



"Bone Chamber 1" 1989 Powder pigment on paper

JUDY WATSON

26 OCTOBER - 27 NOVEMBER 1989

GRIFFITH ARTWORKS

CENTRAL THEATRES GALLERY GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY
KESSELS ROAD NATHAN, QLD. 4111 (07) 275-7414

This exhibition is the outcome of a three-month residency at Griffith University. Judy Watson was born in 1959 at Mundubbera in the Queensland coastal hinterland, and spent her school years in Brisbane prior to completing tertiary and post-graduate art studies in Queensland, Tasmania, and Victoria. Her art work over the past ten years has been concerned with social debates over feminism, racial identity, and cultural displacement, alongside personal issues of isolation and the bonds of family heritage.

Judy Watson is a direct descendant of the Wanyi clan of north western Queensland. Her grandmother, who lives in Mt Isa, is the daughter of a full-blood Australian Aborigine Mabel Nanunga and a white stockman who worked at Riversleigh Station at the turn of the century.

Along with her mother Joyce Watson and uncle Ken Isaacson, Judy is exploring the restoration of family and cultural links which were severed by government assimilation policies and the removal of "half-caste" children from their parents. The association with several generations of her maternal extended family, in conjunction with a strongly held belief in the opportunities for social change through grass-roots community action have also informed her work in establishing artists cooperatives, access facilities for isolated artists, and with Murri (Queensland Aboriginal) arts groups.

The titles of the works in this exhibition and their dominant recurring figure images indicate the artist's contextualisation of her own situation within a wider arena of contemporary cultural and political realities. Through references to traditional aboriginal culture, its association with the land and with totemic ancestral spirits, the artist is examining issues of personal and racial stereotyping. Many of the works are framed in traditional dot patterns which often designate sacred objects or ceremonial sites but which also present an ironic stage-lighting of the construction of standardised public images. The politics of ethnic exclusion and codification are judged through history, and from the standpoint of the individual psyche. A shadowy boomerang, a spear, a stone circle, bound hands, and a noose testify to the links between current events and the distant and more recent past.

Many of the drawings contain a strong element of self-portraiture and family portraiture, while at the same time referring to Greek and Byzantine sculpture and imaging of women, to the Romantic notion of the isolated figure in the landscape, and to the wandering hero of the classical epic. These allusions link with Australian Aboriginal references to totemic beings or culture heroes who metamorphosed to become landscape features such as hills and rocks, and who continue to manifest their presence as meteorological or astral phenomena inhabiting hill and desert country, caves, rock fissures, and bodies of water.

These figures are sometimes seen at a distance as transient mirage-like pulsating or whirling forms in a heat haze or dust storm. They appear alternately to be moving forwards and to be turning in acknowledgement of the past heritage from which they have emerged. Other figures are viewed at close quarters through a silhouetted arch which hints at the shape of a doorway, a proscenium, a key-hole, a sarcophagus, or a cave entrance. Such images both distance and protect the central figure while adding sexual allusions and elements of performance and to the analysis of gender and racial identity.

Some of the silhouettes stand alone as ancestral figures, guardian spirits, or individual geographic or physical features. These too have equivocal associations of the phallus, the gesturing of a closed fist raised in solidarity, the weathered rock in an outback landscape, or the colossal proportions of Heroic statuary. Again the references to personal heritage are clear.

There is a contemplative atmosphere and an intuited spiritual presence in all of Judy Watson's art which relates to a sense of place, and to connections between family, culture and land. On a more pragmatic level the work speaks to problems of cultural classification and the need for an ongoing analysis of generally accepted stereotypes which subsume the individual.

Margriet Bonnin
October 1989

STUDIED

- 1977-79: Diploma of Creative Arts, Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, Toowoomba.
1980-82: Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of Tasmania, Hobart.
1986: Graduate Diploma in Visual Arts, Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education, Victoria.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1986: "Bath Icons", Switchback Gallery, Gippsland Institute of Advanced Ed., Victoria.
1988: "Bloodline", Aboriginal Artists Gallery, Sydney.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1979: Graduate Show, Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, Toowoomba.
1980: "Young Queenslanders", Printmakers' Gallery, Brisbane.
Lillian Pederson Prize, Queensland Art Gallery.
1981: "Artists for Wilderness", Harrington Street Gallery, Hobart.
1982: Drawing Exhibition, Devonport Art Gallery.
Pacific Festival Exhibition, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville.
"Detours by Tender Aliens", Long Gallery, Hobart.
Graduate Show, School of Art Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart.
1983: Australian Student Printmakers Travelling Exhibition, Australia, and San Francisco.
Two Person Show, Ralph Martin Gallery, Townsville.
T.A.F.E Instructor's Exhibition, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville, and Mackay Art Gallery.
"Women at Work", Perc Tucker Gallery.
1984: Henri Worland Memorial Print Award, Warnambool Art Gallery.
Pacific Festival Exhibition, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville.
"Women at Work", Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville.
1985: SGIO Art Award, Brisbane.
"Women at Work", Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville.
1986: Art Resource Collective Women's Show, Yinnar, Victoria.
1987: Miniature Print Biennale, Silvermine Guild Galleries, Connecticut.
John Szoke Graphics, New York.
"Working on Paper", Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville.
1988: Members' Exhibition, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery.
Urban Aboriginal Art, Contemporary Art Space, Adelaide.
A Complementary Caste: A Homage to Women Artists in Queensland, Past and Present, Centre Gallery, Gold Coast.
National Women's Art Award 1988, Centre Gallery, Gold Coast.
1989: Bharat Bhavan International Biennial of Prints, Roopankar Museum of Fine Arts, Bhopal, India.
A Koorie Perspective, Artspace, Sydney.
Cross Currents, Coo-ee Gallery, Sydney.

AWARDS

- 1980: Gold Coast City Council Art Purchase Prize.
1982: Printmaking Prize, Pacific Festival, Townsville.
1985: SGIO Art Purchase Prize, Brisbane.
1987: Print Prize, Mackay Art Exhibition.
1987: William Buttner Scholarship, Qld. Art Gallery.
1988: Visual Arts Board Grant, Australia Council.

COLLECTIONS

Australian National Gallery, A.C.T.
Art Gallery of New South Wales.
Art Gallery of Western Australia.
Tokyo National University of Technology.
Latrobe Valley Arts Centre, Victoria.
Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education, Victoria.
James Cook University, Townsville.
Gold Coast City Art Collection.
T.A.F.E. College, Underdale, Adelaide.
Suncorp, Brisbane.
St. Anne's and Gippsland Grammar School, Sale, Victoria.
University of Tasmania, Hobart.
Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, Toowoomba.
Private Collections.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bock, Anna. Working on Paper: Four Townsville Artists, Eyeline, Nov. 1987, p30
Waterer, Helen. Review, Eyeline, July 1989

EXPERIENCE

- 1983 - 1985: Lecturer P/T, Townsville College of T.A.F.E.
1986: Tutor, Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education, Churchill.
Artist in Residence, St. Anne's and Gippsland Grammar School, Sale.
1987-1988: Lecturer P/T, Townsville College of T.A.F.E.
Travelled throughout Australia, Nuigini, New Zealand, Europe and Morocco.
Conducted various open access lithography workshops in Townsville
1989: Artist in Residence, Griffith University, Brisbane.

LIST OF WORKS

	TITLE	MEDIUM	DIMENSIONS (in cm, height x width)
1	black ground	Powder pigment and oil stick on canvas	246 x 190
2	In Grandmother's Country	Powder pigment, ink, gouache, pastel, and foil on rag paper	76 x 57.5
3	Flying Ants	Acrylic, bitumen and oil paint, charcoal, and pastel on canvas	182 x 189.5
4	Sacred Ground	Lithograph on rag paper	38 x 45.5
5	States of the Heart	Lithograph with gold ink	46.5 x 36.5
6	Dust Storm	Lithograph on rag paper	34 x 44.5
7	Alone	Ink, pastel and gouache on rag paper	18.5 x 27
8	open to suggestion	Gouache, acrylic and oil on wood	40.5 x 13
9	Bone Coffin and Relics	Lithograph on rag paper	39.5 x 25
10	Bone Chamber I	Powder pigment on rag paper	100 x 70.5
11	The 3 Graces	Ink on rag paper	37 x 78.5
12	Family	Lithograph on rice paper	27.3 x 24.5
13	Album	Lithograph on rice paper collaged onto rag paper	37.5 x 51
14	Bone Chamber II	Powder pigment, pastel, oil stick, and graphite on rag paper	99.5 x 70
15	Horizon line	Acrylic and gouache on wood	14.5 x 32
16	a sacred place for these bones	Lithograph on rice paper collaged onto rag paper	37.5 x 24.5
17	the burning	Ink, pastel and gouache on rag paper	18.5 x 27
18	White Line	Lithograph on rice paper collaged onto rag paper	29 x 23.5
19	Staged	Pastel, poster paint, powder pigment, ink, gouache, watercolour on rag paper	36.5 x 78.5
20	Circle	Lithograph on rag paper	24 x 38
21	turtle bones and singing stone - wings over my country	Acrylic, powder pigment, gouache, pastel, charcoal, ink, and conte crayon on rag papers with collaged asphaltum on paper, tissue paper, photocopy, cellulose filler, bones, cotton embroidery thread, and wood.	57.5 x 76
22	sacred ground beating heart	Powder pigment, pastel, charcoal, and oil paint on canvas	215 x 190
23	landscape with singing stone and temple money	Pastel, powder pigment, ink, coloured pencil and foil on rag paper, with collaged chinese temple money, photocopy, and cotton embroidery thread.	57.5 x 76

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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