



PortAugusta

CITY COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

YIDUMDUMA BILL HARNEY: BUSH PROFESSOR EXHIBITION - An Ancient Culture Kept Alive Through Art

A new retrospective exhibition brings to life the riches of the Wardaman culture and one man's remarkable journey to share his knowledge of the Wardaman people with the world.

Launched on 2 September, *Yidumduma Bill Harney: Bush Professor* is an exhibition celebrating the life work of Yidumduma Bill Harney. The exhibition, presented by the Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts & Culture Centre in Katherine, Northern Territory, will be open to the public until 14 October 2017 at the Yarta Purtli Gallery.

At over 80 years of age, Harney is a charismatic storyteller and artist and the only remaining living custodian of the collective memory, laws and history of his people.

"Yidumduma Bill Harney is recognised throughout the world as an artist of high esteem on many different stages," said Paul Taylor, a Northern Territory finalist for Australian of the Year in 2013 for his work in preserving and recording Harney's extraordinary Indigenous knowledge through the Yubulyawan Dreaming Project.

"He is a master painter, storyteller, songman, Didgeridoo player/maker and author," he said. "All his art forms have the deepest roots in the celebration of his Wardaman Aboriginal heritage and his unique ability to "walk in both worlds" and communicate the joy of his culture to a global audience."

As a child Harney learned the ways of the Wardaman people from his mother and step father and also the stories connected to the stunning ancient rock art seen on the land of his people, including the famous Lightning Brothers site.

Harney's knowledge has been described by anthropologists as 'encyclopaedic in nature', and his artwork is one way that he shares this intimate understanding with the world. Harney's work is widely exhibited, with major paintings held in the National Gallery of Australia, Parliament House in Darwin, Bond University and the University of Sydney's Law School. He has been a finalist in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Telstra Art Award eleven times.

"Yidumduma Bill Harney calls himself a Bush Professor," said Margie West AM, Curator of the exhibition and Emeritus Curator of Aboriginal Art & Material Culture at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

"His contemporary painting is a fascinating look into topics as diverse as traditional law, astronomy, sorcery and ancestral narrative," she said.

"This is his first major retrospective exhibition providing national audiences with a fascinating and unique look into his world for the very first time."

ENDS

JOHN BANKS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
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