



Japingka Gallery

Founding member of **Art.Trade**

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MEDIA RELEASE

Watiyawanu Artists

In association with "Watiyawanu Artists", Japingka Gallery is mounting the first group Exhibition in Western Australia by the highly acclaimed Artists of the Watiyawanu Community from Mount Liebig, N.T.

*Senior artist, **Ngoia Pollard Napaltjarri** will be attending the celebrations at the opening.*

This remarkable all women exhibition features the distinctive work of award winning artist, **Lily Kelly Napangardi** as well as senior *Ngangkari* (law-woman), **Colleen Whiskey Nampitjinpa**. Other highly sought after artists exhibiting include **Wentja 2 Napaltjarri**, **Ngoia Pollard Napaltjarri** (who will be making the long trip down for the official Exhibition opening), **Lynette Corby Nungurrayi**, **Topsy Peterson Napangardi** and a selection of other leading artists from the Community.

Four of these exhibiting artists have been chosen as finalists in this years prestigious **Telstra Awards**. The Mount Liebig (Watiyawanu) community, 325 Kms north-west of Alice Springs, is close to the heart of the region where the modern *Desert Art Movement* began. The community is just 75 kilometres from *Papunya* where those first paintings of the movement were painted in 1969-1972. Watiyawanu acts as a *go-between* Community for families with connections to other well known Communities such as *Haasts Bluff*, *Papunya* and even further west to Kintore and Kiwirrkura in W.A.

Watiyawanu Arts has been operating from Mt Liebig since 1990. It has been restricted in its capabilities by lack of outside funding. When artists began painting 15 years ago, they worked from home, with the support of community store manager Glenis Wilkins and Peter Malavesi. Early (now famous) artists included **Billy Stockman**, **Long Tom Tjapanangka** and **Mitjili Napurrula**. Not long after this, Lilly Kelly moved to Mt Liebig with her husband and family, and started painting her own canvases. Other women began to join the group, and it was the success in the late 1990's of Lilly Kelly's elegant and finely detailed *Sandhills* paintings that started to bring overdue recognition to Watiyawanu.

In 2003, these higher profiles lead to a special invitation to a small group of Watiyawanu women artists to be invited to exhibit and tour in Japan. Armed with emergency supplies of tinned bully beef and "Weetbix", the artists travelled to Japan and experienced traditional Japanese lifestyle, culture and art, visited special art/ healing centres and sampled traditional dishes. A film was made of their travels and experiences. In 2003 and 2004 works by senior Watiyawanu artists, including Lilly Kelly, Ngoia Pollard and Wentja Napaltjarri, were successfully exhibited in Sydney and Melbourne. The artists' reputations began to rise steadily.

Watiyawanu artists have developed a distinctive stylistic approach in their work, often combining a detailed lacework of fine dotting along with strong iconography of Western Desert Dreaming sites. The work of senior artists is becoming highly prized in the market and younger emerging artists are coming forward to join them. With typical issues confronting the community- issues of youth employment and recreation, threats of petrol sniffing and alcohol abuse- the development of strong cultural models that reinforce the value of traditional knowledge and skills is a major advantage to desert communities like Mt Liebig. The artists of Watiyawanu are carrying forward that cultural model.

Preview this amazing new exhibition online @ www.japingka.com.au after 25th August.

"Watiyawanu Artists"

Opens at 6.30pm on Friday the 26th August, and runs seven days a week until 2nd October, 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.

Please join us and Ngoia Pollard to help celebrate this first W.A. group show for Watiyawanu. Admission is free to the public.