

Shane Pickett

Language: Balladong Nyoongar

Shane Pickett spent much of his youth at Quairading, a wheatbelt town in Western Australia. From a family of artists, he has performed as an actor and dancer, but it is in the visual arts that he excels. He graduated from the Claremont Art School in 1983, though he had begun exhibiting in 1976 when only nineteen. Today Pickett is one of the foremost Nyoongar artists working in Australia, and he has exhibited in every state and territory throughout a thirty-year career. His talent has been recognised in numerous art awards exhibitions, most recently through his winning the inaugural 2007 Drawing Together Art Award and being chosen as a finalist in the 24th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2007.

In 2003 his works featured in the first comprehensive survey to trace the rich multiplicity of Nyoongar visual culture, *SOUTH WEST CENTRAL: Indigenous Art from South Western Australia 1833-2002*, at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Pickett, a Balladong man, charts the light and the lay of the Nyoongar landscape in his paintings. Versatile and prolific, he produces highly personal, ethereal landscapes that reveal an intimate relationship to and understanding of land and country. The works often tell the untold or concealed histories of Nyoongar lands that underscore the deep connections, pride and confidence that come from identity, family and knowledge of place.

Inhabiting the spiritual space between what is concealed and revealed, his recent paintings explore the Nyoongar season cycle and in so doing create complex visual analogues for the persistence and renaissance of Nyoongar culture throughout the South West. As he has said, his works “bring a respect and awareness of Aboriginal culture imbued with the spirituality present in Nyoongar values.”

Pickett describes his art as portraying an inner peace while at the same time the harshness of our Indigenous everyday journey through modern life. “My works are about an understanding of culture, about the complex but common sense narratives that make up Indigenous knowledge.”

In Western Australia Pickett's works are represented in the State Art Collection at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the University of Western Australia Art Collection, the Western Australian Museum and numerous corporate and private collections.

(Author: Gary Dufour)