

Ngurra

6 December 2023 to 17 February 2024

An exhibition of paintings by 14 First Nations Australian artists.



Mary Gibson, *Ngayaku Ngurra II*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 120cm x 90cm. Image courtesy of Daniel Browne.

LONDON, 6 December, 2023 - JGM Gallery presents *Ngurra*, an exhibition of paintings by 14 First Nations Australian artists.

Ngurra, meaning Country, is a term that appears in many Indigenous Australian dialects. The word refers to their traditional lands, waterways and seas, but also carries more nuanced and spiritual connotations than its Western equivalent. Contained within the term and, by extension, paintings of Country, are complex ideas about law, language, spiritual belief, material sustenance and identity.

This exhibition brings together the work of 14 artists from Australia whose subject is their Country. Many of the paintings can be conceived of as descriptive depictions of the land, carrying for the artist and their community a very utilitarian purpose. The work of Keith Wikmunea, by example, illustrates the salt deposits and food sources that remain following the recession of water from the coastal plains of Aurukun. At the same time, the spiritual significance of these pieces can be gleaned through a more abstract reading. Indeed, one of the many strengths of an aesthetic such as Mary Gibson's or Kitty Simon's, is its ability to reconcile the descriptiveness of representation with the intensity of abstraction.

As this exhibition demonstrates, Country is not viewed dispassionately by Indigenous Australians but as a living and even familial part of their lives. Because of this, paintings of Country often seem distinctly animated, an effect sometimes achieved through dense dot and line work. The result is a hallucinogenic quality that imbues many of the paintings from *Ngurra* with a sense of life and alchemical transformation.

The environmental reverence conveyed in these paintings is especially relevant in the context of colonisation and the destruction of traditional homelands. The Tennant Creek Brio, represented in this exhibition by the work of Lindsay Nelson and Marcus Camphoo, use their art and depictions of Country as a vehicle for a broader social critique. Painting on mining maps, Nelson superimposes his vision of the land onto a more empirical representation. His work is thus defiantly expressive and it is perhaps in Nelson and Camphoo's work that the contrasts between the Aboriginal and Western conception of the natural world is most distinct.

Jennifer Guerrini Maraldi (Director of JGM Gallery) writes that "There is an aesthetic sophistication to these landscapes that is sadly often overlooked by followers of the Western Canon. Expressed in these paintings is not just beauty and power, but the wisdom of the world's oldest unbroken culture."

Exhibiting artists include: Bob Gibson | George Cooley | Judith Walkabout | Keith Wikmunea | Kitty Simon | Lily Hargraves | Lindsay Malay | Lindsay Nelson | Lydia Balbal | Marcus Camphoo | Mary Gibson | Patrick Mung Mung | Selma Hoosan | Carissa Gurwalwal.

For further information and press enquiries, please contact the gallery at info@jgmgallery.com or + 44 (0) 207 228 6027.

Opening Reception:

Wednesday, 6 December, 6:00pm - 8:00pm
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