



Cory Wakartu Surprise

Circa 1929 - 2012, Fitzroy Crossing, West Kimberley WA, Australia

BIOGRAPHY:

Senior Walmajarri artist Wakartu Cory Surprise was born in the Great Sandy Desert circa 1929. These are close to her words:

"Tapu that's my fathers' country... Kutal my mothers' country.. My parents died when I was a baby. I grew up at Wayampajarti.... That's my country now. I was born in the desert; I was born at Tapu. I don't remember my mummy or daddy... They were finished up in the desert. When I was crawling I went to Christmas Creek. My sister-in-law Trixie took me. I was promised to one old man, he had two wives. We had no clothes when we came in. We were frightened of the Station Manager. He was hitting people so we ran away from that place. Two times we ran away to the desert. The police tracked us down and put chains around the men. They tied my husband up. Then I worked at the main quarters for the police, collecting eggs and washing plates.

I went to the desert with my husband we looked for Pijaju Peter Skipper out there, then we all came back for ceremony. My husband was working contract. I followed my husband on his contracts...fencer him. I worked as camp cook...big mobs I cooked for. We did fencing at Quanbun Downs, Jubilee Station, Yiyily, Cherrabunn Station. I got sick of that station...big one work..I worked so hard...I ran away. I did cleaning, cooking, milking goats.

Me walk out from bush last time...young woman me...with my two brothers. We were living at Wayampajarti and around that country there. At Wayampajarti there is a jila (waterhole)...that's the place of Kalpartu (an ancestral snake). When we lived out bush we got to know law. We got to know where the water is and where our country is...where to find food. You got to be careful not to go to the wrong places...you might make the kalpurtu (spirit snake) angry or them other ones like kukurr, murungkurr, parlangan. You could make other people angry too. You need permission to go to other people's country.

I worked at lots of places: Christmas Creek Station, Cherrabunn Station, Quanbun Downs, Jubilee Downs Station, then I live mainly at one place, Go Go Station (near Fitzroy Crossing) until I got old. I come to Fitzroy in the 1950's. I got big mob of kids...some of them finish up now. I first started painting at Karrayili Adult Education Centre in the early eighties. We told our stories through painting and I learned to speak to Kartiya (non aboriginal person). I also did painting at Bayulu community near Fitzroy Crossing. That's how I told my story to kartiya. We worked on paper then, not canvas, not board.

When I paint, I think about my country and where I have been travelling across that country. I paint

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from here (points to head-thinking about country) and here (points to breasts, collarbone and shoulder blades which is reference to body painting). I think about my people the old people and what they told me, I think about jumangkarni (Dreamtime). Nobody taught me how to paint, I put down my own ideas, I saw these palces for my self, I went there with the old people. I paint jiji (sand hills), jumu (soak water), jila (spring), jiwari (rock hole), pamarr (hills and rock country), I think about mangarri (vegetable food) and kuyu (game) from my country and when I was there. Whe I paint I am thinking about law from a long time ago, I am thinking about the country, my country. When I first painted we didn't get money, nothing. I like painting, its good, I get pamarr (word for rock, stone money) for it, I can buy my food, tyres, fix my car, I give some money to family and I keep some for me."

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- 2007 Wakartu Cory Surprise at Silvershot Gallery, Raft Artspace in Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- 2006 Mangkaja Arts Presents Wakartu Cory Surprise, Raft Artspace, Darwin, NT, Australia
- 2006 Cory Wakartu Surprise at Silvershot Gallery, Raft Artspace in Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- 2006 Wakartu Cory Surprise, Raft Artspace & Mangkaja Arts at Silvershot Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
- 2005 Cory and Freinds, Red Dot Gallery, Singapore
- 2004 Solo Exhibition, Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

- 2014 Country to Coast; Colours of the Kimberley, Aboriginal Art Museum Utrecht, The Netherlands
- 2010 Yiwarra Kuju, Canning Stock Route Exhibition, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT
- 2010 Four Desert Women, Short St Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 2009 Mangkaja Survey Show, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 2009 Sharing Difference on Common Ground, Holmes a Court Gallery, Perth, WA, Australia
- 2009 26th Telstra National Aboriginal, Australia
- 2008 The Other Thing: a survey show, Charles Darwin University Art Collection, NT, Australia
- 2008 Wet n' Wild, Artkelch, Freiburg, Germany
- 2008 Manglaja Arts, A P Bond Art Dealer, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
- 2008 Marnintu Maparnana, ReDot Gallery, Singapore
- 2008 The Canning Stock Route Project, Beijing International Olympic Committee Expo, China
- 2008 25th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Award, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Australia
- 2008 Shalom Gamarada, Caspary Conference Centre, Universtiy of NSW, Australia
- 2008 Mangkaja Artists WA, Randell Lane Fine Art, Perth, WA, Australia
- 2008 Divas of the Desert, Gallery Gondwana, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 2008 Waterholes and Bush Tucker, Bridget McDonnell Hampton Gallery, Australia
- 2008 Women On Country, Suzanne O'Connell Gallery, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

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- 2007 24th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Award, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Australia
- 2007 Bendi Lango, Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane, QLD, Australia
- 2007 Mangkaja Arts - Fitzroy Crossing, Artkelch, Germany
- 2007 Women Artists of Fitzroy Crossing, Raft Artspace, Darwin, NT, Australia
- 2007 Salt Water Fresh Water, Central TAFE Art Gallery, Norhtbridge, Perth, WA, Australia
- 2007 Jila, Jilji and Miyi, Cool- art Gallery, Coolum Beach, QLD, Australia
- 2007 X Marks the Spot, Wooloongabba Art Gallery, Brisbane, QLD, Australia
- 2006 Mona (Jukuna) Chuguna & Cory (Wakartu) Surprise, Short St Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 2004 This is Still My Country, 10 years on Perth International Arts Festival, Artplace, Perth, WA
- 2004 Ngurrara Canvas, perth Concert Hall, Perth International Arts Festival, WA, Australia
- 2004 Works on paper, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 2004 Warkartu Cory Surprise & Djalyi Widgee Henry, Short st. Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 2003 Mangkaja Women, Raft Artspace, Darwin, NT, Australia
- 2003 Jila, Jumu, Jiwari & Wirrukuja, University of Western Australia, Australia
- 2003 Fitzroy Fusions, Raft Artspace, Darwin, NT, Australia
- 2002 Recent works from Mangkaja, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA 2002 Group Show, flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- 2002 Short on Size, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 2001 Ngurrara Canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Australia
- 2001 Short on Size, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 2001 Mangkaja Arts Ten Years On Mangkaja's 10 year Anniversary Show, Tandanya, Adelaide, SA, Australia
- 2001 Fitzroy Women, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 2000 Past Modern, Short St. Gallery @ Australia Square, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 2000 Short on Size, Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 1999 Short on Size, Short St Gallery, Broome, WA, Australia
- 1999 Ngurrara, Japingka Gallery, Fremantle, WA, Australia
- 1998 Group Show, Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London, UK
- 1997 National Aboriginal Art Award, selected to hand, Australia
- 1997 Group Show, Hogarth Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 1996 Group Show, Hogarth Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 1995 Group Show, Australian Perspectives Gallery, Brisbane, QLD, Australia
- 1995 Kimberley Art, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- 1995 National Aboriginal Art Award, selected to hang, Australia
- 1994 Ngajakura Ngurrara Minyarti, this is my country, Festival of Perth Exhibition, Artplace Gallery, Perth, WA, Australia
- 1993 Mangkaja Women, Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle, WA, Australia
- 1993 Images Of Power, National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
- 1992 Group Show, Hogarth Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 1991 Karrayili, Tandanya, Adelaide, SA, Australia

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AWARDS:

- 2010 Western Australian Art Award 2010, winner of The Western Australian Art Award
1997 Work on Paper Prize National Aboriginal Art Award

COLLECTIONS:

Art Gallery of New South Wales
National Gallery of Australia
National Gallery of Victoria
Lavery Collection
Brocard - Estrangin Collection

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- 2003 Martuwarra and Jila, Jumu, jiwari and Wirrkuja, Exhibition catalogue Culty Gallery UWA Perth / Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency
2003 The Painted Desert, the Fate of an Aboriginal Masterpiece, New Yorker Magazine July 28, 2003
2000 Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art, Oxford University Press & ANU
2000 Karrayili, The History of Karrayili Adult Education Centre, IATSI Canberra
2000 Painting Up Big, The Ngurrara Canvas, Kaltja Now National Aboriginal Cultural Institute
2000 Jila Painted Waters of the Great Sandy Desert, Video Documentary / SBS Television
1996 Minyarti Wangki Ngajukura Ngurrarajangka, This is the word from my country, Exhibition Catalogue
1994 Ngajakura Ngurrara Minyarti, This Is My Country, Exhibition Catalogue
1993 Mangkaja Women Exhibition Catalogue, Fremantle Arts Centre
1991 Aboriginal Womens Exhibition Catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales
1991 Karayili: 10 Years On, Exhibition Catalogue

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