

DORIS GINGINGARA

DORIS GINGINGARA was born in 1946 at Maningrida, an Aboriginal community town in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Her tribal group is *Barada* and she spent her childhood in the traditional way with her parents and her tribe, hunting and gathering. Twice she was taken by the *Mimi* spirits and put into a tree to be taught about basket and net making. *Mimi* are important figures in the cultures of Arnhem Land, and are often depicted in bark paintings as long thin humans. They can only be glimpsed in dreams or the half-light, and make themselves fully present only to 'doctors', the clever people of the tribe. Doris's capture indicates the importance of these spirits in the cultural life of Aborigines. Knowledge is not so much achieved by individuals as conceived in the Dreaming and passed on from generation to generation. This is how she tells the story:

Djunuwiny is a sacred place to me, this is the place where spirits came to get me when I was a little girl. My parents were

looking for me and call my name. When spirits heard this they put me on the beach so my parents could see me. Dad got some green ants and put them around me so I could wake up, then I was all right and my parents did not worry anymore when I went a little bit far way because they knew spirits were looking after me.



Later she went to school in Darwin, living there and going back to visit her family at Maningrida during the holidays.

After cyclone Tracy hit Darwin in 1974, Doris moved to Perth, Geraldton and finally Mount Magnet in Western Australia, where she now lives with her French-born husband Danny. It was after moving to Mount Magnet that she started drawing, initially for fun and to pass the time. Her inspiration is from everyday life, her childhood in Arnhem Land, and from things she sees around her, mostly to do with nature — plants, flowers, rocks and animals. Doris has visited France several times, but her work still draws on the countryside around Mount Magnet.

D·U·I·N·A·I·N·A·A·R·A

DORIS GINGINGARA

David Wroth

Doris Gingingara was born in Maningrida, Arnhem Land in 1946. She spent her childhood in the traditional way with her parents and her tribe, hunting and gathering. Twice she was taken by the *mimi* spirits and put into a tree to be taught about basket and net making. Later she

Mount Magnet and the things she sees around the bush.

Seven years later Danny showed Desert Designs these early sketches. Encouraged to work with better materials, Doris began a series of drawings on a bigger scale bringing together her early sketches to more complete and detailed designs.

During the summer of 1989 the first of these designs were printed on silks and cotton as part of the Desert Designs range. Her first exhibition of her limited edition prints was shown in Sydney, Perth and London.

Doris draws all the ideas for her work from places and events in her own life - whether it is from her travels or childhood experience in Arnhem Land, in the community at Maningrida. Here she was taught the traditional skills required

men singing up the rain, or in *Garriwa*, certain obligations for the women to provide special foods at ceremony time.

Sometimes she draws a particular sacred place, like *Djunuwiny*, which is where the spirits came to collect her when she was a child.

She also draws on locations around Mount Magnet. These may be precise drawings of a creek or a bush track with representations of hills, paddocks, trees or wildflowers, showing a particular place where she went searching for bush tucker or exploring for rock fossils.

Doris may draw on a wide range of images that she encounters on her travels. When she travelled with her French husband Danny, who is a chef, to visit his parents in the south eastern region of France, she recalled crossing a very high bridge that spanned two sheer rocky cliff walls. Later in Australia she drew this, showing the fractured cliff faces as bright checkerboard structures of colour, cut by a zigzag bridge.

On another occasion Doris travelled with Desert Designs for a photo shoot at Kalbarri, situated in coastal gorges north of Perth. She deeply misses not living near the sea, having spent the past ten years in a small inland town, a strong contrast to her childhood life in Arnhem Land.

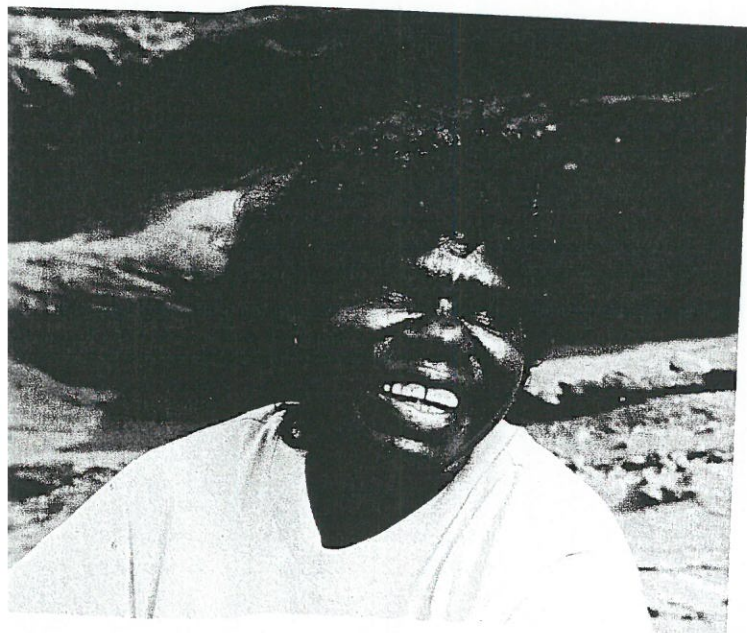
The drawing that she created at Kalbarri was a colourful image of rocks and sea showing all the fine detail of plants and fossils found in the limestone caves along the river there.

She chooses her colours from a wide range of art marker pens that she has. She uses a rich range of warm, ochre type colours from warm pinks and yellows to burnt reds and deep browns. These are often contrasted with bright blues, greens and purples. The total effect of her work is of a warm harmony of colours created in very intricate patterns.

Doris has sisters who now live in Darwin and a daughter who is now married. Her family have been important members of the Community, and have recorded on video and audio tapes, songs and ceremonies of the Community. They have been involved in the traditional arts of the area. Doris' cousin, David Gulpulil, has become well known in film and for dance performances.

The art of Doris Gingingara is part of what has been described as the most exciting trend in current Australian art - the blend of traditional Aboriginal culture with contemporary materials and expression.

All Doris' art conveys the intricate detail of the world seen from the Aboriginal woman's perspective, exploring the complex relationship of the artist and the natural world. □



went to school in Darwin, going back to visit her family during the holidays.

After the destruction caused when Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin, Doris moved to Western Australia. For her own enjoyment and to pass the time, Doris started drawing small sketches in bright colours of rocks and plants, animals and insects, taking inspiration from her childhood in Arnhem Land, from events of everyday life, and from the things she saw around her. Her strong natural sense of design and colour were already starting to become evident, as was her own distinctive style. Doris and her husband Danny now live in the outback mining town of Mount Magnet, where Doris is busy painting. She still likes to paint from early memories, as well as taking inspiration from the countryside around

of the women weaving baskets and nets, searching for bush tucker, using digging sticks and grinding stones and hunting for game. Traditional links to Dreaming totems were established and important ceremonial rites undertaken.

Doris gives accounts of the main bush tucker sought by the women, and the sources of abundant food found in the billabongs and marshes. In *Mumbanda - Bush Tucker*, Doris draws the different types of yams and bush onions available, and the Nalpur plant used to dye woven baskets. In *Three Billabongs* she shows the fish, ducks, snakes, goannas and turtles that are found in these waterways.

Other works give an insight into important ceremonies like *Rainstorm Magic*, about the old

Doris Gingingara

Doris Gingingara was born in 1946 in Maningrida, a small aborigine town in Arnhem land. Her tribal group is BURARRA.

She spent her childhood in the traditional way with her parents and her tribe gathering bush food and hunting. Later on, she went to school in Darwin where she spent her teenage years occasionally going back to Maningrida.

In 1974, she met her husband Danny, a Frenchman who was at the time working as a chef.

Shortly after Cyclone Tracy both decided to move to Perth where Doris began to draw using texta pens, while Danny was at work. Doris would go to King's Park and sit and draw the plants and flowers around her, also the memories and images which came into her head.

A few years later Danny got a job in Geraldton so they both moved to that town where Doris kept up with her drawing.

Around 1981 both Doris and Danny moved to Mt. Magnet.

In 1988, a company called "Desert Designs", whose main purpose is to promote and commercialise aborigine art, became interested in Doris's work. This was the beginning of a productive and interesting association, which developed into an easygoing friendship. With Desert Design help, Doris became better known as an artist and the recognition encouraged her to paint more and to try out new ideas and new subjects but always coming back to her favourite subjects which were the plants, flowers and animals which she had known since childhood.

Doris and Danny bought a house in Mt. Magnet and settled there.

Doris has had exhibitions of her work in every major city in Australia as well as several other countries in Europe, America and Japan. As well Doris visited France several times with her husband. Doris had an easygoing and happy nature and was always ready with a smile and to help others to see things in a happier light.

She is sorely missed by her husband and her friends.



DANNY shows off one of Doris's works while out and about in the country that inspired it. **LEFT:** Together again, gathering bush tucker.



A FIVE-STAR AFFAIR

A true Aussie romance, where French chef Danny loves Doris, an artist from the bush

IN 1971, Danny Rey packed his cooking utensils and left his home town of Saint-Laurent-Du-Pont, France, to try his luck 20,000km away in Australia.

As a highly skilled chef used to cooking in luxury restaurants in the home of the crepe suzette and haute cuisine, Danny had a good job waiting for him in Melbourne.

But destiny took a hand and changed his life.

The shock of coming from the pleasant warmth of southern France to the wet winter chill of Melbourne had Danny packing his bags to follow the sun, first to Queensland, then to Darwin.

There, fate stepped in and introduced him to the love of his life – and to a totally different world.

Danny met Doris Gingingara, a full-

blood Aborigine from Arnhem Land, and the couple decided to share their lives together.

The devastation of Cyclone Tracy that flattened Darwin at Christmas, 1974, sent the couple south to Perth, where Danny worked as a chef at Perth's first five-star hotel, the Parmelia.

With nothing to do while Danny was working, Doris decided to turn her hand to art.

She would head up to Kings Park with her pet guinea pig in her shoulder bag for company and, with pencil and sketch pad, she'd draw the trees and flowers around her.

It didn't take Danny and friends in the art world long to realise Doris's potential as an artist. Since those first tentative sketches, her career has gone from strength to strength.

Her magnificent Dreamtime paintings grace the homes of art lovers in the US, Norway, Italy, Holland and, of course, Australia.

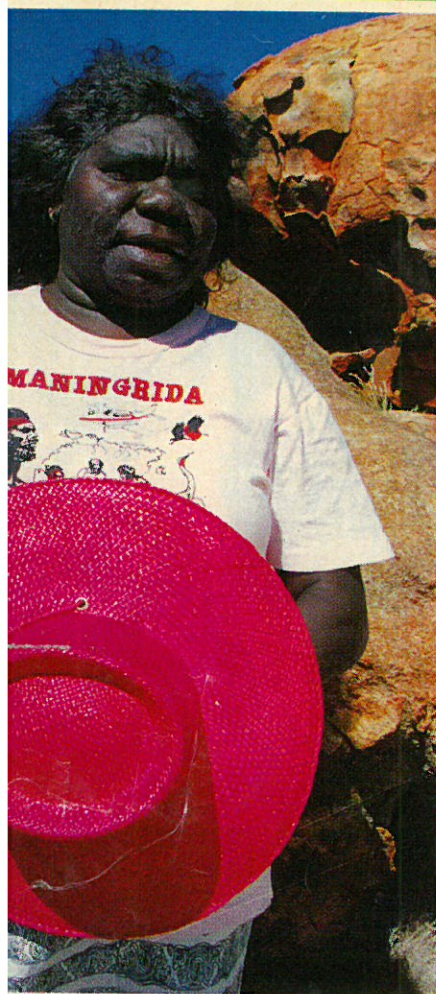
And her work has featured at art exhibitions in London, Tokyo and every Australian mainland capital.

The trendy fashions you see these days with stunning and distinctive Aboriginal motives on them are more than likely



'Doris likes her goanna done in the ashes of a wood fire, I like mine in a casserole'





FAIR

to be the work of Doris Gingingara-Rey.

Doris believes that her early life with the Anbara people, her tribal family, gave her the feeling for her art.

"I base my work on the fond memories of my people and my childhood," she says. "The hunting, the food gathering and the flowers, rocks, plants and animals that surrounded me. I believe that the spirits took me away when I was a baby. For two days, in my dreams, I was put in a tree in a very secret place. What I was taught there by the Mimi spirits is what has brought out the artist in me."

The couple now live in Mt Magnet, about 600km north-east of Perth. It's a hot, dusty little gold mining town in the semi-arid desert country that Danny has grown to love.

Danny no longer slaves over a hot stove, but acts as Doris's manager, and tries his hand at emu egg carving.

"We have no plans to get married," says Danny. "After 20



years together we are happy how we are. My family back in France has accepted Doris and we've gone back there for visits several times.

"And the Anbaras, Doris's people, have accepted me, too."

Living with an Aborigine has taken Danny from the mouth-watering delights of French cuisine to an interest in the secrets of Australian bush tucker.

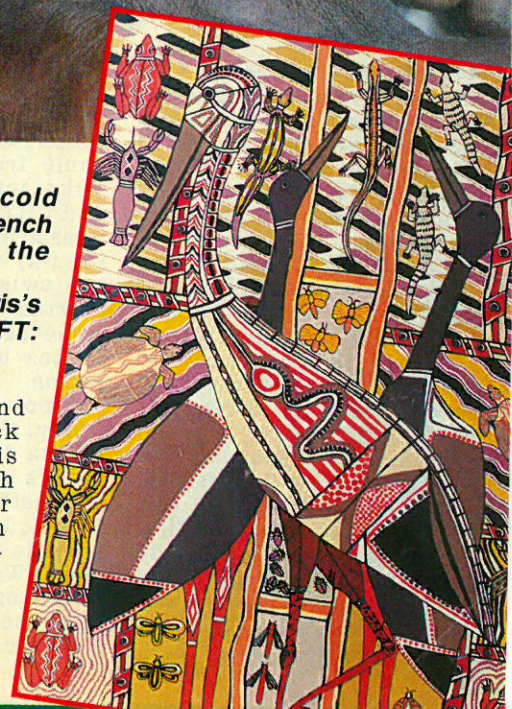
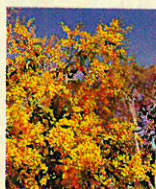
"I like some of it," says Danny, "but I still love the French touch when cooking."

"Doris likes her goanna done in the ashes of a wood fire, I like mine in a casserole."

MELBOURNE'S cold weather drove French chef Danny into the arms of Doris.

RIGHT: One of Doris's works. FAR LEFT: Doris in the studio.

When Doris and Danny next go back to France, Doris plans to take with her dozens of her paintings for an exhibition at Saint-Laurent-Du-Pont, just to thank the people from her other home, for accepting her.



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Odd couple of art world in demand



IT IS an unusual combination, an Aboriginal woman from Arnhem Land and an immigrant French chef.

But together, from their humble Mt Magnet home, Danny Rey, 46, and Doris Gingingara, who was born in 1946 at Maningrida, 400km east of Darwin, have sent art around the world.

Mrs Gingingara's paintings have been sold to enthusiasts in Norway, America, Italy, Holland and Australia.

They have been seen in exhibitions in London and Tokyo as well as every Australian mainland capital and featured on fashion clothing, T-shirts and bags.

Now, she is preparing work for an exhibition next year in Mr Rey's hometown of Saint-Laurent-du-Pont near Grenoble.



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Death sparks coronial inquiry

THE death of a woman at Mount Magnet's nursing post two weeks ago has sparked fears from the State Opposition that the standard of essential medical equipment in regional and remote areas was slipping.

The 53 year old woman was taken to the Mount Magnet nursing post by family members on July 10 where it is believed she died of a heart attack shortly after.

However, Opposition member for the mining and pastoral region, Tom Stephens, said the woman's family had raised was concerned that the nursing post's defibrillator may not have been working to assist nursing staff.

Whether the defibrillator was actually working and if it could have saved her life is now the subject of a coronial inquiry.

Mr Stephens said in this particular case it may not have been possible for the patient to survive even if the emergency equipment had been functioning.

"However, the event highlights the fact that emergency equipment at nursing posts must be functioning and reliable," he said.

"Nursing posts are a cost effective means of providing health services

in remote areas of WA. However, they cannot and should not be expected to cope with old and even broken equipment.

"This places extraordinary pressure on

staff and patients."

A spokeswoman for the Health Department said bio-medical equipment such as defibrillators were checked twice a year by the Department.

"Apart from that external check, staff

would check it a minimum of once a week but many would check it once a day or even once a shift," she said.

It is not known how old the defibrillator at the Mount Magnet nursing post was or when it was last replaced.

by Daniel Newell

Artist mourned

INTERNATIONALLY renowned Aboriginal artist Doris Gingingarra has passed away at the age of 53.

She was born in Arnhemland in 1946 and moving to Mt Magnet with her husband Danny Rey in 1981. Her work was exhibited in Australia's most prestigious galleries and in France, London and Japan.

Director of Desert Designs who marketed her work, David Wroth, said the storylines of her work referred back to her childhood in Arnhemland through to her more recent times in Mt Magnet.

Danny Rey said she would be buried in Darwin with a traditional burial ceremony followed by a Christian ceremony.

"I think all over WA she will be remembered for her art," Danny Rey said.

In Memory of Gochan

The anthropologist Annette Hamilton lived in Maningrida in 1968 to 1969. She was a friend of Les Hiatt and Betty Meehan, two other anthropologists who wrote about the Gidjingali, Anbara and Bararra clans of Djunuwunya and Kopanga near the Blyth River. In her book, Annette Hamilton thanks Gingingara and Raritpala and their children, Gochan, Tanya, and Bernadette and their cousin Elizabeth. Henry was not born then. Les Hiatt introduced Annette to the family.



In those days the families lived in a tin shed on the beach at Maningrida.

In 1997 I worked with Burarra people in Darwin and met the members of the family who had moved into Darwin, including our dear Gojan, Tanya, Henry and Elizabeth. Later I met Bernadette and Stuart at Maningrida.

In Darwin was also lucky to meet wise old elders like the grandfather of Bernadette's sister, Mr Johnny Balayia. I know that Johnny loved his granddaughter and she visited him in hospital and in Juninga Hostel.

When I returned to Perth I met the Balanda, Danny Rey, who had married Gingingara. They left Darwin after Cyclone Tracy and moved to the little town of Mount Magnet. There Gochan's mother became a famous artist, working for the Desert Designs Japingka Gallery in Fremantle. Sadly, Gochan's mother passed away in Mount Magnet but Danny brought the body of his wife back to Maningrida for the funeral. Danny died in 2009. I know that they loved their children, Gochan, Tanya, Isabel and Henry and the children loved their mother.

Bernadette

It is always a sad time when someone passes away too young. I am now 72 years old and I have seen too many young people leave us at a young age. Please read this letter at the funeral to say how sorry I am for Gochan's family and friends who will be missing her deeply, today and always.

Dr Bill Day

Anthropologist

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