



EDUCATION KIT

A Flinders University Art Museum touring exhibition

Gooch's Utopia: collected works from the Central Desert

Touring agency
Flinders University Art Museum

Introduction

Gooch's Utopia sources works from the collections of the late Rodney Gooch (1949–2002), donated by him to Riddoch Art Gallery (Mount Gambier) and Flinders University Art Museum (Adelaide) in 1998 and 2002 respectively.

The project surveys the art of Utopia from the latter decades of the 20th Century and explores the role of Gooch in its making. In addition it looks at the contribution one person can make to the public realm as a private collector.

Originally from the foothills of Adelaide, Gooch settled in Alice Springs in his early 30s. In 1987, through the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), he became art advisor to the remote community of Utopia. Following this appointment, Gooch continued to work closely with the artists of Utopia and was ultimately engaged with the production and sale of art from the community to the wider world for a period of 15 years.

Utopia is a tract of land located some 240km north-east of Alice Springs. Named by white pastoralists who settled there in the early 1920s, it encompasses the traditional country of Eastern Anmatyerr and Alyawarr people, who in 1980, following a successful land claim under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976, were granted freehold title to it. People at Utopia today live in small communities or outstations and lead semi-traditional lives; making art is a major source of income.

Exhibited works reflect intimate knowledge of the land, its flora and fauna and customary law associated with it. Like much Indigenous art produced in remote Australia today the designs are of profound cultural significance for their creators and extended familial networks. This is drawn out in the exhibition and accompanying catalogue.

The exhibition also looks at the place of Gooch in the development of a unique art movement at the outstations of Utopia. Assisting artists in the making and marketing of their work, he was to have a lasting impact on the production of new art forms, art sales and ultimately the business of art dealing in the Central Desert.

Gooch's Utopia also speaks of Gooch himself and his affections for the artists with whom he worked. As a magnanimous and uniquely spirited individual of eclectic taste and extraordinary energy, Gooch established an extended Aboriginal family to whom he was committed until the very end.

The exhibition comprises 52 works and is accompanied by a DVD and full colour catalogue.

The catalogue will be supplied free to teachers who are conducting class visits. Please contact the hosting gallery in this regard.

This education kit is available online from: www.flinders.edu.au/artmuseum/documents/GU_education_kit.pdf.

For further information about the exhibition or if you would like to provide feedback please contact:

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Gloria Tamerre Petyarre Anmatyerr born c.1942, *Untitled* (detail) 2002, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 92.5 x 123 cm, Flinders University Art Museum 3494 © Gloria Tamerre Petyarre, Licensed by VISCOPY, Australia, 2008



List of artists

Rodney Gooch
 Katy Kemarre
 Lena Kemarre
 Mary Kemarre
 Queenie Kemarre
 Paddy Kngale
 Audrey Kngwarreye
 Christopher Hunter Kngwarreye
 Eileen Bird Kngwarreye
 Emily Kame Kngwarreye
 Hazel Kngwarreye
 Janice Kngwarreye
 Lucky Morton Kngwarreye
 Weata Kngwarreye
 Annie Mpetyane
 Janie Mpetyane
 Lyndsay Bird Mpetyane
 Mavis Mpetyane
 Ronnie Price Mpetyane
 Ada Bird Petyarre
 Billy Morton Petyarre
 Gloria Tamerre Petyarre
 Kathleen Petyarre
 Angelina Pwerle

Teacher's notes

This kit has been prepared by Flinders University Art Museum to support the exhibition. It is intended as a reference tool to assist educators in generating ideas and classroom activities for use before, during and after a visit to the exhibition.

The kit references the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework with particular focus on Learning Areas pertaining to the 'arts' and 'society and environment'. It caters to primary and secondary levels and is set out with activities pitched to the following bands:

Primary Years	(3-5)
Middle Years	(6-9)
Senior Years	(10-12)

Tasks are intended to be open-ended which invite students to construct their own meanings, explore their own feelings and clarify their own ideas regarding the works displayed.

Preparing for the visit

Teachers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the exhibition catalogue. It contains five essays together with a map, images of all works, photographs of Rodney Gooch, artist biographies and reference list.

Leading questions suggested below are intended to focus students and prepare them with some background information. Answers can be found in the introductory essay by Fiona Salmon and/or pursued on the web.

Suggested pre-visit questions

What does the title Gooch's Utopia suggest?

Where is Utopia?

What does this country look like?

Who owns this land?

What is the history of its ownership?

Who was Rodney Gooch?

How did he make his way to Alice Springs?

It is said that Gooch 'wanted to make an adventure of his life'. Do you think he achieved this? / in what way?

Why did he donate his collections to public institutions?

What is an 'art advisor'?

What role does/he she play in production and sale of art from remote Aboriginal communities?

Exploring the exhibition

Activities for exploring the exhibition are theme based:

- Art and gender
- Works in 'Western' idiom
- Three-dimensional work
- The art of Emily Kame Kngwarreye
- The making and marketing of Indigenous art in remote Australia

Post visit activities

Follow up activities are included for school-based projects. Art making activities are pitched at primary years, but adaptable to older groups. Topics for essay writing and extended research are supplied for the Senior band.





Art and gender

Although Utopia boasts a number of well-known male artists they are far outnumbered by the females in their community. This is evident in the Rodney Gooch Collections, which comprise works predominantly by women. It is also reflected in the current exhibition, where for every three works by a woman there is one by a man.

The prevalence of women among the artists can be attributed in part to the origins of contemporary art making in the community, dating back to the late 1970s when batik was introduced by Jenny Green as part of an Adult Education course. Interest in batik grew among the women with whom she worked and was sustained under the management of successive female coordinators for a decade. At one point, the Utopia Women's Batik Group (as it became known) had 80 members.

With the appointment of Rodney Gooch as art adviser to Utopia in 1987, men were actively encouraged to participate in the projects he initiated and although Lyndsay Bird Mpetyane contributed a work to the batik project *A Picture Story*, it was not until the focus of contemporary art practice shifted from wax resist techniques to acrylic painting on canvas that the numbers of male participants increased.

This unit encourages students to compare and contrast the works of male and female artists on display and articulate their similarities and differences in terms of subject and style.

Primary Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Find these works in the exhibition:
Ronnie Price Mpetyane
A Meeting of the Dreamtime Tingari Men for the Snake and Dog Dreaming (undated)
Janice Kngwarreye
Bush Plants and Seeds 1989
2. Consider their titles, colours and designs and make a list of the things they have common and how they are different.
3. Consider whether in this instance Kngwarreye could have chosen the same subject matter (story) as Mpetyane and write a paragraph on your thoughts.

POST VISIT – MAKING ART

1. Choose a well-known story such as a fairy tale or fable. Create a set of symbols to represent the story (or an important aspect of it).
2. Using wax crayons or pencils on an A3 sheet of paper represent your story with the symbols you have chosen. Write your name on the back.
3. On a separate piece of paper (A4) create a 'key', which explains what each of the symbols mean.
4. Hang your work – with the key, on the classroom wall.
5. Look at all the works on display and see if you can 'read' which stories have been represented.
6. Now look at the works all together. What can you say about them? How are they similar or different? Consider the choice of stories (subjects). Can you guess whether they have been created by males or females?

Middle Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. *Awley* and *Tingari* are recurring subjects in the works displayed. What do these terms mean?
2. Select an example of each of these types of works. Look at their formal qualities and make notes regarding their similarities and differences. Consider to what extent gender may have played a role in determining the 'look and feel' of these works.
3. Look closely at other works on display. Can you determine the gender of the artists in light of their subjects and styles?

POST VISIT – WRITING

1. Using notes taken during your visit to the exhibition write a short essay (300 words) about the similarities and differences of the works you selected.

Senior Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Working in small groups look carefully at the works on display. What differences can you see between the works by male artists compared with those of their female counterparts?
2. Make a list of your observations.
3. Discuss with your group how gender may have effected these differences.

POST VISIT – WRITING & FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Essay question: Is gender a useful frame of reference for discussions about the art of Utopia? Discuss why/why not. Refer to specific examples.
2. Further research: Investigate the history of art making at Papunya. In what way does this history mirror developments at Utopia (if at all)? Choose some examples of art from both communities (by males and females) to compare and contrast.

Works in 'Western' idiom



In her essay in the exhibition catalogue Christine Nicholls writes:

Two main subdivisions within this genre of figurative artworks in The Gooch Collections focus on what the Eastern Anmatyerr and Alyawarr people call 'country'. The first grouping is mostly characterized by a romantic, almost 'rose-tinted glasses' view of Indigenous pre-contact life where Aboriginal people are depicted as leading a harmonious existence in a 'land of plenty'.

[These works have an] equal, opposite and far more interesting counterpart. A fascinatingly contrapuntal sub-category of works shows these earlier scenes of naïve innocence being violently shattered at gunpoint. Rifles, wielded by mounted white police and/or soldiers with the clear intention of killing Indigenous people, interrupt the earlier portrayals of the quiet domesticity of everyday life. Despite their apparent simplicity, the arbitrary nature of these murderous acts is evident in these works, which have become known as the 'massacre paintings'.

This unit is concerned with art, memory and history.

In talking about this latter category of works, Nicholls raises the issue of how they may be read in the context of the so-called 'history wars'. She argues it is in this connection, as visual documents of the past, that they are of particular contemporary interest.

Primary Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Look at the works displayed in the 'Western' idiom category. Discuss with your class why this term is used?
2. Consider how the paintings in this category compare with each other? What stories do they tell?
3. Do these paintings evoke particular reactions when you look at them? Write down how they make you feel.

POST VISIT – MAKING ART

1. Think of something that has happened to you in the past.
2. Brainstorm possible ideas for recreating this memory as a photomontage.
3. Find and select 10-20 images that convey this memory. (Search magazines, images on-line and/or take your own digital photographs and print).
4. Think creatively about ways in which to assemble the images on a piece of A3 card.
5. Glue the images into place. Give your work a title and display on the classroom wall. Explain to the class why you have chosen your title and what the work represents.

Middle Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Look at the works displayed in the 'Western' idiom category. Take notes that describe the style of these works. Are there other terms you could use to characterize the 'look' of the works?
2. Examine the paintings of 'pastoral scenes' what do these tell you about Aboriginal life? Discuss with your class. Take notes.
3. Examine the 'massacre paintings'. What do these works show? How do you they make you feel? Why do you think these particular works may be contentious? Discuss with your class. Take notes.

POST VISIT – WRITING

1. Using your notes write a short essay (300 words) that compares and contrasts the camp-scene and massacre paintings in the exhibition. Refer to specific examples.

Senior Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Look at the works displayed in the 'Western' idiom category. Make notes about what these paintings reveal in terms of the history of Utopia?
2. In a small group discuss how memory may have influenced the construction of these works.
3. Focussing on the 3 works dealing with contact history, discuss with members of your group why you think these works in particular may be contentious.

POST VISIT – WRITING & FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Essay question: Fact or fabrication? Discuss the depiction of contact history in the exhibited works.
2. Extended research: At its crux, the culture wars have to do with what Keith Windscuttle has described as the 'fabrication' of Aboriginal history. Investigate the impetus of this claim and the wider cultural discussion it led to in Australia.

Three-dimensional works

The three dimensional works on display include a coolamon, five carved dogs, a painted watering can and an example of so-called 'spare-part art'. These can be considered in their historical contexts as part of the changing and all-encompassing approaches to art practice actively fostered by Gooch.

Handcrafted functional wooden items, such as spears, shields, digging sticks and coolamons, have a long history among Indigenous people of the Central Desert. Typically made by men, coolamons are long, flat, concave-sided dishes carved from the bean or mulga tree. They are used mainly by women to carry food or belongings, and sometimes babies. The painted designs on the coolamon by Billy Morton Petyarre in this exhibition transform this piece from a functional to a highly decorative work.

Similarly, Emily Kngwarreye's paintings on the car door and watering can transform relatively mundane objects from the ordinary to the extraordinary. Using the surface of the scrap metal as ground for her designs, the artist has created novel works.

Figurative sculpture represented here by Janice Kngwarreye's and Queenie Kemarre's carved dogs can also be seen in the context of Gooch's enthusiasm for the imaginative use of materials at hand. Originally centred at

the outstation of Ngkwarlerlanem, this particular genre encompassed both human and animal forms.

By challenging audience expectations when they first emerged in the early 1990s, figurative carving and 'spare part art' successfully captured the attention of the Australian art market and, although not produced as readily as the acrylic paintings on canvas, the production of such works continues today.

This unit challenges students to consider how factors such as tradition, access to materials and economics may influence contemporary art practice.





Primary Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Find the 3-dimensional works on display?
2. Make a list of what these works are and who has made them.
3. Which of these works do you like the most? Write a paragraph about why it is your favourite piece.

POST VISIT – MAKING ART

1. Look around your home or school – can you find an old watering can, a metal bucket, an old car part or a bicycle part that no one wants.
2. Using your garden as your theme, decorate a piece of 'junk' to create a work of art. Use thick paint like acrylic or poster paint or cut out coloured paper shapes and glue to the surface.

Middle Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Consider the carved dogs on display. Do you think these would have been made traditionally? What might have been the precedents of these works?
2. It is noteworthy that these works have been made by women. Why do you think this is the case? Discuss with your class.
3. Works such as these have been very popular among buyers. Why do you think people are drawn to them?

POST VISIT – MAKING ART

1. Think of animal in quirky, whimsical terms. Using thick but malleable wire, create the form of this animal (not larger than 50 x 50cm).
2. Scrunch balls of newspaper in and around the wire to give the animal bulk and shape. Bind the paper into place with generous lengths of masking tape.
3. Paint the animal with thick acrylic paints and decorate with additional items such as buttons, beads, feathers etc.

Senior Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Consider the 3-dimensional works by Emily Kame Kngwarreye.
2. Read the text panels to establish history of these works.
3. Discuss in a small group whether or not you think these works constitute 'good art' or not.

POST VISIT– WRITING & FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Essay question: Imagine you are a collector of contemporary Aboriginal Art. Would you choose to purchase a painted car door such as the work of Emily Kame Kngwarreye? Why/Why not?
2. Further research: investigate the history of 'found art' – consider its precedents, development throughout the 20th century and contemporary expressions.

The art of Emily Kame Kngwarreye

Emily Kame Kngwarreye (1910-1996) was one of the founding members of the Utopia Women's Batik Group but went on to work exclusively with acrylic paint on canvas after Gooch introduced the medium to the artist's of Utopia in the late 1980s. Kngwarreye was in her late 70s at this time. Over her relatively short painting career she produced an extraordinary number of works, which captured the interest of dealers, collectors and institutions alike and catapulted her into the limelight of the Australian contemporary art scene. Following her death in 1996, interest in her work continued to soar. In 2007 for example, a painting by the artist was sold at auction for over 1 million dollars.

Posthumously Emily Kame Kngwarreye, together with Judy Watson and Yvonne Koolmatrie, represented Australia at the Venice Biennale in 1997. In 1998-99 the Queensland Art Gallery mounted and toured a major survey of her work. Most recently, in April 2008, 120 works by the artist went on display at the National Museum of Art in Osaka, Japan – the largest body of work by an Australian artist ever to be exhibited outside Australia. Arguably, Kngwarreye is Australia's most celebrated Indigenous artist.

With success Emily Kame Kngwarreye attracted much unwanted attention. Many people (dealers and otherwise) approached her, eager to make a profit through the on-sale of her work. Moreover it is known that her paintings provided income for her extended family. In a society where the sharing of property is the norm and private incomes typically low, Kngwarreye was under intense pressure to continue painting up until her death.

This unit aims to engage students with the work of one of Australia's most illustrious Indigenous artists: to examine her shifting styles and to consider the phenomenon of her success and its effects.



Primary Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Consider the term 'abstract art'. Discuss and define with your class.
2. Find the works in the exhibition by Emily Kame Kngwarreye. Make a note of the different styles you see in her work. In what way are they abstract?
3. Which of these works do you like the most? Write a paragraph about why it is your favourite piece.

POST VISIT – MAKING ART

1. Think of a place special to you. Imagine that you are at this place.
2. Choose 3 colours to represent it.
3. Paint the entire surface of a small canvas (30x30cm) using the colours you have selected. Be inspired by the works you have seen and experiment with splotches, dots, lines or flat areas of colour.
4. Write a short paragraph explaining what you have painted and why. Hang your work with the statement on the classroom wall.

Middle Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Study the work of Emily Kame Kngwarreye. How might you describe it? Write your thoughts down.
2. Compare it with other works in the exhibition? Make notes on any similarities/differences you observe.
3. Consider why Kngwarreye's work was more sought after than any of her contemporaries from Utopia? Discuss with the group.

POST VISIT – WRITING

1. Using your notes taken in the exhibition write a short essay about the success of Emily Kame Kngwarreye and why you think she achieved such fame? Refer to specific works to exemplify your ideas.

Senior Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Study the work of Emily Kame Kngwarreye. How do you respond to it?
2. In a small group, discuss its formal qualities. Compare with the work of other artists in the exhibition – in what ways can it be distinguished?
3. Discuss in your group how and why Kngwarreye achieved such fame in such a short period.

POST VISIT– WRITING & FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Essay question: At what cost, do you think, Emily Kame Kngwarreye achieved such extraordinary success?
2. Further research: Investigate what policies, procedures and/or protocols exist to protect indigenous artists against exploitation. Consider whether or not they are effective.



The making & marketing of Indigenous art in remote Australia

This unit encourages students to consider the role of art advisors in the production and sale of Indigenous art in Central Australia.

In his essay in the exhibition catalogue Philip Batty writes:

The art advisor occupies a special, if impossible, place in the world of Aboriginal art. Employed by community arts organizations to 'assist' Aboriginal artists, their tasks are multifarious and difficult: they have to soothe angry artists convinced that they have been ripped off, go cap-in-hand to governments each year for more funding, work out what will sell and encourage their artists to paint accordingly, stretch and undercoat innumerable canvases, watch for 'carpetbaggers' circling around their artists, write submissions for endless government enquiries into Aboriginal art, deal with vehicle breakdowns miles from nowhere and butter up rich buyers at glittering exhibition openings. Finally, they must do all this work knowing that their best artists will probably spend their money on drink or dodgy cars.

Senior Years

DURING THE VISIT

1. Look at the works in the exhibition. Make a note of the varying styles and media.
2. Consider how and why Rodney Gooch may have influenced the making of these works? Make a note of your thoughts.
3. Discuss how works from a remote community such as Utopia may eventually find their way to a gallery wall?

POST VISIT – WRITING & FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Essay question: Discuss the role of Rodney Gooch played in bringing the art of Utopia to the wider world?
2. Further research: In 2008 controversy overshadowed The Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award, one of the country's most prestigious events on the Aboriginal art calendar. What was the cause of discontent? Do you think the concerns raised by the art advisors (and art centres) are valid?