

## ARTIST'S PROFILE



Artist	Minnie Pwerle (Also known by other spellings: <i>Pwerl, Pula, Apwerl, Motorcar</i> )
Born	c.1920
Deceased	18 <sup>th</sup> March 2006
Language	Alyawarr
Country	Atnwengerrp, Utopia Region, N E of Alice Springs
Medium	Acrylic paint on Canvas/Linen
Subjects	Awely for Atnwengerrp (woman's ceremony and body paint for Atnwengerrp country), Anemangkerr (small melon), Akarley (wild orange)

MANY of Minnie's paintings reflect possibly the oldest designs of art in the world; the body painting for women's ceremony – *Awely*. These are linear designs that are painted onto the chest, breasts, arms and thighs. Powders ground from red ochre (clay) and ash are used, applied with a flat stick with soft padding. This stick is called a 'typale'. During the ceremony, Minnie and the women would sing the songs associated with their awely, paint each other and dance. Awely ceremonies are performed to demonstrate respect for the country and the total well-being and health of the community.

Minnie also painted the Dreamtime story of the Anemangkerr (Bush Melon) and also of the Akarley, which are represented in her paintings by 'a-lube-eh-ditch' *loops*.

Her works are very bold and free flowing and immediately capture the attention of art lovers. Having never been taught art by way of European methods, nor having visited museums and contemporary art galleries, Minnie was one of Australia's top female contemporary Indigenous artists. Her paintings are loved for being so modern in style and yet so traditional and raw in subject.

Minnie was born in Alyawarr land, approximately 200 kilometers north east of Alice Springs, in approximately 1920. Speaking very little of the English language, Minnie made a bold, swift and unexpected entry into the European world of Australia in 2000 through painting. Minnie's eldest daughter, Barbara Weir born in 1945, was taken away at the age of 9 but they were both reunited in the late 1960's. For many years Minnie detached herself from Barbara. Sorry business had been done for her many years before and it was hard for Minnie to welcome a stranger claiming to be her daughter. Their lives were so different.

Minnie had earlier married an Aboriginal man by the name of Motorcar Jim, and had six children; Aileen, Betty, Raymond and Dora Mpetyane (two other daughters passed away and are not spoken of). But it was Barbara who encouraged Minnie to paint in the latter years of her life. Barbara, being an established artist herself, gave Minnie some canvas and paints while she waited for Barbara to finish painting at a workshop in Adelaide. Minnie painted what she has always painted – the body paint designs (awely) that belonged to her country, Atnwengerrp. The traditional colours of this country are red ochre and white; however Minnie was excited by the vast amount of colours in front of her, and never looked back. When asked numerously if Minnie enjoyed painting, Minnie’s family always replied for her with wholehearted conviction ‘absolutely’. And very evident it was in her enthusiasm to paint and in her work; her freedom of brush stroke and fervor of colour.

Minnie passed away on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2006 at her home in Atnwengerrp. She is survived by her children, grand children, great grand children, and siblings Margie, Molly, Emily, Geyla, Lois, Ally and Louie.

## **COLLECTIONS**

Mbantua Gallery Private Collection, *Alice Springs*

## **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

Aug-Sep 2003	Minnie Pwerl, Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs
Aug-Sep 2004	Minnie Pwerl, Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs
June-July 2006	Minnie Pwerle, Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs

## **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

2000	Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, NT
2001	Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, NT
2001	May-July, “Painting Country”, Tandanya, S.A
2002	‘Generations’, Japingka Gallery, WA
2002	‘The Utopia Six’, Flinders Lane Gallery, Vic
2002	Chapman Gallery, ACT
2002	‘United – Mother and Daughter’, Alison Kelly Gallery, Vic
2002	New York City, USA
2002	Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, NT
2002	Mbantua Gallery - Art and Soul Gallery, Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A

2002 Mbantua Gallery - 'The Cove Gallery' Portland, Oregon USA  
(Benefit - OHSU Heart Research Centre)

2002 Mbantua Gallery - Urban Wine Works, Portland, Oregon USA  
(Benefit – OHSU Heart Research Centre)

2002 Mbantua Gallery - Mary's Woods, Portland, Oregon USA (Benefit –  
OHSU Heart Research Centre)

2002 Mbantua Gallery - New City Merchants, Knoxville, Tennessee USA

2003 Feb, World Vision\_Walkabout Gallery, Sydney “*My Grandmother  
and Me*”

Mar 2003 *Light Over Utopia*, Japingka Gallery, Fremantle, WA

2003 Mbantua Gallery - Art and Soul Gallery, Nashville, Tennessee USA

2003 Mbantua Gallery - 'The Cove Gallery' Portland, Oregon USA  
(Benefit - OHSU Heart Research Centre)

2003 Mbantua Gallery - Contemporary Aboriginal Art Event, Umpqua  
Bank, Portland, Oregon USA (Benefit - OHSU Heart Research  
Centre)

2003 Mbantua Gallery - Mary's Woods, Portland, Oregon USA (Benefit -  
OHSU Heart Research Centre)

2003 Mbantua Gallery - Art From The Dreamtime, Portland Art Museum,  
Portland, Oregon USA (Benefit - OHSU Heart Research Centre)

Mar-April 2004 “Diva’s of the Desert”, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs, N.T

June 2004 ‘Black and White’, Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs

Aug-Sep 2004 Mbantua Gallery USA exhibition; Portland, Nashville, Knoxville,  
Hartford, Greenwich, New York and Philadelphia

May-June 2005 ‘Small Wonders’(A collection of 1’x1’ and 1’x1½’ paintings),  
Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, N.T