



# Mr R Peters

1934 - 2020, Springvale Station, Turkey Creek, WA

## BIOGRAPHY:

Rusty Peters is a senior Gija man of Juwurru skin. His bush name Dirjji refers to dingo pups looking out of a hole at the sunrise. He was born under a Warlagarri or Supplejack tree on Springvale Station south west of Turkey Creek the same day as his jimbarri or age mate Charlie McAdam. His spirit came from a crocodile his father had killed when his mother became pregnant.

He grew up on Springvale learning traditional law and working as a stockman and at other things such as welding fences and stock yards. When his father was killed in a tragic riding accident at Roses Yard, the family moved to Mabel Downs where he became renowned as a horse breaker. He lived for some time at Nine Mile reserve at Wyndham after the introduction of award wages forced people off stations but then moved to Turkey Creek where with other senior Gija artists such as Hector Jandany and George Mung-Mung he helped start the school.

In 1989 he moved to Kununurra where he was employed at Waringarri Aboriginal Arts as an assistant. He was a long time friend of Rover Thomas, caring for him on most of the trips he made in the later part of his life. He made prints and did some painting while working for Waringarri Arts.

He moved to Crocodile Hole when Freddie Timms based the Jirrawun Aboriginal Arts group there in 1997 and began to paint on large canvases. His detailed knowledge of the land and stories from Springvale and neighbouring Moolabulla stations is reflected in distinctive paintings in traditional red and yellow ochres and black charcoal. While recognisably part of the 'Turkey Creek' style the intricate curves mapping the country and the dark caves and rivers in the pictures are particular to Rusty's work. In early 2000 he collaborated with Peter Adsett, a white artist from the Northern Territory University. Each artist completed seven canvases taking turns to paint in response to each other. These paintings were shown at a joint exhibition "Two Laws, One Big Spirit" at 24Hour Art, Darwin in September 2000. The Neminuwarlin dance group performed at the exhibition's closing ceremony. This acclaimed exhibition toured Australia during 2002-2004.

Rusty's painting "Chinaman Garden Massacre", which tells the story of yet another tragic piece of East Kimberley history, was purchased by the Art Gallery of New South Wales in March 2001. This painting together with another work by Rusty's, "Blackfella Murdered in Australia", were included in the Blood on the Spinifex exhibition at the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne between December 2002 and March 2003. His eight panel painting "Waterbrain" was acquired by the Art Gallery of NSW in February 2002 and featured in their True Stories: Art of the East Kimberley in early 2003. Rusty Peters has returned to paint with Warmun Art Centre in 2010.

## JGM GALLERY

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In 2015, Rusty was a finalist in the 32nd Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award, and in 2017, three of his paintings were featured in *Defying Empire*, the exhibition of the 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial at the National Gallery of Australia Canberra, and later at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. In 2018, at age 84, Rusty painted a 5-metre triptych depicting his inimitable East Kimberley night starry skies over Darrajayin, his ancestral land. The beautiful and moving painting was acquired by ARTBANK, an entity of the Australian Government specialised in loaning and rotating the works of Australian artists in private and public institutions.

#### **SOLO EXHIBITIONS:**

- 2019 Mabel Juli & Rusty Peters "Stories of Garnkiny", RAFT Artspace, Alice Springs, NT
- 2016 Rusty Peters - Recent Paintings, William Mora Gallery, Melbourne
- 2012 Rusty Peters - Seva Frangos Art, Perth, WA
- 2004 Long Fella Standing Up, William Mora Galleries Melbourne
- 2003 Strong Language, Grant Pirrie, Sydney
- 2002 Water Brain, Grant Pirrie, Sydney
- 2002 Rusty Peters - Recent Paintings, William Mora Galleries Melbourne
- 1999 Kimberley Stories, William Mora Galleries Melbourne

#### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS:**

- 2020 Ngarranggarni, JGM Gallery, London, UK
- 2020 Paying it Forward: Recent Acquisitions to the University Art Collection, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, VIC
- 2019 VOID, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst, NSW
- 2019 "Manparra" Big Boss Man - Male Masters Show, Short Street Gallery, Broome, WA
- 2019 36th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards - Finalists Exhibition, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT
- 2019 Desert River Sea - A landmark exhibition of Kimberley Aboriginal Art, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, WA
- 2019 Beyond the surface of the Dreaming - Warmun & Jirrawun, Aboriginal Signature, Estrangin Gallery, Brussels
- 2018 Warmun At Twenty Exhibition - A group exhibition celebrating 20 years of Warmun Art Centre, Nancy Sever Gallery, Canberra, ACT
- 2017 When The Sky Fell - Legacies of the 1967 Referendum, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth, WA
- 2017 Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial - National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, ACT
- 2016 Canberra Gravity (and wonder) - Penrith Regional Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2015 LIVELY: New Prints from Warmun Arts, Nomad Arts, Darwin, NT
- 2015 Recent paintings by senior Gija artists from Western Australia - Nancy Sever Gallery, Canberra, ACT
- 2014 The world is not a foreign land - Ian Potter Museum of Art and NETS Victoria touring exhibition Warmun: Gija Contemporary Art of Western Australia - Harvey Art Projects, USA
- 2014 Gija Manambarram Jimerawoon (Gija Senior Law People Forever) - Australian Embassy Paris, France
- 2013 Alice Springs Art Prize - Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT

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- 2012 Our Music - Sydney Conservatorium of Music, NSW
- 2012 Rusty Peters, Seva Frangos Art, Perth, WA
- 2011 Where Knowledge Comes From - Gadfly Gallery; Perth Concert Hall, Perth, WA
- 2003 Jirrawun jazz, Raft Artspace, Darwin, NT
- 2003 True stories: Art of the East Kimberley - Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW
- 2002 Blood on the spinifex, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne
- 2002 Jirrawun artists - William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
- 2002 Rhapsodies in country - GrantPirrie at Art Miami, USA
- 2001 Four men, four paintings, Raft Artspace, Darwin, NT
- 2000 Two Laws One Big Spirit with Peter Adsett - 24Hour Art, Darwin (Toured throughout Australia in 2002 - 2004. Opening in Wellington New Zealand August 2004)
- 1999 My country - Northern Territory University Gallery, Darwin, NT
- 1998 Jirrawun Aboriginal artists - Martin Browne Fine Art, Sydney, NSW
- 1998 Jirrawun artists from Crocodile Hole - Gemma Stowe, Perth, WA

## **COLLECTIONS:**

ART GALLERY OF NSW

ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, PERTH, WA BANKS COLLECTION, USA

NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, ACT

PARLIMENT HOUSE ART COLLECTION, CANBERRA, ACT

THE IAN POTTER MUSEUM OF ART, VIC

## **AWARDS & COMMISSIONS:**

- 2019 Peoples Choice Award, 36th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
- 2019 Finalist, 36th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
- 2018 Artbank Collection special Commission (Three Nyawana in Yarity Country Triptych)
- 2017 Finalist, Fremantle Art Centre Print Prize
- 2015 Finalist, 32nd Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

- 2004 Rothwell, N. 'Under the Skin' The Weekend Australian Review, 12-13 June 2004
- 2003 Kofod, F, 'Blood on the spinifex', The World of Antiques and Art, February 2003, p. 193.
- 2003 Taylor, R, 'Blood on the spinifex', Art Monthly Australia, no. 159, 2003, pp. 28-31.
- 2003 Watson, K, True stories: Art of the East Kimberley, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 2002 Oliver, T, M Langton & F Kofod, Blood on the Spinifex, University of Melbourne, 2002.
- 2002 Oliver, T, Rhapsodies in country, GrantPirrie, Sydney, 2002.
- 2001 Lee, M. A. article in Art and Artists in Australia March 2001
- 2000 Kofod, F. 'The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture, Oxford University Press
- 1999 Rusty Peters Kimberley Stories, solo exhibition catalogue, William Mora Galleries 1999
- 1995 McAdam, Charlie, Boundary Lines, McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, Victoria, 1995

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