

SALLY'S STORY

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woolloongabba art gallery
presents



SALLY'S STORY



Sally’s Story

“King Alfred led a big raid on my small mob. They came at night to steal women. They speared my brother Buddi and grabbed my younger sister Reah. All we could do was run away in the dark. Buddi broke the spear off and ran too. We got out in the water and sat on a shallow reef with just our noses poking up until they went away. Buddi had been speared in the stomach and died the next day.

About three days later I took two of my tribal brothers up northeast to King Alfred’s Country. I went to kill King Alfred and take his sister for payback. In the late afternoon I left my two mates in the bush while I went down to see where they were camped. When the last glare was in the sky I crept close and watched where each man made his heap of grass to sleep under. There were only three men and five women with some children.

After dark my two mates came up and we waited while the men chanted and sung themselves to sleep. When they were quiet I sneaked up, gathered their spears and hid them. Then I showed my mates what they would have to do. The other two men with King Alfred were called Percy and Pluto. Our plan was for me to spear King Alfred while another speared Percy, my last brother was to grab King Alfred’s sister. Pluto was our uncle so we could not touch him.

I had a spear with a head made from three big stingray barbs. I sneaked up by the head of King Alfred and shifted the grass a bit so I could see him properly. Then I drove the spear hard into his stomach just below the chest. He gave one great shout and died. Percy was speared in the leg and again through the side as he and Pluto ran away. I took King Alfred’s sister for my wife-today she is called Sally. (Thundamun)”

“Thundamun”, 1971, p 116, Dick Roughsey, Moon and Rainbow



Working With Sally

2005 has been a year of many surprises and rapid transformation of our art centre, from a struggling wholesaler of handcraft and traditional story painting to a contemporary painting studio with an exhibition program previously unavailable to our artists. This success has been the result of our professional development workshops conducted with Simon Turner Director of Woolloongabba Art Gallery and the efforts of our artists.

Early this year Mornington Island Arts and Craft centre approached the Aged Person’s Hostel regarding the possibility of old men in particular Lindsey Roughsey older brother of the late Dick Roughsey, coming to the art centre to paint. In March 2005 Lindsey and a couple of old men started coming and spending part of Thursday in the studio. On one of their visits the manager of the APH explained the ladies no longer had anywhere to go for their activities, so the art centre extended an invitation for the following week. A few old ladies were brought down with the old men the following week and Sally, who is a proficient weaver of bush string and rope asked to be taken ‘bush’ to get grass to spin, she was very shy. Simon was working with other artists and encouraged me to give her some canvas and let her have a go. Since that very first painting it has been a joy and a privilege to work and laugh with Sally. To begin it was one day a week, then two, now it’s five and would be seven, if the art centre opened on the weekend. When the APH car is not ready when Sally is, she will set off on foot to the art centre walking a kilometre or so, that is if someone doesn’t stop and give her a lift.

Sally has grown in confidence this year from a ‘head down shaming’, too shy to look at people, to interrogating anyone who comes into the studio. She may even be accused of starting to dress like an artist and shows definite signs of eccentricity wearing her stylish hats to the art centre. The biggest change is how the other artists especially the older men have changed the way they see Sally. People often ask, “what does she paint about where does it come from?” There are artists that not only paint from the heart but also put their soul into their work. Sally Gabori is one of these artists; the very fibre of her being is what she is communicating.

Art has helped Sally reconnect with her country and story places, her fish and her fish traps. Not many can imagine the pain and suffering she has experienced being forcibly removed from her country, her Bentinck Island, her soul. Sally is taking a journey back to her country, to times of happiness and joy. The smile that lights up her face as she tells the story of each painting reinforces how strongly Sally feels about her paintings.

Using commissions from the sale of her work, the art centre chartered a plane for Sally and her blind cripple husband Pat to Bentinck Island for the first time in a decade. The day was filled with song and laughter as they joked with family on Bentinck Island. These trips are becoming more regular for Sally and may soon happen on a regular basis.

Sally’s family is justifiably proud, as her reputation grows in the community. Although her English is very limited her personality is infectious, whether you are sure what she is saying or not, you kind of understand. At eighty one, Sally is an emerging artist who may not enjoy the longest career, though the legacy she will leave behind may last a very long time. Mornington Island Arts and Craft centre hopes many people will learn about Sally Gabori, her life and how she came to paint. When Sally finishes a painting, she looks up and asks” Good eh.” The answer seems to always be the same,”Yes Sally, it’s good”.

*Brett Evans
Co-ordinator
Mornington Island Arts and Craft centre.*





Intertidal Rock-Wall Fish Traps, Wellesley Islands Region, Gulf of Carpentaria

Sally Gabori belongs to the Kaiadilt people who have traditionally occupied the South Wellesley Island, the largest of which are Bentinck and Sweer Islands, in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria. The Kaiadilt have a village at Nyinyilki on the south-east side of Bentinck Island. However many Kaiadilt, including Sally and her husband Pat, live at Mornington Island in the township of Gununa in the North Wellesley Islands. Mornington Island, which is the largest in the Wellesley group, is the traditional country of the Lardil people. Mornington Island is linked to the mainland by a number of smaller islands, which are the homelands of the Yangkaal people. The adjacent mainland was occupied by the Ganggalida people. All of these groups utilized stone-wall fish traps in their pre-contact traditional lifestyles.

These rock-wall trap enclosures were built in strategically placed points of the intertidal zone. The Kaiadilt name for a fish trap is ngurruwarr, whilst the Lardil call their traps derdernin. All groups asserted that they caught not only fish, but turtle and dugong in traps. Other by-products were crabs obtained from the crevices within and underneath the rock walls, oysters from on the rocks themselves, and a range of species of shellfish from the muddy and sandy bottoms of the traps. Most traps have not been in regular usage since the sustained contact period with Europeans (1914 for North Wellesleys, 1948 for South Wellesleys). Reconnaissance surveys of most of the Wellesley Islands and the mainland between Moonlight Creek and Bayley Point, indicate that there are some 108 fish trap sites or clusters containing at least 334 traps. This makes it the largest complex of stone walled fish traps in Aboriginal Australia. Bentinck Island, in Kaiadilt country, is enormously rich with fish traps with an average of one cluster of traps every 900 metres and one trap per 400 metres.

The use of rock wall traps was under the direction of the local clan custodian. With his or her permission, traps could be used whenever tidal conditions were suitable. In the most advantageous conditions, numerous fish were be left stranded on the floor of the trap when the water had completely run out. They were easily collected by hand (by men or women) or with a pronged fishing spear (by men), and carried ashore in bark containers or small hand-nets. Dugong and turtle could be stranded in the same way but this was more likely during the biggest tides when the tops of the walls were covered with a substantial height of water. Aboriginal consultants stated that there were different types of traps for catching dugong, turtle and fish, and have referred to a `double trap`, one part being for fish and one for dugong. This probably refers to the combination of an inner and outer wall situated on a higher and lower substrate contour respectively. A second method of harvesting fish could be used prior to the trap becoming emptied, once the tide had fallen below the top of the wall. Fish were `herded` into schools and towards one or more spearsmen by individuals hitting the surface of the water. Another technique was to simply walk along the walls spearing fish, as the tide fell.

There is a further harvesting technique, that of designing an outer apex in the trap (ie. the point of a V shape, to coincide with a channel system of small runlets of water which flow together to make a larger channel, draining out to sea. When the tide is rising or falling these streamlets become channels where the current is strongest, and through their velocity naturally direct and carry fish travelling inshore and offshore when the tide is changing. Thus as the water in the trap falls with the tide, it will drain to the V point of the trap leaving a large pool in the lower part of the V, thereby concentrating the fish into one area. Several choices are then presented as to how to harvest the fish. First the fish could be speared. Secondly one could wait until the trap fully drains and pick up by hand any fish that might be stranded on the substrate in the V point. Thirdly the fish could be netted, facilitated by a gate in the wall at the V point formed by removing a few rocks.

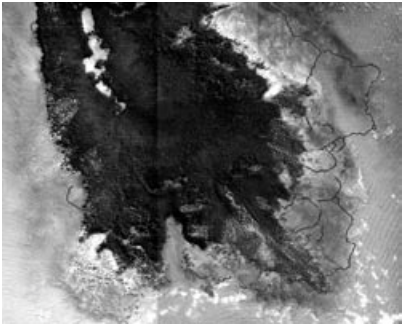
Dr Paul Memmott



Part of a complex of rock wall fish traps off the south-west corner of Bentinck Island, with a pocket trap in the apex of a large pen. (Photo by Richard Robins.)



Two lengths of wall connected to a stand of mangrove trees, Bayley Island. Is this one continuous wall and if so, is it one or two traps? (Photo by Connah and Jones of University of New England, 12/5/82.)



The south-west corner of Bentinck Island showing part of the large rock wall trap complex adjacent to a mangrove forest (aerial photo enhanced with line).



Ngijinda Dulk, My Country 2005
acrylic on canvas
60 x 76 cm



Ngijinjina Makarrki, King Alfreds Country 2005
acrylic on canvas
60 x 84 cm



Ngurnawarra, Fish Traps 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



Ngijinjina Makarrki, King Alfreds Country 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



Ngijinjina Kanthathuna Dulk, My Fathers Country 2005
acrylic on canvas
60 x 84 cm



Ngijinjina Kanthathuna Dulk, My Fathers Country 2005
acrylic on canvas
60 x 76 cm



Ngurnawarra, Fish Traps 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



Ngurnawarra, Fish Traps 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



Story Place 2005
acrylic on canvas
76 x 101 cm



Ngijinjina Makarrki, King Alfred's Country 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm

Muthaa miburlda ngad: the life of Sally Gabori

Sally Gabori was born around 1924. She grew to womanhood at a time when her people - the Kaiadilt people of Bentinck Island and the other South Wellesley Islands - still lived a completely traditional life, uninfluenced in the slightest way by the encroachment of Europeans. Until the age of about twenty, she had practically no contact with non-Kaiadilt people, and lived from fishing and gathering shellfish and vegetable foods, and maintaining the stone fish walls around the shores of Bentinck Island. She never went to school, speaks little English, and cannot write her name. Her whole life has been oriented to the Kaiadilt's ancient traditions, and even after the Kaiadilt were evicted to the Methodist Mission on Mornington Island, she has kept up a largely traditional life, fishing and gathering bush foods, remaining with her family and the small Kaiadilt community.

Sally has always been a keen practitioner of traditional crafts, ranging from the building of stone fish traps to the rolling of hibiscus bark string (birrk) and the making of dillybags and coolamons from traditional plant materials. She is also an accomplished singer of traditional Kaiadilt songs, a distinctive lullaby-like style that often expresses longing for absent people or love or homesickness for particular places. A feeling for the close ties to country these songs express can be gained from the words of one of her songs, which go like this: baluraayaanki mankinji / mankinji yanga jirrkurumirdamirda diijuru - 'from being in someone else's country, in my previous night's camp in the west, I will sit down in my sea country to the north'.

But it is only this year -in her early eighties - that she has begun to paint. All artists, of course, must learn to see before they begin to paint, and eighty years of invisible learning taught Sally Gabori to see what she does. A common phrase used by Kaiadilt elders is muthaa miburlda ngad, literally 'many eye me', but rendered more idiomatically as 'my eyes have seen much'. Acute observation of nature is needed to survive as a hunter-gatherer. And Kaiadilt culture, like other indigenous Australian cultures, instils a close knowledge of place, mediated by strong emotional attachments that form the basis of Kaiadilt cosmology. Popular Australian culture tends to associate the indigenous idea of sacred sites with spectacular places like Uluru (Ayers Rock) or Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge). But what is perhaps most moving about the Kaiadilt tradition of place is the way it hallows rather minor places - a small waterhole whose coloured rocks are sometimes exposed when the sand shifts, linking it to the scales of the Rainbow Serpent, or a small spring at the base of a cliff, where fresh water seeps out even beneath the sea water at high tide, and which is linked to the ancestral Rock Cod. These stories give colour and life to what, to an outsider's first glance, appears to be a rather featureless and bleached-out beachscape. This cosmology of story places is given precision and articulation by an unwritten cartographic tradition: Kaiadilt adults minutely divided their small territory into many hundreds of named sites, competitively recited to one another by old men vigilant to note the omission of one named place along a coastline. Learning to see one's traditional country in this detailed, meaning-invested and emotionally-charged way is part of the traditional process of becoming a Kaiadilt person. We can thus see the first seven and a half decades of Sally Gabori's life as a long apprenticeship in learning how to see the world, as a traditional Bentinck Islander.

But the final part of the artist's task - to work out how to show us what they see - was only accomplished in this year when community worker Brett Evans made appropriate materials available to her through the Art and Craft program on Mornington Island. Unlike in many parts of Australia where contemporary indigenous artists draw on long-standing local artistic traditions - rock or bark painting in Arnhem Land, sand-painting in the Centre - the Kaiadilt people did not have a developed graphic tradition in pre-contact times. Sally Gabori's paintings - of fish, fishtraps and story places from her country - thus represent an inventive individual response, original and naive in the full sense of the world, from someone who has spent her life seeing the world through Kaiadilt eyes.

The traditional territory of the Kaiadilt people is in the South Wellesley Islands in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria. The biggest island, Bentinck Island, is little more than twenty kilometres from west to east, and twelve from north to south. The whole land area of Kaiadilt territories is a mere 180 square kilometres. An inland topography of salt pans and low, infertile scrub is fringed by low laterite cliffs, mangroves, and casuarina-lined beaches. The highest point on Bentinck Island is a sandhill not much over 10 metres above sea level, though Inscription Point on nearby Sweers Island rises higher. This makes the whole Kaiadilt territory vulnerable to inundation. During the monsoon the enormous volume of water discharged from the Gulf rivers sometimes turn the sea fresh. In other years the north west monsoon driving the Gulf may stack up the sea; in conjunction with king tides this can produce rises of nearly four metres.

Drinking water, in traditional times, was scarce at the best of times - over most of the island it must be obtained from soakages dug in the sands just behind the beaches - and fresh water supplies were constantly vulnerable to salting up after flooding by the sea. The scarcity of fresh water is emphasised in a key Kaiadilt myth, in which thirsty newcomers dig long and hard for water without success, until finally Nalkardarrowuru - 'the one with waterlilies on his head' - emerges from the dry sand. He consents to give humans water, but only in exchange for their wives and daughters: Wuuja ngijinji kilwanda kambind, karndiy, ngada wuuju kilwanju ngukuwuru! Give me your children and women, and I will give you water! In another myth, the liver of Dibirdibi, the Rock Cod, is cut to pieces and thrown on to rocks at the foot of a cliff on Sweers Island, where it becomes a perpetual spring.

But the difficult territory on land is made up for by a bountifully provisioned sea teaming with fish, turtle and dugong, and mangrove flats and beaches full of crabs and shellfish. This made the Kaiadilt a people of the strand, living in beach camps with their backs to the land and turning to the sea for their sustenance. Over the centuries - and beginning, according to their tradition, with Bujuku the ancestral black reef heron - Kaiadilt people had constructed a vast network, unparalleled in Australia, of stone fish walls encircling the island, made of heavy rocks piled up and sealed together with growths of oysters. As the tides retreated, fish would be caught in the yards formed by their walls, and were then easily netted or speared. Men would stand in wait, spear in hand, on the many sandbanks around the island - the word for sandbank, ngakand, also means 'waiting' - or would venture further out to sea on rafts to get spear turtle, or visit the small waterless outer islands for turtles or seagull eggs.

In pre-contact times the Kaiadilt were almost completely cut off from the rest of Australia, and had little contact with other Aboriginal peoples. In November 1802 Matthew Flinders anchored off Sweers Island for lengthy repairs to his ship. He encountered a group of "Indians" on Allen Island - about halfway between Bentinck Island and the mainland - but from his description of them it seems likely that they were mainlanders or Forsyth Islanders. He saw people on Sweers and Bentinck Islands, and these were no doubt the Kaiadilt, but there was no close contact. There were sporadic visits to the islands by Europeans over the next 140 years, but major contact occurred only in the 1940s. Severe drought in the period 1942-45 resulted in those on Sweers Island being evacuated to Mornington Island - the mission there had been trying for some time to bring the Bentinck Islanders under their sway, without any real success, but this environmental crisis gave them an opportunity to transport a good part of the Kaiadilt population across to the mission on Mornington. Finally, after a cyclone in 1948, the remaining Kaiadilt were persuaded to move to Mornington Island too. For the next four decades the Kaiadilt people had no choice but to live on Mornington, which they consider foreign territory. Such was the trauma of this forced shift that for several years no child was born and survived, rupturing forever the chain by which one sibling transmits their language to the next.

No child born after the move has ever mastered the intricate Kayardild language, so that grandparents and grandchildren have no language in common that could be used to pass on tribal lore in the home. From the early 1990s many have returned to outstations on Bentinck Island, which now has a population of forty to fifty, as part of a move to establish a healthy community maintaining Kaiadilt traditions in their own country. Sally Gabori moves back and forth between Mornington Island - where her husband Pat now lives in the Aged Persons Hostel - and the outstation on Bentinck.

Traditionally, Kaiadilt people receive a birthplace name, formed by adding -ngathi to the name of the place they are born, and one to two further names - either a totem, passed down through the family, or a spiritual conception name, recalling a significant event marking the child’s spiritual conception, such as a fish or animal presenting itself to the child’s father while hunting, or some other unusual event. Birthplace names are important because they keep track of the special rights that people have as custodians of the country they are born into.

Sally Gabori’s tribal name is Mirdidingkingathi juwarnda. Juwarnda means ‘dolphin’, which is her totemic sign, and Mirdidingkingathi means ‘born at Mirdidingki’, in her country on the south side of Bentinck Island. The English name Gabori comes from her husband Pat Gabori, and is a corruption of his birthplace name, Kabararrjingathi. Her father was born around 1865, dying in 1930; from his name Thunduyingathi Bijarrb we know that he was born at Thunduyi, near Oaktree Point on the northern end of Bentinck Island. Her mother, Murrukunabayingathi Karnda Thandamand, was born around 1880 on Albinia Island (Murrukunabayi) and died around 1946. Her older brother King Alfred (Makarrkingathi Dingkarringathi Thuwathu Bijarrb) was born around 1897 and died in 1947, and her younger brother Percy Loogatha (Dunkurrurriyingathi Wuyirra Bijarrb) was born around 1922 and died in 1974.

All these dates, by the way, were pieced together by the great ethnographer Norman Tindale in interviews with Kaiadilt people in the early 1960s, worked out by calibrating them with natural and astronomical events, the known passing of ships, and other events that could be used to piece together a chronology from this oral culture that remembered and transmitted names, places and kin relationships with scrupulous accuracy but did not have traditional methods of date-keeping.

At the time of moving to Mornington Island she was one of four wives to Pat Gabori. Mission policy encouraged monogamy, and two of Pat’s wives were redistributed to wifeless men, though he managed to hold onto two: Sally, and Maudie Pat (Dawaringathi kulkiji), who died in 1984. Sally brought eleven children of her own into the world, as well as caring for her co-wife’s children, following Kaiadilt tradition, and is grandmother and great grandmother to many more.

This, then, is Sally Gabori’s life - from one angle, the life of a shy great-grandmother in a largely unknown community, who barely speaks English and whose language can now be understood by only a handful of people. It is indissolubly linked with her country, her family, her tribe, and their remarkable and dramatic history. The late and unforeseeable outpouring of artistic talent which this exhibition presents, in a person who has traversed the whole history of Aboriginal - European contacts in a single lifetime, is a striking testimony to the unpredictability of genius, and its ability to spring up after a lifetime of dormancy.

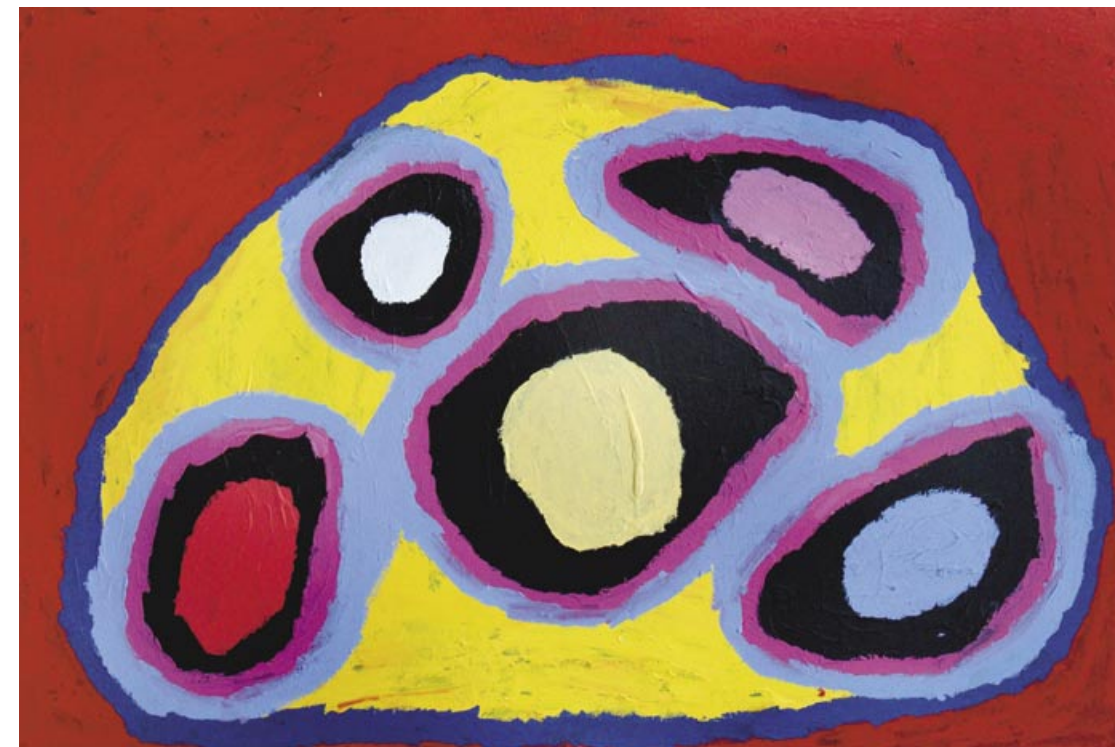
Dr Nicholas Evans (nrde@unimelb.edu.au)



Hunting Ground at Kambu 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



Hunting Ground at Makarrki 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



Hunting Ground 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 137 cm



Hunting Ground in Makarrki 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 137 cm



Ninjlki, Main Base 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



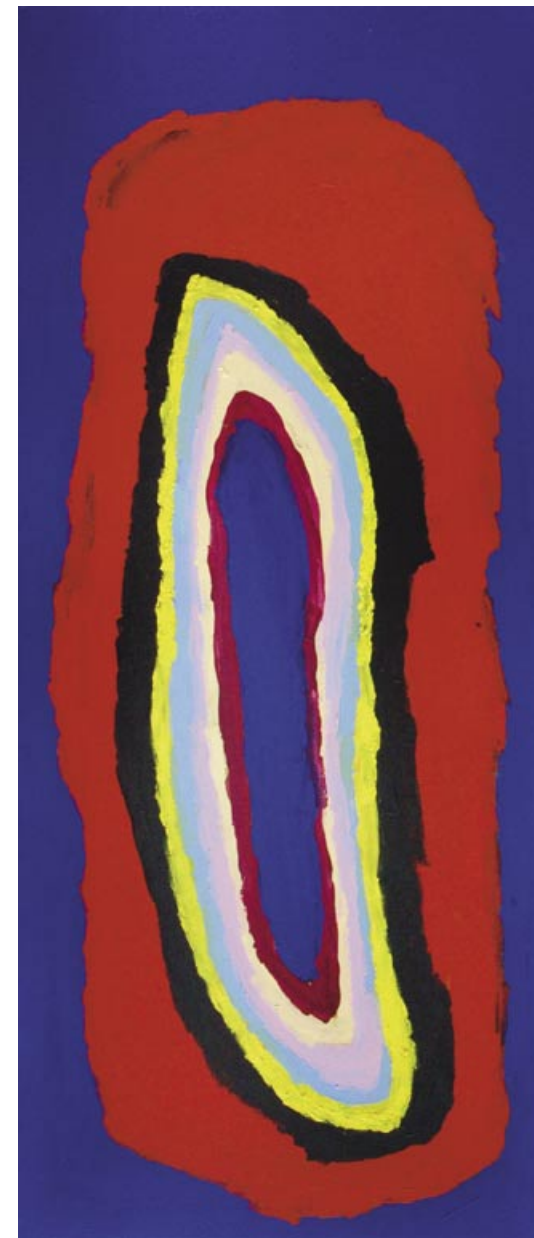
Outside Hunting Ground 2005
 acrylic on canvas
 210 x 91 cm



Outside Hunting Ground 2005
 acrylic on canvas
 210 x 91 cm



Ngjijina Kanthathuna Dulk, My Fathers Country 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



Channel at Main Base 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm





Hunting Ground 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



Kambu, Rock Cod Swimming 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



Kambu, Fresh Water Storyplace 2005
 acrylic on canvas
 91 x 137 cm

Sally's Story

Sally Gabori was introduced as a weaver during artists' workshops in April of 2005. Living at the Aged Persons Hostel on Mornington Island with Dibidibi - Pat, her beloved husband, Sally spent time making bark string, a traditional art she has practiced throughout life. This morning Sally was asked whether she would like to try painting, by late afternoon a small primary coloured painting hung on the art centre wall, when artist Melville Escott shuffled in.

"Is that Sally's painting?" he inquired in a dignified tone. "That's pretty good", he continued, "you can see the river, sand bar and the ripples the fish leave on the water and this side is her brothers King Alfred's Country and these", he said pointing to thick oval areas of acrylic paint, "these are the fish traps she used to look after, that was her job".

Sally's story is the beginning of a language and the start of a dialogue. It's a story of a senior Kaiadilt woman who picked up a paintbrush and created a vehicle, a medium to return home, on canvas and by plane. Sally's relationship with acrylic paint has developed into a daily ritual; her attendance at the art centre limited only by its closure on the weekend. Sally's story was not written Sally painted it.

Sally's work describes for us country known, though rarely seen in our state. Her subject matter has included her McKenzie River, her brother King Alfred's country, her Grand fathers' country, hunting grounds at sea and on land, fish traps, tidal lagoons, soakage's and schools of 'plenty fish'. She describes her brother King Alfred in English as 'a champion, he grew me up' she says with resolve and a firm grip on her paintbrush. Sally's intellectual property is a national treasure, a rare archive of times and the spaces that produced life and culture before there was such a thing.

Jagged edges of oyster bed rock walls, sweeping curves of the Bentinck coastline and ripples across the water are observations in life that is the language of Sally's painting. The object becomes subject through a process of retracing the old ground of memory. Spaces are created within spaces; story places under the sea and on the land are recalled like a song from her memories. What is sacred as a site, a story place akin to her spirit, is described with vigor and gesture. Painting has become both a meaningful experience and an added responsibility for Sally. Her role as a "living repository" of Kialdialt knowledge and beliefs seems to compliment her new position as a custodian of contemporary aesthetics.

Modernist talk comes from modern thought that seem to originate from the work of Braque and Picasso. The geometry of cubism is a fundamental way of seeing in the west, though the forms that create the compositions of Sally's paintings both pre and postdate this modern canon of construction. Sally's works are non-cubist and do not conform to the traditions of abstraction, nor is this rhetoric likely to be of use in seeing her work. Sally's figure of representation comes from a traditional adult indigenous Kaildilt perspective, predating the infancy of modernism. On the other hand, her paintings are recent, contemporary, postdating the event of modernism.

Sally has invented a personal language to tell her story, an old made anew, where paint is a medium of translation from the invisible properties of memory into the concrete reality of the archival. Painting has become an opportunity to recall and more importantly state what may be obvious to the artist but has remained oblivious to an audience.

Sally's geometry is not a system of mathematics nor a theory of applied science, it's poignancy stems from an accurate sense of representation that holds true to the nature of the figure rather than symmetry of geometry. From the outset of her process, Sally dissolves the hard edge of her canvas. By rounding out the perpendicular, Sally defines the composition of the landscape through a readjustment of the square, allowing the boundaries of country to define the frame. Within lies a place where history and knowledge are used as tools of construction,

Significance of place is paramount to this painter. Sally's work captures the spatial relationships of her country through the visibility of mark, the intent of line, bony or broad and a palette of contrast. The relationships between objects in Sally's compositions are derived from notions of inclusion, a formation of a set or a grouping of related objects. The geometry of landscape with diminishing horizons is selective, exclusionary of subject matter, a need to remove objects being created by the tyranny of distance in the picture plain. Someplace lost in the distance of a landscapes perspective, can be located nestled in a corner of Sally's canvas, or positioned centrally in a work. Schools of fish huddle together inside a boundary of thickly rippled paint, the sea rendered like a tin of sardines with it's lid peeled back, revealing the life under the waters surface.

As Sally returns by plane and memory, her dialogue grows, as does her confidence with a new language. Remembering her husbands' effort in digging out freshwater soakage's in the early part of the twentieth century to the multitude of life in the surrounding waters of Bentinck Island, Sally's story is her recalling, remembering, revisiting, reliving and representing who she is and what she knows. Her bold aesthetic could be likened to accomplished Australian indigenous painters, whose confidence in representation by a direct and fluent use of paint altered the direction of the movement during the late 1980's.

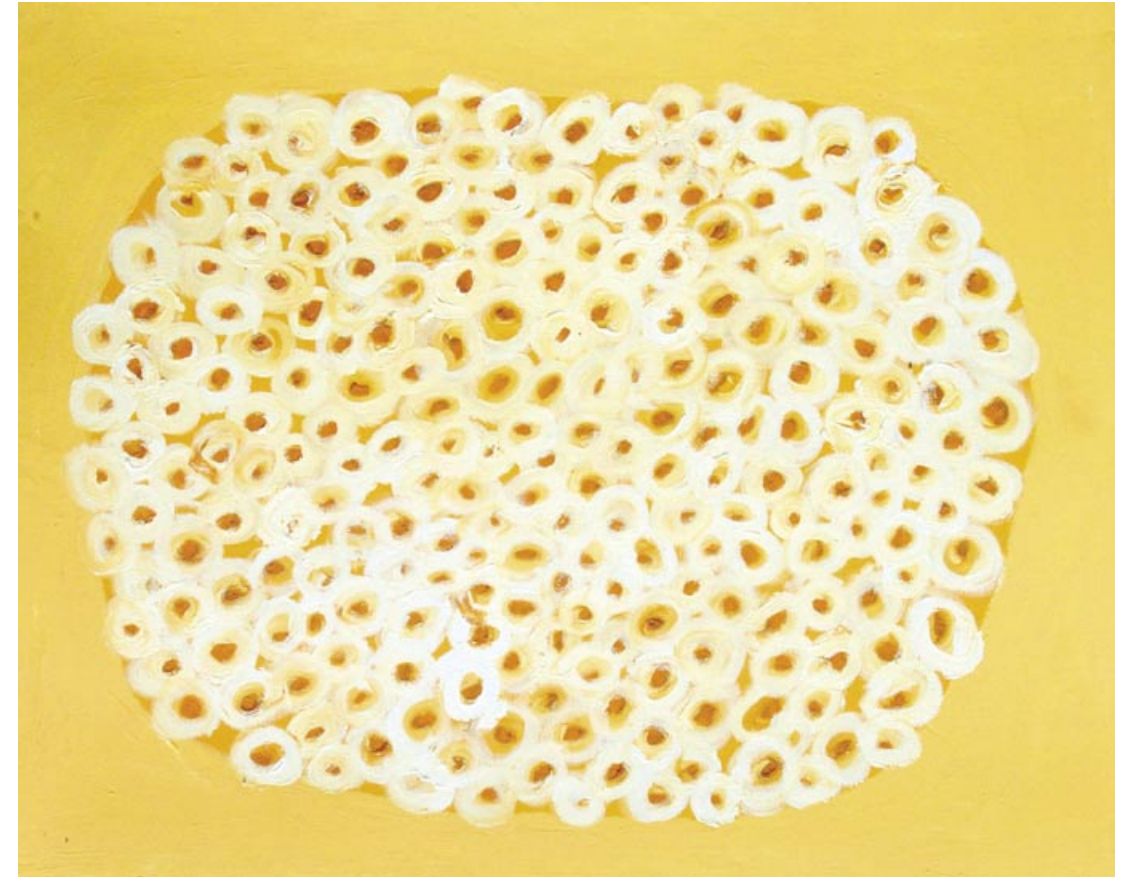
The size or scale of Sally's story is further recognition of the confidence she has gained as a painter. "All the Fish" is a work that speaks with an inclusive nature, bold in application, primary in palette, circular in form and tonal in colour. Mangrove Jacks, Bream, Trevally, Mullet, Blue fish all swim together, one big school. The work is expansive, beyond its four-meter boundary. It is continuous, a perpetual image of fish in motion, jostling inside the frame, each fish unique by its mark and related by its colour. Sally's palette has become a distinguishable feature of her work. Pastel hues and primary colours contrast along the jagged edge of her 'bony' line. From monochromatic mullet to hunting grounds filled with a spectrum of high-keyed colour, Sally's palette reflects the vibrancy and light of her country. Each work is an assemblage of colour, their contrasts exaggerating the anatomy of her forms.

Sally is a painter and remains a weaver. Her painting is fresh, creating a new territory where colour and form should not be subjected to the rigors of abstraction but be allowed to take shape and begin to describe a new way of seeing. Sally's Story is about a woman who has returned to Bentinck Island her home after missionaries forcibly removed her some 50 years ago. Sally has painted a landscape we as Queenslanders and Australians know little of. With a palette consisting of the colours of the gulf; her knowledge of place and the life that inhabits this forgotten part of Australia, Sally paints. Her confident and direct approach comes from an unshakable identity, a rich cultural knowledge and a lifetime of experience and contrast. At 81, Sally is emerging as a painter and speaking a new language.

*Simon Turner
Director
Woolloongabba Art Gallery*



Bulkurdurdu, Crocodile 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



Turtle Nest, Turtle Eggs 2005
acrylic on canvas
121 x 151 cm



Kambu, Rock Cod Story Place 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



River Full of Fish 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



Malji, School of Fish 2005
acrylic on canvas
121 x 151 cm



Malji, School of Fish 2005
acrylic on canvas
121 x 151 cm



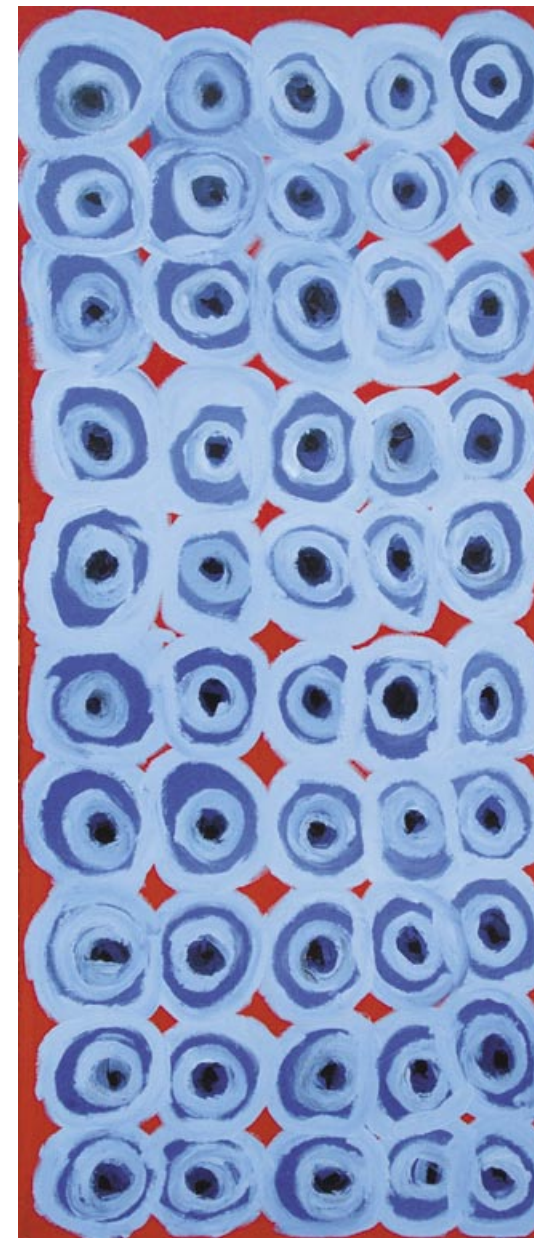
Mangrove Jack 2005
acrylic on canvas
181 x 121 cm



Mawunjuru, Big Black Mullet 2005
acrylic on canvas
181 x 121 cm



Mawunjuru, Big Black Mullet 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



Mangrove Jack 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



Warndaa Ngarrawurna, Mullet and Blue Fish 2005
 acrylic on canvas
 210 x 91 cm



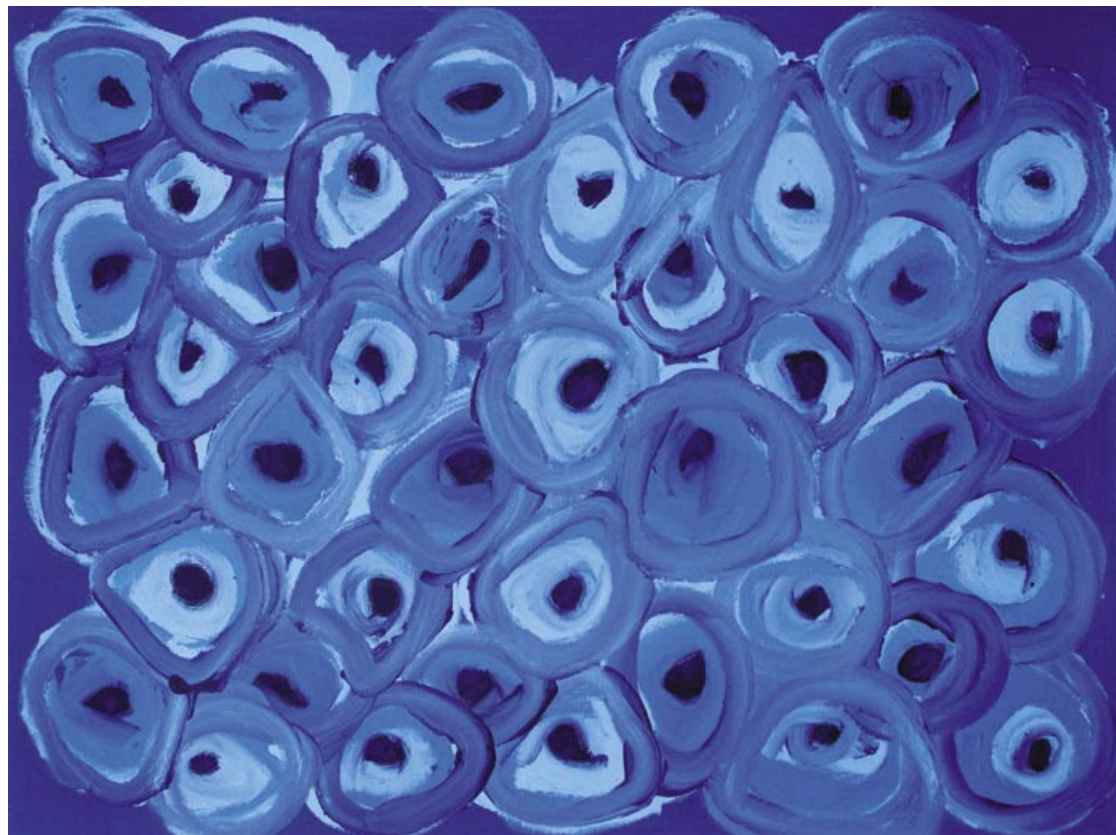
All the Fish Swimming 2005
 acrylic on canvas
 210 x 91 cm



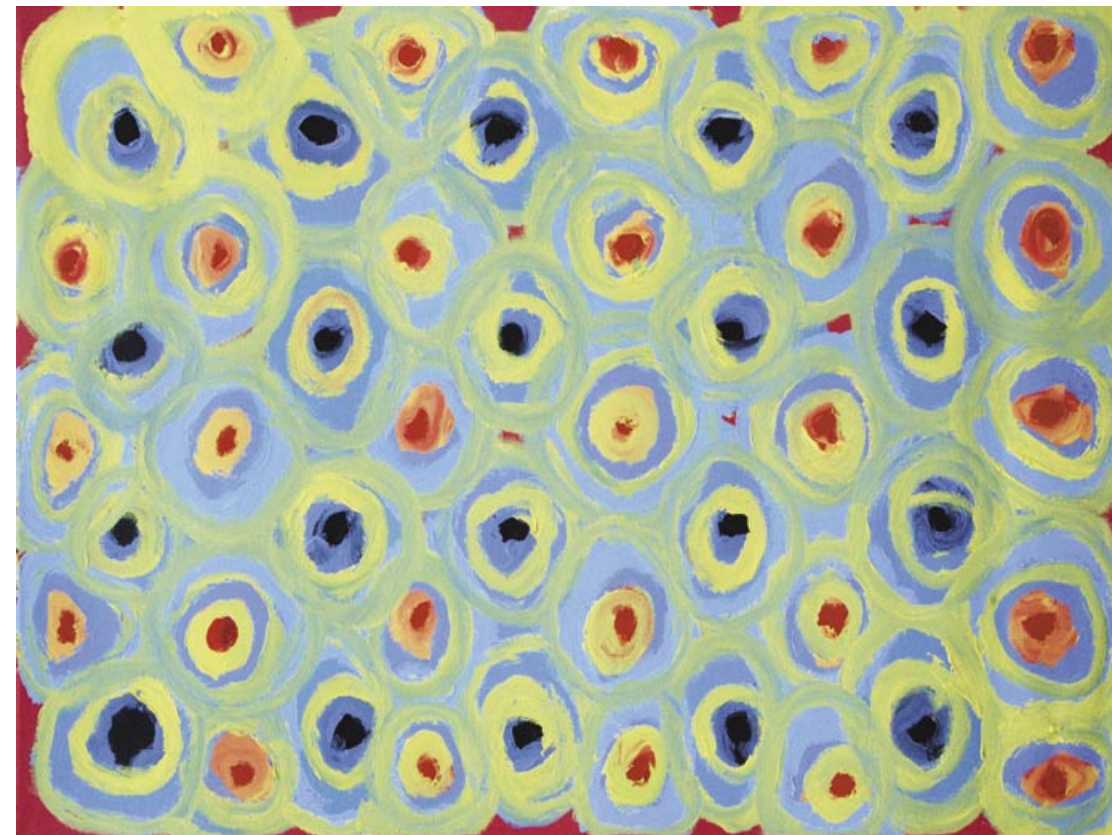
Kurrangka Warardawurru, Black Bream and Yellow Fish 2005
acrylic on canvas
210 x 91 cm



Warndaa, Mullet 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 137 cm



Warndaa, Mullet 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



Warardawurru, Yellow Fish 2005
acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 cm



Warardawurru, Yellow Fish 2005
acrylic on canvas
151 x 121 cm



Warndaa, Mullet 2005
acrylic on canvas
181 x 121 cm



The Harding Family
Collection

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