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Doug Chambers also made use of the existential possibilities of paint, its multiple material states and textures, in relation to the mythic possibilities of the imagination. Chambers, however, followed Picasso in the use of imagery, often images related closely to that of the ancient world. Indeed his figurative works often recall Picasso's work of the 1940s and 1950s. The unavoidable presence of the paint as a substance lends his images an energy and authenticity that could not be attained in any other way.

In his imposing triptych *Unfinished Business: The Life* (1991), a crowd of large figures crams the central panel, while to left and right totemic animals appear in conjunction with mythic figures. The right-hand panel contains a reclining nude and above it what appears to be a bull, an allusion at least to the Rape of Europa, a legend which features Jupiter in one of his many disguises which was painted by several great figures from the history of European painting. Chambers' use of several layers of semi-opaque paint in the body of the image and any number of contrasting outlines produces a dense image that fills the picture as if it were carved in rock.

Chambers' painting *Desert Animal* (1985), gives a less cluttered impression of his technique. The form of the animal is scraped out of the chaos of a pink-encrusted background in heavy white paint. The palette knife-marks leave the impression that the animal's life is closely conditioned by the unfruitful emptiness around it. In the desert all life must be sparse, barely separate from the inanimate rocks on which it is required to exist. *Desert Animal* also offers the opportunity to study Chambers' magnificent informal drawing, which simultaneously reveals the form of flesh and the bone beneath.

The Collection also owns Chambers' *Windows* (1976), originally purchased by Claremont College in that year. It is a combination oil and...
acrylic with some collage set into a series of small vertical rectangles arranged in a loose grid of pastel colours which have apparently been made using spraypaint and a mask or template. This results in an effect akin to light flooding into a room bringing with it a variety of images, or perhaps mere reminiscences of the world beyond. Chambers plainly had in mind the series of window paintings, *Simultaneous Windows and Windows Open Simultaneously* (1912), made by the Parisian Orphist Robert Delaunay in which the idea of light moving through open windows slowly replaces any specific content or imagery.

The Collection holds works by other senior artists whose origins were in the UK. Taken as a whole they suggest that the presence of British concerns at the centre of contemporary art in Western Australia has continued long beyond the post-war generation.

A triptych by Carole Rudyard (b. 1922), *Cantata Chiesa* (1973), was made at the time when she was profoundly engaged with Colour Field and optical painting. As with Chambers, Rudyard was dedicated to painterly experiment of all kinds; for instance she experimented with poured paint in the manner of the American Helen Frankenthaler. In *Cantata Chiesa*, however, she works with a flat field over which there is a
'dog tooth' pattern which carries modulations in blue and reddish pink between the three canvases. As with most of Rudyard's work from this time, it is an attempt to make paint into light by using painting as a form of alchemy or marvel.

Trevor Vickers (b. 1943), is also connected to the UK, but unlike Rudyard, who has been resident in Perth since 1956, Vickers was born in Adelaide, lived in Perth and Melbourne, then moved to Brighton in the UK in 1978. He returned to Australia in 2000 having absorbed much of the current British attitude to painting, which was concerned with extending the formal possibilities of larger canvases. His Crucible (2001/2002), was bought directly from a recent exhibition. It is an informal variant of Vickers' long-term concern with overlapping interrelated rectangles, both empty and filled. In this case, however, the rectangles are empty boundaries alternately in scarlet and crimson. They bulge and contract in response, or so it appears, to some external pressure, perhaps the heat and motion of the field of bright yellow gestures at the base of which they sit. The whole composition is cradled in a midnight-blue background. Plainly, since this is a crucible, the rectangles are analogues for flames. As with all the painters discussed so far in this chapter, Vickers' work is concerned with the relationship between the formal resources available to the painter, and aspects of the external world and life experience.

If not solely British, this is a profoundly European approach to painting, as Galliano Fardin's Playground #1 (1990) shows. Fardin was born in Italy in 1948, but studied art after his arrival in Australia in 1972. Playground refers to Fardin's playground, the shores of Lake Clifton and its endless interplay of living and dying flora, birds, and other aquatic creatures. In 2001 he recalled:
Playground #1 was created at a time when I was completing the construction of my studio/home at Lake Clifton. As the building effort was nearing completion, I started a series of works which were inspired by the Lake Clifton environment and by my own personal concerns. It was a period of enthusiasm and endeavour.3

Playground #1 references the horizontals of the reeds round the lake in separate sections of dense vertical strokes of rich oils: indian reds and pinks to the left, ochres and whitish-grey straw colours to the right. Beneath them to the left the rich blue-greys of the lake are invoked by horizontal strokes. To the right is a darker vertical reflection of the ochre stems above. Across the whole image Fardin has drawn sections of electricity pylons that float above the landscape. Pure indian brown and grey horizontal lines interlink them. This is the kind of playground in which decay in nature takes the key role in liberating the painter. Fardin appears to have worked the whole image ‘in the wet’ which gives the impression that every mark has emerged as part of some natural process. Another painting from the same year, Echo (1990), emphasises process even more by incorporating a painted grid of light and dark strokes in the field of natural colour.

Directions and Choices (1997–1999), takes the use of a system of squared-off light and strokes of specific colours much further. Two rectangles nested one inside the other, the first of darkish blue-brown and the central one of silverish yellow-green seem to float beneath pristine blue surface evoked by an immaculately painted array of vertical rectangles in almost every possible shade of blue. It is not surprising that this work was two years in the making. Fardin commented that his work was also a product of his engagement with Lake Clifton, but that he has also attempted to incorporate a more general experience of sites within the Western Australian landscape.

In 2003, in the context of an exhibition in New South Wales, Fardin stated that his art concerned:

Breakdown, decay, transformation, weathering and most of all the passing of time. All these aspects are part of the ongoing exploration of painting as a metaphor for life, decay and renewal.

The compost heap is as important as an organised filing cabinet.

That is what this group of paintings is about—which is a continuation of what I have been doing—what keeps me going.4
Galliano Fardin, *Playground #1* (1990); *Directions and Choices #5* (1995-97)
The work of Adelaide artist and architect John Dallwitz (b. 1941) is more typical of the native Australian approach to what has become known as epic painting. His *Angulate Orange* (1969), consists of a series of rectangles and L-shaped units fitted within a large, almost square canvas. The formal pleasures to be found in this balance of colours and shapes go back to Malevich. Painting has become a design game, a cerebral architecture, lacking the organic engagement of Blanchflower or Fardin.

Epic painting has its origins in the New York School and in developments in the UK in the early 1960s. It first became widely understood and accepted in Australia at the time of the Field Exhibition in Melbourne in 1968, summarised in the terms hard-edge and Colour Field. Work in the Collection by Sydney Ball and Tony McGillick reviewed earlier also embodies that approach.

The Collection does contain work by one native Western Australian who has had a long engagement with large scale painting. Jeremy Kirwan-Ward (b. 1949) has been painting the surface of the sea for over thirty years. His *Sea Skin* (1976) is a relatively small study of a square of sea in bright blue and saturated light and dark green patches created by the rise and fall of the swell. Kirwan-Ward uses the precise interval of tone and colour between each set of patches that will suggest the reflection from and passage of light through water so as to indicate not only its depth but also the time of day and the mood of the ocean.

Kirwan-Ward’s more recent and far larger work, *Tide #2* (2002), shows the reflection of a low sun in grey-green water. One assumes that the limpid orange streak across the canvas refers to a sunset because of the evening calm and the turn of the tide. Also Kirwan-Ward has always worked close to the west coast, the land of sunsets over the Indian Ocean. In this magnificently conceived painting all the compositional requirements have been met by carefully balancing the shape and area of each orange ripple and the graded intensity of the colour at its highest point. It is almost two-and-a-half metres wide so the viewer’s gaze is lost in the vast scale of the ocean.

The large scale paintings in the University Collection, such as those discussed here are all what might be referred to as ‘epic’ paintings. They all deal with notions of expansive space that require a large physical area to be properly explored in paint. There are several reasons for this. The relative scale of a painting in relation to the size of the viewer has a powerful effect on the way in which the work is seen. The viewer can always ‘step into’ or ‘explore’ large works. Large scale permits the free use of human gesture. It can also incorporate a series of ‘incidents’ within the overall work. Finally, large scale painting can act as a surrogate landscape or even, as in the case of Brian Blanchflower, a stand-in for infinity.
Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *Untitled* (nd)
The wide acceptance of epic painting appears to be an important precursor for the rapid growth in the popularity of Aboriginal painting. Unfortunately, formal criticism and analysis of Aboriginal painting appears to be a way of avoiding its substantive content, so as to appropriate the work for the art market. Nonetheless, in a discussion of an art collection it seems important to present Aboriginal artwork in the same context as the Collection as a whole.

It was the acceptance of epic abstract painting that opened up the art market for Aboriginal artwork. Traditional Aboriginal artwork was either ephemeral or functional. Particular images and designs and the 'stories' that they told were owned by specific groups or individuals. Some images were secret or sacred, other designs were to be seen only by men or women; many, in particular rock paintings, could not be moved. Once it became possible for the themes and images of traditional Aboriginal artwork and stories to be worked in acrylic paint on canvas or panel and hung on a wall in the manner of western epic painting, Aboriginal art became widely accessible and accepted. It should be made clear that Aboriginal paintings in traditional forms are made, for the most part, with canvas or other support laid horizontally on the ground. There are some recognisably Aboriginal landscape paintings, using traditional symbols, made on much smaller masonite panels in the 1950s, but they and traditional bark painting and other artefacts had remained, in the main, of interest only to specialist collectors and anthropologists.

Only after the work of an art teacher, Geoff Bardon, in 1971, at Papunya, a settlement set up in 1959 on the eastern fringes of the Western Desert for Warlpiri, Luritja, Anmatyerre and Pintupi Aborigines, was it possible for their work to enter the Australian art market primarily as art. In 1971, a school project to paint a mural was taken over by older men who completed it in the style of traditional rock painting. The 'subject' of the finished painting was the Honey Ant Dreaming, the story for which Papunya had been named. The men then began to paint on any available support, including plywood and lino. Bardon encouraged them to use traditional symbols and dreamings. In the year between July 1971 and August 1972 they produced over 620 paintings which were sold through the Stuart Art Centre at Alice Springs. By the 1980s Papunya painting was widely known and it had appeared in exhibitions throughout the world.

The national and international reception of Indigenous art raised several issues which remain unresolved. There is, primarily, the insuperable question of what has been called the specificity of Aboriginal art, its reference to a specific piece of land and or a unique Dreaming, the vast majority of non-indigenous Australians remain unable or unwilling to deal with this specificity. Then there is the requirement of the art market that a painting must be the authentic work of a specific artist, rather than the product of several artists who own its design and story and have the right to paint it. Finally there is the question of aesthetics and the radically different criteria that Indigenous artists apply to their work. None of these issues have proved insoluble to the art market or to collectors. Aboriginal art is now widely displayed in public collections alongside other aspects of contemporary Australian art and accepted as part of a common aesthetic experience. One might argue, however, that this is at the price of a permanently sustained contradiction.

From the 1980s, schools of painting related to traditional Indigenous forms developed rapidly at settlements throughout Australia. Often, Aboriginal painters first made craft objects for local galleries and gift shops then took up painting. Simultaneously urban Aboriginal artists appeared in all Australian capitals. Their work dealt with the problems and paradoxes of contemporary Aboriginal life.\(^5\)

Whilst Aboriginal painting may lay claim to a pre-history of many thousands of years, in practical terms it has been a significant aspect of Australian contemporary art for less than three decades, or just about the length of time that the University Collection has existed in its own right.

The Collection was fortunate in being able to acquire a number of works by highly significant contemporary Aboriginal artists, often through private donations. In particular, it owns work by three artists who typify, between them, the current predominant position of Aboriginal painting in the context of Australian contemporary art as a whole.

They are Emily Kame Kngwarreye (c.1910-1996), Rover Thomas (1926-1998), and Julie Dowling (b.1969). The recent exhibition of Kngwarreye's work in Japan, Utopia: the Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye (2008), was the largest exhibition of work by an Australian artist to travel overseas. In 1990, Rover Thomas and the urban Aboriginal artist Trevor Nickolls (b.1949), whose work is also in the Collection, were the first Aboriginal artists to represent Australia in the Venice Biennale, the most prestigious international exhibition of contemporary art. Julie Dowling has been declared one of Australia's most collectible artists; her work has been shown in London, Paris and Washington DC, as well as at the National Museum of Australia and many other prestigious Australian public galleries.

The achievements of these artists have much in common. Most importantly all of them achieved great fame and prestige in a relatively short time; Kngwarreye made over 3000 paintings in her seven year career. Moreover, these artists have all been acclaimed in the widest possible context of Australian and international contemporary art.

There is one work by Kngwarreye in the Collection, a medium-sized, undated, untitled diptych, acrylic on canvas. It is typical of the open free approach to brushwork that Kngwarreye used throughout her career. The presentation of the work as a diptych does not have the significance it would have in work of European origins. Kngwarreye probably used
two convenient pieces of material to continue the energetic painterly theme, the rhythm of her work. This consists of a surface filled with clusters of white dots made by twisting a vertical brush filled with white paint mixed with dark ochre into a semi-dry background so as to produce an extraordinary effect of blooming as the brush picks up the underpainting.

If there is a dreaming, symbol or a particular piece of land linked to this work it has not been recorded. In any case Kngwarreye herself took the view that each of her paintings included everything, "the whole lot," as she said when she was asked about her land and dreamings in relation to her art. In 1977 Kngwarreye was one of a group of artists at Utopia who learned batik and other art and craft techniques. Her colleagues made jokes about the breadth of her batik style. It was only in 1987, when an arts coordinator gave the group acrylics and canvas to work with over the summer break of 1988-1989, that she began painting. Kngwarreye's first painting appeared on the cover of the catalogue of the exhibition of the resulting work when it was exhibited in Sydney in May 1989. In 1990, her work featured in an exhibition of works from a larger project sponsored by the Holmes à Court Foundation at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art.

Initially her paintings showed discrete dots, but by the second year of her career she had begun to mass them, so as to cover an entire area of the canvas. Some of those who witnessed her painting have described her movements as akin to traditional women's dancing. Her later linear paintings, many of them derived from traditional body markings, suggest that her sense of the all-inclusive nature of painting was closely related to her body movements and as therefore akin to the same experience that New York abstract expressionists looked for in their painting.6

Although Kngwarreye was irritated by the persistent inadequate and inaccurate interpretations of her work, relatively little information was made available about the context of her work during her lifetime. In the case of Rover Thomas, on the other hand, his complex cultural history was relatively familiar from the time that his work first appeared in the art market.

Thomas was a stockman for many years, but in 1968, like many others, he was sacked as a result of legislation that intended to give all pastoral workers equal pay. He brought his family to Turkey Creek, otherwise known as Warmun, in the Kimberleys in 1975. In later years he became an active supporter of the Waringarri Arts Organisation in Warmun.7

In 1974, around Christmas time, one of his relatives was fatally injured in a crash on a flooded road near Warmun. She died during a flight to Perth as the plane was over a whirlpool off Derby that is associated with the Rainbow Serpent, a central figure in Aboriginal culture. In 1975 the spirit of the dead woman 'gave' him a Corroboree (dance) cycle known as the Krill Krill. This is structured around short verses that narrate the journey of the woman's spirit back across country to Warmun where the accident occurred and then north to Kununurra and onwards with a companion, at which point she witnessed the destruction of Darwin by Cyclone Tracy.

Thomas' uncle, Paddy Jaminji first painted the cycle on boards, each one of which bore a single figure relating to an episode in the Krill Krill that had been given to Thomas in a dream. The dancers in the corroboree bore one board on their shoulders. The corroboree became popular. Thomas took it 'on tour' across the north. In 1983 it was performed before a non-Aboriginal audience for the first time at the Festival of Perth.

The Krill Krill corroboree gave Thomas the authority to adopt the 'Gija' style of his adopted country, with its tendency to figurative elements influenced by regional rock art and ceremonial body-paint designs. In addition, his
‘displacement’ from his original country may have prompted his unique synthetic attitude to his painting which ranged widely, far beyond his immediate country. In later years when he was asked about the location of his best known image, the crossroads, he said that it could be, “anywhere—Tokyo, America or the East Kimberley.”

Thomas first painted on boards sometime in the early 1980s. Soon afterwards he began working on canvas. His range of subject matter extended rapidly as the popularity of his works grew. It included local Dreamings, significant local memories such as the massacres of Aboriginal people in the Eastern Kimberleys between the 1880s and 1920s, in particular the atrocious Bedford Downs massacre of 1924, and relatively contemporary events such as Cyclone Tracy. Occasionally, Thomas even incorporated reference to immediate contemporary experience such as road signs in his images. Whatever the subject matter or reference of this work, it was always ‘carried’ by his unique style of landscape painting focussed on the forms and colours of the Kimberley Region.

The Collection owns two of his earlier paintings, an untitled work made in 1984 and painted in dark ochres mixed with bush gum, and a second work, Rock Country on Texas Downs, painted in bush gum and ochre on canvas in 1988, by which time he was associated with the Waringarri Aboriginal Arts association who marketed his work.

The forms of the earlier work are related to the ceremonial boards, but no particular Dreaming has been recorded for this work. Thomas worked for nine years, until 1972, on the Texas Downs station in the Kimberleys. A number of his paintings concern incidents which occurred there, including a well-remembered massacre of Aboriginal people.

This work, however, is a simple painting of country. It comes with no particular Dreaming attached to it. It has a crossroads motif, but there are a multiple number of trails involved, only some of which come together at the centre of the work. The fields of ochre in the four quarters of the canvas are delightfully modulated in their depth of hue and in the irregular texture left by the artist’s brush. Most of the painting is in a rich red ochre, but parts of the right-hand side of the canvas are stained with a golden-yellow pigment. The process of staining or soaking colour into the support is vital to the unique impact of Thomas’ work. He carefully modulates each shape by overpainting or staining some of the dots which border each trail, to suggest different qualities to different patches of this rocky country. The irregular boundaries of each area are not mere decorative form. Their uneven ribbon-like forms are caused by the way in which these lines fit the country which the artist is recalling.

The Collection also owns a number of prints designed by Rover Thomas and printed by various craftsmen printers and publishing houses, including Crossroads (1997). This shows a diagonal crossroads in white and a wide range of greys. It is an accurate transcription of the painterly strategies that Thomas used in Rock Country on Texas Downs. There are multiple lines of dots marking the roads, some of them occluded by warm or cold greys.

Julie Dowling, and her identical twin sister Carole, were born in Subiaco, Perth, in 1969. Light-skinned, Dowling identifies herself as both Aboriginal and white Australian and is very aware of her own tribal affiliations and her Aboriginal family. In 1989 she graduated with a diploma in Fine Art from Claremont School of Art. In 1992 she was the first Aboriginal student to graduate with a degree in Fine Art from Curtin University, which gave her a thorough technical and theoretical grounding in conventional western art. Throughout her career she has worked within the boundaries between traditional western representational art and the broadest possible references to Aboriginal tradition and contemporary Aboriginal painting.
The Collection owns nine of her works, including her self-portrait painting *Insider: Yellow Fella* (1996). It shows her face painted as if she were a black person surrounded by yellow and blue dots on an ochre-coloured background. On her collar is the inscription “not white nor black.” Her torso is built up from further elegant interpretations of dot painting, perhaps directly informed by the work of Emily Kngwarreye. It takes on the look of a Catholic liturgical garment. Indeed, embedded within it is the blood-red outline of a heart and a Christian cross, both Catholic symbols. The territory between white and black is also presented as a problematic synthesis of two religions and cultures, two ways of living, that urban Aboriginal people are all required to reconcile in their day-to-day lives.

The cross also acts as a plus sign in the inscription “Yamatji + Wudjula” which is written over the Aboriginal painting on the torso in the manner of a piece of graffiti. Yamatji is her tribal affiliation while Wudjula refers to non-Aboriginal Australians. In 2001, Dowling commented that:

Yellow Fella is about how my family used to see me. Yellow fella is a term used to describe someone who is not black (Aboriginal) and not completely white. They are both in between two cultures and two bloodlines. I wanted to honour myself in spite of the derogatory name I am sometimes called. Yellow fella is also given to people who have no culture. They are lost. But I know I’m not.

For some years Dowling has had a successful career as an artist exhibiting regularly in commercial galleries in her own right. Her exhibitions always deal with one or more episodes in the relationship between black and white history, usually presented in conventional figure painting. The Collection has several works which represent this.
In Silver Jubilee at the Leper Colony—Pt. Hedland (1994), for instance, Dowling has used a photographic record of a white institution founded by a white religion to serve Aboriginal people, juxtaposed it with some references to the technique of contemporary Aboriginal painting, and inscribed an Aboriginal painting symbol for a meeting across the top of the board. Contradictory costumes and ceremonies can frequently be found in her work. By contrast, Going Home: Long Shadow (2002), uses a different kind of contradiction between the exaggerated rhetoric of a golden red western sunset over an extreme perspective of the seashore, and the Aboriginal mother and daughter headed for their home territory.

In her text for Julie Dowling’s 2006 exhibition in Melbourne, which concerned, amongst other things, the unrecognised resistance to European conquest, Carole Dowling wrote:

We reach across the generations, trying to understand what had happened to our people, feeling what we have in common with them and where we differ, so that we can see who we are and see what we might become. We need particular freedoms. These include the freedom to navigate the dynamics, the positioning and the trajectory of resistance.

Many of us ‘dispossessed mob’ are still negotiating our rights to sovereignty with those in power. We see the dominant cultural majority disregard our oral histories as ‘anecdotal evidence’. This is the luxury of the coloniser. Our version of history is unimportant to the ‘history wars’ debate. It is the insecurity, uncertainty and doubt about the foundations of our nation that consume them. It is about who can belong in this land. It is also about the insecurity they feel in their relationship between themselves...
and us as Indigenous people. There is doubt about who ‘we’ are as Australians together. By giving a face to resistance fighters, scouts/guides, and first contact engagements with early colonisers, Julie makes a statement about current issues and engagements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. By negotiating resistance and the nature of dispossession, we can all see in Julie’s work the alternative to a singular version of history.9

For all the support that Julie Dowling has received from collectors and the art market it is not yet sufficiently appreciated that at its heart her painting is an attempt to recover a true history for all Australians.

Another urban Aboriginal artist, Trevor Nickolls (b.1949), took perhaps a more forceful view of white-black relations. In 1990, however, he wrote:

My paintings are to share with everyone. I look to bridge the gap between Western and Aboriginal art. My work is a balancing act, like walking a tightrope between my dreams and my life when I’m awake.10

The Collection owns an untitled example of his work made in 1990, just before his work was shown with that of Rover Thomas in Venice. It shows an anguished suburban backyard depicted in a contemporary Aboriginal technique. The roof of the small-scale anthropomorphic building is rent by rocket-shaped flames, bearing letters “AUST”, incorporating a pylon and Christian cross. All are emblems of forces which have oppressed Aboriginal culture. A black dog arches its back in fear. The serpentine creature growing from the loins of the reclining figure at the centre of the picture is as much an emblem of suburban impotence as of incoherent desire.

Not all Aboriginal artists who engaged with the broad Australian art market were able to achieve the extraordinary prominence of the
recent generations. The Collection holds several works by such artists, including a folio of sixty-four drawings by Butcher Joe Nangan (c.1902-1989) who was born at Fisherman's Bend, Broome, and received his nickname when he was employed in the Beagle Bay butcher shop in the 1930s.

As with Rover Thomas, he was the owner/creator of a dance, the marinji—jinji nulla, depicting the benevolent appearance of the spirits of the dead which was taught to him by a spirit familiar, the Pelican Being Mayata which he had received from the spirit of his dead aunt. He last performed the dance in 1985. From the 1950s he produced pictures of flora and fauna, spirit beings, and ancestral and historical events in pencil and watercolour. These works, in his distinctive, naturalistic style, illustrated his remarkable knowledge of the complex narratives of his home region. For fifteen years in his later life he worked with Mary Macha who later also worked with Rover Thomas. He produced over 500 drawings during that period.

The second drawing of the Collection's series, Gabudardi ('Waterloo Swamp Bird'; nd) shows a man and his young daughter surrounded by birds. A note explains:

The little girl is also a Gabudardi. Sometimes you think you can see one running in the swamp. The old man is her father. He saw her running and knew a little girl would be born.11

Every aspect of Nangan's work is always remarkably animated. He saw the world as an unashamed animist would, filled with spirits and stories. Unfortunately, at the time his carved eggs and other souvenir items were regarded as more 'authentic'.

In the early 1990s the public were made aware of an extraordinary original artistic development that had taken place at the Carrolup Native Settlement school at Marribank in the South West of Western Australia. The school had reopened in 1948, and was finally closed in 1951. It became home to a number of what later became known as the Stolen Generation. Several teachers in the school recognised the artistic abilities of the children and encouraged them to draw and paint. They developed a colourful landscape style which depicted the once heavily wooded South West country with only a few dark trees standing.

The Collection owns a work by Cliff Ryder (c.1920–), Kangaroo in the Landscape (c. 1948). It is typical of Carrolup with its dominant bright yellows and red sunset behind a carefully patterned lacework of trees. The lone kangaroo, broken branches and stumps in the foreground all suggest the decline and destruction of Nyungar life. These paintings were displayed and reproduced across the world but public attention faded after the school was closed. Nonetheless, Ryder and other artists continued to work. Carrolup painting has been described as nostalgic, as it represents the final decline and disappearance of the Nyungar culture of the South West. In fact it supplied inspiration to many contemporary Nyungar artists.
Until recently the most familiar style of Aboriginal painting influenced by European painting conventions and techniques was that pioneered by Western Arrernte man Albert Namatjira (1902-1959), who first painted watercolours in the district around Hermannsberg, a mission near Alice Springs, in 1935. He worked in what appeared to be a highly stylised version of European conventions. In fact it is now realised that the subjects of most of his paintings were sacred or culturally significant in other ways. Namatjira was painting his country. His attitude to his work was also traditional in that he taught and encouraged relatives, such as Walter Ebatarinja. Namatjira might do the hills and the gum trees and, under supervision, Ebatarinja would finish the background. Namatjira would sign the painting, thereby giving a 'gift' to Ebatarinja of his teaching, and the finished work his imprimatur. This was offered as the dutiful and generous response to kinship obligations towards Walter's father. It also allowed relatives to work with him on the same painting. He would also sign their work himself, to indicate his approval and that he had given them permission to work in his manner.12

The Collection holds a watercolour of Simpson’s Gap, Evening (nd) attributed to Walter Ebatarinja (1915-1969). Simpson’s Gap is a well-known site, one of the natural gaps in the MacDonnell Ranges, twenty three kilometres from Alice Springs. It is now a popular tourist spot, but is also the location of an ancient Aboriginal waterhole. The painting was originally part of the Claremont Teachers’ College collection but was lost for a while and later recovered from the Education Department along with a work by Hans Heysen. It is typical of the style of the Arrernte school of artists, with a high and deliberately distanced viewpoint, clearly separated hard-edged washes and precisely demarked tonal relations.
Walter Ebatarinja, *Simpson's Gap, Evening* (nd)
The remarkable prominence achieved by contemporary Aboriginal painters in the last two decades has also allowed practitioners of more traditional forms to achieve individual cultural identities. David Milaybuma (c.1938--) is one such. His traditional bark paintings, usually of animals, incorporating various marks of tribal or totemic affiliation in their design, are very popular. The Collection holds his *Barramundi* (nd), a well-observed image of the fish which is believed to have been introduced to rivers and fresh water lakes in western Arnhemland by the Rainbow Serpent and the giant Luma Luma. In the Dreamtime they roamed together over western Arnhemland, teaching law and ceremony to the people living there. Surprised that there were no fish available, they returned to the salt water of the Arafura Sea and caught barramundi, mackerel and saratoga with which they stocked the inland waters.

Sacred Barramundi Dreaming sites exist throughout the area, where Barramundi are said to have been metamorphosed into stone. One in the East Alligator River separates Arnhemland from Kakadu. Another emerges from an inland river at low tide. Originally this Barramundi was a man who fought a bitter duel with a 'devil' man, and both men were so badly injured that the devil turned into a tall palm tree on the hill where they fought, and the other became a large stone after he rolled down the hill and into the river.

The more traditional artists of Arnhemland benefited especially from the wider interest in Aboriginal paintings. Marawili Marriwa's bark painting *Story of Dugong* (1976), was originally acquired by the Graylands College collection in 1976. It has a straightforward story.

Dinbul (crocodile) started a fire he could not control. He retreated to the sea & decided to stay there. He found Dugong there. A giant Stingray attacked him and the two fought, Dinbul finally surrendering.¹³
Mara w ili Marrira,
Story of Dugong (1976)