

Aboriginal Art

Aboriginal art really involves story telling, myths, rituals, sorcery, and magic, where the artist describes their Dreaming, the stories of creation, their beliefs, and their spirituality. The strong relationship between the ancestral beings of the 'time before time', the Dreamtime, with the landscape and every living creature they created forms the basis for this art. The ancestral spirits came to a land devoid of features and created everything -- the rivers, hills, plants, animals, people, and the relationships between people and animals. When finished, they changed into landforms, animals, stars, or other objects. To the Aboriginal people, the past is still alive and will remain so into the future.

Source: <http://solar-center.stanford.edu/folklore/folklore.html>



Bradshaw Painting, Kimberley, WA (Western Australia)

Bradshaw paintings were first discovered by Joseph Bradshaw in 1891. Many consider that the Bradshaw paintings are the earliest rock art in the Kimberley. They are characterized by dynamic, graceful figures with elaborate headdresses and body ornamentation. Quartz dating sets the age of the painting at 15,050 B.C. Bradshaw paintings may not be the earliest rock art in the region for the dated motifs include partially infilled hand stencils and X-ray style animals.

Wandjina -- Ancestor Creatures

Ingelari Site, Katherine, NT

Images of Wandjina typically have a large mouthless face with enormous black eyes and a beak-like nose usually surrounded by a band with radiating lines projecting outwards. Before the time of creation, the landscape was flat and featureless. The Wandjina, the ancestral creatures of the Dreamtime, came across the sea, down from the sky, and out of the ground. They created the world and all it contains and laid down the rules governing all aspects of human behavior including the proper way to live on the land. After they were finished, the ancestral spirits went into the landscape or continued their travels.





Yankee Hat Rock Shelter

Namadgi National Park, ACT

7 m x 2 m with sixty-eight pictures or motifs in red ochre and white clay. Subjects include human-like male and female figures, dingoes chasing a kangaroo, long-necked tortoise or echidna, Bogong moth, koala, and a tall bird (?emu). There are also abstract designs. Date unknown.





Dynamic Figures Ubirr, Kakadu National Park, NT

The thin, stick-like figures and animated stances are typical of the Dynamic Figure tradition. On the left is a more recent Dynamic figure showing a running male carrying hunting gear and a goose feather fan, which is characteristic of the Freshwater Period. On the right is an early Dynamic figure depicting an individual with upraised arms typical of Mimi paintings.





**White Man Wearing Derby
With Two Pistols Delamere
Station, NT**

Anbangbang Gallery, Nourlangie Rock, Kakadu National Park, NT

The figure on the upper left is Namandjolg who broke the incest laws by sleeping with his sister on the ledge above these paintings. He later became Ginah, the great salt water crocodile. On the right is Namarrgon, Lightning Man, who wears his lightning as a band



connecting his arms, legs, and head. Stone axes on his knees and elbows provide the thunder. Namarrgon and his wife Barrginj (lower left) are parents to Aljurr, the Leichhardt's grasshoppers that appear as the first storms break. Namarrgon, Barrginj, and their children entered the land from the north during a time of rising sea level, rain, and thunderstorm. Namarrgon now lives at Namarrgon Djadjan, Lightning Dreaming, three tall cliffs along the Arnhem escarpment. At the base of the gallery are family groups of men and women. Namandjolg, Namarrgon, and Barrginj were added to the gallery by Najombolmi (Barramundi Charlie) in 1964.