QUEENIE MCKENZIE KNOW HER

A Secondary Eye

Catalogue to accompany the solo presentation of Queenie McKenzie at Sydney Contemporary

A Secondary Eye

5 - 8 September 2024

A Secondary Eye acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

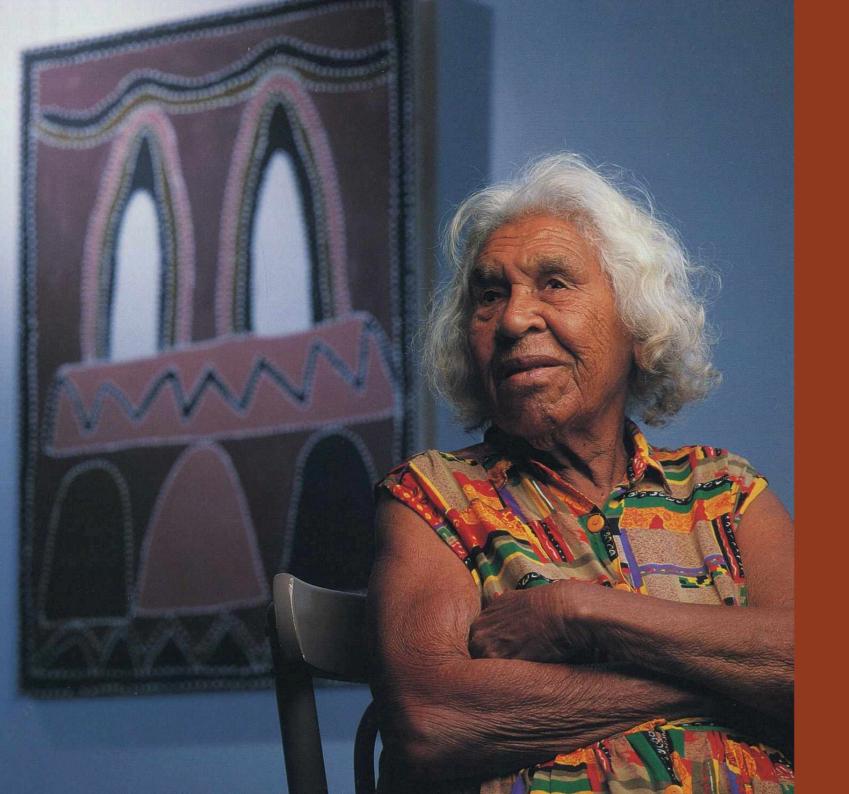
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this publication contains images

and references to people who have passed away.

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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that we present this exhibition showcasing the extraordinary work of Queenie McKenzie.

Over recent years, many observers have expressed frustration at the lack of recognition afforded to Queenie. Those familiar with her pivotal role in the formation of the East Kimberley School of Art alongside luminaries such as Rover Thomas, Paddy Jaminjin, George Mung Mung, Hector Jandany and Jack Britten understand her paramount significance. Notably, as the sole female artist in this founding group, Queenie played a defining role in shaping the aesthetic for which the Kimberley region is now renowned.

The purpose of this exhibition was to curate a comprehensive presentation and catalogue to be featured at the highly attended Sydney Contemporary art fair. Our goal is to reaffirm Queenie's enduring importance, a fact widely acknowledged by academics, artists, collectors, and institutions so it is important to have that recognised in the wider market. In our preparations, we have engaged with her Estate and enlisted the expertise of Dr. Suzanne Spunner to provide clarity on acceptable ethical provenance, an important step in ensuring that Queenie's cultural legacy is duly acknowledged and esteemed.

We would also take this opportunity to acknowledge that this marks Boris Cornelissen's final exhibition with A Secondary Eye before embarking on a new role at Sotheby's in Hong Kong next month. Boris's invaluable contribution to the success we have achieved in these formative years has been immeasurable and we wish him the very best in what is an incredible opportunity for him at Sotheby's.

Jesse-Jack De Deyne

Queenie McKenzie in front of Banana Springs, 1996 at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

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QUEENIE MINGMARRIYA: KNOW HER

Suzanne Spunner

The East Kimberley artist Queenie McKenzie was one of the artists in 'Know My Name', a two part survey exhibition of Australian Women Artists 1900 to Now, which opened in 2020 at the NGA in Canberra. The exhibition is still touring and completes its progress in 2025. Queenie McKenzie began painting in 1987 and died in 1998 and her oeuvre spans barely a decade. Back then, she was carried along by the East Kimberley Art movement dominated by the rise of her Countryman and friend, Rover Thomas. Today, she warrants fresh consideration and revaluation, and invites the question, how might we know her? To know her name is to know many names.

Queenie Mingmarriya Nagarra McKenzie, also known as, Brennan,Oakes and Ashton, nickname Garagarag/ Gara-Gara.

She was born around 1915 on Gija country on the banks of the mighty Ord River on Texas Downs station/ Gawoornben between Lisadell /Thildoowan and Mabel Downs/Gilban, south -east of Turkey Creek / Warmun, in the East Kimberley of North Western Australia. Her mother Nuyugaya known as Dinah Nokiah was a Malngin- Gurindji woman who worked in the station kitchen and was also a renowned horsewoman, competing as a jockey in the Negri Races, an important annual gathering for station people. Her Gadiya (white man) father, Roy (Brennan?) was a horsebreaker from Queensland. Mingmarriya, her bush name, refers to her conception site on Texas Downs near the echidna dreaming called Yarlka.

Yarlka this white mountain, this my spirit place. My mother old Dinah, she found white porcupine la swag la yarlka. That porcupine was me (Vinnicome, P. p.20).

From the outset Queenie McKenzie was unique, with her fair hair bathed in sparkling whiteness like Yarkla, the limestone hills nearby and she was given the nick name, Garagarag/Gara-Gara; meaning light coloured hair, Blondie, while Queenie recalled Queensland and her father.

They bin give me name Mingmarriya now. Hill for Mingmarriya. My Country. I bin get 'im name from dat hill now. When you go, you see 'im dat hill like adat. Like all the time he singin' "MingMing". All the time like dat. Like a glass. Dat why they bin call 'im Mingmarriya. Well, dat's my name Mingmarriya. Queenie Mingmarriya, they callin' me (Kjellgren, E. p.12).

First known as Queenie Brennan, then as Queenie Oakes from her stepfather, Walter Oakes, a Gadiya prospector, an Irishman and educated returned soldier. She had a younger half-brother, Wortok July Oakes. For a time, she was also known as Queenie Ashton. Hidden by her mother, Queenie Mingmarriya was "miraculously" never taken from her family. Dinah witnessed others being taken away so she was exceptionally vigilant and protective of her blonde daughter – "Him bin coverim up me gotta charcoal everywhere" (Kejellgren, E. p.13) and would not even let Walter Oakes take her away for education as he did with Wortok, her half-brother. Amidst all these putative Gadiya fathers, Queenie Mingmarriya was grown up by her stepfather, or 'real' father, a renowned Gija songman, corroboree maker and Marparn, Junjuwiny, a Clever Man known as Spinney, and she was fully integrated into the Gija world with the skin

name Nagarra/Nakarra. Amongst so many surnames, it is by the name of her old husband, Charlie McKenzie a Gija stockman who also had a Gadiya father, that she is best known. Queenie and Charlie McKenzie had no children of their own, but they grew up many.

My name bin grow up from these hills (Kjellgren, E. p.12).

Queenie Mingmarriya worked on Texas for forty years and like all the Gija women she was a great horsewoman and worked the cattle too. She was part of the Texas Mob, the families that included Hector Jandany, George Mung Mung and Rover Thomas, who lived under the protection of their Gadiya Manager, an Irishman named Jimmy Klein who was married to Hector's elder sister, Julia.

In the 1960s, Leprosy, The Big Sick swept through the Kimberley and Catholicism came to Texas Downs, and ultimately to Warmun via the Derby Leprosarium or lazaretto, Bungarun, established by the sisters of St John of God. Patients were brought in from all over the Kimberley and Queenie Mingmarriya's mother, Dinah and her friend Winnie Budbaria, another sister of Hector Jandany, spent long periods at Bungarun. Winnie became the Catechist, and it was known when she was instructing, there was no playing cards. Dinah was her devout acolyte and at Warmun, Queenie Mingmarriya was an enthusiastic hymn singer - "Hail Queen of Heaven" was a favourite. Dinah and her daughter were fierce Law Women, strong horsewomen and devout Catholics and Queenie Mingmarriya grew up, immersed in the Gija ritual world; speaking Gija while also swathed in Josephite Catholicism, without ever registering a conflict between them.

Queenie Mingmarriya worked as cook and nurse in the stock camps mustering bullocks, moving across Country staying a week or so in each place. The procession began at Pandanus Yard near the homestead, then on to Kilfoyle Yard, Norton, Spring Creek Yard and Cattle Creek, before returning to the homestead and



nearby Horse Creek and Red Butte, finally crossing the Ord River, the circuit finishing at Nine Mile, Old Texas, Flying Fox Yard and Barker Yard. All the time, people were visiting sites and telling stories; the Gija on Texas did not lose their Law. At Pandanus Yard, Rover Thomas, a young stockman, was kicked by a horse and scalped. Queenie Mingmarriya sterilised a needle by passing it through the flame of the campfire, boiling up cotton and cloth bandages and stitched him up before he was taken to Wyndham hospital. There, the doctor complimented her work:

'I have to sew 'im up you old man, keep 'im dat head down 'Alright' he bin say. I bin gettin' needl la 'im, I bin gettin' clothes, needle, big one. I bin gettin' cottons put em la table, getting' scissors everthin'. Yeh Rover be young man ... Wyndham doctor reckon I did a good job! He sent me letter back up and I done a good job he reckon. Nother way he oughta be dead for dat head' (Field, J. p. 163).

Nagarra/Nakarra, already stood as classificatory mother to Joolama/Juluma, Rover Thomas, and now credited with saving his life, this event bonded them. Queenie Mingmarriya frequently depicted 'Rove Thomas Story', retablo style in paintings and prints, and the incident was immortalised by singer songwriter Paul Kelly in 'The Ballad of Queenie and Rover', 2007.

In 1973 in the wake of the vast changes in the pastoral industry, which pushed people off stations all ove the Kimberley creating what Kimberley Land Council Director, Peter Yu described as "a refugee situation" Jimmy Klein retired to Turkey Creek and the Texas Mob followed him. Queenie Mingmarriya soon became a key figure in the burgeoning community, now called Warmun/ Warrmarn, advocating for education and health services. As well as being the community nurse, she helped set up the Two Way Ngalangangpum /Mother and Child School in 1979 and was the first Gija language teacher. 'I come to this school every morning I teach them kids in their own language. I teach them culture way too. This Ngalangangpum school is a two way school. We can't let kids forget' (Ryan, V. p.104).

According to Sr Veronica Ryan, the principal of the school, at Turkey Creek the power lay with the old matriarchs and Queenie Mingmarriya herself, who never drank and often looked after grandchildren, the sick and the elderly and generally "kept things in check". Ryan notes that Queenie Mingmarriya was the only woman who spoke up at Warmun Council meetings, she was on the school council and on the committee responsible for the community store; as Peter Yu put it, she had a "high standard of personal integrity". Her younger brother Wortok July Oakes was educated at Moola Bulla and could read and write, whereas Queenie Mingmarriya remained illiterate throughout her life. In 1973 he was elected to the National Aborigines Consultative Council (NAC) and she did not hesitate to take his advice:

'I never tell you really how this Turkey Creek bin start too, you know. When we bin come, we bin live here la Turkey Creek. Big mob here all right but, when they bin la station ... well my brother bin workin' la NAC that time. He was come here one time ... "I bin see em la Canberra in a paper- If a blackfella wants to get it back, he'll get it back he reckons"- "What you fellas reckon? "He bin ask me. I bin talk, "Well I got no right, I bin talk. I wasn't here before, I not bla this place", he said. "What about you Jumpany (Bob Nyalcas)?" he bin talk la him' (Ross, H. & Bray, E. p. 89).

Joonbany Bob Nyalcas who was a traditional owner of the area became the first chairman of the Warmun community.

Queenie Mingmarriya quickly became such an effective leader and community politician through her nous and confidence, and an ability to form strategic alliances and friendships with Gadiya women like anthropologist Helen Ross, archaeologist Pat Vinnicombe, linguist Frances Kofod and school principal, Sr Veronica Ryan, all of whom were happy to assist her to realise her calling as a Law woman and keeper of Gija story.

When diamonds were found at Smoke Creek on nearby Lisadell station, Queenie Mingmarriya went into battle against the miners at Argyle to try and protect the women's sites, at Dayiwool/Tayiwul/ Barramunc Gap. Moreover, she argued that the Warmun women should get royalties separate from the men and compensation to support the practice of women's law:

'Dat place they dug up is where all the women in the Dreamtime were trying to catch Barramund with spinifex. They just about flatten dat hill. They bin bugger 'em up dat place now... I bin talk f that sacred place there. All them women really upset about this at Turkey Creek ... Because it bin woman sacred site, they bin bugger up. Men never bin roll 'em up those spinifex, it bin woman .. This the woman dreaming not the man dreaming' (Ryan, V. p.132/146).

In 1982, Dr Patricia Vinnicombe from the WA Museum was sent to map women's sites related to the Barramundi Dreaming. Finding an ally in her, Queenie Mingmarriya seized the opportunity to revive and wake up Women's Law at Warmun. From Dinah, she inherited the secret sacred Mutu dance, last performed on Texas Downs at Barramundi Gap in 1967 and in 1982, Queenie Mingmarriya organised the large women's law and land meeting at Mabel Downs station and revived it. Her earliest drawing, a diagram of the body painting used in the Mutu ceremonies was made then, for Vinnicombe. Over the nex five years, Queenie Mingmarriya ran painting exercises at the school as a teaching aid to telling dreamtime stories. In 1987, Joel Smoker, the Waringarri Aboriginal Arts Co-Ordinator asked the school principal, Sr Theresa Morellini, if there were any women interested in painting, anyone with "flair" and Queenie Mingmarriya came forward. Dealer, Mary Macha was already working with Rover Thomas; Smoker sent her Queenie Mingmarriya's work for a market appraisal. Macha sold 'Landscape at Turkey Creek' by Queenie Brennan to the Berndt Museum at UWA, and by 1991 Macha had sold her work to the NGV and QAGOMA, but ultimately, Macha declined to represent her long term.

The same year, Queenie Mingmarriya collaborated with Frances Kofod on a guide to hunting, cooking and eating goanna, correct way. In 1988, former Warmun school Principal, Sr Veronica Ryan returned to take down the women's stories - "so that our young girls will read them". Dinah, "the matriarch" and Queenie Mingmarriya, "the spokeswoman and custodian of corroborees" were Ryan's most significant informants. Busy as she was, Queenie Mingmarriya wanted to paint for herself.

'I bin start paintin' now, I bin lookin' at this Rover. I think Rover make 'im money la this paint. Alright my head bin workin' now. I'll try this paintin'. I bin try 'im paintin' la my place. I bin try.... Rover bin talk la me. "You keep 'im till Joel Smoker come up. You show 'im la 'im them". Rover bin tell 'im Smoker now, "Dat old woman gotta paint dat way to" (Kjellgren, E. p.186).

Encouraged by Rover Thomas, Queenie Mingmarriya began painting for Waringarri Arts in April 1990, alongside Rover and his painting mates; Jack Britten, Freddie Timms, George Mung Mung and Hector Jandany. By July she was included in 'Turkey Creek Artists' at Dreamtime Gallery in Perth. Vinnicombe asserts that Queenie Mingmarriya only got seriously painting after the deaths of her mother and her husband in 1991, and that she paid for their headstones in the Warmun cemetery with painting money. Unquestionably Queenie Mingmarriya was the catalyst for Warmun women starting to paint, and Mabel Juli, Madigan Thomas, Shirley Purdie, Peggy Patrick and Lena Nyadbi followed her example:

'... this old Auntie Queenie teach me how to do a painting, you know. Well, I painting all the way now '(Mabel Juli, quoted in Kjellgren, E. p.361).

In 1991, she was shown in two Sydney exhibitions - 'Artists from Warmun: Turkey Creek' at Hogarth Gallery and the 'Aboriginal Women's Exhibition' curated by Hetti Perkins at the AGNSW. In 1993, in 'Turkey Creek', at Tandanya in Adelaide, Queenie Mingmarriya showed five works, as did Rover Thomas and her photograph featured on the catalogue cover. The same year, two paintings- 'God sending the Holy Spirit' and 'Limestone Hills near Texas Downs' - encapsulating her equal passions, Catholicism and Country, were shown in the seminal exhibition at the NGV, 'Images of Power: Aboriginal Art of the Kimberley'. In 1994, her work was selected and chosen for the catalogue cover of 'Power of the Land: Masterpieces of Aboriginal Art', NGV, and she was also a drawcard for 'Bush Women' at Fremantle Arts Centre; a significant exhibition that was restaged in 2018. In 1997 she featured in an exhibition, in Kununurra organised by Waringarri Arts, 'Gwaooleng Beleoonggoor- Women Painting'.

They bin makin' me do boards now. Put 'im here now. He bin start me up, me finish. Right through can paint now' (Kjellgren, E. p.18).

Eric Kjellgren queries the co-option of Queenie Mingmarriya to the feminist agendas of curators in the 1990s and her place in "women's exhibitions", saying it reflects Gadiya thinking, downplaying if not overlooking, her profound embeddedness in Women's Law; she ran the law at Warmun. Queenie Mingmarriya relied on those powerful, old Gija ladies and the Marian sisters, Mary Mackillop no less and from it all, she made a matriarchal fortress to protect women and children, buttressed by her signal position within a network of important Gadiya women. Queenie Mingmarriya's stance was pragmatic but always on point- she told Vinnicombe she wanted Warmun Council to pay for the women to get their grader licences so they could prepare the ceremony grounds themselves and not have to either wait for the men to do it or risk the men interfering. Queenie Mingmarriya was a tireless advocate for Womens Law.

The massacre history of the East Kimberley came out in the 1980s and both Rover Thomas and Queenie Mingmarriya made paintings based on stories told by the Elders of the Texas Mob who had witnessed them. Rover Thomas was told the story by Junpan, the old father of his brother-in-law, Joonbany/Jumpany Bob Nyalcas, and it relates to Lajipany, on Old Texas Downs.

The story was also known by his friends, Hector Jandany and Queenie McKenzie, and it happened when Dinah and Spinney, were on Texas Downs. The boy who hid under the bullock hide, afterwards found a baby girl who had survived, and she became Bob Nyalcas's mother. Rover Thomas made three works about the killings on Texas Downs, 'One Bullet', 1990, 'The Camp at Mistake Creek' 1990 and 'One hid under the bullock hide' 1991.

Queenie Mingmarriya also painted the Mistake Creek massacre but focused more on the Lajipany or Horse Creek massacre, sometimes depicting it overlaid with the story of when she saved Rover Thomas, as 'The Massacres and Rover Thomas Story', mixing events she had been part of with events she had been told about.



Queenie Mingmarriya's style combined profile views of hierarchical scale proximally placed,with planar depictions of rivers and roads, and minimal stylised figuration. She developed her own distinctive iconography to denote both Country, Ngarranggarniy sites, significant places and people. Queenie Mingmarriya painted the "power places" in her Country, Texas Downs - Wirdim/ Wertim/Red Butte, Rawooliliny/ Mount Glass, Kamangalama/Dog Boss Rock, Doolngayim/Argument Gap, Jewigunning/Bower Bird place, Winnaba/ Winnama/ Winnabun Springs, Nintermangy/Neemeroni/Leaning in All Directions the fertility site of the Rainmaker tree in the grove of fallen boabs, Dahlo Dahlo/Dahlu Dahlu Hill, Yoornoor Country near Mistake Creek, Moorndoo/ Mooloogoor Hills, Nimirriddi/ Fig Tree Dreaming, Joodal Country/Tick Dreaming, Dayiwool/Tayiwul /Barramudi Gap, Limestone Hills, Yarlga/Yarlka / White stone place, an echidna Dreaming place and the adjoining Country, Purnululu/ the Bungle Bungles.

'Every rock, every hill, every water, I know dat place backwards and forwards and up and down; inside out. It's my Country and I got names for every place' (Vinnicombe, P. p 20).

Rather than making maps of Country, she depicted sites as distinctive emblems and arranged them in serried ranks on a flat field like a painted banner celebrating her knowledge and signifying her attachment to them. Kjellgren comments that she "compresses" space and time in the landscape "to fit the painted surface" (Kjellgren, E.p.19). The triptych became a characteristic feature of her work. Her triptychs have the quality of an altar piece, emblazoned with codified pictograms showing as much Country and as many "power places" on each screen as can be fitted. In other works, she tells stories focusing on incidents from the past, stories she has been told, populated with stylised figures, about Massacres, the Packman, a Gadiya man speared at Red Butte, Major the bushranger, or stories from her own history and observations - about Rover Thomas, The Great Flood of 1922 on Texas Downs, Drinking story and the foundation of the school.

Giji Country near Texas Downs, Western Australia

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Her work was made entirely in ground up local ochres and distingushed for its varied colours - "makim' pretty" (Ellwood, T.1992) - especially her distinctive soft pinks – her favourite colour - a mixture of red ochre and white kaolin clay, locally known as mowantum. Queenie Mingmarriya mined and hand ground her ochres. As demands on her increased, she traded with others in the community, however she remained notably, very picky about her ochres. Her finely ground ochres impart an opaque, smooth, suede finish to her works. Her palette was nuanced, she also liked the contrast of a khaki green, metal greys and luminous blue blacks against the mauve, maroon, rose and lavender shades of her various pinks.

1995 was a pivotal year; Kevin Kelly of Waringarri Arts curated her first solo exhibition, 'Gara - Garag: My life longa Texas' at William Mora Gallery in Melbourne. Kelly also organised for the Warmun artists to begin print making at Northern Editions in Darwin. These initiatives heralded a rich time for Queenie Mingmarriya, but success invariably led to enormous pressures. Vinnicombe had encouraged her to paint her country, but when she returned in 1995, she was struck by Queenie Mingmarriya's prodigious output, committing country and history to canvas in a great outpouring of work.

Vinnicombe had returned to record the story of the Texas Mob, map the women's sites and significant places, document an accompanying series of paintings, and assist Queenie Mingmarriya to stage the Mutu once more. Events unfortunately stymied their plans for writing a book together based on Vinnicombe's extensive interviews.

1998, her final year, attests to her rich and complex life. Her great friend, Rover Thomas died at Easter. Soon after, the community owned and auspiced Warmun Art Centre (WAC), which Queenie Mingmarriya and Hector Jandany had argued for, opened, pausing, if not putting an end to, the rampant exploitation of senior Warmun artists. In August, Queenie Mingmarriya was designated a State Living Treasure by the WA Government and, she danced the Goorirr Goorirr at the NATSIAA in Darwin in honour of Rover Thomas. In September, Melbourne gallery, Kimberley Art presented a solo exhibition, 'Recent work (1994-98)'.

In November 1998 Queenie Mingmarriya died suddenly at Warmun. At her funeral, Countrywoman and Elder, Madigan Thomas said:

'What are we going to do now? Who goin' to run dat Law? What's goin' to happen to all these women now? (Field, J. p.13).

Queenie Mingmarriya became embroiled in The Culture Wars when 'Mistake Creek Massacre', 1997, was acquired by the National Museum of Australia in 2003 and quickly banished to storage. The oral story it told, was disputed and considered to be what was dubbed Black Armband History, and therefore could be dismissed. In 2009, geographer and former gallerist Jennifer Joi Field published Written in the Land: The Life of Queenie McKenzie, which drew on Vinnicombe's interviews. In 2013 her painting of the Mistake Creek massacre was reinstated, in recognition of Queenie Mingmarriya's stature as an artist and custodian of Gija people's stories. Whether it was Law, Language, Culture, Faith, Art or practical matters, Queenie Mingmarriya Nagarra McKenzie always knew what to do; nothing daunted her.

'Me, I'm leader for this mob and they listen and follow' (Ryan, V.p. 129).

Dr Suzanne Spunner is an art historian and expert on Rover Thomas and East Kimberley art, and an honorary senior fellow in Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is also a playwright- Not Still Lives, Running Up a Dress, Dragged Screaming to Paradise, and in the seventies she was the founding editor of LIP, a feminist magazine about women and art.

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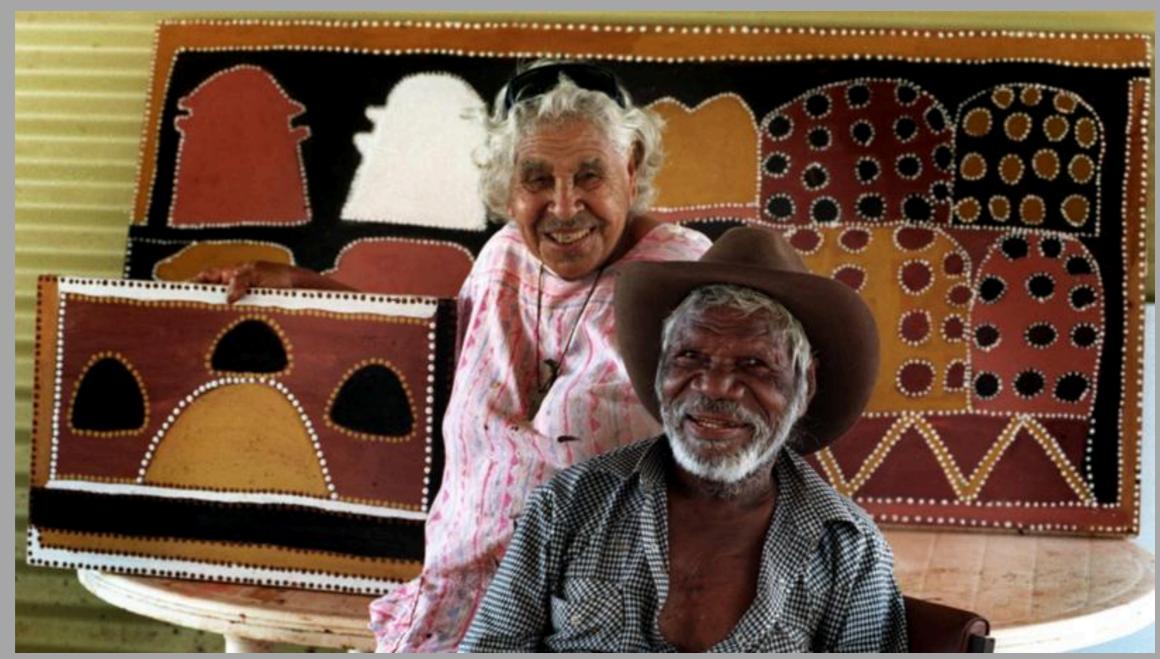
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NOTES

Her Voice – Queenie 's words are taken from extensive oral histories she recorded with-Patricia Vinnicombe, Helen Ross, Frances Kofod, Sr Veronica Ryan and Eric Kjellgreen between 1982 and 1995 and many of these stories were reproduced by Jennifer Joi Field in 'Written in the Land' without attribution, as to date, place or interlocuter.

Kimberley Kriol - The pronoun 'he' tends to be the general form representing, 'he, she or it'. 'La' means about, to, in or at depending on context. 'Bin' indicates past tense, 'Bla' means belong.



Queenie with Rover Thomas in 1995

Courtsey of Kevin Kelly

Untitled, circa 1994

natural earth pigments on canvas

60 x 90 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia

Warringari Aboriginal Arts, Western Australia

Private Collection, Melbourne

Utopia Art Sydney, Sydney

Private Collection, Sydney



Untitled, circa 1996

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears dimensions and Warringarri Aboriginal Arts cat.no. verso

90 x 100 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia

Waringarri Aboriginal Arts, Western Australia

Private Collection, Brisbane



Untitled, circa 1998

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears signature, dimensions and Red Rock cat.no. verso

60 x 80 cm

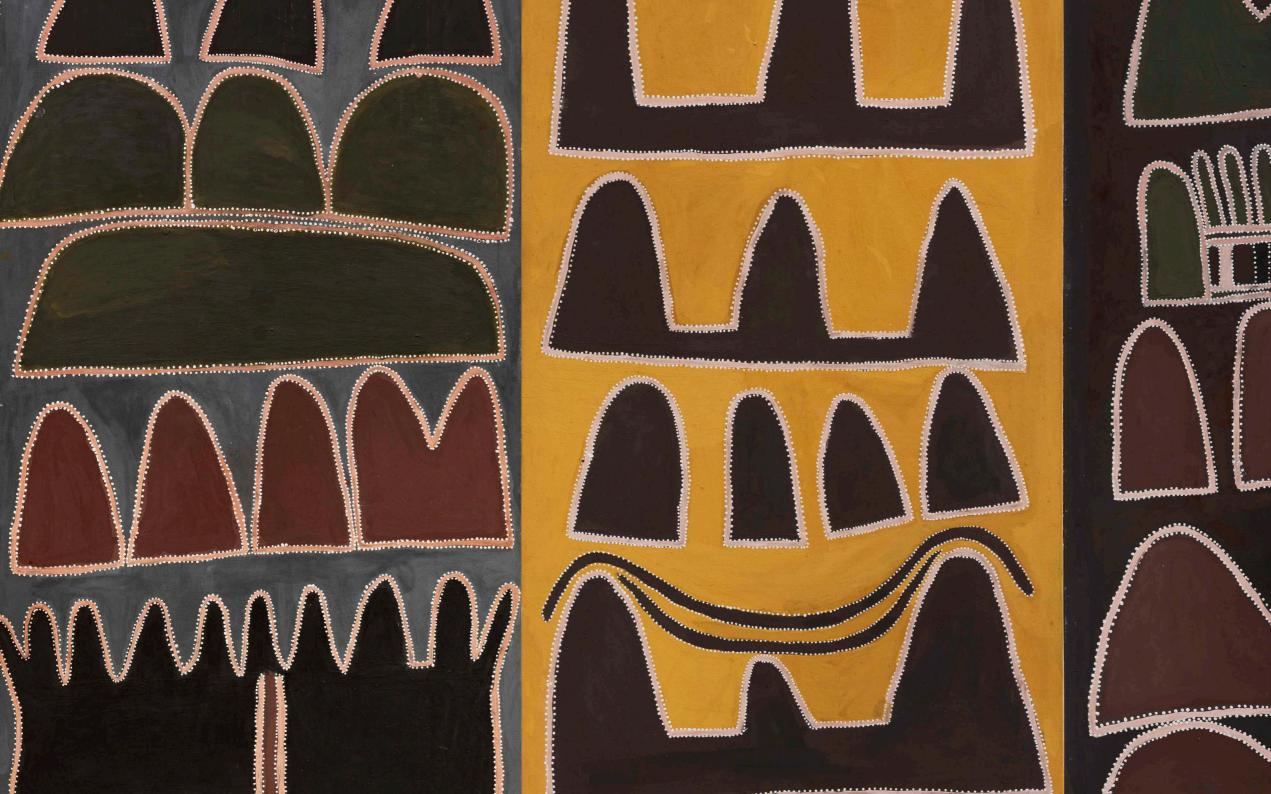
Provenance

Painted at Warmun Community, Western Australian

Red Rock Art, Western Australia (cat.no. KP 046)

Private Collection, Queensland







Texas Downs (Tryptch), 1998

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears artist's name, date, dimensions and Red Rock Arts cat.nos. verso

180.5 x 100.5 cm (each)

180.5 x 301.5 cm (overall)

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia Red Rock Art, Western Australia (cat.nos. Q19 & KP419) Private Collection, Queensland



Untitled, 1998

natural earth pigments on canvas bears date and Red Rock Arts cat.no. verso 30 x 90 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia

Red Rock Art, Western Australia (cat.no. Q13 & KP393)

Private Collection, Brisbane





Diamond Mine (Argyle), 1997

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears signature, title, date, dimensions and Warmun Traditional Arts cat.no. verso 100 x 100 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia
Warmun Traditional Arts, Western Australia (cat.no. QM1153)
Private Collection, Victoria
Lawsons-Menzies, Sydney, 14 November 2007, lot 55
Private Collection, Sydney
Important Australia & International Art, Menzies, Melbourne, 26 June 2024, lot 81
Private Collection, Sydney



Banana Springs, 1996

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears signature, title, date, dimensions and Warmun Traditional Arts cat.no. verso 91 x 122 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia

Warmun Traditional Arts, Western Australia (cat.no. QM0022)

The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands

The Thomas Vroom Collection, Leonard Joels, Melbourne, 26 February 2017, lot 213

Private Collection, Sydney





Untitled, circa 1995

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears artist's name, dimensions and Waringarri Aboriginal Arts cat.no verso

140 x 100 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun Community, Western Australia

Waringarri Aboriginal Arts, Western Australia (cat.no. AP1595)

Private Collection, Queensland



Kamanggarrnarding Country - Halls Creek Yard, 1995

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears artist's name, dimensions and Warringarri Aborignal Arts certificate verso 40 x 60 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia Waringarri Aboriginal Arts, Western Australia (cat.no. AP0649) Private Collection

This painting shows Kamanggarranarding country (Halls Creek Yard) on Texas Downs Station near Turkey Creek, Western Australia where the artist spent most of her early life. Like much of her work, this painting shows the place where she grew up. The large hill called Kamanggarnarding is in the centre of the painting. Nearby is a spring from which a creek flows out across the country.





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Darlu Darlu, 1995

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears artist's name, title, dimensions and Waringarri Aboriginal Arts cat.no. verso

141 x 101 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia

Warringarri Aboriginal Arts, Western Australia (cat.no. AP1586)

Private Collection



Propa Home - Texas Downs, 1995

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears Warmun Traditional Arts cat.no. verso

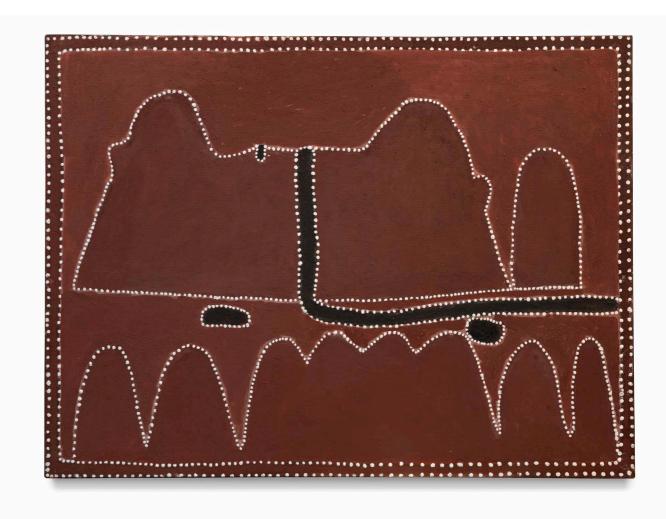
90 x 122cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia

Warmun Traditional Arts, Western Australia (cat.no. QM11)

Private Collection, Victoria





Yirago - Rosewood Station, 1995

natural earth pigments on canvas

bears artist's name, title, dimensions and Waringarri Aboriginal Arts cat.no. verso

101 x 140 cm

Provenance

Painted at Warmun community, Western Australia

Warringarri Aboriginal Arts, Western Australia (cat.no. AP1173)

Private Collection, Queensland



Queenie McKenzie: A BRIEF TIMELINE

IMPORTANCE OF PROVENANCE

A Secondary Eye practices with the most stringent of provenance guidelines to ensure the cultural integrity of the First Nations artworks that we sell, providing a verifiable chain of custody that authenticates the origins and history of the artwork. This is crucial for preserving the cultural significance and authenticity of Indigenous art. It ensures that artists receive proper credit, acknowledgment and fair compensation for their works. In most instances this entails us to seek out community based art centre provenance sources, which have historically operated with a high level of ethical standard.

The issue that arises with regards to Queenie McKenzie's career is that during her lifetime there was no community owned and operated art centre within the community of Warmun where she resided (that is until the establishment of Warmun Art Centre three months before her passing). She painted for a number of sources, most notably for Waringarri Aboriginal Arts and Red Rock Gallery in partnership with Kevin Kelly who now handles the Queenie McKenzie Estate. In preparation for this exhibition we engaged the Estate and Dr Suzanne Spunner in the aim of bringing clarification on acceptable channels of provenance. It was important to address these issues to ensure that her cultural importance is properly acknowledged and valued in manner which we hope will become the new standard.

1982 QM restages the Mutu Dance to demonstrate the power of Women's Law in the East Kimberley after the desecration of the Barramundi Dreaming site during exploration for diamonds on Argyle. She is assisted by Dr Patricia Vinnicombe, an archaeologist from the WA Museum.

QM paints her first work- a diagram of female Skin Groups for Vinnicombe.

1985 Waringarri Aboriginal Arts and Crafts (WAAC) established in Kununurra to serve artists including those at Turkey Creek/Warmun 200 kms away

1986 Encouraged by Patricia Vinnicombe, QM paints two works as teaching aids for the Warmun Ngalangangpum Two Way School, 'The Eagle and the Crow' and 'Red Butte' (an important place on Texas Downs).

1987 QM collaborates with linguist, Frances Kofod on a guide to Cooking and Eating Goanna correct way- Jang Yarra Jarrampayiny, for the school.

Joel Smoker of Waringarri Arts asks Sr Theresa Morellini at Warmun school if there are any women Joel Smoker of Waringarri Arts asks Sr Theresa Morelinin at Warmun school if there are any women interested in painting, she suggests QM, who is inspired by the example of her friend Rover Thomas. Smoker arranges for QM's work to go to Mary Macha for market appraisal. Macha sells one work immediately to the Berndt Museum at UWA, where QM is described as "Queenie Brennan". Over the next few years Macha takes a small number and in 1991 sells them to the NGV, QAGOMA, however ultimately Macha declines to represent Queenie McKenzie. 'Landscape at Turkey Creek', UWA; 'Old People Looking for Goanna and Emu', NGV; 'Moses and the Ten Commandments', NGV; 'Blackfellas in bush country', NGV.

1988 'Old Couple Hunting for Bush tucker', NGV; 'Kimberley Landscape' QAGOMA.

Peggy Griffiths, Mignonette Jamin and Nellie Gordon begin to paint for Waringarri Arts.

Mirrilingki Spirituality Centre opened in Warmun by Sr Theresa Morellini offering drug and alcohol counselling.

1989 Nancy Noonju and Madigan Thomas also start painting.

1990 QM paints her first works for Waringarri Arts (WAAC) in May.

6 paintings in ochre for (WAAC)

WAAC exhibition Turkey Creek Artists Dreamtime Gallery, Perth in July

1991 5 paintings in ochre for (WAAC)

Deaths of QM's mother Dinah Nyukaya/Nokiah followed by her elderly husband, Charlie McKenzie.

Aboriginal Women's Exhibition AGNSW, curated by Hetti Perkins features two works by QM

1992 8 paintings in ochre for (WAAC)

Around this time QM moves into the Pensioners Quarters, Walumba Aged Care Facility.

1993 14 paintings in ochre for (WAAC)

Images of Power, NGV curated by Judith Ryan & Kim Akerman includes works by QM: 'God Sending the Holy Spirit 'and 'Limestone Hills near Texas Downs' 1991.

WAAC exhibition Turkey Creek Tandanya, Adelaide

1994 26 paintings in ochre for (WAAC)

Mabel Juli and Shirley Purdie, (daughter of Madigan Thomas) begin painting.

Bush Women: Fresh Art from Remote Western Australia, exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre, features work by QM

In September, Warmun Aboriginal Corporation/Warmun Community Arts, Warmun Community (Turkey Creek) Incorporated, backed by Kimberley Art, Melbourne is established and embedded in the Warmun community. Directed by Peter Harrison of Kimberley Art and run by ex-policeman Dave Rock, with assistance from the Warmun Community Council members, Dallas Purdie and Jock Mosquito.

Vinnicombe copied records of 52 paintings sold through Warmun community during the nine-month period September1994-May 1995.

Ochre Gallery established in Kununurra by Jennifer Joi Field ostensibly to serve the female artists.

Vinnicombe was told by Field that she had purchased about 32 paintings from QM that year.

Vinnicombe noted-"Almost every week either one or both of the agencies working out of Kununurra, Waringarri Arts and the Ochre Gallery, left canvases for Queenie to paint" (p.3).

Neil McLeod began visiting Warmun and commissioning works directly from QM when she was living at Walumba Aged Čare Facility, aka The Pensioners Unit.

According to Vinnicombe, "innumerable canvases" were sold from there.

1995 46 paintings in ochre for (WAAC)

Vinnicombe copied records of 68 paintings made for Waringarri Arts by QM over eighteen months from 1994-5

Vinnicombe notes- "The standard of documentation that accompanies the paintings varies from excellent to abysmal. with that from Waringarri Arts being the most comprehensive" (p.3).

In November, Narangunny Art Traders (NAT) owned by Maxine Taylor and Serge Brooks form Warmun Traditional Artists, backed primarily by Kimberley Art, Cooee Gallery-Adrian Newstead, Utopia Art Sydney-Christopher Hodges and also supported by Indigenart /Mossenson, Perth and initially by Helen Read, Digeri Art Tours/Palya Art.

1996 30 paintings in ochre (WAAC)

Peggy Patrick begins to paint.

WAAC exhibition/first major solo: Gara-garag My life Longa Texas, William Mora Galleries, Melbourne

1997 24 paintings in ochre (WAAC)

In October, Red Rock Art established in Kununurra by Kevin Kelly, former manager at Waringarri Arts.

In December, Maxine Taylor and Serge Brooks, Warmun Traditional Artists /Narangyunny Art Traders (NAT) asked to vacate the old Post office building and leave the Warmun community, the site of their "Art Centre" in order to: "set up a Community owned and Community manged Art Centre Enterprise, where the people who worked there would manage the centre and report to and be accountable (operationally and financially) to the Warmun Council":

1998 19 paintings in ochre and 25 works on paper/prints (WAAC)

Making approximately 80 works for Waringarri Arts

In September Warmun Art Centre (WAC) opens.

QM distances herself from NAT entirely and fulsomely supports WAC

Solo exhibition, Queenie McKenzie Recent Work (1994-98), Kimberley Art, Melbourne

In November Queenie McKenzie dies at Warmun.

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra	1000	DREAMTIME GALLERY, PERTH
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney	1990	
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne	1991	HOGARTH GALLERIES, SYDNEY
Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane	1991	ABORIGINAL WOMEN PAINTERS, ART GALLERY OF I
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth	1991	VM GALLERIES, MIAMI, U.S.A.
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide	4000	
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin	1992	GALLERY GABRIELLE PIZZI, MELBOURNE
Australian National University, Canberra	1993	TANDANYA, ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
National Museum Australia, Canberra	1993	KIMBERLEY ART, MELBOURNE
Museums Victoria, Melbourne	1993	INDIGENART, PERTH
Shepparton Art Museum, Victoria		
Australian War Memorial, Canberra	1993	CHAPMAN GALLERY, CANBERRA
Kaplan & Levi Collection, Seattle	1994	KIMBERLEY ART, MELBOURNE
Stokes Family Collection, Perth	1994	GALLERY JILA, BROOME, WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Wesfarmers Collection, Perth	1994	HOGARTH GALLERIES, SYDNEY
Holmes à Court Collection, Perth	1771	
Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands	1994	FREMANTLE ARTS, PERTH
Kluge Ruhe Collection, Virginia	1994	TANDANYA, ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

OF NEW SOUTH WALES



HOGARTH GALLERIES, SYDNEY

COOEE ABORIGINAL ART, SYDNEY

WILLIAM MORA GALLERY, MELBOURNE

SAVODE GALLERY, BRISBANE

WILLIAM MORA GALLERY (SOLO)

SAVODE GALLERY BRISBANE

HOGARTH GALLERY SYDNEY

KIMBERLEY ART, MELBOURNE (SOLO)

WILLIAM MORA GALLERIES, MELBOURNE

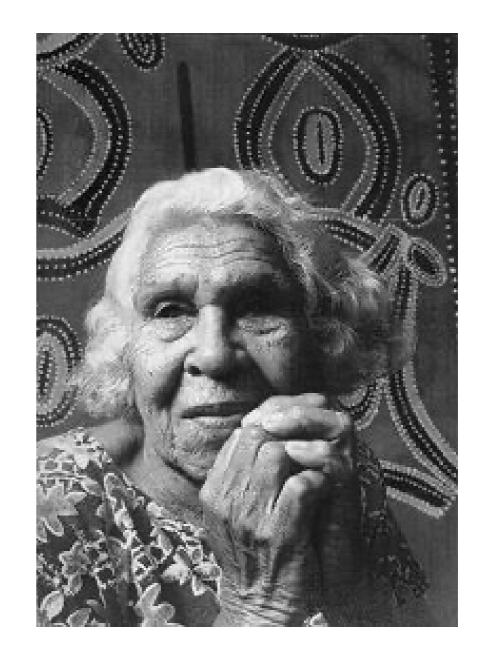
TALKING BLAK TO HISTORY, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA

FROM LITTLE THINGS BIGS THINGS GROW, KLUGE-RUHE COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, USA

PRINTABOUT, DARWIN

GALLERY GONDWANA, ALICE SPRINGS, NORTHERN TERRITORY

DURACK GALLERY, BROOME, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



1994

1995

1995

1995

1995

1995

1996

1996

1996

1997

1998

2007

2020

2020

Catalogue to accompany the exhibition Queenie McKenzie: Know Her

5 - 8 September 2024

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