

GOOD STRONG POWERFUL



Adrian Robertson Jangala, *Yalpirakinu* 2010, Acrylic paint on linen

Good Strong Powerful is an exhibition of paintings that celebrate the individuality, diversity and vision of ten Indigenous artists from three innovative Northern Territory art studios.

Good Strong Powerful offers students a unique insight into the lives of these contemporary artists and the world in which they live.

Good Strong Powerful challenges Western notions of disability and acknowledges the major contribution these artists make to the artistic and cultural life of their people and the broader community.

The Education Kit provides an introduction to the exhibition from an educational perspective.



Index

Acknowledgments	3
Where the Artists Live - Map	4
Community Support	5
Ability and Disability	6
Catalogue Essay - Dr Sylvia Kleinert	7
Artists - Information	9
Adrian Robertson Tjangala	9
Alfonso Puautjimi	10
Billy Benn Perrurle	11
Billy Kenda Tjampitjinpa	12
Dion Beasley	13
Estelle Munkanome	14
Kukula McDonald	15
Lance James	16
Lorna Kantilla	17
Peggy Jones Napangardi	18
Internet Links	19
Curriculum Links	19
Indigenous Knowledge & Protocols	20

Artists

From Tiwi Islands

- Lorna Kantilla
- Alfonso Puautjimi
- Estelle Munkanome

From Alice Springs

- Billy Benn Perrurle
- Kukula McDonald
- Billy Kenda
- Adrian Robertson
- Lance James

From Tennant Creek

- Peggy Jones Napangardi
- Dion Beasley

Acknowledgements

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Education Kit

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GPO Box 535 Darwin NT 0801
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The Artists

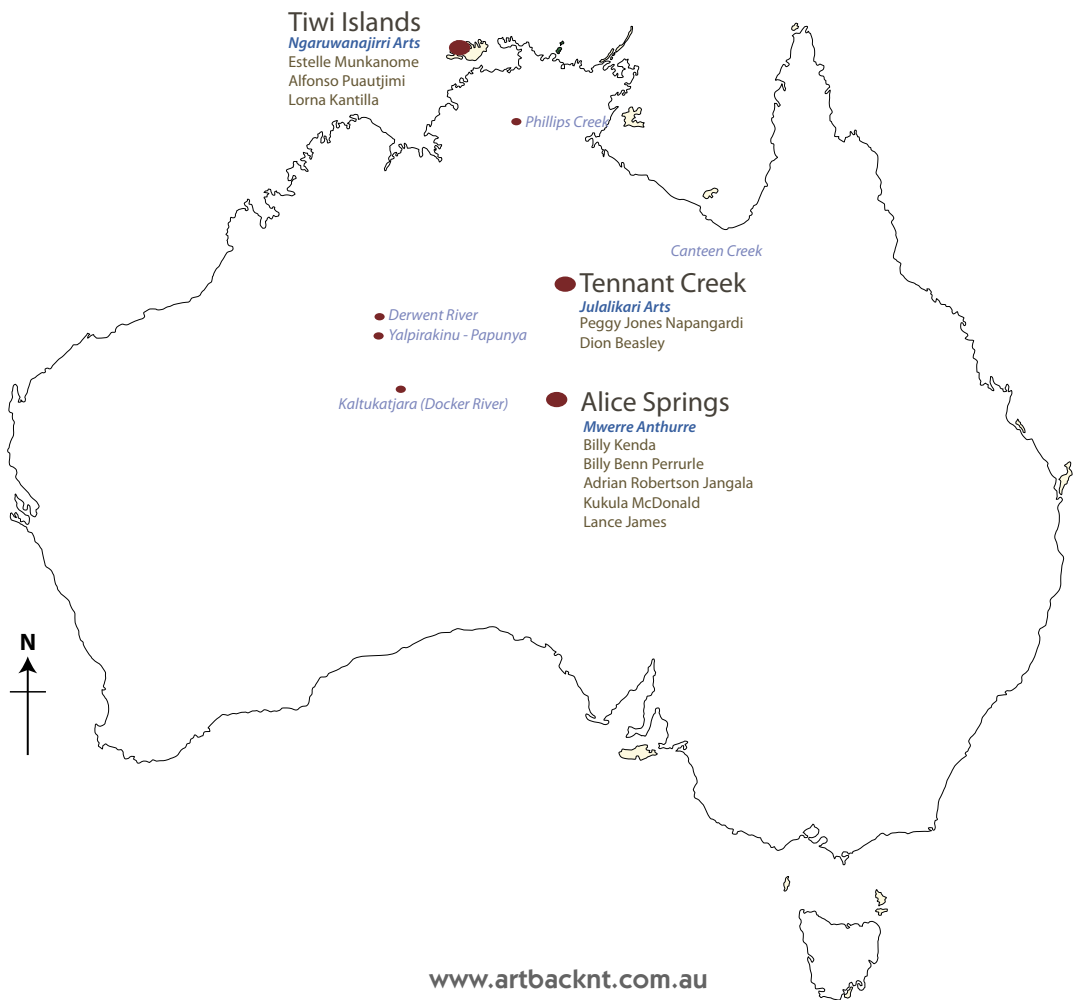
The *Good Strong Powerful* artists are creative pioneers of their art form who are mostly self-taught and make art for the love of doing so. In each case they have both considerable artistic abilities coupled with either a physical or intellectual disability.

Every artist is different. People get interested in making particular kinds of art for many reasons. Different art forms offer different opportunities, challenges and rewards. Artists can depict their lives in many different ways.

Where the Artists Live

The *Good Strong Powerful* artists work at art centres based in towns and communities throughout the Northern Territory.

Many communities in north and central Australia are isolated and lack the resources others take for granted. However, they are also places of enormous creative out-put and spiritual connections. Each artist has strong connections with their homeland, which are represented in their depictions of country, animals, people and daily life.



Community Support

Making art is a way of discovering new things and making life meaningful. People with disabilities are often restricted from opportunities to make art. They often rely on carers and special institutions to assist them in the things they like to do.

The artists in this exhibition are supported by various community organisations and individuals. Support includes physical support, artistic support, career support and financial management.

Ngaruwanajirri is located on Bathurst Island (Tiwi Islands) and has been operating since 1994. Ngaruwanajirri (pronounced Naru-wuna-jiri) has a reputation for producing unique and high quality art. Up to sixteen Tiwi artists work at the centre, including Good Strong Powerful artists Lorna Kantilla, Alfonso Puautjimi and Estelle Munkanome.

Mwerre Anthurre (pronounced Mor-an-durra) is a professional art studio based in Alice Springs and is run through Bindi Inc (a not-for-profit organization which supports people with disabilities). Established in 2000, Mwerre Anthurre Artists (meaning very good or very proper) has received recognition through a series of high profile exhibitions nationally. Mwerre Anthurre Artists are represented in collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales and National Gallery of Victoria. The artists include Billy Benn Perrurle, who was the winner of the 34th Alice Prize in 2006, Kukula McDonald, Billy Kenda, Adrian Robertson and Lance James.

Julalikari Arts in Tennant Creek was established in 1994. One of the most prominent artists to emerge from Julalikari Arts is Peggy Jones Napangardi, whose bold, expressive and colourful paintings of country are featured in this exhibition.

In 2007/08, Julalikari Arts held printmaking workshops in conjunction with Arts Access Darwin and Artback NT for emerging Canteen Creek artist Dion Beasley. These workshops introduced Dion to an innovative way of making art, appealing to audiences and helping establish his reputation as an emerging artist. Dion's prints toured nationally in 2010 and 2011.

Ability and Disability

The Encarta English Dictionary describes the word disabled as people with an ‘inability to perform some or all of the tasks of daily life’. In Western societies it has been common for people with disabilities to be removed from the community or placed on the margins of society.

Most Aboriginal communities are inclusive toward people with disability. The Good Strong Powerful artists are people with disability, who are integrated within their communities through kinship, cultural activities and social participation and are valued in the community for particular qualities, leadership and talents.

As explained above, the title of the exhibition Good Strong Powerful refers to the qualities displayed by the artists through their work, and the strength they bring to cultural life as role models. Indigenous leadership is a key element of the exhibition, as the artists strongly represent their culture, country and traditions through their art.

Appreciating art by people with disability is about understanding and celebrating the diversity which exists among all Australians. Art is a universal language, a means to express observations, concerns and feelings. Art unites people with different abilities. Having a disability in one area may heighten abilities in another. For example, Dion Beasley demonstrates an acute and intimate understanding and observation of dogs: their behaviour, characteristics, personalities and social hierarchy.

Disability can affect people different ways. It

is not always easy to tell when someone has a disability. People can experience a disability for a short time, or through their entire life. People of all ages and from all parts of the community can experience a disability. Disabilities can affect the body or mind including seeing and hearing, intellectual capacity, brain injuries and degenerative and psychiatric disorders.

Over the last century Australian society has changed significantly towards recognising the rights of individuals. All people have hopes, dreams, disappointments and achievements. It is a basic human desire to express these things in a unique and independent way and to make individual choices about life.

Through this change societies are learning to focus on ability rather than disability. Language is changing to more positively reflect differences and avoid labelling people. Australian laws such as the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) recognise the barriers that can work against people with disability, and protect these people’s rights. Other laws have been established to ensure that all people have access to the same opportunities and the same services and benefits within the community.

Significant changes have taken place in education, employment and technology for people with disabilities. People with disabilities are now able to have greater participation in community life. Sporting achievements have been celebrated both nationally and internationally, while creative diversity has been expressed through the arts.

Catalogue Essay - Dr Sylvia Kleinert

Good Strong Powerful brings recognition to a new direction in Indigenous art. In the remarkably rich field of contemporary Indigenous art, a new current of creativity has emerged that has already won wide acclaim. As with all art movements it is the artists who have taken the initiative. They have been supported by specialist art studios that run according to best practice. In creating value for this art it is important to place artists with disabilities, and their work, in a social and cultural context.

The aim of this exhibition is not to celebrate otherness through the category of Outsider Art but rather to acknowledge the difference and diversity of these artists within a broader, more inclusive definition of contemporary Indigenous art. These artists are neither marginalised nor outsiders. Their artistic truth stems from the same deep connections to people and place that is the wellspring of Aboriginal culture. As part of that moral and social order they belong to a society where everyone is allowed to do and be, without any labels or categories. Where, as artists, they are recognised for who they are and the contribution they make to the cultural life of their communities.

Offering an inviting workspace for Tiwi, Ngaruwanajirri artists' cooperative has been operating at Wurrumiyanga (formerly Nguui) on Bathurst Island since 1994. Artists at Ngaruwanajirri have each developed their own particular subject matter and personal painting style. Yet they all draw on the same visual iconography: designs and patterning in ochre that resonate with the Tiwi practice of body painting (jilamara). Artworks by Lorna Kantilla are deeply introspective, comprised entirely of delicate, free-flowing circular and linear forms. Estelle Munkanome's paintings of concentric circles and intersecting forms evoke the woven baskets (tunga)

and carved burial poles (tutini) of Tiwi culture. Alfonso Puautjimi's images of houses, aeroplanes, cars and dinghies offer a beguiling insight into his contemporary world. In recent work Alfonso uses his own individual technique: first building up layers of ochre to create textured patterns then redefining his bold, deft forms with a strong, black outline.

At Mwerre Anthurre Artists based at Bindi Inc. in Alice Springs, the success of the workshop has formed around the single, inspirational figure of Billy Benn Perrurle. Around 2000 Billy Benn, a long-time employee of Bindi, picked out a corner of the workshop for himself and began painting his country on scavenged strips of plastic foam and offcuts from a local timber mill. Through his drive and determination Billy Benn Perrurle has taken Bindi in its own special direction. As mentor to an emerging group of artists Billy Benn Perrurle highlights the role art has played as a form of social action through its contribution to social cohesion and well being.

For artists living away from their communities, 'painting from memory' is a way of expressing their nostalgia for country and home, recapturing its emotional and cultural affinities. Benn's childhood memories are of being taught to paint by Mrs Mark Mitchell, 'Jane', the Chinese wife of a local miner when Billy Benn and his family lived near the mines at Mt Brady north-east of Alice Springs. Billy Benn's paintings map the Dreamings of his Alyawarr father and Akarre mother that lie north and south of Harts Range. Initially Billy Benn gained renown for his feathery, translucent watercolours reminiscent of the Western Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira — an heroic figure for the artist. Following a recent visit to his home country, Billy Benn's work has suddenly erupted into a bold,

Catalogue Essay - continued

expressionistic vision in acrylic on canvas that is both compelling and profound.

Billy Benn's standing at Mwerre Anthurre Artists is complemented by a group of emerging artists. In the space of a few years Warlpiri artist Adrian Robertson Jangala's paintings of his mother's country Yalpirakinu — the rocky outcrops surrounding Papunya — have evolved from swirling brushstrokes of vibrant, lyrical colour into turbulent landscapes with pale trees, orange and red rock strata and striated skies.

There are also narrative works evocative of contemporary and historical experience. The imaginative world of Luritja artist Kukula McDonald focuses solely on the black cockatoos of her Dreaming. Portraits of cockatoos either singly or in groups are invested with intuitive and emotional significance viewed against the backdrop of the dusky, purple ranges around Papunya and the Derwent River. Displaying great verve and conviction, Ngaanyatjarra man Lance James paints Aboriginal stockmen and free-wheeling cattle, horses and camels amidst the intense blue skies and high mountain ranges of Kaltukatjara (Docker River). For Luritja artist Billy Kenda, it is the constant flow of cars, trucks and aeroplanes which he sees from his home that are the focus of intense interest. In his artwork each vehicle assumes an individual, independent character: insouciant and animated, they travel through a desert landscape of hills and highway and sky — all deftly painted in bold, arbitrary colour.

Known affectionately to locals as 'The Pink Palace', Julalikari Arts in Tennant Creek was established in 1994. One of its most senior artists is Warumungu woman Peggy Jones Napangardi. Without any traditional models to follow she evolved her own

personal expression, initially painting soakage areas (ngulya) from her father's country around Phillips Creek using bold, fluid brushstrokes. As new themes emerged of bush plants, snakes, goannas and birds, Peggy Jones's style changed: animals, birds and landscape appear as blocks of brilliant, contrasting colour often set within the vibrant, syncopated rhythms of a painted frame.

Julalikari Arts also hosts Dion Beasley, a young, emerging Alywarr artist from the remote community of Owairtilla, also known as Canteen Creek. Dion's personal expression focuses on the camp dogs that are central to the life of Aboriginal communities. Dion's portraits of dogs are clever and captivating. While each has its own distinctive personality, together they form a chronicle of daily life on Aboriginal communities, with its own dramas, tensions and energies. With the assistance of carer Joie Boulter, printmaker Alan Murn and Northern Editions, Dion has progressed from designs on T shirts to silkscreen prints and etchings. With these developments comes a broader vision. Dion's subject matter has expanded to include the people and the wider community that play such an important part in his life. And while the camp dogs continue to be a major theme, the range of animals has transformed into a veritable menagerie of exotic wildlife.

These artists take us on a new trajectory. Involvement in the creative arts is shown to be strong and empowering. Through their success they raise the status of people with disability and widen definitions for Indigenous art. The pathway they have forged will surely become a beacon for others to follow.

Dr Sylvia Kleinert

Adrian Robertson Tjangala

Language Group: Warlpiri

Adrian was born at Papunya in 1963. He went to school at Papunya and remembers Geoff Bardon working alongside the early Western Desert painters. Adrian's paintings consistently refer to the desert mountains, ridges and trees of his country, Yalpirakinu.

His brushwork is loaded with energy, drama and memories. Career highlights: Adrian has been exhibited in both the NATSIAA and Togart Art Awards.



Adrian Robertson Tjangala
Yalpirakinu 2010
Acrylic paint on linen

Alfonso Puautjimi

Language Group: Tiwi

Alfonso has been painting with the Ngaruwanajirri group since 1997. The subject matter for his paintings is drawn from his environment and includes *Tutini* (pukumani poles), carved heads, figures and birds as still life groupings, local landscape including trees, boats, planes, cars and patterns. Alfonso uses bold brush strokes, generous paint application and applies black lines over broad areas of colour, finishing with dots and lines in colour.

Alfonso Puautjimi



Alfonso Puautjimi



Billy Benn Perrurle

Language Group: Alyawarr & Eastern Arrernte

Career highlights: Winner of the 34th Alice Prize 2006.

Billy was born in 1943 and has worked at Bindi Inc. for over 20 years. Billy began to map out his father's country via the painted image using old boards discarded by the Alice Springs Timber Mill, working as many artists do, with second rate materials.

Images of the land in Billy's paintings come from his memories and feelings, Billy brings his country into his art. He primarily paints his mother's country and his grandfather's country.

Billy Benn Perrurle



Billy Kenda Tjampitjinpa

Language Group: Luritja

Billy Kenda is from Jay Creek in the West Macdonnell Ranges, his mother’s country.

His father was a Ngaatjatjarra man from Kaltukatjara (Docker River). Billy has been painting at Bindi Inc. Mwerre Anthurre Artists for five years.

Billy paints landscapes which are full of texture with a strong sense of country. His use of colour mirrors a modern Asian aesthetic with a wide use of pastels within his work.



Billy Kenda, Untitled 2010, Acrylic paint on linen

Billy Kenda Tjampitjinpa



Dion Beasley

Language Groups: Auslan and sign language

Dion grew up at Canteen Creek in the NT. When he was 11 years old, Dion began expressing his daily life through drawing. His fascination with camp dogs led to a unique and appealing insight into their daily lives, which has captivated viewers.

Dion Beasley, *Dog Police* 2010, Etching



Estelle Munkanome

Language Groups: Tiwi

Estelle has been working with Ngaruwanajirri since 1996. Her early works with natural ochres were very delicate, while her recent paintings have become bolder in line, colours and dots. The structure and ideas in Estelle’s paintings are often reflected in her batiks on silk.

Estelle Munkanome, Untitled, Ochre on paper



Kukula McDonald

Language Group: Luritja

Kukula has painted at Bindi Inc. Mwerre Anthurre Artists since 2002.

She predominantly paints Black Cockatoos and knows where to find ‘big mobs’ of them in the Central and Western Deserts. Kukula also paints Uttumpatu, the rocky outcrops that form ridge lines or hills beside the community of Papunya. These landscape formations hold cultural significance for the people of Papunya.



Kukula McDonald, *Black Cockatoos*, Acrylic paint on linen

Kukula McDonald



Lance James

Language Group: Ngaanyatjarra

Lance is from Kaltukatjarra (Docker River) in the Northern Territory. He has been working at Mwerre Anthurre Artists based at Bindi Inc since 2003.

Lance is a wonderful draughtsman with a keen eye for the subtle movements of horses and outstation life in the desert.



Lance James, Untitled 2010, Acrylic paint on linen.

Lance James, Untitled, Acrylic paint on linen.



Lorna Kantilla

Language Group: Tiwi

Lorna was born in 1977. Lorna has been working with Ngaruwanajirri since the group began in August 1994. Her work with natural ochres is lively and spontaneous and has a feeling of movement through the use of full and flowing strokes. Lorna's paintings are non-figurative, using lines, dots and sometimes circles.

Lorna Kantilla, *Jukwarringa – Mud Mussels*, Ochre on paper



Peggy Jones Napangardi

Language Group: Warumungu

‘I was born in 1955 at Phillip Creek (north of Tennant Creek). I lived longtime in the bush. My father bin take me Brunchilly Station, walking all around out station. I lived at Alekarenge for a long time, when I was a big girl.’

One of Peggy’s signature motifs is birds. She paints a variety of birds including the Willie Wagtail, her Dreaming. Peggy also paints the various plants and animals of her environment.



Peggy Jones Napangardi, *Two Green Birds* 2009
Acrylic paint on cotton duck.



Peggy Jones Napangardi, *White and Green Cocky*, Acrylic on canvas.

Internet Links

Arts Access Australia is the national body representing a dynamic network of State and Territory arts and disability organisations and individuals. Each of these organisations and individuals works to increase access and participation in the arts for people with disabilities in their State or Territory.

Access Arts QLD - www.accessarts.org.au

Accessible Arts NSW - www.aarts.net.au

Arts Ability ACT - www.actartsofficers.org.au

Arts Access Australia
www.artsaccessaustralia.org

Arts Access Central Australia
<http://inciteya.org.au/?section=artsaca>

Arts Access Darwin
www.darwincommunityarts.org.au/node/30

Arts Access Victoria - www.artsaccess.com.au

Australian and New Zealand Arts Therapy Association
www.anzata.org

Canberra Arts Access Network
www.generate.net.au

Disability Arts Transition Team (SA)
www.disabilityandarts.net.au

Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts,
Australia WA - www.dadaawa.org.au

Disability Services Australia Ltd
www.dsa.org.au/life_site/text/index.html

Mwerre Anthurre – Bindi Art
www.bindiart.com

The history of people with disabilities in Australia
100 years. A resource guide prepared by Disability
Services Australia Ltd.
www.dsa.org.au/life_site/text/education/index.html

Curriculum Links

Good Strong Powerful has connections to the first phase of the Australian Curriculum through cross curriculum priorities in English and History in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

English

Year K – 10 Strands

Language

- Language for interaction
- Text structure and organisation
- Expressing and developing ideas

Literature

- Literature and context
- Responding to literature
- Examining literature
- Creating literature

Literacy

- Texts in context
- Interacting with others
- Interpreting, analysing, evaluating
- Creating texts

History

Year K – 10 Strands

- Key inquiry questions
- Historical knowledge and understanding
- Historical skills

Good Strong Powerful can be used as a starting point to develop investigative themes on:

- How art reflects values, beliefs and traditions
- The role of artists in different societies
- Design considerations and constraints
- Aesthetics
- Relationships to the land as expressed by Indigenous culture
- Media, materials and technologies
- Continuity and change

Indigenous Knowledge and Protocols

Protocols, cultural sensitivity, awareness, trust and generosity are key elements of the Good Strong Powerful exhibition. The sharing of knowledge and cultural exchange can only grow when the elements are right. Aboriginal people have had physical, cultural and spiritual associations with the land for tens of thousands of years which has been passed down through the generations.

There are no fixed rules when interacting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Every community is different and there are hundreds of Aboriginal language groups in Australia, each with a unique cultural background. The following principles are taken from the Australian Broadcasting Commission program Message Stick, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Online and provide a guide for working with Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Control

Indigenous people have the right to self-determination in their cultural affairs.

Respect

The rights of Indigenous people to own and control their cultures should be respected. Diversity of Indigenous cultures should be acknowledged and encouraged. Indigenous views, lifestyles and customary laws should be respected in contemporary life.

Consultation, Communication and Consent

Indigenous people should be consulted on the use and representation of their Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. Prior to use, Indigenous peoples should be informed of the implications of consent. Consultation should address the communal nature of Indigenous society and cultural expression.

Interpretation, Integrity and Authenticity

Indigenous people should be consulted about the integrity and authenticity of ways in which their history, community, interviews, lives and families are represented.

Secrecy and Confidentiality

The right of Indigenous people to keep secret and sacred their cultural knowledge should be respected. Sacred and secret material refers to information that is restricted under customary law. For instance some information may only be learned or viewed by men or women, or only after initiation. Indigenous people have the right to maintain confidentiality about their personal and cultural affairs.

Attribution

Indigenous people should be given proper credit and appropriate acknowledgement for their achievements. Indigenous people should be given proper credit and appropriate acknowledgement for their contributions and roles in the development of stories. Indigenous people should be given proper credit and appropriate acknowledgement for the use of their cultural material.

Continuing Cultures

Indigenous people have responsibility to ensure that the practice and transmission of Indigenous cultural expression is continued for the benefit of future generations.

Sharing of Benefits

The contribution of Indigenous people should be recognised by payment where appropriate. Indigenous people have the right to be paid for the use of their Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. The issue of copyright ownership of the story, image, music, contributions and artwork should be discussed up front. Indigenous people should have the right to control exploitation of their cultural and intellectual property. If consent is given Indigenous people have the right to share in the benefits from any commercialisation of their Indigenous cultural material.

Recognition and Protection under the Law

Indigenous people have the right to protection of their cultural and intellectual property.

Reference: <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/>
http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/education/ethics_codes.htm