



MEDIA RELEASE

“Barney Ellaga”

1st W.A. Solo Exhibition for acclaimed Senior Arnhemland Lawman & Artist

Senior Alawa Community Lawman and Artist, Barney Ellaga is to make the long journey down from his traditional homeland in South East Arnhemland to the port City of Fremantle in W.A. especially for the opening of his first solo exhibition in this State. Barney Ellaga's reputation is already firmly established in the Eastern States after several very successful solo and group Exhibitions in Melbourne and his distinctive, colourful paintings are highly sought after. His work is already represented in the National Gallery of Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria.

The Alawa people live on the upper reaches of the Cox and Arnold rivers, just south of the Roper River and west of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Ellaga was born around 1939 in the Minyerri region of the Northern Territory. Ellaga is a senior law-man in the Alawa community and was brought up in the traditional way and is a fully initiated Elder.

The region around Roper River has produced some of Australia's best known Indigenous Artists such as Telstra Award winning artists Ginger Riley and Gertie Huddleston. However, the area is somewhat unique in Indigenous communities because of the very diverse range of painting styles. Usually, it is relatively easy to place an artist's Community simply by their painting style. This is not often the case in the Roper River region, where the only common factor seems to be a love of bright colour.

Ellaga did not start painting on canvas until the late 1980s. His initial painting style was to represent his country and Dreamings on canvas in bold, solid blocks of colour. As his skill and confidence grew, Ellaga began to develop a unique style of painting that drew upon the ancient traditions of rock painting but utilized the full range of colour available to him in modern acrylic paint.

Ellaga's new paintings consist of soft, stippled, lines of colour where each line represents a different aspect of his Country. This could be either a spiritual or physical feature of the land. The lines of colour pay homage to the many ancient rock and cave paintings in the Alawa region where the stippled, feathery lines represent the unevenness and roughness of the cave or rock walls. This is a very diverse part of the country with long sweeping rivers, lush vegetation and sweeping, sparse plains and Ellaga's paintings reflect this complexity.

Ellaga's beautiful paintings evoke rainbows just after a clearing light shower of rain when the soft sunlight breaks through the clouds, illuminating different parts of the landscape. His paintings have a soft inner glow that throw a revealing light upon his Country and Dreamings and effortlessly bridge the gap between the traditional rock paintings of his Country and modern “Abstract” Art. Ellaga's use of light and colour is inspirational with his effortless mix of saturated blues, reds, purples and yellows of varying hues and tones.

It is easy to understand why Ellaga's revealing paintings of his Country and Dreamings are in such demand and Japingka Gallery is honoured to present the rare opportunity to meet this exceptional Artist and Elder and to experience his unique, uplifting paintings. This is a “must see” Exhibition!

“Barney Ellaga”

opens at 6.30pm on Friday the 15th April, and runs seven days a week until 20th May, 2005.

@ Japingka Gallery, **47 High Street, Fremantle**

Gallery Hours are Mon - Fri: 10.00am 5.30pm. Sat: 10.00am–5.30pm Sun: 12.am–5.00pm.

Admission is free to the public.