



Short St. Gallery

ALISON BURGU



Born 1966
Language Group Ngarinyin
Region West Kimberley

BIOGRAPHY

Alison is the second eldest daughter of Mowanjum artist and elder Stateman, Roger Burgu. As a six year old, Alison appeared in Michael Edol's award winning film *LaiLai*, which focuses on traditional Aboriginal Culture in the Wororra homelands near doubtful bay. Alison was born in Derby hospital and educated in Derby, completing her secondary education in the early 1980's. She undertook work experience as a nurse's aide and later a teacher's aide, before securing premanent employment at the Holy Rosary School as a teacher's aide.

She says of her eight year experience, "I learnt how things worked. How to work with teachers and other aides, I was going to conferences in Broome, expanding myself and learning from others, learning how to make programs for children and how to teach. I made my own work for the children. It gave me a lot of skills. Nursing also helped me to care for the old, children and others in my community."

When Alison had her daughter, she left town. Through the Community Employment Development Project, Alison was offered the opportunity to make a contribution to her community and she entered the project as a trainee pre-school teacher.

Alison describes her first painting experience as "not good". She adds, "I couldn't draw anything. No good at drawing animals or Wandjina. Just couldn't do it properly. I would look at other people's work and would just keep doing it... I was making mistakes, the hands were too small, the head was too small. Just kept going, doing it again and again."

When the community learnt to paint at the Mowanjum Hall, Alison learnt to apply 'different backgrounds and ways to use the paint.' She adds, "I used old people's style first (like in the caves) and now I have improved, and have my own way. I am satisfied where I am."

"when my father and uncle were alive I heard lots of stories. I put them in the paintings."



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Stories were important. They taught us about culture. We can talk to our children about it. Culture needs to be strong in this community and our families."

Alison's father, Rodger Burgu, was a church minister for the Mowanjum community. "He did a lot of work with the people, speaking out for the community, speaking to Government.

I was very close to him. I learnt from him, things that are very close to my heart like showing fairness."

In the book 'Mowanjum- 50 years community history', a self published history of Mowanjum artist about the Mowanjum Community, Roger Burgu writes, "Wudu is a discipline for the kids. If a kid goes to town, they want that lollie or cool drink. In wudu, that's the way we train our kids. We can put smoke on the kids. That's the Wandjina giving is that thing for our kids."

Alison says the Wandjina is "like God. The Wandjina and God are alike. The culture and law together. That is my belief. In me there are two special parts. I will always keep these.

Meaningful to me, you know " Alison is also a Christian; "I understand both sides"

The Wandjina helps us lead our lives in a good way. our teenagers are reading about it, growing up with their culture. The knowledge put in their minds, settles them down, especially the young teenagers. It makes me happy to see them accept the meaning. We teach them about their lives by touching their hearts and stopping the foolishness."

Alison has visited her grandmother's country, Worrorra, where she visited the Wandjinas in the caves. Alison remembers "I felt right at home and relaxed. I remember my grandfather used to paint the Wandjinas, the paint had faded and he would repaint them. It's old country and the old spirit. We are looking after him (the wandjina). To go to the caves you need to have an old person with you, someone like Donny (Woolagoodja) You can't just go there."

Alison helps out at the annual Mowanjum Festival helping children make totems, which are used as part of the ceremonial dress at the festival. "In annual events like these, culture is passed down. We are proud of what we are doing at the art centre. As parents, we can see that the children know what they are doing and they know the meaning. They can see and feel it."

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2012 Wandjinas Darwin Art Fair

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016 Darwin Art Fair

2016 Kimberley Art Prize



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2016 Mowanjum Festival

2015 Darwin Art Fair

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2012 Shinju Matsuri Wandjina Budda Budding- Broome 6 Gallery.

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2008 Shinju Matsuri Wandjina Budda Budding – Broome 6 Gallery

2008 Kimberley Art Prize – Derby, W.A

2008 Mowanjum Festival

2008 Cultural Connections - Artja Art Gallery, Perth

2008 Spirit of the Wandjina- Shinju Matsuri Exhibition Broome 6 Gallery

2007 Mowanjum Festival

2007 Arralululai Broome 6 Gallery

2007 Mowanjum Exhibition Woodford Dreaming Festival, QLD

2006 Spirit of the Wandjina - Governor Stirling Tower, Perth

2006 Power of the Wandjina Macquarie University Sydney

2005 Spirit of the Wandjina Broome 6 Gallery

2005 Keeping the Wandjinias Fresh- Exhibition and book launch - Alexander Library Perth

2005 Mowanjum Festival

2005 Mowanjum Exhibition Festival of the Dreaming Woodford, QLD

2004 Mowanjum Exhibition Sydney Dreaming Festival

2004 Mowanjum Festival - Mowanjum Community

2003 Mowanjum Festival - Mowanjum Community

2003 Spirit of the Wandjina, Harvey Bay QLD

2002 Visions from the Cave Sun Picture Theatre, Broome

2002 Mowanjum Festival - Mowanjum Community 2001 Recent Works - Melbourne Spirit of the Wandjina Gallery



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2001 Mowanjum Festival - Mowanjum Community

2000 The Art of the Wandjina - Sydney Olympics Exhibition, NSW 2000 Spirit of the Wandjina
- Compass Travel Postonja Slovenia

2000 Mowanjum Festival - Mowanjum Community

2000 Spirit of the Wandjina Exhibition - Melbourne

1999 5th Telstra Art Award Museum and Art Gallery of the NT- Darwin

1999 Power of the Wandjina Telstra National Headquarters - Melbourne

1999 Recent Works Spirit of the Wandjina Gallery - Melbourne

1999 Power of the Wandjina - Governor Stirling Tower, Perth

1999 Spirit of the Wandjina Exhibition - Governor Place, Sydney

1999 Mowanjum Festival - Mowanjum Community

1998 Spirit of the Wandjina - Telstra National Headquarters, Melbourne

1998 Mowanjum Festival - Mowanjum Community

1998 Mowanjum Wandjina Art – Matzo's Broome

1998 Spirit of the Wandjina – Grosvenor Place, Sydney

1997 Mowanjum Festival – Mowanjum Community

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2010 Mowanjum 50 year Community History Mowanjum Artists Defend Their Art in Sydney,
Arts Backbone & The Observer, Jenny Wright

2008/2009 KAA collective of Kimberley artists - featured artist

2008 WA Tourism Web site - featured artist