

Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori

Language: Kayardild *

Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori was born around 1924 on Bentinck Island, one of the South Wellesley Islands in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria.

After a lifetime of weaving and producing fibre craft, Gabori, aged in her early eighties, took up painting and had her first exhibition in 2005 to considerable acclaim. Having been removed to Mornington Island with her family in the 1940s, Gabori is now a member of a vibrant new art movement operating out of the long-established Mornington Island Arts and Craft. It was Gabori's keenness to paint that led other Bentinck Islander women living on Mornington to take up the brush. This is of great significance: Kaiadilt people had no prior history of art-making, as did the Lardil people of Mornington Island. Kaiadilt artists' work shows little resemblance to that of their Lardil predecessors, most notably brothers Dick and Lindsay Roughsey, who created figurative earthy paintings of Lardil country and Dreaming Ancestors.

Gabori is widely known for her bold and strong use of colour. Reds, blues, pinks (her favourites), white and black are brilliantly splashed across the canvas to capture the essence of her island homeland, which is central to her arts practice.

Gabori's paintings have been acclaimed for their articulation of country, although her technical skill is considered equally important. Her paintings have a colourful presence, with fluid brush strokes overlaying solid masses of colour that represent the land, sea and sky. Her brush strokes and colour combinations bring movement and texture to the flat plane of the canvas, representing and replicating the life that surrounds the artist.

Since her first show in 2005 at the Woolloongabba Art Gallery in Brisbane, Gabori has participated in a number of solo and group exhibitions including the inaugural Xstrata Coal Emerging Indigenous Art Award (2006), the Togart Contemporary Art Award (2007) and the 24th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award (2007).

(Author: Carly Lane)

* Kayardild is the language of Kaiadilt people.