



LAND, ART AND THE SACRED:
Three Perspectives

D. Y. BEGAY
Gabriella Possum NUNGURRAYI
Claire Campbell PARK

January 22 - March 7, 2008

PimaCommunityCollege Louis Carlos Bernal Gallery

D. Y. BEGAY

Pollen Path
26"h x 36.5"w
wool

Red Earth
19.25"h x 37.5"w
wool

Other work exhibited:
Ochre Mesa
21"h x 41"w
wool

Mountains Behind the Hogan
30.5"h x 46"w
wool
Collection of Martha Albrecht

Untitled
21"h x 41"w
wool



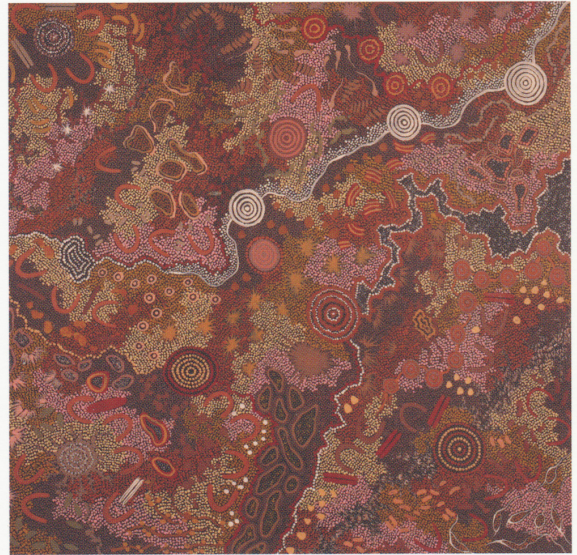
"I am 'Dine' born to Totsohnii, the Big Water people, and born for Tachii'nii, the Red Streak Earth people. I am a fourth generation Navajo weaver and my unique weaving has been handed down through generations. I learned at an early age to shear sheep, card and spin wool, and pick the plants for dyeing the fleece to obtain the varied and subtle colors. My weavings are reflective of the vast beauty of the land and the flora of the high desert. Weaving is not just sitting in front of the loom and tapping rows of wefts and creating designs. My weaving reflects who I am. It incorporates my beliefs, my family, and my community." - D. Y. Begay

Gabriella Possum NUNGURRAYI

Grandmother Country
48"h x 78"w
acrylic on linen
Courtesy: Boomerang Art Gallery

Grandmother Country
48"h x 36"w
acrylic on linen
Courtesy: Boomerang Art Gallery

Grandmother Country
48"h x 48"w
acrylic on linen
Courtesy: Boomerang Art Gallery



Gabriella Possum Nungurrayi is a second generation Anmatyerr painter, originally from Mount Allan, Northern Territory, Australia. The stories she depicts include Bush Tucker - Black Seed and Exploding Seed, Women Ceremonies, and Seven Sisters. These stories have been handed down for generations and she inherited them from her paternal grandmother. She honors her heritage by painting interpretations of only those stories she is responsible for, which are inseparable from her community and spiritual life. She was raised traditionally and is the eldest daughter of the world renowned painter Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, who first taught her to paint.

Claire Campbell PARK

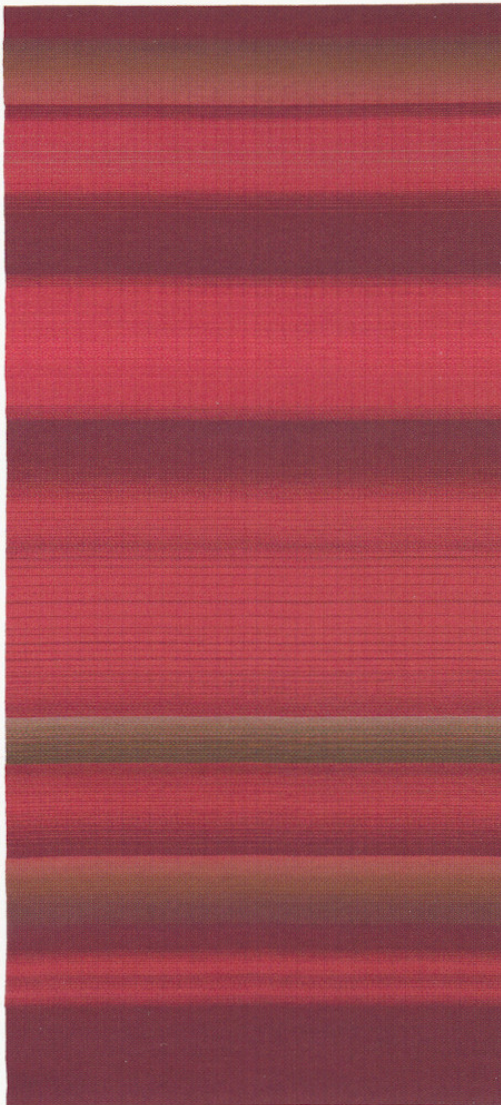
The Red Center
66.25" h x 30.25" w
woven linen

Two Continents: One
Pacific
67.75" h x 29.75" w
woven linen

Other work exhibited:
After the Fire: Prickly Pear
66.875" h x 30" w
woven linen

After the Fire: Sotol
66.875" h x 30" w
woven linen

Emu Walking on Water
66.875" h x 30.125" w
woven linen



"I am fascinated by how our beliefs transform our experience of creation, beauty, life. I love to learn from others and focus on what is universal, although seen from distinctly different perspectives.

The Anangu people of central Australia say their sense of time is the past, present and future all at once; there is no division. As I was walking through the Kata Tjutas in the late afternoon I was struck with how every branch, every leaf, the air itself, was vibrant with burgundy light - rendering distinctions of form, of time, unimportant. As I wove the Red Center I reflected on the eternal sacredness of life.

Looking across the Pacific from our separate shores we see our immutable unity—two continents: one Pacific." - Claire Campbell Park

D. Y. BEGAY

Among Begay's many credits are co-curating exhibits at the Kennedy Museum of Art in Athens, Ohio, the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City, and the Wheelwright Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Begay has also served as a consultant to numerous other museums, galleries, and private collectors throughout the country.

Exhibits of her artwork include: "Weaving Is Life" 2005, Kennedy Museum of Art; "Interpretive Landscapes" 2005, Mesa Art Center; "Tradition and Innovation," 2005, Art in Embassies, Chisinau, Moldova; "Passionate Journey Contemporary Southwestern Weaving" 2004, Roswell Museum & Art Center; "Another Phase" 2003, Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian.

Permanent collections include: Autry National Center, Los Angeles; Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ; Kennedy Museum of Art, Athens, Ohio; Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; and the Wheelwright Museum, Santa Fe, NM. In addition, D. Y.'s work is in many private collections.

Begay's early schooling was on the Navajo reservation and later, at Arizona State University in Tempe, where she received her bachelor's degree in fine arts and art education. She resides in Tselani and Scottsdale with her husband and sons. www.navajo-indian.com



Gabriella Possum NUNGURRAYI

Nungurrayi's artwork has been exhibited in Warsaw, Poland; Berne, Switzerland; London; Washington, D.C.; at the United Nations, New York; Melbourne, Sydney and throughout Australia.

Permanent collections include: The National Gallery of Australia, Canberra: the Richard Kelton Foundation Collection, Santa Monica, California; Galeria R. Poznan, Poland; Winterthur Collection, Switzerland; Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide; Museum and Art Galleries of the Northern Territories, Darwin and the Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs.

Nungurrayi was the youngest person to be awarded the prestigious Alice Springs Art Prize in 1983, when she was just sixteen. Nungurrayi attended Yiarra College in Alice Springs. She resides in Melbourne with her husband and five children.

www.boomerangart.com.au



Claire Campbell PARK

Park is an internationally recognized artist, lecturer and teacher. Exhibits of her artwork include: "Made in California 1900-2000: Art, Image and Identity" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; "The Twelfth International Biennial of Miniature Textiles" in Szombathely, Hungary and "The International Textile Competition" in Kyoto, Japan. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Szombathely Kunsthalle and the Tucson Museum of Art, as well as numerous private collections.

Lecture venues include: the Louvre and Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris; Seian College of Art and the World Textile Conference, Kyoto; Apeejay College of Fine Arts, Jalandhar, India; the Center for Middle East Studies, University of Arizona; The Minneapolis Institute of Arts; the University of South Australia, Adelaide and the University of Tasmania, Launceston.

Park researched Moroccan Textiles for a year in London, Paris and Morocco, and served as an exhibit consultant for the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C.. She has published articles in the accompanying Textile Museum exhibit catalog, FIBERARTS, and TEXTILE/ART (a French art journal), and has written a manuscript titled "Creating with Reverence: Art, Diversity, Culture and Soul."

Park received a B.A. from Scripps College in 1973 and an M.F.A. from U.C.L.A. in 1978. Since 1978 she has been head of the color and fiber areas at Pima Community College, West Campus. She leads seminars and workshops on creativity, culture and the sacred, as well as on color. She lives on the Sonoran Desert with her husband and daughter. web.mac.com/clairepark



Land, Art and the Sacred: Three Perspectives

The three artists participating in Land, Art and the Sacred; D. Y. Begay, Gabriella Possum Nungurrayi and Claire Campbell Park; express their community and spiritual values through the abstraction of land. The exhibit celebrates diverse perceptions of land and the sacred, yet simultaneously unifies through an expression of the numinous, which transcends culture and medium. It expands our understanding of the significance of beauty—in our lives and as an important subject for contemporary art—as well as provokes reflection on how the ideas and values represented in the traditional arts can challenge and reinvigorate our perceptions of contemporary art and life.

D. Y. BEGAY begins her statement about her artwork with: “D. Y. Begay is a Navajo born to Totsohnii, the Big Water people, and born for Tachii’ nii, the Red Streak Earth people. Begay is a fourth generation weaver; her unique weaving has been handed down through generations.” Everything in her weavings is natural and naturally dyed. Her work is foremost an expression of community, a continuity of generations and an on-going relationship with the land—which are an integral whole. She writes: “Weaving is not just a matter of sitting at a loom and weaving; it is not only about weaving techniques and rug designs. My weaving reflects who I am. It incorporates my beliefs, my family, and my community.” Jennifer McLerran, a curator at the Kennedy Museum of Art, further explains this relationship as “...the choices a Navajo weaver makes in her practice reveals how, in the act of weaving itself, the artist participates in the perpetuation of a particular ethic of being and a regard of her own and others’ proper place in the world. Her actions express and fulfill an individual responsibility to contribute to the continued order and vitality of her family, her culture, and her environment” (McLerran 2006:12).

Gabriella Possum NUNGURRAYI is a second generation Anmatyerr painter who depicts stories such as the Women Ceremonies, Bush Tucker (Black Seed and Exploding Seed from the Mt. Allan area), and Seven Sisters Dreamings. She honors her Australian Aboriginal tradition by painting interpretations of only those stories for which she is responsible. These stories are inseparable from her spiritual and community life and inseparable from the land. In her essay on the Australian artist Kathleen Petyarre who is also a member of the Anmatyerr people, Christine Nicholls notes: “These paintings offer an integrated spatial, environmental, economic, spiritual and ‘moral’ reading of the land, of Anmatyerr spatial history, if you like... Each work is accompanied by an elaborate and lengthy oral narrative, the retelling of which can take hours, and which custodians may sing, dance and paint. The paintings are visual, iconic metaphors for these longer narratives, which may be re-created via a variety of different art forms” (Nicholls and North 2001:10).

Claire Campbell PARK’s weavings are meditations on hope and resurrection inspired by the beauty of creation. She considers her work to be prayers of a universal nature that are to be shared with all people, yet are founded in her Christian faith. It is her intent that these weavings help us to be aware of the numinous in creation—the sacredness of life. This relationship of the creative process with prayer is eloquently

expressed by Thomas Merton in his reflections about the Shakers, who were an American monastic sect (men and women) of Christianity which is now disbanded: "One feels that for the Shaker craftsmen, love of God and love of truth in one's own work came to the same thing, and that work itself was a prayer, a communion with the inmost spiritual reality of things and so with God, not as if the 'spirit' of the thing were something distinct from the thing itself, but in a full realization that everything that is, is in a certain sense 'spirit,' since 'spirit,' 'form,' and 'actualization' are all one and the same" (Merton 2003:81).

Park has had the good fortune to lecture in many art schools, both in the United States and abroad. She is dismayed that the prevailing view, which considers it to be of the utmost importance for artists to "fit in" to the current critical context, is so often unquestionably adopted. The scholar, curator, and advocate for Japanese folk art, Soetsu Yanagi writes, "... art movements tend to the pursuit of novelty, but the true essence of beauty can exist only where the distinction between the old and the new has been eliminated" (Yanagi 1972:131). "Beauty is essentially a matter of values" (Yanagi 1972:111). Park believes the artists in this exhibit and their communities, challenge us to strengthen the foundation of our creative integrity and hold on together to those values that are timeless.

All three artists believe in beauty. Beauty needn't be easy. Yanagi also writes, "The principle of the beauty of craft is no different from the law that rules the spirit underlying all things... A true example of craft is the same as a passage of holy scripture" (Yanagi 1972:215). D. T. Suzuki notes that some believe that "... all great works of art embody in them yugen whereby we attain a glimpse of things eternal in the world of constant changes..." (Suzuki 1970: 220). A document on Environment and Art in Catholic Worship states, "Admittedly difficult to define, the beautiful is related to the sense of the numinous, the holy" (Bishops 1977: 325). Gaining an understanding of beauty through the creative process, like conversion, is never ending; an endeavor for a lifetime.

The painter Mark Rothko once said, "The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them, and if you, as you say, are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point!" (Barnes 1989: 22) The paintings of Nungurrayi and the weavings of Begay and Park are saturated with color and pattern, yet dot by dot, thread by thread they are united in the desire to create art with reverence and dignity; to bring hope—faith—beauty—into a world where these are easily lost.

American Bishops "Environment and Art In Catholic Worship" 1977
Barnes, Susan J. "The Rothko Chapel: An Act of Faith" Houston, Texas, The Rothko Chapel 1989.
McLerran, Jennifer "Weaving is Life: from the Edwin L. & Ruth E. Kennedy Southwest Native American Collection" Athens, Ohio, Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University in association with Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2006.
Merton, Thomas "Seeking Paradise: The Spirit of the Shakers" Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2003.
Nicholls, Christine and North, Ian "Kathleen Petyarre: Genius of Place" Kent Town, South Australia, Wakefield Press, 2001.
Suzuki, Daisetz T. "Zen and Japanese Culture" Princeton University Press, 1970.
Yanagi, Soetsu "The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight Into Beauty Tokyo" New York, London: Kodansha International, 1972.

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