JACK BRITTEN

Age: b.1921-2002

Subsection Skin: Yalarrji

Language: Gija

Born: Alice Downs

Biography

Jack Britten was born at Tickelara in the east Kimberley in 1921. He was a senior Gija lawman.

As a boy he was taken to work as a stockman and later as a road worker. In 1982 he moved to Frog Hollow, south of Warmun Community, to help establish the Worranginy Outstation.

Jack's painting focused on his country, its origins, its ceremonies and ancestral figures.

Britten began painting early in life. His grandparents taught him to paint using traditional methods and materials.

Distinctive features of his earlier paintings include the use of garliwan (bloodwood gum), spinifex sap and kangaroo blood as binders for ochres.

Britten depicted his Dreamings with a lateral landscape perspective and gentle clusters of dome-shaped ranges representing Purnululu. He was known for his exploration of the landscape with rough textures and bold designs.

The distinctive dotting, which outlines and is embodied in the landscape forms, describes the country and evokes the presence of ancestors and ceremonies.

Britten passed away in 2002.

Medium

Natural ochre on canvas

Themes

Bedford Downs Station country

Purnululu, limestone hills and jump ups

Country near the headwaters of the Ord River

Woorreranginy (Frog Hollow) area

Traditional Gija Ngarrangkarni (Dreaming) stories

Ribbon stone country near Kununurra

Station life

Corroborees for Han Spring & Jarlalun country

Body designs painted during ceremony

Group Exhibitions

2002 'Hector Jandany & Jack Britten', Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, Vic

2002 Thornquest Gallery, Gold Coast, Qld

2002 Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Vic

2002 Framed Gallery, Darwin, NT

2002 'Easter Show', Bett Gallery, Hobart, Tas

2002 Munumburra: Old men of Warmun', Artplace, Perth, WA

2002 ‘Warmun Group Show', Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, SA

2001 'Beyond Wings', Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, SA

2001 'Ochres', Short St. Gallery, Broome, WA

1999 'Images in Ochre', Cooee Gallery, Sydney, NSW

1998 'Creating Australia: 200 years of Art 1788-1988', touring show for the International Cultural Cooperation of Australia.

1998 'A Thousand Journeys' travelling exhibition, 1998-99

1997 ‘Imaging the Land', National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic

1996 'The Thirteenth National Aboriginal Art Award Exhibition', Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT

1994 'Power of the Land: Masterpieces of Aboriginal Art', National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic

1994 'Australian Heritage Commission National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award Exhibition', Old Parliament House, Canberra, ACT

1993 'Images of Power: Aboriginal Art of the Kimberley', National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic

1992 Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Vic

1992 Broome Fringe Festival, Broome, WA

1992 ‘The Ninth National Aboriginal Art Award Exhibition', Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT

1992 'Crossroads: Towards a New Reality - Aboriginal Art from Australia', National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto & Tokyo, Japan

1991 The Eighth National Aboriginal Art Award Exhibition', Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin

1991 Lindsay Street Gallery, Darwin, NT

1991 Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, NSW

1991 VM Gallery, Miami, Florida, USA

1990 Dreamtime Gallery, Perth, WA

1990 'Balance 1990', Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Old

1990 Adelaide Biennial, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, SA

1990 The Seventh National Aboriginal Art Award Exhibition', Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT

1989 ‘Turkey Creek Recent Works', Deutscher Brunswick Street Gallery, Melbourne, Vic

1988 'Aboriginal Art from the East Kimberley', New South Wales Craft Council Gallery, Sydney, NSW

1988 'ANCAAA & Boomalli, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, Sydney, NSW

1988 'Art of the East Kimberley, Birrukmarri Gallery, Perth, WA

1988 'Recent Aboriginal Paintings', Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, SA

1988 Innovative Aboriginal Art of WA', University of WA, Perth, WA

1988 Aboriginal Artists' Gallery, Sydney, NSW

1988 Aboriginal Arts Australia, Sydney, NSW

1987 'Aboriginal Art from the Kimberley', Goolarabooloo Gallery, Broome, WA

Collections

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, ACT

Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, NSW

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, WA

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, SA

Anthropological Museum, University of Western Australia, Perth, WA

Robert Holmes a Court Collection, Perth, WA

Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth, WA

Boomalli Aboriginal Art Cooperative, Sydney, NSW

Wim Wenders Collection, Sydney, NSW

Artbank

Gifu Museum, Seki City, Gifu Prefecture, Japan

Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT

The Kelton Foundation, Santa Monica, USA

Bibliography

1993 ‘Images of Power: Aboriginal Art of the Kimberley', Judith Ryan, National Gallery of Victoria