

COMMUNITY: UTOPIA, NORTHERN TERRITORY

LANGUAGE: ANMATYERRE / ALYAWARRE

B. 1922 C.

Minnie Pwerle was born in the Utopia Region in about 1922. In her late 70's, after a lifetime of ceremonial body painting she began painting on canvas in 1999. Her first works were a series of bold, free-flowing linear designs painted at DACOU in September/October of that year. Since then, Minnie has painted a number of major canvases, and her reputation as an artist has grown in the relatively short time.

Minnie's main Dreamings are *Awelye – Atnwengerrp [Women's Ceremony]*, *Bush Melon* and *Bush Melon Seed*, all convey her love and respect for the land and its ability to provide physical and spiritual sustenance for her people. Unlike Western abstraction, this art proceeds from direct spiritual roots based in tribal consciousness. Minnie paints with an unbound spontaneity, her works are bold and colourful with a dynamic but rhythmic style.

Minnie, one of eight children and mother of acclaimed artist Barbara Weir and also artist Betty Mbitjana, was born in the Utopia Station Region of the Northern Territory, 250 kms northeast of Alice Springs. She was married to Motorcar Jim and together they had six children.

Like many other highly respected Utopia women artists, Minnie participated in the batik project which was introduced to the community in 1977. Painting on canvas in the community started in the late 1980s. In 1999, after many years of ceremonial body painting and in her late eighties, Minnie started to paint on canvas.

Painting traditional body paint designs of Awelye and her inherited Bush Melon Dreaming, Minnie soon attracted a large following, holding her first solo exhibition in Melbourne in 2000. Her knowledge of and her spiritual connection to the land is clearly evident in all her paintings.

Minnie continued to paint until she died in March 2006. Her paintings are held in many overseas institutional and private collections as well as the major art galleries in Australia.

Minnie Pwerle's age and status in her community make her an important living link to the history and traditions of her people. She had seven children including **Barbara Weir** , who is also a well-known Aboriginal artist.

One of Pwerle's pieces was entered into the 18th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2001.



Exhibitions

2000 Minnie exhibited her paintings at various galleries throughout Australia including, Gallery Savah- Sydney, Flinders Lane Gallery- Melbourne, Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs.

2000 DACOU in association with AMP, an official sponsor of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, hosted an exhibition of mixed Utopia artists in the AMP building, Sydney.

2000 'Mother and Daughter', Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, NT.

2000-2006 Group Exhibitions and Permanent Collection, Redrock gallery, Melbourne.

2001 'Out of Utopia': - Chapman Gallery- Canberra. Exhibited with Barbara Weir.

2001 Combined exhibition in San Anselmo, Marin County, California USA

2001 Group Exhibition at Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, NT.

2001 'Minnie Pwerle', "Mary Pantjiti McLean- 'Tumaru Purlykumunu- small stories"- Japingka Gallery- Perth- Western Australia.

2001 "Painting Country"- combined exhibition at Tandanya, Adelaide.

2001 "Desert Colour"- "My Country"- combined exhibition at Raintree Aboriginal Art Gallery- Darwin NT.

2001 Combined exhibition at Dreamtime Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA.

2001 "Women Artists Of The Australian Desert"- combined exhibition Gallery 2021- Auckland, New Zealand.

2002 "United – Mother and Daughter"- exhibited with Barbara Weir at Alison Kelly Gallery, Armadale, Victoria.

2002 Group Exhibition New York City, UTSA, USA.

2002 Group Exhibition, Mbantua Gallery Alice Springs, NT

2002 Mixed Utopia exhibition at Knut Grothe Galeri, Charlottlenlund, Copenhagen, Denmark

2002 Solo exhibition, " Recent Paintings", Gallery Savah, Sydney, NSW.

2002 'Paintings From Utopia"- combined exhibition at "Framed- The Darwin Gallery", Darwin, NT

2002 Mixed Utopia exhibition at Galerie a Le Temps Du Reve, France.

2002 'Contemporary Aboriginal Art From The Utopia Region"- combined Exhibition at BMGART, Adelaide, SA.

2002 'Minnie's Country' Dacou Gallery, Adelaide, SA.

2002 'Generations Utopia'- combined exhibition, Japingka Gallery, Fremantle, Perth WA.

2002 Selected entrant in the 2002, 19th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award.

2002 'A Collectable Aboriginal Art Event"- combined exhibition at Raintree Gallery, Darwin, NT.

2002 'BIG COUNTRY small worlds'- solo exhibition at Fire-works Gallery Qld

2002 'The Utopia Six', Flinders Lane Gallery, VIC.

2002 'Awelye Atnwengerrp' Solo Exhibition at Dacou Gallery, Adelaide, SA.

2002 Heart and Soul Gallery in conjunction with Mbantua Gallery, Nashville, TN, USA.

2002 Urban Wineworks with Mbantua Gallery, Portland, Oregon, USA.

2002 Mbantua Gallery – 'In the Cove', Portland, Oregon, USA.

2002 Chapman Gallery Group Exhibition, ACT.

2002 Mixed Utopia Exhibition, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs, NT.

2002 Mixed Utopia Exhibition', Gallery Savah, Sydney, NSW.

2003 'My Grandmother and Me', World Vision, Walkabout Gallery, Sydney, NSW.

2003 'Minnie Pwerle & Mitjili Napurrula', Japingka Gallery, Fremantle. WA.

2003 Group Exhibition, Art & Soul Gallery in conjunction with Mbantua Gallery, Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

2003 Contemporary Aboriginal Art Event, Mbantua Gallery, Umpqua Bank, Oregon USA

2003 Solo Exhibition, "Sydney Art Fair", Gallery Savah, Sydney, NSW.

2003 'Art from the Dreamtime", Portland Art Museum in conjunction with Mbantua Gallery. Oregon, USA.

2004 'Divas of the Desert', Gallery Gonwana, Alice Springs, NT.

2005 'Utopia Revealed', Japingka Gallery, Fremantle, WA.

2005 Annual Group Exhibition 'Shalom', University of NSW, Shalom Department, Kensington, NSW.

2005 'Small Wonders', Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, NT.

2006 Solo Exhibition, "Memorial Exhibition", Gallery Savah, Sydney. NSW.

2006 'The Pwerle Sisters,' Group Exhibition, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne, VIC.

2006 Group exhibition, APS Bendi Lango Art Exhibition, Rio Tinto Offices, Melbourne, VIC.

2007 'Standing on Ceremony', Tandanya Cultural Institute, Adelaide, SA.

2007 'Utopia in New York' Robert Steele Gallery, New York. USA.

2007 Group Exhibition, Australian Embassy, Washington, USA.

2007 Group exhibition, "Desert Diversity", Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne, VIC.

2007 'Treasures of the Spirit', Tandanya Cultural Institute, Adelaide, SA.

2007 Group exhibition, APS Bendi Lango Art Exhibition with Rio Tinto, Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane, QLD.

2007 June Redrock gallery, Group Exhibition, Gallery Grand Opening Beijing, P.R China

2007 July Redrock gallery, Group Exhibition China World Exhibition Centre, Beijing P.R China

2007 August Redrock gallery, Group Exhibition, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Beijing, P.R China

2007 November Redrock gallery, Group Exhibition, International Art Expo, Beijing, P.R China

2007 'New Works from Utopia', Space Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA, USA.

2008 'Utopia Revisited', NG Art Gallery, Chippendale, NSW.

2008 Colours of Utopia, Gallery Savah, Sydney NSW

2008 'Atnwengerrp: Land of Dreaming', Minnie Pwerle carpet launch, Designer Rugs Showroom, Edgecliffe, NSW.

2008 Hillside Gallery in Tokyo, with Coo-ee Art Sydney in conjunction with the landmark retrospective exhibition 'Utopia - the Genius of Emily Kngwarreye' at the National Art Centre, Tokyo Japan.

2008 July Redrock gallery, Beijing, 2nd Gallery Opening, Group Exhibition, Beijing, P.R China

Collections

- AMP Collection
- Art Gallery of NSW
- Art Gallery of South Australia
- Kelton Foundation
- Kreglinger Collection
- Mbantua Collection
- National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
- Mem Aziz Private Collection, Melbourne, Victoria
- Hank Ebes Collection, Melbourne, Australia
- AMP Collection
- Queensland Art Gallery
- Thomas Vroom Collection