

Short St. Gallery

P. Boorljoonngali Thomas

Born	1933 - 2018
Language Group	Gija, Kimberley Kriol
Ngarrangarni/Totem	Black Cockatoo, Kingfisher
Skin	Nagarra
Region	East Kimberley

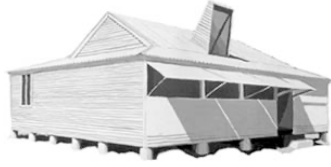


Biography

P. Thomas was a Gija woman of Nagarra skin whose bush name, Boorljoonngali, means 'big rain coming down with lots of wind'. She was born at a place called Riya on the Turner River, south east of the Bungle-Bungles. When Boorljoonngali was young she worked on Turner Station looking after poultry, gardening, grinding salt and carting water from the well but often preferred to run away into the bush with the old women. She loved walking all over the country with her grandmother and the other old women, hunting, collecting dingo scalps and looking for gold. She married Joe Thomas from Rugun, Crocodile Hole and lived there for many years.

She began painting when Freddie Timms set up Jirrawun Arts at Crocodile Hole. Her work depicting Dreaming places and bush tucker from the Crocodile Hole area as well as the country around the middle reaches of the Ord and Turner rivers where she was born, achieved almost immediate success. She was represented in the Telstra Art award exhibition in 1999 with a stunning picture Boornbem Goorlem, Hot Water Spring II done in black and a pinkish red colour made by mixing red and white ochre. The spring is in a gorge with the open sky shown as a plain expanse of paint above the water and rock faces. Other works include Bush Honey - 'Sugarbag' Dreaming at Dry Swamp in which the dark cells of the hives float on a plain ground, and Loomoogoo Blue Tongue Lizard Dreaming in which a prominent landscape feature is seen from the side.

Boorljoonngali's work has been acquired by a number of collectors and galleries including a special focus purchase of five paintings by the Western Australian Art Gallery in 2000. Her painting 'The Escape' done as part of a series of paintings relating to massacre stories by Jirrawun artists intended to be shown together as "Blood on the Spinifex" was exhibited at the Seventeenth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award Exhibition in 2000 and was highly commended. It was purchased as part of the MAGNT Telstra collection. This image was used as the poster and catalogue cover for the exhibition at the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne between December 2002 and March 2003. An eight panel



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series on the same subject was shown at Raft Artspace in Darwin in April 2002. This was purchased by the Western Australian Art Gallery in 2003. Boorjooonngali was also a singer and dancer with the Neminuwarlin Performance Group in its production of *Fire, Fire Burning Bright* which premiered at the Perth International Arts Festival in February 2002 and opened the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts the State Theatre of Victoria in October 2002. She sang the haunting *Warnalirri* with Peggy Patrick on the second half of the group's CD released in 2002 during PIAF.

In 2017, Boorjooonngali's work created during the Jirrawun era was featured in a special exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia during the TARNANTHI festival; the same eight panel *Gemerre* series was later featured in RAFT Artspace's special duo show, featuring her works and those of Peggy Patrick in Alice Springs (in June 2018). Boorjooonngali later created a beautiful painting reminiscing her sisters who were stolen from their birth country and placed in Wyndham, in a painting titled "My Stolen Sisters from Gija Country," which was a finalist in the Art Gallery of NSW's 2018 Wynne Prize.

The great artist attended her last Warmun artist weekly Tuesday meeting on Tuesday 30th October 2018, where she enjoyed the special birthday cake marking the 20th Anniversary of Warmun Art Centre with some fellow artists and friends.

She passed away peacefully at Kununurra Hospital on Monday Nov 5th 2018 in the late afternoon.

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Themes

Country in the middle reaches of the Ord and Turner Rivers
Dreaming places around Turner River Station country
Traditional life practices of Aboriginal people prior to white settlement
Traditional Ngarranggarni (Dreaming) stories

Solo Exhibitions

2018 Phyllis Thomas Solo Exhibition – Koskela Gallery, Sydney NSW
2019 The Escape – RAFT Artspace, Darwin

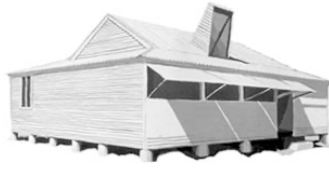
Group Exhibitions

2021 *Gemerre* and *Purnululu* – Olsen Annexe, Sydney, NSW
2021 TarraWarra Biennial 2021: *Slow Moving Waters* – TarraWarra Museum of Art, VIC
2020 *Whenua Ukaipo* / United Nations 75 – Public Trust Hall, Te Whanganui-a-tara
Wellington



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- 2020 Nga Iwi Moemoea – Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland, NZ
- 2020 Robert & Janice Hunter Collection – Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, NSW
- 2020 The Ochre Story – Japingka Aboriginal Art, Fremantle, WA
- 2020 Badem Mawoondool – Red Ochre, White Ochre – Aboriginal Contemporary, Sydney
- 2020 Matriarchs 2020 – Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin
- 2019 "Connection to Country" Fundraiser Exhibition, Form Gallery, Perth WA – Environmental Defenders Office of WA Exhibition
- 2019 Desert River Sea, Art Gallery of Western Australia – A Landmark Exhibition of Kimberley Aboriginal Art held at Art Gallery of WA
- 2019 Beyond the surface of the Dreaming – Warmun & Jirrawun – Aboriginal Signature Estrangin Gallery, Brussels
- 2018 Environs Kimberley Art Auction – Gallows Gallery, WA
- 2018 Jooroob "Coming Together" Exhibition – Warmun Art and Jirrawun Artworks curated by Nichola Dare, Aboriginal Contemporary
- 2018 Art for Wellbeing, Boab Health Services – Kununurra WA
- 2018 Moon Dreaming & Other Stories – Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland, NZ
- 2018 Peggy Patrick and Phyllis Thomas: Works from the Jirrawun Studio – RAFT Artspace
- 2018 Dream Time Mine – FORM Gallery Perth, curated by Kate Alida Mullen
- 2018 Wynne Prize Finalist, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW
- 2017 Spiritual essence of the Earth with Warmun artists - Aboriginal Signature Estrangin gallery Brussels
- 2017 For the Women - Tandanya, Adelaide
- 2016 Telling Tales: Excursions in narrative form - Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia
- 2015 Gamkiny: Constellations of Meaning - Short Street Gallery, Broome, WA
- 2014 Gamkiny: Constellations of Meaning - Melbourne VIC
- 2014 Warmun: Gija Contemporary Art of Western Australia - Harvey Art Projects, USA
- 2014 Warmun Aboriginal Art - Art Images Gallery, Adelaide, SA
- 2013 Nagarra & Naangari - Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
- 2012 Earth: Ochre Painting from Warmun - Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland, NZ
- 2011 Where Knowledge Comes From - Gadfly Gallery, Perth, WA
- 2011 (Re) - Currents of Warrambany - Gecko Gallery, Broome, WA
- 2010 Ochres of the Kimberley - Tunbridge Gallery, Margaret River, WA
- 2010 Surface of Our Dreaming - Paintings by Gija Women - Chapman Gallery, Canberra, ACT
- 2010 Warmun - Our Earth Our Story - Art Images Gallery, Norwood, SA
- 2010 Putipula Gallery - Noosa, QLD
- 2010 Big Country - Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs, NT
- 2010 Framed Gallery - Darwin, NT
- 2009 Warmun Ochres: Rich Earth - Gadfly Gallery, Perth, WA



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2007	Warmun Snapshot, Aboriginal Art Fair - Darwin, NT
2007	Dog Dreamings - Seva Frangos Art, Perth, WA
2006	Bungle Bungles, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA
2006	Warmun Arts - Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, WA
2005	Warmun Women's Show, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
2005	Gija: Across The Border, Raft Artspace, Darwin, NT
2005	Warmun Group Show, Framed Gallery, Darwin, NT
2005	Waterhole Country, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA
2005	New Work From Warmun, Gadfly Gallery, Perth, WA
2004	Big Country Show, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs, NT
2002	Warmun Group Show, Flinders University Art Museum, SA
2001	Beyond Wings, Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, SA
2001	Short on Size, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA
2001	Ochres, Short St Gallery, Broome, WA
2001	New Paintings from Warmun Art Centre, Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
2000	The Seventeenth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award Exhibition - Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Darwin, NT
1999	My Country - Northern Territory University, Darwin, NT
1999	New art from the Kimberley - William Mora Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
1999	The Seventeenth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award Exhibition - Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Darwin
1998	Jirrawun Artists - William Mora Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
1998	Jirrawun Artists from Crocodile Hole - Gemma Stowe, Perth, WA

Awards

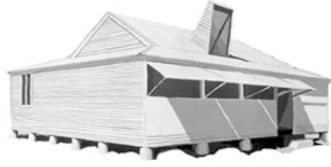
2015	32nd Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
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Bibliography

1999	Ngalangangpum Jarrakpu Purum: Mother and Child, Margaret Stewart, Magabala Books, Broome, WA
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Collections

ARTBANK
ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, DARWIN, NT
ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY, NSW
ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, PERTH, WA
ART GALLERY OF QUEENSLAND, QLD
BROADMEADOWS PUBLIC HOSPITAL COLLECTION, MELBOURNE, VIC
CHARTELL COLLECTION, NZ



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COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE COLLECTION, LONDON, UK
EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTION, PERTH, WA
FLINDERS UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM, SAHARLAND COLLECTION, NSW
HARVEY WAGNER COLLECTION, USA
JONES COLLECTION, SYDNEY
KAPLAN COLLECTION, USA
KERRY STOKES COLLECTION
LAVERTY COLLECTION, SYDNEY, NSW
MUSEUM & ART GALLERY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, NT
NORTHERN TERRITORY UNIVERSITY COLLECTION, DARWIN, NT
NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK
VOITURON COLLECTION, BELGIUM