

talkking

listening.

talking. listening.

IAN ABDULLA ALAN TUCKER
YVONNE KOOLMATRIE ELLEN TREVORROW
JO CRAWFORD

25 February - 13 March 1994
Artspace, Adelaide Festival Centre

 **AdelaideFestival**
February 25 - March 13, 1994

talking. listening.
.....

Secret Histories

Ian Abdulla, Alan Tucker, Yvonne Koolmatrle, Ellen Trevorrow, Jo Crawford

The Native Title Act and the Mabo decision are difficult to understand in terms of their details and ramifications but their legal and symbolic value in the recognition of prior ownership is very clear. The exhibition *Talking. Listening.* occurs in the context of this legislation. Reconciliation will not happen quickly and must happen thoughtfully.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, including literature, visual art, dance, film and music, has played an important part in the struggle for recognition and justice. Aboriginal arts and crafts have always maintained a political dimension as part of the background to land claims as well as being a significant factor in the maintenance, exploration, sharing and assertion of identity. Also of importance is their role in the incorporation of the cultural capital of Aboriginal peoples into a cash economy.

Over the years perceptions and descriptions of Aboriginal art have fluctuated between ethnographic artefact to tourist curio, kitsch item to aesthetic object, commodity to identity marker and subversive sign. Until quite recently there was a tendency to consider urban, regional or non-tribal Aboriginal art as inauthentic, transitional and probably transient. This point of view can be correlated to some extent with a similar attitude towards the Aboriginal people, the expectation of their eventual capitulation to assimilationist policies or continued invisibility. Today firm divisions between the purposes and appearances of tribal and urban or regional art are less clear due to the diversity of Aboriginal art and its multiplying iconographies, all forms of which can be seen as unique expressions of an evolving culture.

Howard Morphy, Curator of Anthropology at the Pitt River Museum in Oxford, in a review of *ARATJARA: Art of the First Australians*, the large exhibition recently shown in London, states: *...rather than disappearing through its diversity Aboriginal art is entering a discourse with other arts at the boundaries of its*

*existence. The distinctiveness of Aboriginal art is maintained both by the distinctive formal traditions of regional Aboriginal cultures and by shared political and historical consciousness. Part of the future challenge for Australian Art is to come to terms with the internal dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art: seeking inspiration in diversity without destroying the identity of either.*¹ This "internal dialogue" between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art is in its infancy and both greater knowledge and experience of the complexity of Aboriginal histories and ways of life as well as their art is vital to a constructive dialogue.

Most artwork by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples relates to issues besides the aesthetic and historic concerns of art. The position of Aboriginal people in Australian society makes their art inevitably political, probably the most political ever made in Australia. Particularly noteworthy features in recent Aboriginal art are syncretism and confusing of the codes, mixing of the languages of high art and popular culture, irreverence and fearlessness. These features bespeak the presence of another culture within Australia, a parallel reality, a culture with a different experience of bureaucracies, of daily life, of families and ways of doing things. Yet this culture shares a great deal with the dominant society. Recognition and discovery of what is shared is surely as important as the acknowledgment of difference.

In the article *Second person/first peoples: writing about post-colonial art*, Terry Smith contrasts: *...the dream of human communality, of exchange between cultures...and...the equally evident fact of cultural incommensurability.*² He goes on to claim that: *Inequities of cultural exchange have not disappeared, but they are being disturbed, and from the unexpected quarter of art.*³

Exchange has occurred and continues to occur, but most of it has been one way and rather selective. Attempts to redress the balance are underway and, as Terry Smith suggests, may have an influence on all kinds of inequities in Australian society. Justice does not consist in consuming or incorporating another culture but in allowing it space to communicate and to exercise its own power. In her introduction to the *Australian Perspectives 1993* catalogue Victoria

Lynn points out that: *Perhaps the most significant result of the 'Orientalism' debate is that attention is now being paid to the co-existence of cultures within nations. It is precisely this overlapping between cultures and the desire to re-position notions of identity that are at the heart of Australia's cultural make-up.*⁴

The 1993 *Perspecta*, which included two of the artists in *Talking. Listening.* (Ian Abdulla and Yvonne Koolmatrerie), focused on the postcolonial rhetoric of *open borders, shifting traditions and cultural hybridity*. New perspectives, new interpretations and new stories are based on economic and political events as much as on cultural ones, and to understand the art of Aboriginal people it must not be divorced from its origins in people's lives and the many local centres of history, meaning and significant activity that are involved. The international and economic success of Aboriginal art is a contributing factor to a new regard for it, in addition to its location in world-wide discourses about marginalization and intervention.

The exhibition *Talking. Listening.* maintains as its basic premise the possibility of similarities, conversations and connections between the processes in artworks of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. George Petelin in his essay on the work of Richard Bell in the *Perspecta 93* catalogue points out that: *Socially, it [urban Aboriginal art] provides entry to a site other than sport, upon which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians can at last meet as equals.*⁵

The artwork of rural Aboriginal people like Abdulla, Trevorror and Koolmatrerie represents part of Aboriginal experience in Australia. The work has a strong documentary flavour and, while it appeals to an international market and audience, it is the locale to which it refers which is most significant to the work's concerns. All art by indigenous peoples relates to the importance of specificity, the non-winning of the ephemeral and the local. The Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people included in *Talking. Listening.* are from South Australia and the work that each of them presents has a specific relation to this place. The basketry of Ellen Trevorror and Yvonne Koolmatrerie continues an aspect of Ngarrindjeri material culture in a testimony to skills lost and retrieved. The South Australian Museum encouraged and supported the continuation of

Trevorror and Koolmatrerie's work after the initial workshop, organized in 1982 by the Department of Education, Employment and Training, where the women were introduced to the ancient tradition of coiled basketry weaving using particular sedges by Dorothy Kartinyeri, an older Ngarrindjeri woman from Point McLeay. Kartinyeri also showed the women where to find the raw materials and how to prepare them. The sedges used are less numerous today because of the ecological impact of over-grazing in the South-East of South Australia.

The museum's preservation of the past has made it possible for present-day descendants to tap into their own heritage and view historical works for information and inspiration. An example is the sister baskets, two circles linked to form a basket, a traditional form later turned into a turtle by Koolmatrerie; and the dramatic influence of the finely-worked and innovative basketry aeroplane made by Janet Watson, probably in the 1920s. Koolmatrerie has already made one aeroplane inspired by Watson's work and is making a new one, a bi-plane especially for *Talking. Listening.*

The maintenance of traditions as well as the social side of teaching and learning, which includes the telling of stories and singing of songs to accompany weaving, are Trevorror's main concerns. At Camp Coorong, the Ngarrindjeri Land and Progress Association's Race Relations, Cultural Education and Recreation Centre, she and her husband teach groups about local Aboriginal culture as well as basketry. Yvonne Koolmatrerie's work is more sculptural and experimental. It can be seen to breach the somewhat ragged borders of art and craft. There exists a learnt response to basketry which rapidly overlooks it as functional and disposable. However to let the eye linger is to appreciate the purity of the forms achieved through the repetition of units and the resulting integrity and character of the objects. Apart from an aesthetic response to the work it is possible to appreciate it as an evolving yet connected part of a very ancient culture. Koolmatrerie will also exhibit a swan egg-scoop traditionally used to lift an egg from the nest without contaminating the remaining clutch.

The South Australian Museum possesses an extensive and unusually closely

documented collection of Aboriginal material culture from the Murray and South-East Aboriginal culture region. *Ngurunderi: an Aboriginal Dreaming*, a display installed in 1989 at the South Australian Museum, shows Ngarrindjeri coil bundle basketry as it was traditionally used in fishtraps, eeltraps, clothing, carrying baskets, mats, egg-scoops and for coffins. Some of these pieces were made by Yvonne Koolmatrie and Ellen Trevorrow. Incredulity and humility is aroused by the spareness of the material culture of these people. And you must then consider the virtual Eden of Australia before European settlement. Viewed in this historical context the contemporary basketry of Trevorrow and Koolmatrie can make the viewer think about Aboriginal dispossession as well as the effects of agriculture on the ecology of Australia. The placement of these basketry forms made from natural fibres in an art gallery rather than a museum marks a distinct shift in the complex position of Aboriginal culture within Australia.

Jo Crawford is chiefly known as a ceramicist. For a couple of years, in addition to her ceramics, Crawford has been making flimsy, fragile objects and settings out of dried plant material and used objects. The work has a basis in her childhood experience of collections of significant objects with their own histories and rituals, once belonging to her relatives' lives and work, accumulated around the family farm. Crawford has been asked to make some work on the theme of the home for a large group exhibition organized by AusTrade to go to Indonesia later this year. She will be working towards this project during *Talking. Listening.* on two steel armatures fabricated by local sculptor Greg Johns that represent respectively the corner of a kitchen and of a lounge room. The kitchen will be woven and developed chiefly with found and recycled objects while the lounge, which Crawford sees as the heart of the house, will be brought to fruition mostly with dried leaves and petals. The affinity of Crawford's work to that of Trevorrow and Koolmatrie lies in her uses of local plant materials and references to her family history include the lingering associations of old and used objects.

Ian Abdulla is from the Riverland. His work is fresh and easy to appreciate. He paints his history and his memories, his experiences and responses. His style of painting, like that of the late Broken Hill painter Sam Byrne, is naive in the sense of untrained in both techniques and conventions of representation. Both

artists devise highly inventive compositions to make pictorial equivalents of oral history. Abdulla's paintings and prints always include a story or explanation in words that are an integral part of the work. Many of his stories are about his childhood and adolescence.

These are stories dealing with a particular time and place. The history they tell relates to the lives of Aboriginal people, rural labour, life by the river and at the mission, therefore not one of which we know the details or which has often been the subject of art. These perspectives make the work compelling as a unique kind of social history. It states, not in a complaining way but matter-of-factly, how we lived, what we did for entertainment, for work, for money, for food. In addition to the narrative and informative didactic appeal of Abdulla's work is the sheer delight of his orchards, skies, stars, animals, trees and people.

Many material aspects of Abdulla's reality would be shared by non-Aboriginal rural peoples. Yet through the work we do learn about another culture, its language and ways of being. This includes overlaps with introduced culture and its influences. Much of Abdulla's work makes clear that the influence of introduced culture on Aboriginal lives is not only in negative or confrontational ways, but in complex and ordinary ways, as well as in everyday popular culture ways. Thus, for example, memories of The Beatles as seen in Abdulla's installation at the Contemporary Art Centre in 1993⁶, are something we share that perhaps we didn't know that we share.

Alan Tucker's style of painting is also naive rather than illusionistic or painterly. He is influenced by Abdulla's work, particularly the power and directness of his use of words. Tucker's work began when he read Aboriginal writers' stories and autobiographies and realized the existence of a local historical reality that included Aboriginal resistance. He is a schoolteacher and uses the form of the school project to set out his material. He takes official records and accounts to tell a black-white history from primary sources, but not the part of the sources used when compiling official histories. In these documentary works he decided to use only those words and events recorded by non-Aboriginal historians and

journalists⁷, and has found the language of the 19th century useful in creating a distance from the emotional and often shocking content of the events he portrays. During the exhibition Tucker will be working on a painting telling the history of Aboriginal and European relationships around the River Torrens during the 1830s and 1840s.

All of the artists' works contain secret histories, stories that have been hidden and which contradict official versions of the past as well as extending our view of the present which alters when these events are admitted.

In her recent book *'Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television...'* essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people and things, Marcia Langton raised the model of realistic constructions of Aboriginality through social interaction: *...when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people engage in actual dialogue be it at a supermarket check-out or in a film co-production. In these exchanges, as in any social interaction, the individuals involved will test imagined models of the other, repeatedly adjusting the models as the responses are processed, to find some satisfactory way of comprehending the other. It is in these dialogues ...that working models of Aboriginality are constructed as ways of seeing Aboriginal people, but both the Aboriginal subject and the non-Aboriginal subject are participating.*⁸

The exhibition *Talking. Listening.* creates the conditions for some positive interaction and dialogue. At different times during the Festival the artists will be present or working in the gallery, ready for talking and listening with each other and with visitors.

Stephanie Radok, January 1994

Footnotes

- 1 Howard Morphy, Aratjara, *Art Monthly Australia*, September 1993, p 18
- 2 Terry Smith, Second person/first peoples: writing about post-colonial art, *Art Monthly Australia*, October 1993, p 10
- 3 Op cit: p 11
- 4 Victoria Lynn, *Australian Perspecta 1993* catalogue, p v
- 5 George Petelin, *Australian Perspecta 1993* catalogue, p 8
- 6 Murrundi. Three River Murray Stories Contemporary Art Centre 1993
7. *'As a non-Aboriginal Australian artist, I feel most at home portraying European and colonial history, although as a reader and thinker, both histories influence my knowledge and understanding'* Alan Tucker 1992
- 8 Marcia Langton, *'Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television....'* An essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of film-making by and about Aboriginal people and things, North Sydney: Australian Film Commission 1993, p 35

INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 1990 Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne Vic
- 1991 Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
- 1992 Hogarth Gallery, Sydney NSW
- 1993 Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne Vic
Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide SA
Looking for a head strainer, Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle WA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1988 *Reflections of the Dreaming*, (NADOC Week), Hilton Hotel, SA
- 1989 *Look at Us Now: South Australian Aboriginal Artists*,
Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
- 1990 *Balance-Views, Visions, Influences*, Queensland Art Gallery, Old
Aboriginal Art and Spirituality, High Court, Canberra ACT
- 1991 *A Koori/Nunga Perspective*, Tandanya National Aboriginal
Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
Nunga Artists from the Murray River, Aboriginal Artists Gallery,
Sydney NSW
Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne Vic
- 1992 *Tyerabarrowaryau, I Shall Never Become a White Man*,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney NSW
(travelled to other states)
- 1993 *Images of a First Language*, Prospect Gallery, Adelaide SA
Australia Week, Tokyo, Japan
ARCO Madrid, Spain (Greenaway Art Gallery)
Murrundi, Three River Murray Stories, Contemporary
Art Centre, Adelaide SA
Urban Aboriginal, Jan Weiss Gallery, New York, USA 1994
- 1994 ARCO Madrid, Spain (Greenaway Art Gallery)

REPRESENTED

- South Australian Museum, Adelaide SA
Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide SA
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide SA
Tandanya, National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
Art Gallery of Western Australia, WA
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra ACT
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane Qld
Australian Museum, Sydney NSW
The National Museum of Australia, Canberra ACT
Robert Holmes a Court Collection
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
Artbank, Sydney NSW

PUBLICATIONS

- 1993 *As I Grew Older*, Omnibus Books

AWARDS

- 1991 South Australian Aboriginal Artist of the Year
- 1994 Community Achievement Award, Barmera Council

Ian Abdulla

Ian was born in 1947 at Swan Reach on the Murray River. His father, Jimmy Abdulla, came from the Flinders Ranges and was an Afghan cameleer, his mother, Jemima, was from the Hunter family and came from Raukkan (Point McLeay). Ian was one of twelve children and spent most of the first five years of his life with various foster parents.

Ian rejoined his family and they moved to Winkle. They scraped together a living during a period Ian refers to as the 'Depression'. Later the family moved to Cobdogla where Ian found his first job picking grapes. When Ian was a teenager, the family shifted to Gerard Mission and he worked on the farm as a driver.

Ian has worked in the agricultural industry, for community welfare in Adelaide and as far afield as Coober Pedy. In the 1970s, Ian returned to the Riverland. He has raised his three children since he and his wife separated in 1986.

In 1988, Ian participated in a printmaking workshop at the Jerry Mason Centre at Glossop and began producing works that tell the story of his life, satisfying an urge to tell his story that would otherwise not be heard, to his children and to others.

Ian has given talks and demonstrations at many country and Adelaide schools. In 1993 *As I Grew Older*, a book of Ian's images and words was published by Omnibus Books and another volume is in progress.

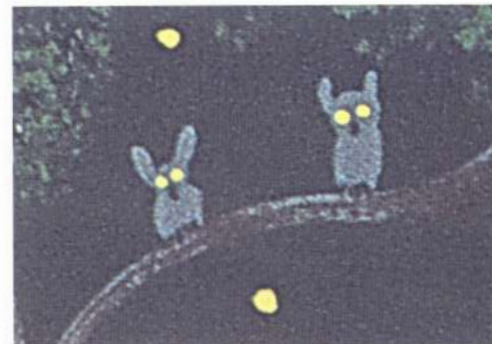


Image opposite and detail: Ian
Abdulla, *Night Fishing on the
Murray River* 1994, acrylic on
canvas 22 x 122cms 1

One night when we were camping along the creek and everyone had gone to bed I went down to the creek to check the hand line. It must have been a good fish-a Pondi or Murray Cod because when I pulled it in I broke the line. It took the hook and everything.



INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1990 *Tea Sets*, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1987 *Craft Purchase Exhibition*, 1987, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania

The Great Science Fiction Show, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

1988 *Commonwealth Bank National Ceramics Award*, School of Art Gallery, Institute of the Arts, ACT

Teapot Exposition, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

Contemporary Craft in South Australia, Adelaide

Festival Centre, Adelaide SA

Jam Packed 11, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

1989 *All Cooked Up*, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

Alice Craft Acquisition, Alice Springs Craft Council NT

1991 *All Boxed Up*, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

An Australian Willow Pattern, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

Gossip, Prospect Gallery, Adelaide SA

Tea Pots, Distellink Gallery, Melbourne Vic

Tea Pots, Potters Gallery, 6th National Ceramics Conference, Brisbane Qld

Bella Domestica, Jamboree Gallery, Adelaide SA

Alice Springs Craft Acquisition, Craft Council, Alice Springs NT

1992 *The China Cabinet*, Jamboree Gallery, Welland SA

Real and Forged - Contemporary Australian Metal, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

SA Ceramics Inglewood Award, Old Methodist Hall, Adelaide SA

Shift, Greenhill Gallery, Adelaide SA

Home Is Where the Art Is, Artspace, Adelaide Festival Centre SA

1993 *Diversity in Clay*, Mildura Arts Centre, Mildura Vic

New Issue, Anima Gallery, Adelaide SA

Side Step, Prospect Gallery, Adelaide SA

Ethereal Edge, Gallery 11, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA

The Tea Party, Distellink Gallery, Melbourne Vic

Noah's Art, Adelaide Zoo, Adelaide SA

REPRESENTED

Queensland University Art Gallery

Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania

Jo Crawford

Jo was born in Adelaide in 1958 and grew up in semi-rural Holden Hill. Jo's father was in the building trade, but both Ruth and George, Crawford's parents, supplemented their income by providing small vegetable crops, chickens and dairy produce to a local market.

The family accumulated all kinds of paraphernalia, typical of a generation who had grown up during the Great Depression. Jo also became a collector with a regard for materials that have nostalgic references, old and used things, common and everyday objects, photos and mementoes.

After finishing high school in Holden Hill she rejected pressure to take up teaching as a profession, choosing instead to explore her own vision, first through the medium of clay and more recently, in any media available to her. Jo has studied at Adelaide College of Arts (now University of SA) and SA College of Advanced Education (now University of SA). Jo is currently a member of Jamboree Ceramic Workshop in Welland, Adelaide, and is working on a Public Art Project for the Hyatt Hotel lower court under the direction of Daryle Pfitzner and Stephen Bowers. The ceramic work is based on a design by Aboriginal artist, Muriel van der Byl.

Jo is also working on a major piece for the exhibition *Family, Tradition and Diversity*, a joint project of Craft Australia and *Australia Today* to be shown in Jakarta this year.

Image opposite: Jo Crawford, Mum's Best Cups 1994, poppy petals 12cm (H)

*Image: Jo Crawford,
Mum's Best Cups 1993
Dried banksia leaves
12cm (H)*





EXHIBITIONS

- 1987 *Ngarrindjeri Art and Craft*, SA Museum, Adelaide SA
- 1988 *Reflections of the Dreaming*, (NADOC Week), Hilton Hotel, Adelaide SA
- From the Centre*, David Jones Gallery, Adelaide SA
- Recent Acquisitions*, SA Museum, Adelaide SA
- 1989 *River*, Artspace, Adelaide Festival Centre, SA
- 1989- *Ngurunderi* - An Aboriginal Dreaming, (permanent display), SA Museum, Adelaide SA
- 1989 *Ngarrindjeri Basketry and Painting*, Jam Factory, Adelaide SA
- 1990 *Look At Us Now: South Australian Aboriginal Artists*, Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
- 1991 *Aboriginal Womens Exhibition*, Art Gallery of NSW Sydney, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
- River Artists: Tandanya Calendar Collection*, Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
- Two Countries, One Weave*, Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA
- 1993 *Murrundi, Three River Murray Stories*, Contemporary Art Centre of SA, Adelaide SA
- Yanada (New Moon)*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney NSW
- Perspecta*, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney NSW
- Exhibited in many NADOC Week exhibitions throughout South Australia

COLLECTIONS

South Australian Museum, Adelaide SA

Camp Coorong Museum, SA

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide SA

Powerhouse Museum, Sydney NSW

National Museum of Japan, Osaka

National Museum of Australia, Canberra ACT

Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide SA

Australian Museum, Sydney NSW

Yvonne Koolmatrie

Yvonne Koolmatrie was born in 1944 at Wudinna on Eyre Peninsula in South Australia. Yvonne's father, Joe Roberts, was a shearer from Ooldea on the edge of the Nullarbor plain. Her mother, Connie, was born at Rabbit Island in the Coorong.

During her youth Yvonne travelled widely, living on Roxby Downs, Purple Downs and Andamooka Stations. The family also lived at One Mile Camp near Meningie.

Yvonne started seasonal work at the age of twelve, picking fruit and vegetables, bag-sewing, fencing, stump-picking and rolling and cleaning fleeces before she met and married Chris Koolmatrie in 1963 and settled in Meningie. They raised seven children and looked after many more.

In 1982, she participated in a workshop led by Dorothy Kartinyeri which led to her current interest in weaving.

Yvonne has explored the potential of weaving in the traditional style and has made many sculptural forms not previously attempted. Her works have found their place alongside those of other contemporary fibre artists in Australia. Yvonne lives in Berri, participates in contemporary exhibitions and is often invited to run workshops in schools, galleries and museums.

Image opposite: Yvonne Koolmatrie, Bi-plane 1994, rushes (Cyperus gymnocaulos) 1 metre (L)

*Image: Yvonne Koolmatrie
Echidna 1993
rushes (Cyperus gymnocaulos)
Echidna quills 45 cms (L)*





INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 1978 *Yorke Peninsula Landscapes*, Kadina TAFE, SA
1993 *Civilized Men and Savages*, Prospect Gallery, Adelaide SA
(a selection of these works toured to regional South Australia through SA Touring Exhibitions Program)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1982 *Self Taught Artists*, Adelaide Fringe, Roundspace, Adelaide SA

REPRESENTED

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide SA
Kernewek Lowender Collection

Alan Tucker

Alan was born in 1952 in Adelaide. In Primary School, he learnt the history of the settlement of South Australia, and later went on to study at Flinders University. Subsequently he taught English at Kadina and Port Broughton. It was not until 1986, during South Australia's sesquicentenary, that he began to read the works of Aboriginal writers. He then realized that the history he had been taught at school was flawed.

In 1992, he decided to paint a series of pictures which would portray history more accurately.

Alan read a range of primary and secondary sources and decided to use only those words and events recorded by non-Aboriginal historians and journalists.

As a non-Aboriginal Australian artist, I feel most at home portraying European and colonial history, although as a reader and thinker, both histories influence my knowledge and understanding.

Alan's use of words in his paintings was partly inspired by his love of words and partly by Ian Abdulla's work.

Alan has just completed a series of paintings for two picture books to be published by Omnibus Books which look at the relationship between Aborigines and European seafarers and settlers in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. A third book will examine race relations in the Northern Territory during its administration from South Australia (1863-1910).

In progress is a series on South Australian footballers with an emphasis on Port Adelaide players. Alan lives in Willunga and divides his time between teaching, family and painting.

Image opposite: Alan Tucker, The Kurna people 1993, acrylic on canvas 120 x 88cms



Image :
Alan Tucker,
Margaret Nobbs,
1993
acrylic on canvas
45x60cms

Kaurna people

"very docile and anxious to please."
"harmless and friendly."

Slate discovered and mined.
The Kaurna had been shaping
slate scrapers for thousands of years.



Encounter Bay

Willungga

Peltongga, "clinging possums"

1845: 50/60 acres cropped. Some Aboriginal men helped bring in the harvest.
1851: 5000/6000 acres cropped. The occupied lands were substantially enclosed.

The Kaurna people's natural food supplies were quickly destroyed.

1859: The most flourishing town in the south.
Sixteen "survivors" of the Adelaide tribe were induced to go to the Court House in Willungga.

They soon scattered.

"The natives are being decimated by our diseases. The wild bushland is fast disappearing. There is indeed, a certain sadness associated with our pioneering work."
Richard Hill 1856

Laren, "dignified and gentle"

Potarking

Kawarung

Rekarnung

Witawali

alan

Talking. Listening.

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