

Tjungu Warkarintja: Working Together

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Wai, palya.

My name is Milyika Carroll, I'm from Pukatja. I am the Director of Ananguku Arts. I work at Ernabella Arts and am on the board there. My grandfather's country is Uluru and Kata Tjuta, my father's country is around Amata and my mother's country is around Kanpi. My first language is Pitjantjatjara, from my mother, and my second is Yangkunyatjara, from my father. There is no word in either of these languages for subversive or for collaboration, but that is what this Adelaide Mob want me to talk to you about today. So you and I are going to have to be working together, like Darryl and the people on the mural project... *tjungu warkarintja*.

For people who don't know about art centres, we own our art centre. Ernabella Arts has a board of six people elected each year by the members, and an Anangu Mayatja. Anangu make all the governing decisions for the art centre and the staff work to the board. We have 2 full time staff, and 4 part time Anangu staff.

On the APY Lands, there are seven art centres. They are all Indigenous owned and run. Every day Anangu Tjuta go to work in their art centres. Ernabella Arts started in 1948 and the ceramic studio as it is now, opened in 2003. Next year we will celebrate 10 years of that studio.

In our art work, we put down *tjukurpa* – stories of law and culture. Most people have heard of the Seven Sisters Story, this is an important one for all Anangu. My story is *Minyma Kutjara* – Two Women. Anangu women know where those two women traveled, through Kata Tjuta and onwards. They know what their story is, and we pass this story down to our daughters and granddaughters. This is not a story for men. We cannot talk with them about this story, they cannot see or hear the inma for this story. And men have *tjukurpa* which women cannot know, or see or hear the inma for. This is important to us. This needs to be respected by other people. We are responsible for our country and our law. We don't want people to get sick from seeing or hearing something they shouldn't.

Anangu men and women make strong, beautiful work at the art centre. People can

see our pottery in Adelaide at the South Australian Museum, the Flinders City Art Gallery and the Jam Factory. This week we have been working at the JamFactory.

The first exhibition pottery from Ernabella was work made here in Adelaide, at the JamFactory. There was an exhibition titled *Tjungu Warkarintja*: Working Together, and that is what I would like to talk about – working together.

At Ernabella there is a primary and a high school, but no place to study art and get the technical skills you would get at an art school, TAFE or university. As everyone here knows, ceramics is a very technical and demanding medium. I have been working in ceramics for over ten years now. Last year my work, which was made at ANU in Canberra, was collected by the National Museum of Australia and the Art Gallery of South Australia. Greg Daly and Travis McFlynn made the pots which I worked on, and we worked together, but I could not say that we collaborated. They did not talk to me about my *tjukurpa*, or anything about how to put that story down. They could not do that, because they are men, and because they weren't born in the country of that story. But I talked to them about the kind of forms I

wanted to tell my story on. We had a good time working together and the exhibition at Strathnairn Arts was very successful. Everyone wants Travis and Greg to come to Ernabella. *Wati wiru!* (Good men).

In the early years of working with the JamFactory, they sent us forms, we painted them, they were sent back, and the Jam fired them. Then some of us came to Adelaide and we worked together here. We have now had our own pottery studio for nearly a decade, but we still work with the JamFactory and are there this weekend as part of the Triennale. There are good relationships and a history between Ernabella Arts and the Jam, and Ernabella Arts and ANU. But how I see us working together, is that these places are helping us realize our work in clay. They give Ernabella artists practical, technical help. They are very generous with their technical skills and knowledge. However, we are not collaborating with the people who are helping us realize our work, and that is understood by everyone. No-one tells us how or what to paint or draw – we put down *tjukurpa*. I can only collaborate on the telling of *Minyma Kutjara* with other Anangu women who own that story.

Collaboration is different from working together. Maybe collaboration is when people who are equals, work on an idea together from the beginning, and it is about everything to do with that art work – vision, creation and concept, material etc. The people involved are equal in all areas including input, contribution, direction and ownership of the artwork. They get the same credit, acknowledgement and payment, and potential ensuing kudos and renumeration.

For Anangu, one way to work collaboratively which makes sense is along family lines – the story being put down is a shared one, and this is a good way for culture to be passed down generations.

Ernabella Artists work with staff on long term planning for the art centre. Part of our program for passing down culture, and creating a pathway between the school and the art centre, is the senior girls ceramics class. Every week, Tjimpuna Williams and Ruth go to Ernabella Anangu School, and do ceramics with the senior girls. This program has been running for two years now and the South Australian Department of Education is looking into doing a case study on it. The school has a kiln, two wheels, a slab roller and a lot of

equipment. Tom Miller will discuss the beginning of this program further. This is to note that the Art Centre also has strong working relationships within community, and young people are starting working with clay from an early age.

The ceramic studio is important to us, as the young people like working there. It is a good place for the young people to start working as they have their own space.

In our community the law, culture and responsibilities sit with older people. Also in the APY Art Centres, men and women work in different spaces. Women may be working on something, and talking about something that men shouldn't hear, and vice versa.

The men's room is intimidating with knoweldgable old men in there like Harry Tjutjuna and Dickie Minyintiri. These men hold big culture and law. The young fellas can learn a lot from these tjilpis, but the young fellas also need space to find their own way, and they can do that in the ceramic studio. It belongs to them – it was established for them.

Because Anangu men and women work separately, in 2011 Ernabella Arts had the first

men only pottery workshop. Simon Reece and Kirk Winter came to show the men how to do slab building. The men enjoyed this and many men came into the art centre for the first time. Derek Thompson has stayed working here since that workshop, and since the workshop Ngunytjima Carroll has been drawing on his own forms, whereas before he only made work for women to paint on. Ngunytjima has been working in the ceramic studio since it first opened and he is on the board of Ernabella Arts. He is an important part of the ceramic studio and has been to the Tiwi Islands and to ANU also, with the Remote Communities Ceramic Network. Ngunytjima has a good working relationship with Geoff Crispin and with Robert Puruntatameri from Tiwi Islands.

It is important for young men like Derek Thompson and Ngunytjima Carroll to keep working in the art centre, to keep stories, law and culture strong. They will one day be helping young fellas coming up in there. Both Derek and Ngunytjima want to learn more, but have responsibilities in community, such as family and young children, so rather than going out to learn more, we now have at least one men's workshop a year.

This year Ben Carter, a young American man from Shanghai Pottery Workshop, came to Ernabella and was able to stay for a month. Ben's way of working was great – he understood *ngapartji ngapartji*, (I do something from you, you do something for me) and that there was an exchange happening here. He got to be in our beautiful country, and do things like hunting with the men, and he raised his own money using Kickstarter to pay his way. He was a good fit with Ngunytjima and Derek, being the same age and gender. Ben did a lot of throwing, and he got a thrill out of seeing what the Ernabella Artists would do with the plates, bowls and vases he threw. Most of the thrown work in the Ernabella show at the SA Museum was thrown by Ben. Like Travis, there was never any discussion about 'collaboration' – it is considered the same as when staff make up canvas for the painters.

White fellas like Peter Ward, Geoff Crispin, Lucas Boswell, Simon Reece, Kirk Winter and Ben Carter have worked with the young fellas and taught them new skills and ways of doing things. The young Anangu fellas have never made collaborative works with white fellas though. They have worked *tjungu* – together – and *ngapartji ngapartji*. Simon and Kirk showed the men slab building, and the watis –

Derek, Jarred, Nguuyntjima, took those two hunting and showed them country. The tjilpis – the old men – sang *inma* when they were working. Both Simon and Kirk said that is something which will stay with them.

To give this talk, Ruth and I worked together and talked about collaboration. We looked up this word to try and translate it, and the original meaning for it is ‘co-labour’. We came up with five criteria which we think are all essential to call an artwork a collaboration.

1. Both/all people are involved from the beginning, with the original idea and an equal vision for the project
2. Both/all people are the ‘authors’ of the work, and are also perceived as such
3. Both/all people are equals/peers and work together with mutual respect and from a position of equality
4. Both/all people are involved equally in all stages of the work – conception, contribution, execution, resolution, exhibition
5. Both/all people have equal benefit from the work, in terms of both professional and financial gain, and kudos

Within a framework of equality and respect, great art works can be made which are true collaborations.

For Anangu, equality and respect is important, maybe in different ways to Piranpa. We have people who own culture and knowledge and law in a way that is particular to us. Anangu and Piranpa think differently. *Kutjipa* way. (Different way). We approach things in different ways. We have different priorities.

This April I went to a Desart Conference in Alice Springs where people from all over the country talked about issues around Indigenous art. The Director of Alcaston Gallery, Beverly Knight, told us that she has noticed that while Anangu place most value on the story in an artwork, Piranpa purchase works based mostly on aesthetic choices. This is one example of our different priorities.

It would be wrong for us, for instance, for a *tjilpi* (old man) to work with a young woman from another culture, on *tjukurpa*. It would be wrong for us for a *pampa* (old lady) to work with a young man from another culture, on *tjukurpa*.

This is part of why we have had men's workshops – men who are artistically and professionally the equals of the men at Ernabella should be working with our artists. Our art centre is 60 years old and our culture is ancient. It is not good enough for someone who's only in community for a little while to bring in a *malpa* (mate) with a good idea.

My uncle, Dickie Minyintiri, won the Telstra award last year and is the number one man in Pukatja for law and culture. It would not be right for a young person from a different culture to come to him with their ideas for an artwork. He paints *tjukurpa mulapa* – true story. This story cannot be changed, that would be changing history.

Piranpa who come into Pukatja Community and Ernabella Arts for one or two months or one or two years, need to remember that – *Anangu are always here*. We have always been here. Anangu learn from Anangu, from our *tjamu munu kami* – grandfathers and grandmothers.

Our stories are from a long time ago and they will live in the future with our children. When they grow up they will be working at the art centre. They will be the owners of our art

centre and will keep our culture strong. The history of the ceramic studio rests with men like Ngunytjima Carroll and Derek Thompson. Ernabella Arts has definitely been fortunate to have good relationships, and to have been working *tjungu palya*, working well together, with so many people and organisations. We are all looking forward to the next ten years.

Thank you.