

UCSD's Grove Gallery to show contemporary Australian Aboriginal art

January 23, 1990

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UCSD'S GROVE GALLERY TO SHOW AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL ART

Contemporary Australian Aboriginal art will be on view at the University of California, San Diego Grove Gallery, from Feb. 15 through March 17, in a show titled "Dream Time." The art works will include bark baskets, bark paintings, contemporary paintings on canvas and objects made of found pieces from Australia's outback region.

There will be an opening reception at the gallery from 6-8 p.m. on Feb. 16. The public is invited.

Anthony Wallis, director of Aboriginal Arts Australia, has said that there is a tremendous surge of interest in the work being produced by contemporary Australian Aboriginal artists using modern materials. The organization, which is responsible for the international marketing of Aboriginal art, has witnessed an increase in national and international sales from \$300,000 to more than \$3 million in the last five-years.

The so-called Aboriginal "dot" paintings are done on canvas with modern brushes and paints. They contain knowledge of the Aborigines and their areas, which are whole sections of desert belonging to various clans and groups. Some paintings may be viewed as maps or indications of what the campsite looks like; others may depict plant growth or a particular kind of food found in that region. The paintings contain a private, symbolic language that is understood by members of the same clan.

Bark paintings have been made for hundreds of years and are used in various ceremonies. They have their roots in the symbols used in ceremonial body painting. Ochre, a clay-like substance, is still used for painting both bodies and bark. The bark is taken from regional trees, such as the Mulga or Red Gum.

Also featured will be several examples of wooden dishes called "coolamon." Some of the dishes are fashioned up to two and three feet long, carved into troughs, and used for winnowing seed or perhaps for holding a baby. The bowls are carried from campsite to campsite, and are used to hold indigenous foods such as witchety grubs, insects and seeds.

Bark baskets, "tungas," are made on the Arnhem Land Reserve, thousands of miles north of the desert, on the Gulf of Carpentaria. Another kind of bark basket is made by a group of Aborigines who live on an island 50 miles offshore Northern Australia, between the Timor and the Aurafura seas.

These baskets, Willis says, are simple and contain their own design language of dots and crosses, "different than the design language of the desert."

The exhibition will also include videos (some with subtitles) showing the Aborigines creating their crafts and paintings.

The Grove Gallery is open from Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. Please use the information pavilion at UCSD's Gilman Drive entrance for directions to the gallery and to purchase parking permits.

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