



Short St. Gallery



Thelma Dundan (Dunjan) Ngarga (Nyarrka) Judson

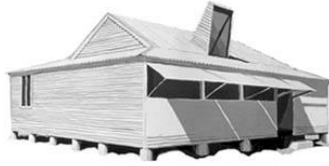
Born 1956
Language Manyjilyjarra
Region The Pilbara

"I grew up around these salt lakes (Percival Lakes) with all the families; (my sister) Yuwali's mob, all together. Too salty to drink, so (we would) get fresh water from Yimiri, a yinta (permanent spring) in the lake."

- Thelma Dundan (Dunjan) Ngarga (Nyarrka) Judson

Ngarga is a Manyjilyjarra woman, born in the isolated Percival Lakes region of the Great Sandy Desert in the mid 1950s. She grew up primarily around Yimiri and Kurturarra soaks. She and her young siblings would stay close to the major water sources while their parents went out hunting. During the rainy season her extended family group would separate into smaller units, and when it was hot they would come back together at the permanent water source of Yimiri.

As a young girl Ngarga lived nomadically in this region with her family group, composed unusually of only female adults and children; the men that had been travelling with the group had either died or moved away. While most Martu had by this time either moved in to pastoral stations or missions, or at the very least encountered whitefellas as they travelled along the Canning Stock Route, the extremely remote location of Ngarga's group had prevented such interactions. Their first contact with Europeans occurred in 1964, when the government sought to clear



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all remaining pujiman (traditional, desert dwelling) Aboriginals from an extremely large area destined for military weapons testing. At that time they were tracked with vehicles and an aeroplane. Once sighted prior to the testing operation, her family group was dramatically pursued for several weeks by Native Patrol Officer Walter McDowell for many weeks. This extraordinary story has since been documented in the award winning book, 'Cleared Out: First Contact in the Western Desert' (Co-authored with Sue Davenport and Peter Johnson, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005) and film, 'Contact' (2009, Contact Films).

Once the group was finally tracked, they were persuaded to move to Jigalong Mission to join family there. They were one of the last families to move in from the desert. Ngarga schooled at the mission, then moved to newly Aboriginal owned Strelley community. She later returned to Jigalong, where she met her husband and fellow Martumili Artist, Yanjimi Peter Rowlands. Together they remained in Jigalong for a time, raising their children until they were school aged. The family relocated to Parrngurr Aboriginal Community during the 1980s 'Return to Country' movement.

Today Ngarga and Yanjimi live between Newman, Port Hedland, and Parrngurr. Ngarga is a talented weaver and painter. Her works depict her ngurra (home Country, camp), the Percival Lakes region, and its associated Jukurrpa (Dreaming). The area is dominated by a series of striking salt lakes, extending across a distance of 350km, and was formed by Wirnpa, one of the most powerful of the ancestral jila (snake) men and the last to travel the desert during the Jukurrpa. Ngarga's work has been exhibited widely across Australia and internationally, and her collaborative works acquired by the National Museum of Australia.

Group Exhibitions

- 2022 Nyinani (Staying put)
- 2022 Paper Wangka (paper story)
- 2022 Tracks We Share
- 2021 Paper Wangka (Paper Story), Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2021 Pukurlpa (happy inside), Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2020 Ngurra Means Home, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2019 Punmukarti!, Yaama Gaanu, Moree, NSW
- 2019 Martumili Kuulkaja (Martu Schools), Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2019 In Cahoots, touring exhibition from Fremantle Art Centre, Fremantle, WA
- 2019 Nyurnma (burnt Country), Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
- 2019 Martu Wangka, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2018 Martuku Ninti (Martu Knowledge), Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
- 2018 Pujiman, Martumili Artists and Spinifex Hill Artists, Port Hedland Courthouse Gallery, WA



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- 2017 Art at the Heart, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2017 Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters, touring exhibition from National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT
- 2016 Black White & Restive, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW
- 2015 The Summer Collectors Show 2015, McCulloch & McCulluch Gallery, Mornington Peninsula, VIC
- 2014 Martu Art From the Western Desert, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW
- 2013 Australia, Royal Academy of the Arts, London, England, UK
- 2013 String theory: Focus on contemporary Australian Art, WA
- 2012 We Don t Need A Map: a Martu experience of the Western Desert, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
- 2011 Waru! Holding Fire in Australia's Western Desert, Thomas Welton Stanford Art Gallery, Stanford University, San Francisco, USA
- 2011 Yiwarra Kuju (One Road), Perth Convention Exhibition Centre, Perth, WA
- 2011 Revealed Emerging Aboriginal Artists from Western Australia, Gallery Central, Perth, WA
- 2010 Yiwarra Kuju (One Road), National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT
- 2010 Jakulpa laju kartyinpa (Bringing a message), Chapman Gallery, Canberra, ACT
- 2009 Nintijunu (Teaching), Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney, NSW
- 2009 Puntu kurnu (Belongs to the people), Newman Visitors Centre, Newman, WA
- 2008 Martumili Artists Recent Works, William Mora Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
- 2008 Martumili Artists, Port Hedland Courthouse Arts Centre and Gallery, Port Hedland, WA
- 2007 Martu-la wakarnu kuwarri wiyaju, William Mora Galleries, Melbourne, VIC

Collections

National Museum of Australia