

The Unwritten Country

Simon Normand

3/12/10 - 28/01/11

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GALLERY

COLOUR FACTORY GALLERY

Fish Net, mixed media, 200 x 60cm, 2008
Original /Artist proof \$2800
Inkjet Print on Canvas (stretched) \$1500, Edition of 3



All along the coast the remains of Indonesian fishing nets wash up with tangled sea turtles in the mangroves. The Borrooloola and Ngukurr Sea Rangers clean up and maintain this country which has no road access for over 400 kilometres. Old Maureen knows this place as Yumunguni where her family used to hunt for Dugong in dugout canoes that used to be rigged with a sail to catch the ocean breeze.

Canoe Factory, mixed media, 200 x 60cm, 2010
Original /Artist proof \$2800
Inkjet Print on Canvas (stretched) \$1500, Edition of 3



This is Wulkulyi swamp where the giant swamp Paperbarks grow. The last canoe was seen in this area in 1968. There are still old canoes in this swamp where the water never dries up. Crocodiles like laying their eggs here, and the old ceremony ground was a great hunting place for Magpie Geese. I don't think it has been photographed before.

Carpentaria Coastline, mixed media, 200 x 60cm, 2008
Original /Artist proof \$2800
Inkjet Print on Canvas (stretched) \$1500, Edition of 3



Not far from here is where the Iron Ore mining company wants to transport ore to China. There will need to be a big port, and the shallow seagrass will need to be dredged to allow 4 million tonnes of Iron Ore to be directly shipped to China from the Gulf.

This is the Dreaming place for the Mermaid, King Brown, and Barramundi. There has never been access to this country by land. According to the website of Western Desert Resources, there is no "cultural or heritage value" in this region. It is considered bad luck to remove the shells from this beach according to the Marranbala people.

Mermaid Country- Elsey Creek, mixed media, 200 x 60cm, 2009
Original /Artist proof \$2800
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The cabbage (Livistonia) palms that populate Elsey Creek glisten in the sun all the way down to the Roper River. This is where the Kilyirring-Kilyirring (Mermaids) travelled all the way from Marra country and left their scales. This is the sweet freshwater spring country of the Mangarrayi people.

The Jungle, mixed media, 200 x 60cm, 2010
Original /Artist proof \$2800
Inkjet Print on Canvas (stretched) \$1500, Edition of 3



When I camped in the Jungle this year I couldn't sleep, thinking of what the Rainbow Serpent might look like after the old women told me stories about it. It is beautiful and dangerous, so to me the rainbow serpent is a cross between an olive Python (Quiet Snake) and Death Adder, which are both found in this country. The ceremony for the Rainbow still continues and kapok is used to decorate the body for dancing. In this work I have incorporated cotton found growing wild on the banks of the Roper in Mangarrayi land.

Limmen River Sunrise, mixed media, 200 x 60cm, 2008
Original /Artist proof \$2800
Inkjet Print on Canvas (stretched) \$1500, Edition of 3



This is where the Jardugal (Kangaroo) travelled on its way to the ocean around Maria Island. Old Hammer told me the story of the Jardugal as it hopped and swam around the mangroves, wells and ceremony sites around Limmen Bight. This is the Budal path through Marra Country. This was the last time Old Hammer got to visit this place before he passed away in 2008.

Wind, Acrylic on canvas, 270 x 60cm, 2008, \$5000



This painting is based on a photograph taken during a walk with the Wagilak Songmen and some of the Ngukurr Rangers. The country had not been visited since 1974, and the men were keen to "clean the country" by burning it, which was fine until the wind changed direction and chased us through the rocky "biting grass".

Rocky Bar, Acrylic on canvas, 270 x 60cm, 2007, \$5000



This is one of our families favourite camping and fishing places. Old Norma Joshua used to always sit under the big paper barks and quietly catch Barramundi, Turtle, and Bream, while we would splash about in the rock pools looking for signs of where the Mermaids and Bigfoot traveled. It is a special site for the Alawa and Marra people.

After the Ceremony, mixed media, 200 x 60cm, 2008
Original /Artist proof \$2800
Inkjet Print on Canvas (stretched) \$1500, Edition of 3



Always the Ceremony at the Roper begins with the song about the Wata (Wind). The Birrt-Birrt (Hooded Plover) has all kinds of song for this country, and the Wagilak people still hold and perform this song on behalf of all the people who live around the Roper. This photograph was taken as the Morning Star was about to touch the horizon at the end of Ceremony in the dry season of 2008.

Near Five Mile, Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 45cm, 2006, \$3000



This is a clay pan that fills up when the Phelp River floods in the wet season. It is a good place to catch long neck turtle with your feet if you know how. It is in Ngandi country but its real name has been lost. The last Ngandi speaker died in 2001.

Ruined City, Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 45cm, 2005, \$3000



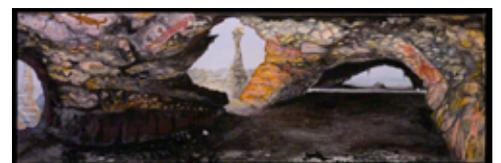
This is where the Ngurru (catfish) travelled up from the coast and was trapped as the tide receded back to the Gulf. Much of the place known as “Burrunjū” is the home of the “little people”, and the first white person to visit the country was a nurse from Ngukurr in 1959. Some places you can’t look at, or photograph, and it’s easy to get lost. The last person to vanish in the area was in 1981. Most people won’t visit this place even today.

Walmadja Hill, Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 45cm, 2006, \$3000



Our family used to watch sunrise over this hill every morning for a couple of years. There’s a billabong at the bottom of the hill, and when it starts to dry up you can spear big Barramundi. In the Dreaming there was a great flood that washed the first canoe up onto the cliff at the top of the hill. The kids always point it out when we go there for a picnic.

Walgundu Cave 1 and 2, Acrylic on canvas, 120 x 45cm,
2005, \$3000



This place is very sacred, full of lore about the Mermaids, Goanna, and Rainbow Serpent. The old people remember painting the bones of their ancestors until tourists started taking the remains away in the 1980's. After asking for access to this sacred site to be restricted for ten years, a gate was finally erected with a padlock in 2009. People however keep breaking the lock. Maureen Marrangulu Thompson first took me there in 1996 to show me where the Serpent breathed fire on the people trapped inside this sandstone cathedral. Maureen still sings this cave when she visits.

Marra Map, Inkjet print on canvas, 170 x 130cm,
Edition of 50 (29 available), \$800, \$950 (stretched)
All proceeds from exhibition sales go towards the
Limmen Mapping project field trips with the Marra
Community



Documentary:

Two short documentary films about Jardugal (Red Kangaroo), Jarrkun (Mermaid Song) by Anna Robert accompany the exhibition.

Books:

Marranbala Country \$40

Stonecountry to Saltwater \$30

Aspects of this exhibition will tour nationally through regional Australia with Country Arts South Australia from July 2011 – December 2012

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