

HARRY TJUTJUNA.
'Wati Ngintaka, Wati Nyiru and Wanka'
(11080), Acrylic on linen,
1670 x 1830mm. 2011.

FIVE STRONG MEN

New paintings from the Men of Ninuku Arts

Showing Friday 16th September – Saturday 15th October, 2011.

Outstation
art from art centres

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Special thanks to The Men of Ninuku Arts, Claire Eltringham and Vanessa Patterson.



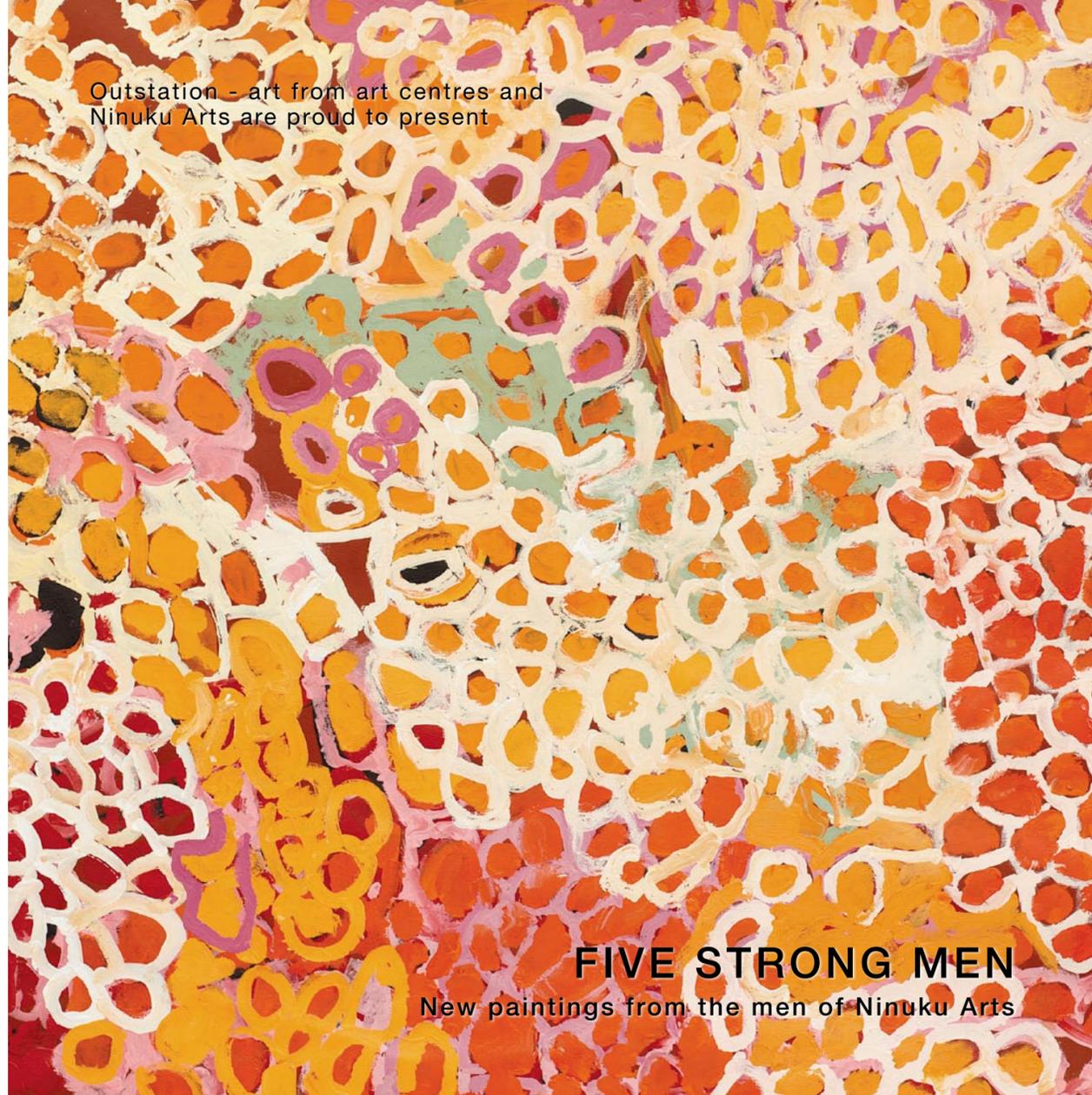
JIMMY DONEGAN. 'Papa Tjukurpa' (11149), Acrylic on linen, 1680 x 1530mm. 2011.



SANDY BRUMBY. 'Walytjatjara' (11193), Acrylic on linen, 1210 x 910mm. 2011.

Outstation - art from art centres and
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Front cover: HARRY TJUTJUNA. 'Kungka Tjuta' (10335), Acrylic on canvas, 1510 x 1670mm. 2010.



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Harry Tjutjuna

Harry, Spider Man, Tjilpi (Old Man), Young Fella (if he's feeling particularly jovial) - Tjutjuna goes by many names. Said to be somewhere around the age of 80 with a bad leg and sight in only one eye, he is far from a "young fella" physically. That said he has a spark in his eye that suggests youth and fervour. Trying to fit the enormity of Harry's character into a few paragraphs is almost impossible. Around these parts, he is so many things to so many people – artist of course (one of our best), family man and provider to many, Ngankari (traditional healer), showman (with an ability to create intrigue and wonder), malpa (a friend who always looks out for you), a proud culture man, teacher and storyteller – I could go on! People are always fascinated to watch Harry paint. He is almost aware of their presence before they even step inside the centre. He sits up straighter, will often pat his hand around him looking for an appropriate-sized stick to put through the hole in his nasal septum. I've even seen days when a big storm has brewed right before our eyes, as though he has asked it to come. He will take the paint pot in one hand and the brush in the other. And so begins the show... With the precision and elegance of a conductor, Harry will begin painting. The brush dripping in paint, he will gradually and with great precision start with the body of the spider. This is followed with the legs which sprawl out one after the other in a series of fluid lines, much like the legs of the octopus. Then comes the designs on the body – I have been told this defines the figure as a male or female spider or represents ceremonial body paint. And then, finally when everything else is done, he puts down the beady eyes and instantly the figure is complete – as beautiful as it is sinister. While he paints, he seems enlivened by his audience, invigorated by it, almost theatrical at times. Some artists may feel inhibited with an audience watching, but not Harry - he is an exceptional man, shining like the brightest star in the sky. He is a commanding and captivating force at the art centre and one whose power never waivers.

Jimmy Donegan

It took some time for all of the subtle nuances of Mr. Donegan's personality to appear. It was a bit like sanding back a fine piece of antique furniture. I would have to say that it was when he won the prestigious Telstra Award in 2010 that I saw with so much clarity how special a person he truly is. Mr.D's (as he is colloquially known around here) response to the news of winning the award wasn't one of elation or even pride, initially he seemed genuinely shocked and even a little ashamed that he could have done such a remarkable thing. "Sorry, sorry" he kept saying, while shaking his head in awe and disbelief. When we arrived at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, the very first thing Mr.D wanted to do was to take his daughter downstairs to see the Tjanpi Toyota – a prize winning work from 2006 of which his late wife had worked on. He chose to do this before going and seeing his own winning painting on the wall. It was his wife's artwork that brought tears to his eyes. I think this gesture epitomizes Mr.D beautifully – humble and dignified, a quiet achiever with a deep respect, adoration and loyalty for his family. He is a natural artist whose commitment to painting and support of his art centre is unflappable. He is also never short of a song (often with impromptu lyrics), a wicked laugh and a knee-shaking jig that never fails to get a warm reception.

Stanley Young

When I think of Stanley Young I think of a cowboy. Almost every time he steps into the art centre, he is covered from head to toe in dust. The film of dust looks so thick on his moleskin jeans and wide-brimmed Akubra that if you gave him a pat on the back, a cloud of milky dust would balloon up into the atmosphere. He is a spirited man, charismatic and always on the move, despite the limp for which he is bound to a walking stick. When asked what he's been up to lately it is not unusual to hear tales of travelling with mining companies, herding cattle, breaking in horses or hanging out in Coober Pedy or Kalgoorlie. His preference is to paint his pictures at home at night and I can imagine him doing

this until the wee hours or until his paint runs out! At times, when I have been privileged to pick up these artworks I am always amazed with what I find. His house is "lived in" like any other household with a big family – his pet dogs running around, teacups and plates waiting for someone to wash them, teenagers lay watching the television – it is a hub of activity like any other busy home. But among the chaos, is the large-scale, jewel-like canvas sitting up proudly, in immaculate condition. Every dot (and there are hundreds, if not thousands) is applied with precision and in a broad palette of colours. The Tjukurpa (Story) can vary of course but Stanley often paints the Emu Story. I have been lucky to see him dance this story, equipped with an enormous headdress adorned with feathers and wool. When he dances he is free of his walking stick, his legs angled and precise, his feet thumping the red dust as he dances the dance of the Emu – proud and strong, just as he is when he has finished a canvas.

Sandy Brumby

For many years Sandy Brumby didn't feel like painting. Every time the art centre car would roll by his house picking up his wife Nola, Mr. Brumby would cheekily tell me "tomorrow, I will come in tomorrow". We both knew that tomorrow would never come, or at least that is what I thought. It would be presumptuous of me to try and guess why he didn't paint, although I have heard him say that he thought painting was "only for the women". Then one day in 2010, Sandy Brumby decided he would give it a go. I'm sure the offer of some Weat-Bix and a warm tea might have helped, him being short of food that particular morning. This was a momentous day for Ninuku Arts, and hopefully for Sandy Brumby too. It was here that we got to witness the first time Sandy Brumby put paint to canvas and tell his story through art. What an experience it was and continues to be. Mr. Brumby is a slight man, almost petite, but his passion for painting is gigantic. He is never without his well-worn, sweat-stained hat that sits almost oversized upon his head of thin, silvery hair. His blue eyes are cloudy with cataract but his visual impairment doesn't prevent him from telling his stories with integrity and

beauty. His compositions contain shapes all deriving from Tjukurpa – hills, snakes, bush food, water holes – and they float around his canvas with whimsical delight. He has an intrinsic sense of colour. If he had thousands of colours to choose from, he would still know which colours to put side-by-side. Mr. Brumby applies the paint with the smallest and most intimate strokes, laying down the paint like delicate sticks for a nest. Like most artworks, his paintings need to be seen "in the flesh" to be fully appreciated. His compositions are intuitive and gracefully designed, but it is the way he fills the space that makes the canvas really come to life - lashings of lustrous paint applied thickly and with the confidence of someone free of all inhibition and on a path of discovery in his creative self.

Samuel Miller

He is a man of few words but an insatiable appetite for painting. Embraced by his "second mother" and founding director of the art centre, Molly Nampitjin Miller, it is no surprise that Samuel is a major part of the art centre. He is the youngest man active in the art centre everyday but is by no means inferior to his senior peers with his ability to paint. His conviction for his "own way" is palpable. He comes in every day, without fail and goes about his business – methodically and to the rhythm of a fast-paced tune - Samuel dots his canvas. Surrounding him on the ground and chairs are dozens of the pots of paints – all the colours of the rainbow within easy reach. He seems to like to use a full spectrum – light and dark, one after the other in order to create the shimmering effect in his work. The lines of dotted colour sometimes look like ripples of water in a pond – rhythmic, hypnotic and emanating the rich stories of Samuel's land. Of all of the artists here at Ninuku, Samuel's work seems to appeal to the widest audience – he is never shy of a fan, whether it be a tourist walking into the centre or an enthusiastic collector. His appeal is as broad as the plethora of colours he uses in his work.

CLAIRE ELTRINGHAM, Manager, Ninuku Arts.



STANLEY YOUNG. 'Kalaya Tjukurpa' (11171), Acrylic on linen, 1830 x 1530mm. 2011.



SAMUEL MILLER. 'Ngayuku Ngura' (10340), Acrylic on linen, 1830 x 1530mm. 2010.