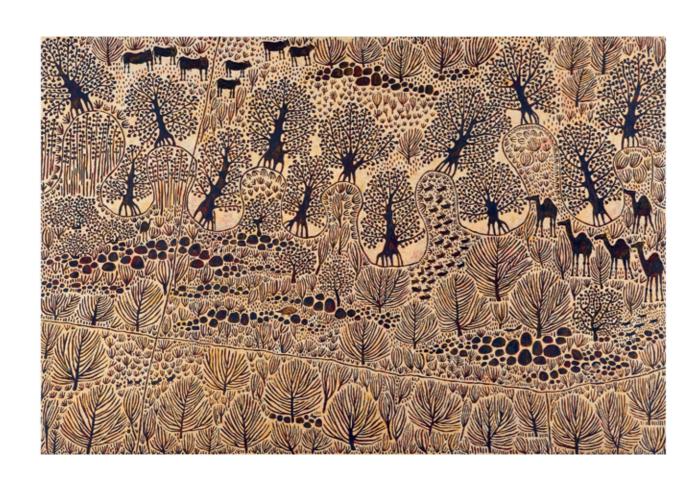


The Fox, 2008, acrylic on linen, 30 x 40 cm, Collection Tina Tilhard and Jamie Balfour

Desert Country (For R.P.), 2012, acrylic on linen, 182.5 x 200 cm, Private Collection



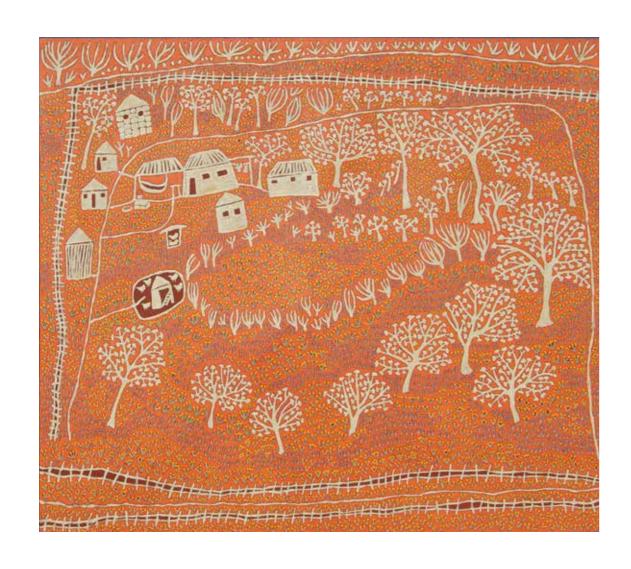
Top End Mangroves, 2011, acrylic on linen, 200 x 300 cm





The Echidna, 2007, acrylic on linen, 200 x 300 cm, Private Collection

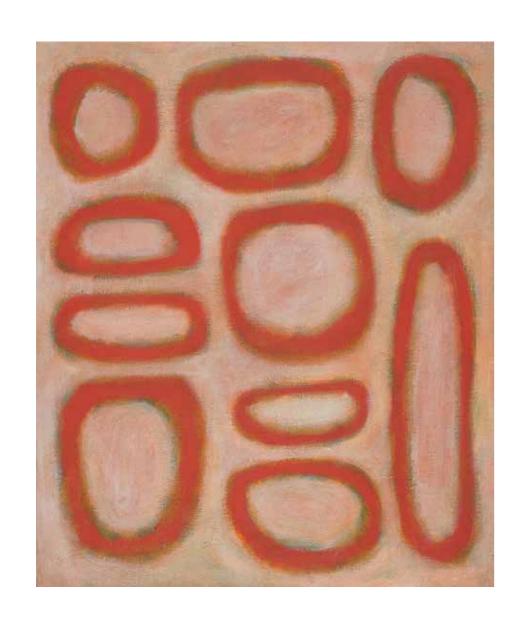
The Tanami, 2010, acrylic on linen, 200 x 300 cm, Private Collection



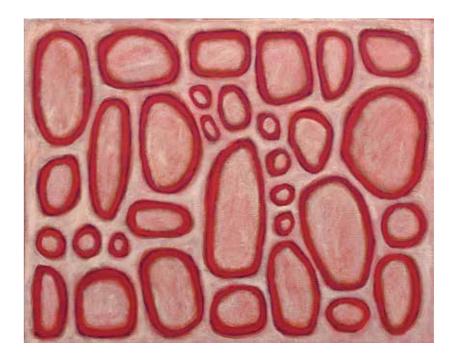


Ilparpa Road After Rain, 2010, acrylic on linen, 121 x 137 cm, Private Collection

Saplings II (State II), 2010, acrylic on linen, 183 x 200 cm



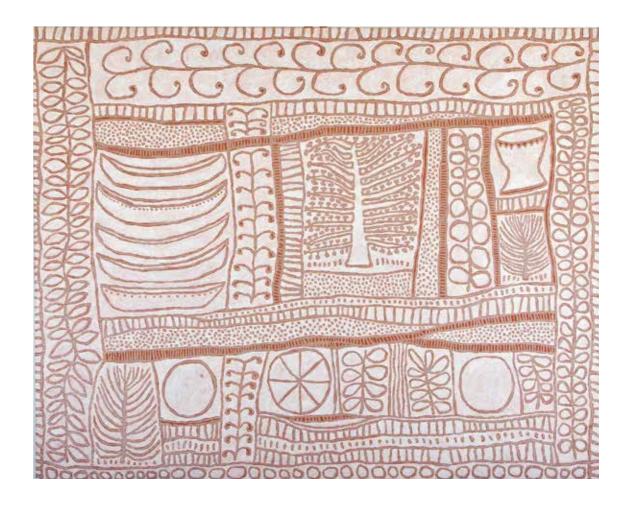
Boulders, 2013, acrylic on linen, 66 x 55 cm





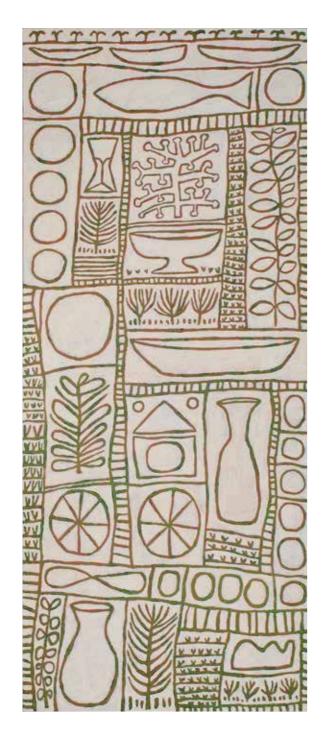
^ Green Algae, 2013, acrylic on linen, 65 x 80 cm v Red Algae, 2013, acrylic on linen, 66 x 80 cm





Blue Canoes, 2014, acrylic on linen, 122 x 137 cm

The Drum (State II), 2014, acrylic on linen, 122 x 152 cm



Nature's Wheel, 2013, acrylic on linen, 183 x 76 cm



Pink Pictograph, 2014, acrylic on linen, 91 x 46 cm



Landscape In Blue, 2013, acrylic on linen, 91 x 152.5 cm

# **Etchings and Lithographs**



Boats, 2007, etching 20 x 24.5 cm



La Vendemmia II, 2007, etching, 24.8 x 32.8 cm



Road to Walker Creek, 2007, etching, 45.3 x 61.2cm



Brancusi Palm, 2007, etching, 29.5 x 9.5 cm



Woolly Butts, 2007, etching, 20 x 24.5 cm



Coffee Pot, 2007, etching, 16 x 9.8 cm



Mangroves, 2007, lithograph, 36 x 49.5 cm



La Vendemmia I, 2007, etching, 24.8 x 32.8 cm



Mulga Trees, 2007, etching, 24.9 x 32.9 cm



Red Tree, 2007, etching, 32.8 x 24.8 cm



Orange-Footed Scrub Fowl, 2007, lithograph, 23.8 x 31.8 cm



The Territory (state II), 2007, lithograph, 38 x 38 cm



The Territory (state I), 2007, lithograph, 38 x 38 cm



Mystery Train, 2007, etching, 24.5 x 20 cm



The Top End, 2007, etching, 38.5 x 49.5 cm

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Artbank
Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs
Art Gallery of Western Australia
Australian National Gallery
B.H.P. Billiton
Broken Hill Art Gallery
Charles Darwin University, Darwin
D.H.H.C.S., Canberra
Environment Australia, Canberra
La Trobe University, Melbourne

Macquarie Bank
Museums and Art Galleries of the NT Darwin
National Gallery of Victoria
Parliament House, Canberra
Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
State Library of Victoria
Tennant Creek Art Gallery
The Toga Group, Darwin

Palacio do Governo (Government House), East Timor (Gifted to Jose Ramos Horta by Vice-Chancellor, Charles Darwin University) Private Collections in Australia, Europe and USA

## Solo Exhibitions

2014	Marina Strocchi, Art Images Gallery, Adelaide	2010	Breaking with Tradition: Cobra and Aboriginal art,
2013	Floribundus, Harvey Art Projects, Sun Valley, Idaho, U.S.A.		Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Utrecht, The Netherlands
2013	Marina Strocchi, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane		The Wynne, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney
2012	The Nature of Things, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne		The Alice Prize, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs
2011	North and South, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane		Northern Impressions - A Celebration of Contemporary Printmaking,
2011	Territoryscapes, Harvey Art Projects, Sun Valley, Idaho, U.S.A.		National Tour
2011	New Works, Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney		Going Places, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs
2010	Territoryscapes, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne		In Print, Charles Darwin University Art Collection
2009	Recent Works, Gallery 139, Adelaide		Stockroom Show, Raft, Alice Springs
2009	Recent Paintings, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane	2009	Salon des Refusés (the alternative Archibald and Wynne Prize), S.H.
2008	Paintings, Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney		Ervin Gallery, Sydney
2008	Marina Strocchi, Chapman Gallery, Canberra		Paper Cuts 1, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs
2007	Recent Paintings, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane		Brisbane Rotary Art Spectacular, Brisbane
2007	New Paintings, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne		Togart Contemporary Art Award, Darwin
2006	The North Country, Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney		Prelude, Charles Darwin University, Darwin
2006	Top End Paintings, Raft Art Space, Darwin		For Pete's Sake, Deutscher and Hackett, Charity, Melbourne
2005	Paintings, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne	2008	Divas of the Desert, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs
2005	New Paintings, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane		The Sum of Us, Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney
2004	Marina Strocchi, Raft Art Space, Darwin		The Other Thing - a survey show, CDU, Darwin
2004	Recent Works, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane	2007	Alice 5, A P Bond Art Dealer, Adelaide
2004	Marina Strocchi, Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney		Marina Strocchi and Wayne Eager, Northern Editions, CDU, Darwin
2003	Paintings, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne		Squared, Greenhill Galleries, Perth
2002	Paintings, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs		Marina Strocchi and Wayne Eager,
2001	Paintings, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne		Etchings, Michael Reid, Sydney
1998	Landscapes, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne		Big Country, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs
1995	Marina Strocchi, Roar Studios (small room), Melbourne	2006	Art for Peace Counihan Gallery, Melbourne
			The Sound of the Sky, MAGNT

**Group Exhibitions** 

Geelong

2013

2011

The Age, Australia Day 2014 Celebratory Exhibition,

Botanica 2, Chan Contemporary Art Space, Darwin

The Age, Australia Day 2013 Celebratory Exhibition,

One of Each, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

Botanica, Godinymayin Yijard Rivers

Arts and Culture Centre, Katherine

Wayne Eager, Alice Spring

Ervin Gallery, Sydney

curated by artist Leo Robba, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

Ross Park Primary School Fundraiser - Marina Strocchi and

curated by artist Leo Robba, Australian Galleries, Melbourne Metropolis' Contemporary and Collectable Australian Printmakers,

Homage to Roy Jackson, Martin Browne Gallery, Sydney

Small Works, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

The Alice Prize, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs

The SAM Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize,

The National Archives of Australia, Canberra Deck the Walls, Northern Editions, Darwin Collective Passions: The Art of Festival Posters,

The Nature of Things, CDU Art Gallery, Darwin

Divas of the Desert Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs

National Film and Sound Archive

Iggy, Marina, Neridah and Patsy, Raft Artspace, Alice Springs

Got the Message? 50 Years of Political Posters, Art Gallery Ballarat

Salon des Refusés (the alternative Archibald and Wynne Prize) S.H.

## Awards and Prizes

AWa	rus and Prizes		34th Alice Prize, Alice Springs
2012 2011 2010 2009 2003 2001	The Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize, highly commended The Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize, finalist The Wynne, finalist Brisbane Rotary Art Spectacular, Category 1: Best acrylic/oil, winner Broken Hill Art Award, winner CWA Tennant Creek Art Award, winner	2005	CARE Art Auction, Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne Togart Contemporary Art, Parliament House, Darwin The Artist, the Community and the Land Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart 2 x 1 Show, Nellie Castan Gallery Small Works Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane Group Show Peter Walker Fine Art, Adelaide 10 Year Anniversary Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane Divas of the Desert Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs Red Planet Revolution The Artery, Fitzroy Small Works Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane New Gallery Stock '05, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

2004	Floranova Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne		Sasha Grishin
2001	Isle of Refuge, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs		A culture absorbed by osmosis
	Windows on Australian Art - Kids on Track MAGNT		The Canberra Times, December 12, 2008
	33rd Alice Prize, Alice Springs	2008	Vivien Johnson
	Small Works Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane	2000	The Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists, IAD Press, 2008
2003	Broken Hill Art Award, Red Spot Special Nellie Castan Gallery,	2007	John McDonald
2000	Melbourne	2001	Studio Australian Painters on the nature of Creativity
	Small Works Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane		R. Ian Lloyd Productions, 2007
	Christmas Show Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs		Art Collector
	End of year show, Raft, Darwin		Australia's most collectable artists, Issue 39, 2007
2002	Windows on Australian Art, Museum & Art Gallery of the NT		Jane Hampton
2002			Smart Art, Art Collector, Issue 41, 2007
	Two Painters Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs		TOGA Contemporary Art Exhibition Catalogue 2007
0001	Small Works Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane	2006	. ,
2001	Marina Strocchi, Wayne Eager, Penny Watson,	2006	Daena Murray
	Linden Eager, Watch This Space, Alice Springs		History in the making, Art Monthly, #195 November 2006
4000	Tennant Creek Art Award		Art Collector
1999	Powerful Posters Australian National Tour		Australia's most collectable artists, Issue 35, 2006
1999			TOGA Contemporary Art Exhibition Catalogue 2006
-2000	NT Art Award, Alice Springs		Nicolas Rothwell
	Alice Prize, Alice Springs		Decade of sunshine and tears
1996	Roar Miniatures Show, Roar Studios, Melbourne		The Australian, November 28, 2006
	Alice Prize, Alice Springs		Daena Murray
1995	NT Art Award, Alice Springs		The Sound of the Sky MAGNT Exhibition catalogue
	Alice Prize, Alice Springs		The Sound of the Sky Charles Darwin University Press 2006
1994	Red Planet in Orbit National Gallery of Victoria	2005	Alison Barclay
	NT Art Award, Alice Springs		How Daisy blossomed for Strocchi
1993	Festival d'Affiches de Chaumont, (finalist) Paris		Herald Sun, January 26, 2005
	NT Art Award, Alice Springs		Fran Atkinson
1992	Festival d'Affiches de Chaumont, (finalist) Paris		Desert Dreams The Age, June 18, 2005
1990	Redletter 10 year Retrospective, Mechanics Institute, Brunswick		Westpac Insight cover, Issue 1 2005
			Jan Murphy Gallery
			10 year catalogue 2005
Publi	cations	2005	Resident Magazine
(Dool:	ra antala musa and antiplas)		Desident Artista Innova 1May Ont 2005
(DOOR			Resident Artists Issue 1May-Oct 2005
•	cs, catalogues and articles)		John McDonald
•	is, catalogues and articles)		•
	-		John McDonald
2013	Anita Angel		John McDonald Future Dreaming Qantas, December 2005 Erica Izett
	Anita Angel Looking at art – Charles Darwin University Art Collection	2004	John McDonald Future Dreaming Qantas, December 2005
	Anita Angel Looking at art – Charles Darwin University Art Collection The Saturday Age Australia Day Celebratory	2004	John McDonald Future Dreaming Qantas, December 2005 Erica Izett Sitting down with Indigenous artists Artlink Vol 25 # 2, 2005 Susan Rothnie
	Anita Angel Looking at art – Charles Darwin University Art Collection The Saturday Age Australia Day Celebratory Exhibition wrap around, front page, January 26, 2013	2004	John McDonald Future Dreaming Qantas, December 2005 Erica Izett Sitting down with Indigenous artists Artlink Vol 25 # 2, 2005 Susan Rothnie New Works by Marina Strocchi Art Collector, Issue 27, 2004
	Anita Angel Looking at art – Charles Darwin University Art Collection The Saturday Age Australia Day Celebratory Exhibition wrap around, front page, January 26, 2013 Nicolas Rothwell	2004	John McDonald Future Dreaming Qantas, December 2005 Erica Izett Sitting down with Indigenous artists Artlink Vol 25 # 2, 2005 Susan Rothnie New Works by Marina Strocchi Art Collector, Issue 27, 2004 Vogue Living, Events, January 2004
	Anita Angel Looking at art – Charles Darwin University Art Collection The Saturday Age Australia Day Celebratory Exhibition wrap around, front page, January 26, 2013 Nicolas Rothwell Meeting of Many Norths in the Northern Territory		John McDonald Future Dreaming Qantas, December 2005 Erica Izett Sitting down with Indigenous artists Artlink Vol 25 # 2, 2005 Susan Rothnie New Works by Marina Strocchi Art Collector, Issue 27, 2004 Vogue Living, Events, January 2004 Christine Clare Robertson
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Rencontres Internationals des arts

graphique de Chaumont Exhibition catalogue, 1993

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Craft Australia, 2009

Australia's most collectable artists, Issue 43, 2008

Art Collector

## **Biography**

## 1961

Born December 28, Melbourne, Australia to Italian father, Australian mother.

## 1972

Lino cut produced in sixth grade at St Joseph's Primary School, Malvern.

## 1970s

Starts looking at art books (Cezanne and Matisse) and visiting galleries including the local Realities Gallery and sees exhibitions of work by Fred Williams, Murray Walker, John Wolsley and John Firth-Smith.



Fruit, lino cut, 1972

## 1979-82

Bachelor of Art, Swinburne University, Melbourne. Studies screen-printing and life drawing during graphic design degree.

## 1982

Attends the opening of Roar Studios, where Marina meets and befriends Roar artists, Wayne Eager, David Larwill, Mark Howson, Jill Noble, Mark Schaller and Pasquale Giardino. Visiting their studios and finding new art books are the highlights of these days. Meeting the Roar artists broadens her awareness of international art including COBRA, Naïve and folk art. Alfred Wallis, Sam Byrne and Henri Rousseau. Paul Klee, Picasso, Miro, tribal art, outsider art also are of particular interest at this time. The venues (including Roar Studios in Fitzroy) where Melbourne bands of the 1980s played were a meeting place for artists and musicians of the time. Travels – Japan, Philippines, Hong Kong.

#### 1983-84

Photography including The Moodists and The Feral Dinosaurs and photographic portrait of Nick Cave for *From her to eternity* album cover and *In the ghetto* single cover and tour posters.

Design work on *The Journey*, Peter Watkins' monumental 14.5-hour film on the systemic impact of the global nuclear regime.

#### 1985-86

Travels to Italy, for the first time, to meet family in Florence and Ravenna and to see galleries and museums. Settles in Paris, gains Certificat de Langue Française, Sorbonne University. Lives in the Marais district, walking distance to the Louvre, the Pompidou, and the newly opened Picasso Museum. Highlights from time spent in Paris are visiting the Musée de l'Homme and the Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Oceanie. Sees an exhibition of Dubuffet's last works mounted at the Pompidou Gallery following his death in 1985. Travels to Mexico and visits museums in Mexico City, sees folk-art in Ario de Rosales.

## 1987

Returns to Melbourne after the death of her father. Sees TV documentary on Ernabellla batiks – this view into another world in the Australian desert leaves a seed of curiosity. Views the recent acquisition Johnny Warangula's Bush tucker located at the top of the escalators at National Gallery of Victoria as well as the other Papunya boards from the 1970s. Sees memorable examples of artworks from remote Australia an outlet in Bourke St. Melbourne. Also visits a shop in Chapel St. Prahran which had sculptures from the Sepik and other regions of PNG – this was a unique chance to see such work.

Works at Kew Cottages (institution for people with intellectual disabilities). Teaching painting, drawing and screenprinting.

## 1988

Artist in residence Melbourne Moomba Festival, designed and hand screenprinted 300 banners for the parade.

## 1988-89

Artist in residence at Redletter Screen-print workshop, Brunswick

At this time produces commissioned posters with community groups and commissioned paintings. Produces *Music of Migration* poster for which she was a finalist in the Festival d'Affiches de Chaumont, Paris. This period informs the linear and single color approach later developed in her painting. Marina develops the use of structure, line and one color in these days of printmaking.

## 1990-92

Works on painting commissions, posters and screen prints.

Travels in India – particular interest in music, art and craft and architecture in the regional areas.

## 1992

January visits Alice Springs for the first time and goes to Haasts Bluff for two weeks. Delivers impromptu painting and printmaking workshops during visit.

Begins painting a series of small desert landscapes with gouache on paper.

DEET Skillshare screen printing tutor.

Commission - Australian Conservation Foundation Habitat cover painting

Artist in community painting project CAST (series of painting workshops with people with intellectual disabilities).

## 1992-97

Is invited to return to Haasts Bluff in August 1992 and with partner Wayne Eager they establish the (to be known as) Ikuntji Art Centre at Haasts Bluff. Encouraged by Wayne Eager she



Music of Migration poster



Landscape, screenprint



Harbour, screenprint, 199



Boats, screenprint, 199



ACF Habitat cover 1992

continues a routine of painting in the evenings and on the weekend. Gouaches on paper and oil on linen, small scenes based on the local environment of Aboriginal communities in the desert and surrounding mountain ranges and country. This was her first body of paintings.

## 1993

Commission – DHHCS painting for boardroom.

## 1994

Convenes the first painting workshop for *Kintore/Haasts Bluff Minyma Tjukurrpa Canvas Project* at Kintore (5 large works were painted).

## 1994/96

Pintupi/ Luritja Language Course, IAD Alice Springs.

## 1995

First solo exhibition of paintings held in small room at Roar Studios.

Convened second painting workshop for *Kintore/Haasts Bluff Minyma Tjukurrpa Canvas Project* at Haasts Bluff (resulting in 40 works on linen and paper). Curates *Kintore/Haasts Bluff Minyma Tjukurrpa Canvas Project* - an exhibition at Tandanya, Adelaide. Gatefolded brochure authored to accompany exhibition. Takes 14 women to Adelaide to celebrate the opening.

Authors *Ikuntji Paintings from Haasts Bluff 1992-94*, Marina Strocchi, IAD. Press (reprinted 2001).

## 1998

Second solo exhibition of works (Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne), small landscapes, gouaches and oils. Spends one month at Kintore and Kiwirrkurra as voluntary assistant to Wayne Eager who was working for Papunya Tula Artists.

Establishes a base and studio in Alice Springs.

Delivers paper Buying the Dreaming at 6th Melbourne Art Fair.

Curates Ikuntji Tjuta Touring 1999-2000 exhibition.

In conjunction with Sioux Garside and the Campbelltown.

Travels - Paris, Italy and Switzerland.

## 1999

Field worker for Papunya Tula Artists.

Launches *Ikuntji Tjuta Touring* exhibition and authors accompanying catalogue and education kit

Public Programs for *Ikuntji Tjuta Touring* exhibition

(Campbelltown, Mosman, Adelaide, Broken Hill, Moree Plains, Logan, Gladstone, Alice Springs, Hervey Bay).

#### 2000

Tutors art at Batchelor Institute, Alice Springs, introduces NPY Tjanpi workshops in association with Thisbe Purlich, to the sculpture unit of the art and craft course.



Marina Strocchi and Wayne Eager at home in Haasts Bluff,1993

Public Programs for Ikuntji Tjuta Touring exhibition.

Starts routine of painting workshops on remote communities.

#### 2001

Lecturer in art and craft, Batchelor Institute, Alice Springs.

Commences annual solo exhibitions.

Painting workshops Tennant Creek, Yuendumu.

Curates (with Thisbe Purich) A Bird in the Hand Gallery Gondwana

(Batchelor student exhibition), Alice Springs.

Awarded CWA Art Award Tennant Creek.

Painting commission - Environment Australia, Old Parliament House.

## 2002

Lecturer Art & Craft Batchelor Institute, Alice Springs.

Curates Kuka Gallery Gondwana (Batchelor student exhibition), Alice Springs.

#### 2003

Awarded Broken Hill Art award.

Lecturer Art & Craft Batchelor Institute, Alice Springs.

Painting workshops at Titjikala, Amata, Yuendumu.

## 2004

Delivers paper Bright colours in the desert.

NGV Public programs for Colour Power exhibition.

Painting workshop at Warlukurlangu Artists, Yuendumu.

#### 2006

Etching and lithography, Northern Editions, CDU, Darwin.

Produced a series of etchings and lithographs over two-week residency.

Painting workshop (two weeks) at Warlukurlangu Artists, Yuendumu.

Painting workshop (two weeks) at Irrunytju Artists, Wingellina.

Travelled - Italy, Paris, Bern, Czech Republic.

Authors Minyma Tjukurrpa: Kintore Haasts Bluff Canvas Project.

Dancing women to famous painters Artlink Volume 26 No 4.

#### 2007

Authors obituary Long Tom Tjapanangka, Art and Australia, Volume 44, No. 3. Travels to Bangkok with Wayne Eager, adopts Lumyai aged 6 and a half.

## 2008

Delivered paper Before painting: Kintore Batiks NGV symposium.

Across the desert: Aboriginal batik from Central Australia.

Authors obituary Daisy Napaltjarri Jugadai, Art and Australia, Volume 46, No. 1.

Authors Before Painting: Kintore Batiks, essay in Across The Desert, NGV.

Painting commission – Michellle de Kretser The Lost Dog cover.



Marina Strocchi 2005



Marina Strocchi and Wayne Eager, Alice Springs, 2006

Awarded Category 1: Best acrylic painting - Brisbane Rotary Art Award.

Authors Starting the Unstoppable: Women's painting at Haasts Bluff and Kintore with

Zara Stanhope, Australian Aboriginal Art, Issue 1.

Painting workshop at Ninuku Arts, Kalka, SA (Ananguku Arts project).

## 2010

Finalist: The Wynne.

Co-curates Tjukurpa Pulkatjara exhibition with Wayne Eager and art centre co-ordinators of APY Lands (a benchmark exhibition from the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands), at the South Australian Museum (Ananguku Arts project).

Delivers painting workshop at Oak Valley, SA (Ananguku Arts project).

## 2011

Finalist: The Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize.

Delivers paper Look both ways Lyceum Club, Melbourne.

Alice Springs Desert Festival artist.

Painting workshops at Iwantja Art Centre, Indulkana, SA, Yuelumu, N.T. and Coober Pedy, SA.

Travels Thailand - Bangkok and Kho Phanang, Chiang Mai.

## 2012

Highly Commended: The Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize.

Painting workshop at Ikuntji Arts, Haasts Bluff.

## 2013

Alice Springs Beanie Festival artist.

Painting commission - Michelle de Kretser Questions of Travel cover.

Painting workshop at Warlayirti Artists, Balgo.

Travels Thailand - Chiang Mai, Mae Sarieng, Chiang Dow, Bangkok.

## 2014

Painting workshop at Papunya Tjupi Arts, Papunya.

## References







Untitled VIII, 1992, gouache on paper, 19 x 27 cm, Haasts Bluff II, 1995, gouache on paper, Private Collection

74.5 x 94.5 cm, Private Collection

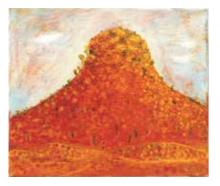
Mt Zeil, 1992, gouache on paper, 27 x 32 cm, Private Collection



Road to Avers Rock, 1992, gouache on paper, 19 x 27 cm, collection of the artist



Mereenie Range IV, 1996, gouache on paper, 31.5 x 53.5 cm, Private Collection



Memory Hill, 1997, oil on linen, 33 x 38 cm, Private Collection



The Cycle, 2012, acrylic on linen, 122 x 137 cm



Truckstop, 2004, acrylic on linen, 183 x 212 cm, Private Collection

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