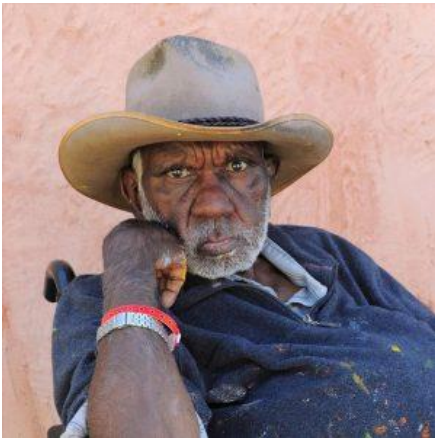


EVERYWHEN ART

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Billy Benn Perrurle



Date of birth: 1943-01-01

Birth place: Artetyerre

Language: Arrernte

Billy Benn Perrurle was born circa 1943 in Artetyerre (Harts Range) and passed away 15/10/2012. His two older sisters, Ally and Gladdy Kemerre, taught Bill how to paint on skin when he was a teenager, while living at Kurrajong/Urapuntja (Utopia). Bill also remembered the Chinese wife of a mica miner, Jane, showing him how to paint. Their father, Jimmy Kemerre, was also an artist, making more traditional artifacts, wooden sculptures, boomerangs and spears. Jimmy worked in the mica mines and also mined for gold out at Altunga, transporting people and mail from Alice Springs to Altunga by camel whilst working for a man, Simon Reef. Bill worked extensively in his country. He began working as a young boy, aged approximately 10, in the mica mines of Harts Range with Simon Reef's younger brother Norman. He recalled a lot of Italian people working there, and the large flagons of wine they carried with them, imported from Italy. He also recalled the lunches of spaghetti "Good food, those Italian people." Billy was not paid for his work, instead receiving tucker and clothes. Later he began pumping water for cattle, again being paid in flour, sugar and tea. He spent most of his working life in the North Eastern area of Central Australia, droving sheep and cattle for Pastoralists, Cameron Chalmers, Joe Mangel and Peter Hayes. It was whilst working with Chalmers that Bill grew up to be a man. He spoke in particular of a special trip, droving with his cousins from Arrkngenangerre (Mount Swan), where they drove a herd of cattle to deliver to Neutral Junction Station, East of Barrow Creek, also returning on horseback.

Since 1981, Billy worked at Bindi Inc, an organisation established to provide employment opportunities, support and advocacy for people with a disability in Alice Springs. During his time constructing metal boxes in the Brown Street workshop, he identified a space which became his corner to paint in. He began to visually map out his father's country via the painted image, using old boards discarded by the Alice Springs Timber Mill. Working as many outsider artists do, with second rate materials, on any surface that appealed, Billy painted using his fingers, cloth, glue and varnish. Despite the brilliant landscapes being created, they were only shown once prior to 2000 in an exhibition of artworks done by people with a disability in the 'Beyond Passions' exhibition in Alice Springs. All his work sold, and yet, the low profile of the exhibition, meant that his work had still not been viewed by the wider market. The Mwerre Anthurre Artist collective was founded around his talent in 2000.

It was many years before Billy was able to return to his homeland. Meanwhile he continued to paint primarily Harts Range, his father's country. His images were found from memory and feeling. By painting his land, Billy brought the country into himself. Only when he had painted every hill from his country, would he stop and

EVERYWHEN ART

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

return home. Bill's paintings cover a wide scope of style, born of his own lack of preciousness, his vivid imagination and colour, texture and material experimentation strategies, rather than the study of other painterly influences. One sees hints of Turner, Cezzane, Van Gogh and the Orientalists within his work, yet these were images never seen by Bill. We are reminded of these other great painters in the variations of light that he captures, rolling ranges painted in deep reds, reminding viewers of the raging seas Turner exposed. From the Central Australian context, they remind one of the great inland sea which once existed here. Yet Bill remarked only on Albert Namatjira being a great painter.

Bill's paintings communicate a well informed knowledge and relationship of the space that exists in this country. Belgian Art Historian, Georges Petitjean, was excited by Bill's breadth and continuance of horizon, never curving at the edges but continuing their travel overland and on into the distance.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2017 Billy Benn Perrurle: Walking His Country (6 - 24 Jun 2017), Alcaston Gallery, Fitzroy / Melbourne VIC Australia
- 2011 Billy Benn Perrurle Melbourne Show, 6-23 Dec 2011, Alcaston Gallery, in conjunction with Bindi Inc. Mwerre Anthurre Artists, Fitzroy/Melbourne VIC Australia
- 2003 Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne VIC Australia
- 2003 Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin NT Australia
- 2002 Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne VIC Australia
- 2002 Grant Pirrie Gallery, Sydney NSW Australia

Group Exhibitions

- 2014 The hills beyond Hermannsburg, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney NSW Australia
- 2013 New Works by Bindi Artists 2013: A Group Exhibition, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne VIC Australia
- 2011-2012 Good Strong Powerful (1 Oct 2011 - 15 Jan 2012) - exhibition featuring the works of 10 established and emerging Aboriginal artists from three Art Centres in the Northern Territory, Mwerre Anthurre from Alice Springs, Ngaruwanajirri Inc. from Bathurst Island and Julalikari Arts from Tennant Creek, National Gallery of Australia (NGA), Canberra ACT Australia
- 2011 Ways of Seeing, August 2011, Coe-ee Art Gallery Sydney NSW Australia
- 2010 Looking Back at Country - Retrospective Exhibition, Series 1, 8th May – 19th June 2010 - Martin Tjampitjinpa, Billy Benn Perrurle, Makinti Napanangka, Alcaston Gallery, Fitzroy VIC Australia
- 2010 Remembering Country, 18 May – 19 June 2010 (Group Exhibition), Alcaston Gallery & Bindi Inc, Mwerre Anthurre Artists, NT
- 2008 Land, Sea & the Universe at the Melbourne Art Fair 2008, Melbourne Exhibition Building, Carlton Gardens, Alcaston Gallery Melbourne VIC Australia - Billy Benn was one of four featured artists in Alcaston Gallery's thematic exhibition.
- 2008 Landscape Masters, 72 Erskine St, Sydney NSW Australia - featured landscapes from artists working at Bindi Inc. Mwerre Anthurre Artists including Billy Benn Perrurle, Billy Tjampitjinpa Kenda and Adrian Jangala Robertson.
- 2007 Visions of Utopia, December 2007, Coe-ee Art Gallery, Sydney NSW Australia
- 2007 Finalist in the 2007 Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award.
- 2006 Treasures from the Desert, January 2006, Alcaston Gallery, Fitzroy VIC Australia
- 2006 Land Marks, 9 February 06 – 11 July 06, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne VIC Australia
- 2004 Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin NT Australia
- 2004 Billy Benn Perrurle was included in the inaugural hang of the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia at Federation Square, Melbourne VIC

EVERYWHEN ART

everywhenart.com.au

EVERYWHEN ART

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

- 2004 'From Little Things Big Things Grow: Gather round people, I'll tell you a story.', National Gallery of Australia, Canberra ACT Australia
- 2004 Desert Mob, Araluen Precinct, Alice Springs NT Australia
- 2004 Big Country, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs NT Australia
- 2004 Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne VIC Australia
- 2004 Australian Culture Now, National Gallery of Victoria Australia
- 2000 Desert Mob Art Show, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs NT Australia

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne VIC Australia
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra ACT Australia
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney NSW Australia
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin NT Australia
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane QLD Australia

AWARDS

- 2007 Togart Contemporary Art Award July 2007 - Billy Benn Perrurle was selected as one of 28 finalists in the 2007 Togart Contemporary Art Award, Parliament House, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2006 The Alice Prize - Winner of the prestigious 34th Alice Prize Award - 2006