

# PLENTY



Djurrutjini, Charlie  
*Yolngu houses*  
nd, lithograph, 63.3 x 48.3 cm

The notion of *Plenty*, in this context, refers to abundance, bounty and profusion. It is a word that can apply to the fecundity, both literal and cultural, as depicted by a number of artists in this exhibition. It also conjures up the notion of multiplicity, a state inherent to the printmaking process.

This exhibition of Indigenous prints highlights a number of recent acquisitions to the Margaret Carnegie Print Collection, along with a number of works which have been donated to the Collection through the Cultural Gifts Program. This recent bounty has increased the Indigenous representation in the Collection considerably and filled an important gap. The Margaret Carnegie Print Collection began with a donation in 1980 of a large number of original prints, produced from 1940 to 1976 by some of Australia's leading printmakers. The Collection has continued to grow and currently holds approximately 1300 original works by some of Australia's premier artists. These days no collection that purports to be a significant collection of contemporary Australian prints could exclude Indigenous printmaking. The concerted effort by Wagga Wagga Art Gallery to acquire Indigenous prints in 2007 and 2008 helps to redress this gap and to acknowledge a key trend in Australian printmaking.

Printmaking by Aboriginal artists began in the late 1960s when the writer and activist Kevin Gilbert produced linocuts, with the aim of preserving and promoting Indigenous culture<sup>1</sup>. Following this there were isolated instances of prints produced in Arnhem Land and the Tiwi Islands in the 1970s. Many urban based Indigenous artists made prints in the 1980s but it was not until the 1990s that printmaking really



Abdulla, Ian  
*Truck full of rabbits*  
2004, silkscreen, 96.4 x 63.3 cm



Nangala, Ningie Nanala  
*Lirrwardi*  
2007, etching, 101.4 x 81.2 cm



Milner, Boxer  
*Purkitji*  
2007, etching, 63.3 x 48.3 cm

took off for artists based in remote Aboriginal communities. Individuals such as Theo Tremblay, Helen Eager and Martin King contributed to the development of printmaking in Indigenous communities, but the real turning point came with the establishment of the printmaking facility at Northern Territory University in 1993, now called Northern Editions. This enabled artists to come to Darwin to produce prints with Basil Hall, and also facilitated printmaking in remote communities, through the input of Leon Stainer. In the last two decades there has been a boom in Indigenous printmaking and nearly every community art centre and major artist has ventured into printmaking in one form or another, often with spectacular results. Artists work across all forms of printmaking in their communities and now produce works of great sophistication and beauty with the aid of master printers.

*Plenty* contains Indigenous prints from across the country - from the Riverina to the Kimberley, from Arnhem Land to the western desert, from the Tiwi Islands to the Tanami. It represents major Indigenous artists including Kathleen Petyarre, Ian Abdulla, Judy Watson and Arone Raymond Meeks, and some artists who are less well known. There are the classic styles of Arnhem Land represented by David Malangi alongside the dot-dots of the desert by Balgo artists Lucy Yukenbarri and Boxer Milner. The screen print *Witchetty Dreaming* by the late Paddy Carroll Tjungurrayi, a prominent Western Desert artist, was produced in 1981 and represents one of the earliest prints made by an Aboriginal artist.

The exhibition contains some particularly beautiful works from the Haasts Bluff and Balgo communities. Lucy Yukenbarri is



Watson, Judy  
*Big brown world with three stupas*  
2005, etching, 73.5 x 63.3 cm



Jandany, Hector & Rish, Adam  
*Dewari (devil) on the Midday Show*  
1997, screenprint, 122.0 x 96.4 cm

one of the first wave of great Balgo artists who, with her husband Helicopter Tjungurrayi and Eubena Nampitjin, began painting canvases in the Tanami desert community in the 1980s. Their works, which depict their country and the Ancestral stories which criss-cross it, are highly sought after and translate especially well to the medium of screen printing. Ningie Nalala Nangala's etching *Lirrwardi*, is another fine example from the community. Marlee Naparrula's brightly coloured, dynamic screen prints made at Haasts Bluff, west of Alice Springs, express the bounty of the desert country and the women's experience of collecting bush tucker.

Some prints demonstrate how Indigenous artists incorporate new imagery and concepts within traditional frameworks. Brian Nyinawanga's wonderful screen print *Visions of a city*, recalls the first time he saw the Sydney skyline, including Centrepont Tower and Central Station, all rendered in the familiar cross-hatched, bark painting style used in his central Arnhem Land community. Hector Jandany and Adam Rish's screen print *Dewari (devil) on the Midday Show* also shows how Aboriginal artists respond to the pervasiveness of television culture by incorporating references to traditional stories within new formats and media. Aboriginal artists are not immune from the influence of popular culture and have always experimented with media and iconography.

Other prints reinforce Aboriginal artists' gifts for storytelling and representing their everyday pursuits with humour and wit. Ian Abdulla's *Truck full of Rabbits* illustrates a vignette from his life when he was flying in a plane, looking at the