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**“Lands of Enchantment: Australian Aboriginal Painting”  
At National Museum of Women in the Arts**



**October 9, 2009—January 10, 2010**

WASHINGTON—National Museum of Women in the Arts presents 26 masterworks by some of Australia’s best-known painters, including Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Dorothy Napangardi Robinson, Abie Loy Kemarre, Mitjili Napurrla, and Eubena Nampitjin in *Lands of Enchantment: Australian Aboriginal Painting*, on view **October 9, 2009**, through **January 10, 2010**.

These works of art, which have never been exhibited publicly, are drawn from the collection of Ann Shumelda Okerson and James J. O’Donnell of New Haven, Connecticut and Washington, D.C. They are avid world travelers as well as passionate educators, and are devoted to sharing their collection with the public and ensuring the legacy of Aboriginal artists.

In recent years, Australian Aboriginal art has captured the attention of the global art market. Collectors and museums worldwide relish the striking color and intricate patterning of Aboriginal paintings created by artists in the nation’s central desert region in particular. The works’ nuanced expressions of Aboriginal history and culture reinforce their significance as rich cultural artifacts.

“Ms. Okerson and Dr. O’Donnell are among the many collectors worldwide who are passionate about Australian Aboriginal art. NMWA is delighted to present this exhibition that not only builds on our 2006 exhibition *Dreaming their Way: Australian Aboriginal Artists* but also brings to light an outstanding private collection centered here in Washington, D.C.,” said NMWA Director Susan Fisher Sterling.

In 2006, NMWA blazed a trail for female Australian Aboriginal painters by presenting the groundbreaking exhibition, *Dreaming Their Way: Australian Aboriginal Women Painters*. *Lands of Enchantment* builds on *Dreaming Their Way* by including works by male artists in order to demonstrate the broader context of contemporary Aboriginal painting.

*Lands of Enchantment* explores how contemporary Australian Aboriginal paintings are expressive representations of Dreamings—ancient Aboriginal stories about creation and ancestral spirits who inhabited an undatable past called Dreamtime. Contrary to the prevalent Western view that draws clear distinctions between nature and civilization, Aboriginal culture holds that all living beings and elements of geography have been inextricably related through time.

Aboriginal artists have long been noted for their work in traditional media such as bark painting and wood carving. Although these art forms are still practiced, many contemporary artists working in central Australia—including those featured in *Lands of Enchantment*—choose to work with the modern medium of acrylic paint on fabric. They extend the ancient tradition of drawing ritual designs on the body or into the earth by rendering intensely colored, semi-abstract symbols of plants, animals, and features of the landscape on their canvases. Through these alluring images, the artists seek to share a part of Aboriginal culture. The paintings are also powerful political acts—statements of the Aboriginal people’s rights to the land and assertions of their enduring cultural presence in Australia.

*Lands of Enchantment* is organized by NMWA and is generously supported by Chevron, the Embassy of Australia, and the Members of NMWA.

**Image:**

Bessie Nakamarra Sims, born c. 1932; Language Group: Warlpiri; *Possum Dreaming*, 2006; Acrylic on linen; 42 1/2 x 47 1/2 in.; Collection of Ann Shumelda Okerson and James J. O'Donnell  
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**About National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA)**

National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) is the only museum solely dedicated to celebrating the achievements of women in the visual, performing and literary arts. The museum’s collection features 3,000 works from the 16th century to the present by more than 800 artists. The museum also conducts multidisciplinary programs for diverse audiences and maintains a Library and Research Center. NMWA is located at 1250 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. It is open Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday, noon–5 p.m. Admission is for adults in \$10, \$8 for Seniors 65 and over and students, free for youth 18 and under and NMWA members. For information, call 202-783-5000 or visit the museum’s Web site at [www.nmwa.org](http://www.nmwa.org).