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Our interviews give you the chance to note the differences between written and spoken English.



Talking to Adrian Newstead, owner of Coo-ee Aboriginal Art Gallery

Adrian Newstead is an art consultant, *dealer* and *spokesperson* for Aboriginal art. In 1981, he established the first gallery that exhibited Aboriginal art, also known as indigenous art. Adrian has been a member of several tourism and art *boards*, and was Head of Aboriginal Art for the multi-million-dollar Menzies Art Brand *auction group*. He is passionate about supporting indigenous artists and their communities.

GO ENGLISH: Hello, Adrian. Thank you for talking with us today. Can we start by asking how you first became interested in indigenous art?

Adrian Newstead: I had no *exposure* at all to Aboriginal culture at school or university, although I spent holidays working where plenty of Aboriginal people lived. Having grown up surrounded by artists, I decided to open an *outlet* where everything was handmade. I travelled throughout Australia to *seek out* art and *craftworks* that were a unique reflection of the Australian environment.



Coo-ee Gallery

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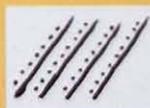
GE: What was your emotional reaction when you first saw Aboriginal art?

AN: I remember as if it were yesterday. They were eucalyptus *barks* painted with *earth pigments*, using brushes made from human hair. I was immediately attracted to these artworks that *came straight from* the natural world and yet were so incredibly sophisticated, technically brilliant and beautiful.

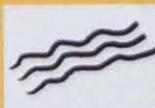
GE: Coo-ee is Australia's oldest Aboriginal and indigenous art gallery – why did you think it was important to open a *dedicated* gallery?

AN: I didn't. It was all an accident really! When I first opened Coo-ee, around 20% of the items were Aboriginal handmade *weavings*, sculptures, bark paintings, *fabrics* and jewellery. My interest in Aboriginal creativity grew rapidly as I travelled to the *remote* communities and came to understand the positive effect art production was making on people's lives.

Key symbols in Aboriginal art



Flowing water,
rain



River



Waterhole



Women sitting
around
a waterhole

a *dealer*
a *spokesperson*
a *board*
an *auction group*
exposure to sth

un marchand, un négociant
un porte-parole
(ici) un comité, un conseil
un groupe de vente aux enchères
l'exposition à qch

an *outlet*
to *seek out*
a *craftwork*
a *bark*
an *earth pigment*

un magasin, un point de vente
chercher
une œuvre artisanale
une écorce
un pigment de terre

to *come straight from sth*
dedicated
a *weaving*
a *fabric*
remote

provenir directement de qch
dédié
un tissage, un objet tressé
un tissu
isolé, retiré



Key facts about Aboriginal art

1. All Aboriginal art tells a **story** and is a form of language, used for sharing history and for teaching.
2. The stories **belong** to one community, so artists can only paint stories that belong to them through their families.
3. These paintings use a lot of icons and symbols: each shape represents something. The combination of icons **tells** the story.
4. Many paintings contain **secret** or sacred messages. If the paintings leave the community, the secrets are often painted over to hide them.
5. Aboriginal art was originally painted onto **tree bark**, but from the 1970s, artists were encouraged to paint onto canvas, which would last longer.



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Adrian Newstead and artist Billy Benn

Artist unknown, Coolamon, 1920, carved wood and ochre, 86 x 20cm



© Coo-ee Gallery

Artist unknown, Tudini Pole, 1950, ochres on wood, 59cm



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GE: What are the main differences between exhibiting Aboriginal art as compared to conventional art?

AN: The major practical difference is that you're dealing with people in very remote places. In the 1980s, many communities did not even have a single telephone. Since that time, more than 80 art centres have been established to assist artists with materials and marketing. So you're most often dealing with intermediaries, which can be a *boon* and a handicap, as close personal relationships with artists are hard to establish.

GE: What are the criteria for the work you exhibit? Must the artist be Aboriginal or do you also exhibit non-Aboriginal artists using the same themes and imagery?

AN: It is not acceptable for non-indigenous artists to appropriate Aboriginal imagery, and an Aboriginal artist cannot use imagery or stories that belong to any other clan. Both cause equal offence.

Coo-ee Aboriginal Art Gallery only shows indigenous Australian art, but I *source* a much wider variety of art for my clients as an independent art consultant.

GE: How vital is it to understand the imagery and symbolism in order to appreciate the artwork?

AN: People often say to me that they don't buy Aboriginal art because they don't understand it, but this has never made any sense to me. I personally *relate to* an artwork initially on an aesthetic level, then later I may want to know more about the

artist or the art movement in general.

GE: Was it a big cultural *shift* for these artists to *commit to canvas* rather than bark?

AN: Bark paintings were only created in certain regions, and no more than 1,000 had been collected up to the 1960s. The first desert *boards* and canvasses were created in Papunya in 1970, and many contained secret or sacred imagery and information. As desert painting *spread* to other communities, it caused a lot of conflict, but artists gradually developed an iconic lexicon acceptable to everyone. The secret elements *were* often over-painted and *concealed*.

GE: Has the world really *acknowledged* the significance and cultural value of Aboriginal art?

AN: The vast majority of people *are yet to be* exposed to Aboriginal art, but it has been shown in many of the world's finest museums and art galleries. What has happened in Australian Aboriginal art during the past 50 years is a modern miracle. The world faced dramatic environmental threat, and a largely marginalised people created art of the most profound importance to mankind. Whether any particular artist achieves the *renown* of Picasso or Monet is largely *irrelevant*. ➔



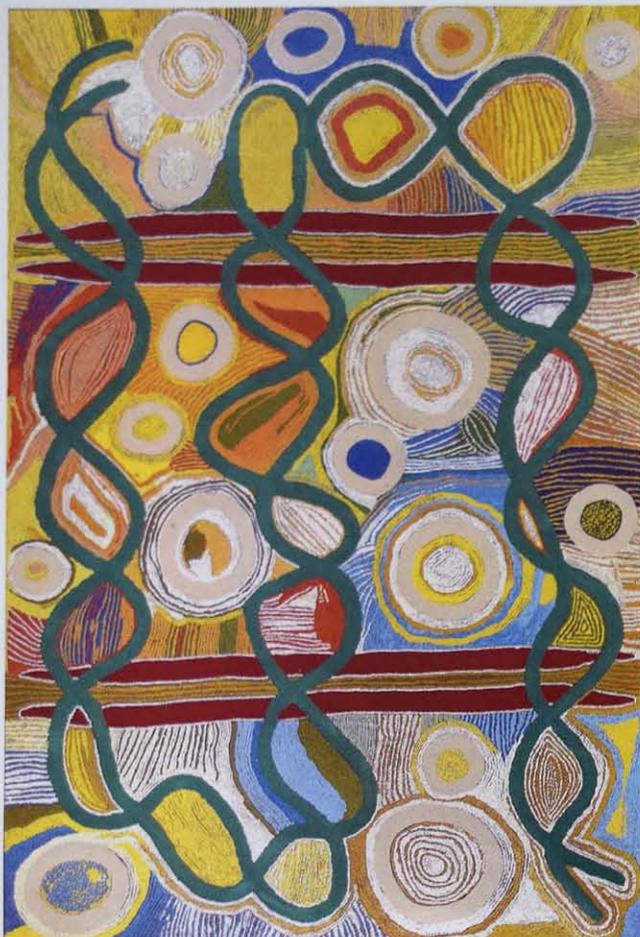
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Wentja Napaltjarri, Rockholes West of Kintore, synthetic polymer paint on Belgian linen, 220 x 150cm

<i>a boon</i>	une aubaine, une bénédiction
<i>to source</i>	se procurer, se fournir en
<i>to relate to sth</i>	s'identifier à qch, comprendre qch
<i>a shift</i>	un changement
<i>to commit to sth</i>	s'investir dans qch, s'engager à qch

<i>canvas</i>	la toile
<i>a board</i>	(ici) une planche
<i>to spread (spread, spread)</i>	s'étendre
<i>to be concealed</i>	être dissimulé
<i>to acknowledge</i>	reconnaître, admettre

<i>to be yet to be</i>	ne pas encore avoir été
<i>renown</i>	la renommée
<i>irrelevant</i>	hors de propos, non pertinent



Maggie Watson Napangardi, *Ngalyapi Vine (Snake Vine)*, 1999, synthetic polymer paint on Belgian linen, 220 x 150cm

GE: How important has the Internet been in raising awareness of this art form?

AN: International collectors have always been important in the appreciation of Aboriginal art, but the Internet has changed everything. Our clients are able to see artworks by more than 200 individual artists in our stockroom from the comfort of their home, whether it is in Latvia or Patagonia, London or New York City.

GE: Modern communication is all about the visual, so the Aboriginal approach to storytelling through images seems more relevant than ever – would you agree?

AN: For Aboriginal people, an image is a freeze-frame from a long narrative: a story about the earth's creation, our place in it and our responsibility toward it. In this sense, it is about the human condition and sense of belonging. I can think of no more relevant art than Aboriginal art in today's world.

GE: For those who don't know anything about this art form, who are the great names to look out for?

AN: I would prefer to answer this in terms of the most important deceased and living artists. Amongst the traditional artists

Upcoming events at Coo-ee Aboriginal Art Gallery

The Collectors Edition

24/09/15 – 31/10/15

Secondary market works by the leading artists of the Aboriginal art movement

A 9x12" Coo-ee Christmas – Get a Gift, Give a Gift

21/11/15 – 24/12/15

Seven communities and 120 artists

who have passed on, I love Emily Kngwarreye, Clifford Possum, David Yirawala, Maggie Watson, Abie Jangala, Lily Hargraves, David Malangi and Queenie McKenzie.

Amongst those currently alive and continuing to paint, I particularly like Naata Nungurrayi, Tommy Watson, Djambawa Marawili, John Mawurndjul and Ronnie Tjampitjinpa. But there are so many others – and I have not even mentioned the urban contemporary Aboriginal artists.

GE: If people want to learn more about indigenous art, do you have suggestions?

AN: Following my six years in the art auction arena (2003 to 2008), I spent a year writing 1 million words on Aboriginal art. Six years later, this evolved into a book called *THE DEALER IS THE DEVIL: AN INSIDER'S HISTORY OF THE ABORIGINAL ART TRADE* (www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/dealer-devil). And I'd recommend two websites, www.aiam100.com and www.aboriginalartresource.com. You can learn a great deal from all of these. Or come and visit us when in Sydney! Coo-ee's staff are all highly knowledgeable when it comes to this extraordinary art movement. ■



Coo-ee Gallery

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to raise awareness of sth
Latvia
a freeze-frame

sensibiliser à qch
la Lettonie
un arrêt sur image

sense of belonging
deceased
to pass on

le sentiment d'appartenance
défunt, décédé
s'éteindre, décéder

a great deal
to be knowledgeable
when it comes to

beaucoup
s'y connaître
en matière de, quand il s'agit de