



# Short St. Gallery



## RUSTY PETERS

<b>Birth Year</b>	1934
<b>Birth Place</b>	Barlinyin - Springvale Station
<b>Language Group</b>	Gija/ Kimberley Kriol
<b>Region</b>	East Kimberley

### Biography

Rusty Peters is a senior Gija man of Juwurrú skin. His bush name Dirji refers to dingo pups looking out of a hole at the sunrise. He was born under a Warlagarri or Supplejack tree on Springvale Station south west of Turkey Creek the same day as his jimarri or agemate Charlie McAdam. His spirit came from a crocodile his father had killed when his mother became pregnant.

He grew up on Springvale learning traditional law and working as a stockman and at other things such as welding fences and stockyards. When his father was killed in a tragic riding accident at Roses Yard, the family moved to Mabel Downs where he became renowned as a horse breaker. He lived for some time at Nine Mile reserve at Wyndham after the introduction of award wages forced people off stations but then moved to Turkey Creek where with other senior Gija artists such as Hector Jandany and George Mung-Mung he helped start the school.

As part of the Gija cultural program, he took groups of boys out bush, showed them how to make spears and hunt and to make a camp without matches or blankets in the traditional way. He also worked in the Gija language maintenance program. In 1989 he moved to Kununurra where he was employed at Waringarri Aboriginal Arts as an assistant. He was a long time friend of Rover Thomas, caring for him on most of the trips he made in the later part of his life. He made prints and did some painting while working for Waringarri Arts.

He moved to Crocodile Hole when Freddie Timms based the Jirrawun Aboriginal Arts group there in 1997 and began to paint on large canvases. His detailed knowledge of the land and stories from Springvale and neighbouring Moolabulla stations is reflected in distinctive paintings in traditional red and yellow ochres and black charcoal. While recognisably part of the 'Turkey Creek' style the intricate curves mapping the country and the dark caves and rivers in the



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pictures are particular to Rusty's work. In early 2000 he collaborated with Peter Adsette, a white artist from the Northern Territory University. Each artist completed seven canvases taking turns to paint in response to each other. These paintings were shown at a joint exhibition "Two Laws, One Big Spirit" at 24Hour Art, Darwin in September 2000. The Neminuwarlin dance group performed at the exhibition's closing ceremony. This acclaimed exhibition toured Australia during 2002-2004.

Rusty's painting Chinaman Garden Massacre, which tells the story of yet another tragic piece of East Kimberley history, was purchased by the Art Gallery of New South Wales in March 2001. This painting together with another work by Rusty's, Blackfella Murdered in Australia, were included in the Blood on the Spinifex exhibition at the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne between December 2002 and March 2003. His eight panel painting 'Waterbrain' was acquired by the Art Gallery of NSW in February 2002 and featured in their True Stories: Art of the East Kimberley in early 2003.

Rusty Peters has returned to paint with Warmun Art Centre in 2010 after the closure of Jirrawun Art.

In 2015, Rusty was a finalist in the 32nd Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award, and in 2017, three of his paintings were featured in Defying Empire, the exhibition of the 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial at the National Gallery of Australia Canberra, and later at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. In 2018, at age 84, Rusty painted a 5-metre triptych depicting his inimitable East Kimberley night starry skies over Darrajayin, his ancestral land. The beautiful and moving painting was acquired by ARTBANK, an entity of the Australian Government specialised in loaning and rotating the works of Australian artists in private and public institutions.

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019	Mabel Juli & Rusty Peters "Stories of Gamkiny" -RAFT Artspace, Alice Springs,NT
2016	Rusty Peters - Recent Paintings - William Mora Gallery, Melbourne
2012	Rusty Peters - Seva Frangos Art, Perth, WA
2004	Long Fella Standing Up - William Mora Galleries Melbourne
2003	Strong Language - Grant Pirrie, Sydney
2002	Water Brain - GrantPirrie Sydney
2002	Rusty Peters - Recent Paintings William Mora Galleries Melbourne Water Brain – GrantPirrie Sydney, NSW
1999	Kimberley Stories - William Mora Galleries Melbourne



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## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 Desert River Sea, Art Gallery of Western Australia - A landmark exhibition of Kimberley Aboriginal Art held at the Art Gallery of WA in February 2019.
- 2019 Beyond the surface of the Dreaming - Warmun & Jirrawun - Aboriginal Signature Estrangin gallery, Brussels
- 2018 Warmun At Twenty Exhibition - A group exhibition celebrating 20 years of Warmun Art Centre, Nancy Sever Gallery, Canberra
- 2017 When The Sky Fell - Legacies of the 1967 Referendum - Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth, Western Australia
- 2017 Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial - National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- 2016 Gravity (and wonder) - Penrith Regional Art Gallery, Sydney
- 2015 LIVELY: New Prints from Warmun Arts - Nomad Arts, Darwin NT
- 2015 Recent paintings by senior Gija artists from Western Australia - Nancy Sever Gallery, Canberra, ACT
- 2014 The world is not a foreign land - Ian Potter Museum of Art and NETS Victoria touring exhibition
- 2014 Warmun: Gija Contemporary Art of Western Australia - Harvey Art Projects, USA
- 2013 Gija Manambarram Jimerawoon (Gija Senior Law People Forever) - Australian Embassy Paris, France
- 2012 Alice Springs Art Prize - Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
- 2012 Rusty Peters - Seva Frangos Art, Perth, WA
- 2012 Our Music - Sydney Conservatorium of Music, NSW
- 2011 Where Knowledge Comes From - Gadfly Gallery; Perth Concert Hall, Perth, WA
- 2003 True stories: Art of the East Kimberley - Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 2003 Jirrawun jazz - Raft Artspace, Darwin
- 2002 Blood on the spinifex - The Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne
- 2002 Jirrawun artists - William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
- 2002 Rhapsodies in country – Grant Pirrie at Art Miami, US
- 2001 Four men, four paintings - Raft Artspace, Darwin
- 2000 Two Laws One Big Spirit with Peter Adsett - 24Hour Art, Darwin (Toured throughout Australia in 2002 - 2004. Opening in Wellington New Zealand August 2004)
- 1999 My country - Northern Territory University Gallery, Darwin
- 1998 Jirrawun artists from Crocodile Hole - Gemma Stowe, Perth
- 1998 Jirrawun Aboriginal artists - Martin Browne Fine Art, Sydney

## COLLECTIONS



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ART GALLERY OF N.S.W  
BANKS COLLECTION, USA  
NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, A.C.T  
ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, P

## AWARDS

2017 Fremantle Art Centre Print Prize Finalist, 2017  
2015 32nd Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award

## COMMISSIONS

2018 Artbank Collection special Commission (ThreeNyawana in Yarity Country Triptych)  
2004 Rothwell, N. 'Under the Skin' The Weekend Australian Review, 12-13 June 2004  
2003 Watson, K, True stories: Art of the East Kimberley, ArtGallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2003  
2003 Taylor, R, 'Blood on the spinifex', Art MonthlyAustralia, no. 159, 2003, pp. 28-31.  
2003 Kofod, F, 'Blood on the spinifex', The World of Antiques and Art, Feb 2003, p. 193.  
2002 Oliver, T, M Langton & F Kofod, Blood on the Spinifex, University of Melbourne.  
2002 Oliver, T, Rhapsodies in country, Grant Pirrie, Sydney, 2002.  
2001 Lee, M. A. article in Art and Artists in Australia March 2001  
2000 Kofod, F. 'The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture, Oxford University Press, 2000 p 671  
1999 Rusty Peters Kimberley Stories, solo exhibition catalogue, William Mora Galleries  
1995 McAdam, Charlie, Boundary Lines, McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, Victoria, 1995