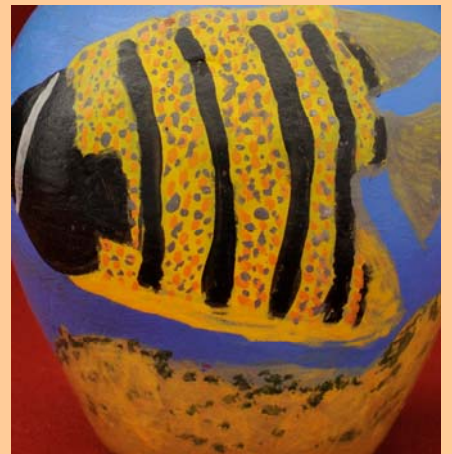


# insight

*A touring exhibition of Hermannsburg Pots*

discussion and appraisal



## Black Cockatoos



Carol Panangka Rontji  
Black Cockatoos 2005  
Terracotta and underglaze  
Pot h: 42cm x w: 32cm x d: 32cm

## Black Cockatoos

### **About the art:** *(Excerpt from Insight Catalogue written by Simon Turner)*

'...The major work of Carol's featuring black cockatoos, is arguably the centre piece of the collection, towering above all other works. It was the last piece acquired for the collection and the most expensive. It was created after her success at the national indigenous art awards in Darwin and was one of the last major works she made before her health began to decline. The work is testament to her mastery and aptitude as a painter.

The black cockatoos fly the circumference of the pot, racing around the surface, their figures following the form which displays their travels. Like her grandfather, Carol's work showcases her knowledge of the country. Both Basil (Carol's grandfather) and Carol have escaped this mortal coil, though the irony I see in this work outweighs any poetic notion, that flying around the pot these two black cockatoos joyfully survey their landscape.'

### **Discussion Questions:** Read the above excerpt about Carol Panangka Rontji's artwork.

- *'The black cockatoos fly the circumference of the pot, racing around the surface, their figures following the form which displays their travels.'* Explain how the figures are following the forms?
- Carol's work shares specific knowledge about the country she knows so well. What are some of the characteristics of her country that we can see from her painting?
- *'...two black cockatoos joyfully survey their landscape.'* How might this phrase be interpreted in terms of The Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime?
- How do the five black cockatoos that we see in the image create harmony within the artwork?

### **Appraisal Questions:** Carol along with other artists make choices when they create an artwork. These choices affect the way we as viewers read and experience the image.

- How does Carol's artwork make you feel?
- What information is clear in the image? Why is it not so clear?
- What do you believe Carol's message is?
- How has Carol emphasised certain parts of her artwork? (size, shape, colour, texture)
- How does each element (line, shape, texture, pattern etc) affect the way you interpret the image? Why?
- What did Carol want to convey in her artwork?
- Does the artwork 'Black Cockatoos' communicate anything about the environment and its relationship to Aboriginal culture?

## Echidna



Judith Pungkarta Inkamala  
Echidna 2002  
Terracotta and underglaze  
Pot h: 24cm x w: 14cm x d: 14cm



## Echidna

### About the art: *(Excerpt from Insight Catalogue written by Simon Turner)*

'Focusing on her target, she (Judith) takes aim at the landscape once more. It's not warfare that makes a masterpiece. Her precision and discipline is a tool not a weapon. The thick rich colour of her Enalanga (the echidna) contrasts the watery application of her ghost gum possum in the collection. Thickly applied like the acrylic paint that flows through the contemporary central Australian indigenous art movement, the work is a reference to the knowledge and role of women and the mother as teachers and providers.

The image depicts an Enalanga (an echidna) and her young venturing from their residence and the safety of a burnt out log and into the landscape to search and hunt for ants. The defensive capabilities of her spiny back accentuated to the viewer by her location across the girth of the work. The youngsters accompany her nestled in tight and in sight, almost camouflaged from the view of potential predators.

This notion of guidance and protection is central to the work and repeated on the lid, where mother and child appear as two parts of a whole, distinguishable only by their size and orientation to one another. She notes however, that the young are headed in a different direction, perhaps returning to a genetic memory or simply refusing to follow the direction of their mother.'

### **Discussion Questions:** Read the above excerpt about Judith Pungkarta Inkamala's artwork.

- What does the writer mean by '*it's not warfare that makes a masterpiece?*' Why does the writer allude to warfare?
- 'Her precision is a tool not a weapon' How does this statement reflect on Aboriginal culture?
- How are the roles of teacher and provider depicted in Judith's 'Echidna' artwork?
- What is meant by the phrase '*...returning to a genetic memory..*'?

### **Appraisal Questions:** Judith along with other artists make choices when they create an artwork. These choices affect the way we as viewers read and experience the image.

- How does Judith's artwork make you feel?
- What do you believe Judith's message is?
- How is it different from other pots or ceramic works you may have seen?
- How has Judith emphasised certain parts of her artwork? (size, shape, colour, texture)
- How does each element (line, shape, texture, pattern etc) affect the way you interpret the image? Why?
- What did Judith want to convey in her artwork?
- Does the artwork 'Echidna' communicate anything about the environment and its relationship to Aboriginal culture?

## Dragon



Irene Mbitjana Entata  
Dragon 2000  
Terracotta and underglaze  
Pot h: 32cm x w: 16cm x d: 16cm

## Dragon

### **About the art:** *(Excerpt from Insight Catalogue written by Simon Turner)*

'A dragon sits knees bent, perched on top of a pot. It's almost as big as the pot itself, balancing by gripping the rim of the lid with its claws. The pot's tiny base gives rise to a modest form that supports such a large beast. The pot belongs to the dragon which looks unwillingly to give it up without a fight. There's no landscape to be seen, just a narcissistic reflection. Irene knows dragons are big and solitary. She's seen they have wings and big nostrils for breathing fire. She's aware that they are a myth, that a dragon might have dreaming and is a story and country to itself. The pot's burnished orange like dragon, its silhouette is the only thing that gives it away. The dragon is camouflaged in dots, authenticating itself in Irene's landscape. The dragon wears her mark or dot and is now a part of an inclusive country and the modern Ntari landscape.'

### **Discussion Questions:** Read the above excerpt about Irene Mbitjana Entata's artwork.

1. '*There's no landscape to be seen, just a narcissistic reflection.*' What does narcissistic mean? What features has Irene painted to make the Dragon appear narcissistic?
2. '*She's aware that they are a myth, that a dragon might have a dreaming and is a story and country to itself.*' What are your thoughts on all creatures both living and mythical having their own country and their own dreaming.
3. How is the Dragon authenticated in Irene's landscape?
4. Explain how Irene's mark/dot empowers the dragon?

### **Appraisal Questions:** Irene along with other artists make choices when they create an artwork. These choices affect the way we as viewers read and experience the image.

- Describe what you see in the painted artwork?
- What shapes do you see in Irene's artwork?
- How does the artwork make you feel?
- What do you believe Irene's message is?
- How has Irene emphasised certain parts of her artwork? (size, shape, colour, texture)
- How does each element (line, shape, texture, pattern etc) affect the way you interpret the image? Why?
- Does the artwork 'Dragon' communicate anything about the environment and its relationship to Aboriginal culture? Explain your answer.
- In response to Irene's artwork, 'Dragon', what expressive words can you associate with the image?

## Birds (Water Finches)



Dawn Ngala Wheeler  
Birds (Water Finches) 2005  
Terracotta and underglaze  
Pot h: 19cm x w: 13cm x d: 13cm



## Birds (Water Finches)

### **About the art:** *(Excerpt from Insight Catalogue written by Simon Turner)*

'The studio for Dawn is a refuge. There are events that have had an profound effect on her, perhaps silencing her voice, but not her quiet passion. There exists a peaceful duality to Dawn that is evident in her work. Partnerships and pairings are a common theme; co existence, inclusion and a sense of togetherness are often portrayed in landscape. The identical appearance of her finches is mirror like, reflecting the ideal of equality in companionship.

Her landscapes appear sparse, conveying a sense of an open interior. They appear to be quiet places, in a dry country and a vast space that echoes with the sound of small chirping birds. One cannot survive out here on one's own; a big space can create loneliness and a real need to belong. Water finches can be your best friend when you're lost in such a deserted place. The small birds are known to fly short distances, allowing a lost soul to keep pace. They will inevitably lead you to water, their acute knowledge and impressive memory of water sources makes these little birds trustworthy guides. On top of Dawns' country, where the vegetation is sparse, a pair of water finches sit side by side, content in their knowledge and at home in her landscape.'

### **Discussion Questions:** Read the above excerpt about Dawn Ngala Wheeler's artwork.

1. How are the ideas of equality, inclusion and companionship reflected in Dawn's artwork 'Water Finches'?
2. '*Her landscapes appear sparse, conveying a sense of an open interior.*' Explain what is meant by 'a sense of an open interior'?
3. If you are feeling lonely or lost, how might a pair of water finches help you?

### **Appraisal Questions:** Dawn along with other artists make choices when they create an artwork. These choices affect the way we as viewers read and experience the image.

- Describe what you see in the painted artwork?
- What shapes do you see in Dawn's artwork?
- How does the artwork make you feel?
- What do you believe Dawn's message is?
- How has Dawn emphasised certain parts of her artwork? (size, shape, colour, texture)
- How does each element (line, shape, texture, pattern etc) affect the way you interpret the image? Why?
- Does the artwork 'Water Finches' communicate anything about the environment and its relationship to Aboriginal culture? Explain your answer.
- In response to Dawn's artwork, 'Birds (Water Finches)', what expressive words can you associate with the image?

## Mission Days



Irene Mbitjana Entata  
Mission Days 2001  
Teracotta and underglaze  
Pot h: 24cm x w: 16cm x d: 16cm

## Mission Days

### About the art: *(Excerpt from Insight Catalogue written by Simon Turner)*

'A single car appears operational, a reference to the beginning of Ntari life. Not a western scholar or historian. Irene's view of her history is shaped by memory and inherited oral stories, poignant, potent and personal. Without words she recreates these times by circumnavigating the vessel with a continuous image. The pot becomes a notation of time and the beginning of modern Aranda history.

Above this new revolving world, a Ntari woman kneels in mission dress. Bending her back, she leans into the labour of grinding out a new existence upon an old stone. The basket that sits beside her is filled beyond its brim with balls of compressed salt, a combination of a long hard day's work and the effective knowledge of the old ways. She sits as the Aranda always have in country and in the sand, working as the Aranda always have with the country, remaining as the Aranda remain, the salt of the earth.'

### Discussion Questions:

Read the above excerpt about Irene Mbitjana Entata's artwork.

1. Irene has painted both the built and natural environment in 'Mission Days'. How has Irene emphasised the built environment in her painting?
2. Aside from the car what other western references can you see in Irene's artwork?
3. 'Bending her back, she leans into the labour of grinding out a new existence upon an old stone.' What is meant by grinding out a new existence? Explain your answer.
4. Irene '*recreates these times by circumnavigating the vessel with a continuous image*'. The symbolism of a vessel can be interpreted in several ways. What meanings might Irene's image allude to?

### Appraisal Questions:

Irene along with other artists make choices when they create an artwork. These choices affect the way we as viewers read and experience the image.

- Describe what you see in the painted artwork?
- What elements has Irene selected?
- What shapes do you see in Irene's artwork?
- How does the artwork make you feel?
- What do you believe Irene's message is?
- How has Irene emphasised certain parts of her artwork? (size, shape, colour, texture)
- How does each element (line, shape, texture, pattern etc) affect the way you interpret the image? Why?
- Does the artwork 'Mission Days' communicate anything about the environment and it's relationship to Aboriginal culture? How so?

## Finch



Lindy Panangka Rontji  
Finch 2004  
Terracotta ad underglaze  
Pot h: 21cm x w: 12cm x d: 12cm



## Finch

### **About the art:** *(Excerpt from Insight Catalogue written by Simon Turner)*

'The contrast between the wealth of Australian capital cities and the absolute poverty of remote Aboriginal communities is far greater than any other divide in our country. It is difficult, if not impossible to truly understand the position of 'the other', let alone account for or justify the existence of such extremes. The courage and tenacity of the Hermannsburg Potters to maintain their practice and dedication to this labour intensive medium is an indication of just how unique their practice is. The environment from which it is produced is remarkable and makes it almost unbelievable.

The small finch pot is yet another example of the modern approach these women exhibit in their art practice. The tiny bird's feathered skin is defined by black and gridded lines, evoking the notion of repetition in the layering of the bird's plumage. It appears as if the bird is armoured and protected from the extremes of its environment. The gecko sculpture in the collection is further evidence that duality is also a means and way of camouflage and defence. Though only a handful of their sculptures exist, they reinforce too that the work is an art rather than a craft.'

### **Discussion Questions:**

Read the above excerpt about Lindy Panangka Rontji's artwork.

1. *'It is difficult, if not impossible to truly understand the position of 'the other', let alone account for or justify the existence of such extremes.'*  
In Australia's history, European people were referred to as white and anyone else was thought of as 'the other'. Can you think of other people in your community or at school who are different to you? Are those people equal even though they have different beliefs or are from a different cultural background? Why/ Why not? Explain your answer.
2. How has the artist, Lindy, created an effect of armoury and protection for the finch against the environment's extremes?
3. The artists of Hermannsburg have contributed greatly to Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art. How can we ensure that their unique practice continues for generations to come?

### **Appraisal Questions:**

Lindy, along with other artists, make choices when they create an artwork. These choices affect the way we as viewers read and experience the image.

- Describe what you see in the painted artwork?
- What elements has Lindy selected?
- What shapes do you see in Lindy artwork?
- How does the artwork make you feel?
- What do you believe Lindy's message is?
- How has Lindy emphasised certain parts of her artwork? (size, shape, colour, texture)
- Does the artwork 'Finch' communicate anything about the environment and it's relationship to Aboriginal culture? How so?