



Short St. Gallery



IVY LAIDLAW

Born 1945
Language Group Ngaanyatjarra
Region Irruntyju (Wingellina) WA

BIOGRAPHY

Ivy Laidlaw, a Ngaanyatjarra artist, was born around 1945 at a rock hole called Walpapulka (Mt. Aloysius) near Irruntyju. Her mother was crippled when Ivy was a young girl and unable to care for her, so Ivy and her sister spent much of their early childhood at the mission at Warburton to the west of her traditional homeland. Ivy's mother was also cared for by the mission at Old Well. Ivy spent some time at school and learnt English, hymns and Bible stories. She has very fond memories of her childhood and Mr Nash who she describes as a "good man". While living at the mission Ivy's job was to milk the goats. She would get up early each morning and get milk for all the kids.

She frequently went back to her country with her extended family where she learnt the Tjukurpa and how to survive in the desert. When she grew up Ivy worked in the mission bakery and clinic. She met her first husband at the mission school, Henry Laidlaw. She was his younger second wife. Traditionally it was not uncommon for desert men to have 2 or 3 wives. On his death Ivy moved to Blackstone. This is also a traditional cultural practice; to move to a new place when someone passes. Blackstone was a camp of wiltja's (makeshi shelters) with no real infrastructure.



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There was no clinic, the only medical service was when Sister Baker (Margaret Hewi) would visit from Docker River. Ivy's sister was epileptic and needed medical assistance at times which inspired Ivy to lobby for medical services and a clinic in the community.

Later Ivy moved to Irrunytju where she married Patju Presley. Ivy was a founding member of Irrunytju Arts and is a highly regarded sculptor, weaver and storyteller. As well as developing

her own art practice and participating in exhibitions, Ivy worked at Irrunytju Arts supporting the cultural development program and bush trips. Ivy ran workshops and taught emerging artists how to weave, where to find organic material; and how to make dyes, resins and traditional medicines. Some of Ivy's paintings depict important Tjukurpa relating to women's business which are carefully stored and only taken out to teach the young women. Other's illustrate dramatic Tjukurpa narratives, structured like fables with strong moral overtones.

In the summer of 2013 Ivy and four other women were stranded in the desert when a trip to country to get wood for artefact making went wrong. The car they were driving broke down in a remote and isolated spot leaving them without food and water. The story of their survival for five days was the inspiration for an exhibition and film "Kapi Ungkupayi - He gave us water" which was part of Tarnanthi festival in Adelaide in October 2015. Ivy is currently living in Tjuntjuntjara Community with her husband Patju Presley who is family to the Spinifex mob.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 MINYMA, Aboriginal and Pacific Arts, Sydney, NSW
- 2019 Kungakarungkalpa, Short St, Gallery, Broome, WA
- 2018 Wüste – Meer – Schöpfermythen, Artkelch at Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Koln, Germany
- 2017 Tjanpi Desert Weavers "Fingers and Petals - The Handmade Flower Show".
- 2015 Kapi Ungkupayi - He gave us water. SASA Gallery University of SA, Tarnanthi Festival, Adelaide

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

- 2017 ARTKELCH, Robyn Kelch: Wüste – Meer – Schöpfermythen, Exhibition catalogue, Freiburg, Germany