



/COMMUNITY

Sculpture exhibition takes pride of place at gallery

A sculpture from prominent senior artist Frank Davies.

Supported by AngloGold Ashanti Australia, the first artist-in-residence program at the remote Tjuntjuntjara community in Western Australia has led to an exhibition of wooden sculpture.

Launched in April, the works were displayed in June over a three-week period, in an exhibition at the Fossick Gallery Kalgoorlie-Boulder and form part of the Spinifex Arts project, which was established in 1997 as part of the Native Title documentation process.

A small community of 160 people, Tjuntjuntjara is located 700 kilometres east of the Goldfields capital in the southern part of the Great Victoria Desert and is the home of the Spinifex People.

Melbourne sculptor Ange Leech has been working and teaching in the remote community since April and plans to return in October for another residency.

With the financial support of AngloGold Ashanti Australia and others enabling the purchase of both manual and power tools, the next goal for Leech is to develop a woodworking workshop in the community.

Working with the elders of the community, the program was aimed at introducing the young people in the community to sculpting and going by the volume of works on show, it certainly seems to have hit the right chord.

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In 2000 the Spinifex people were granted Native Title over 55,000 square kilometres of country of which Tjuntjuntjara is in the southern part of this claim area, characterised by vegetation such as the western Myall tree, Mulga, Desert Oaks and Mallee.

The Spinifex artists are well known nationally and internationally and have exhibited widely in Australia as well as Europe and the US.

Pitjantjatjara is the spoken language of the Spinifex People. There is no word for sculpture although in Pitjantjatjara the word used for both wood and woodcarving is punu.

Wood is an integral part of daily life for the Spinifex People, providing fire, tools and artefacts and the latest program has seen the young sculptors forge a new pathway into the art of wood sculpting.

New ways of working with wood have been embraced resulting in some fantastic abstract sculptures, some representational works and cross cultural collaborations between the Spinifex People and Ange.

Support for the Tjuntjuntjara Artists in Residence Program has been provided by AngloGold Ashanti Australia, the Shire of Menzies, Minara Resources and Australian Art Distributor, Chapman and Bailey.

Sculptor Ange, who is originally from Tasmania and now lives in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, was last year awarded the Travelling Scholarship Noosa Sculpture Prize and an ArtStart Grant by The Australia Council in Canberra, and has also held numerous exhibitions and received six Australia-wide competitive awards.

She said nearly all of the works on display by the Tjuntjuntjara artists had been sold.

"It has been an exciting and rewarding experience to be exhibiting with Fossick gallery," she said.

"AngloGold Ashanti has gone beyond their call of duty in regards to generous support they provided to the project and without them it would not have been possible.

"Chris Boase and John Millikan have provided guidance and support in regards to working in remote communities and I would like to especially thank Phil Virgin and the staff at Williams Street, Kalgoorlie."