

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE
CAIRNS REGIONAL GALLERY COLLECTION

JUNE 2011

Dick Roughsey (Goobalathaldin), *Untitled*
Donated to the Cairns Regional Gallery Collection
by Mr Ray Crooke

Dick Roughsey, known as Goobalathaldin, was born in North Queensland in 1924 and was a respected elder of the Lardil language group of Mornington Island (Gununa). His Lardil parents were Kiwalpija and Gathagin (alias Gilgil) or Minnie. Up until the age of seven, when he was taken from his people and sent to a mission, Roughsey lived a traditional Indigenous life learning the ceremonies and dreaming stories of his ancestors. He was educated at a mission school and from the age of 16 worked as a stockman on cattle stations in North Queensland and as a deckhand on ships around Cairns.

He started painting in traditional ways, telling his people's stories on bark with pigments. His works revolved around Aboriginal legends and the history of his people. Body-painting and decorated artifacts are traditional on Mornington Island, but painting on bark was not done until well after European contact. The style of mixing Arnhem Land, Tiwi and figurative European influences was invented by Roughsey and his older brother, Lindsay, artist and song-man of the Lardil, in the early 1960s. They established Lardil bark painting, which continues today. It was not until he met Percy Trezise, a former Ansett pilot turned artist, anthropologist and conservationist, that his style changed and he started to paint using oil on canvas.

From the early 1960's, Trezise and Roughsey travelled around the Cape recording the positions of ancient Aboriginal sites and rock paintings that they documented with reproductions to scale. These were later sent to the Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra. Roughsey was the first chairman of the Aboriginal Arts Board (1973-76), was awarded an OBE in 1978 and later became a member of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies. Towards the end of his life, Roughsey resided with his family either on Mornington Island or in Cairns where he kept close contact with Trezise, both his 'mentor' and fellow exhibitor. He died in 1985.

'Aboriginal art'. Thames and Hudson, London, p.174. (File note)

The work:

This untitled piece is a rare Dick Roughsey bark due to its scale and its estimated period of completion. It depicts three types of food gathering activities of the Mornington Island and Tiwi peoples; hunting game, gathering palm nuts and fishing. There are currently two small later examples of Roughsey barks in the collection. The addition of this untitled piece ably demonstrates his earlier modus operandi in telling of traditional stories of his people.



Dick ROUGHSEY (Goobalathaldin)
Untitled c. mid 1960's
pigments on bark 1450mm x 670mm



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