Finch & Co



AN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL BARK PAINTING ENTITLED 'THE SNAKE DANCE' BY LIPUNJA OF MILLINGIMBI

AN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL BARK PAINTING ENTITLED 'THE SNAKE DANCE' BY LIPUNJA OF MILLINGIMBI , CENTRAL NORTH COAST OF ARNHEM LAND . STRINGY EUCALYPTUS BARK AND NATURAL PIGMENTS

CIRCA 1920'S – 1930'S

SIZE : 58.5 CM HIGH , 35 CM WIDE – 23 INS HIGH , 13¾ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

'THE LAND BEFORE TIME Â€¦' THE ABORIGINES BELIEVE THAT , EVEN BEFORE THERE WAS ANY LIFE , THE EARTH HAD ALWAYS EXISTED AS A FLAT , FEATURELESS PLAIN , EXTENDING ON ALL SIDES TO THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE . AT SOME ILL DEFINED PERIOD KNOWN AS THE 'DREAM TIME' , GIANT SEMI-HUMAN BEINGS , RESEMBLING ANIMALS IN THEIR APPEARANCE BUT ACTING LIKE MEN AND WOMEN , ROSE MIRACULOUSLY OUT OF THE LEVEL PLAINS UNDER WHICH THEY HAD BEEN SLUMBERING FOR COUNTLESS AGES . AS THESE 'ANCESTORS' WANDERED OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE THEY CREATED THE TOPOGRAPHY : THE SEA COASTS , THE SWAMP-LANDS , THE RIVERS AND THE MOUNTAIN RANGES AND TAUGHT MEN AND WOMEN THE TECHNIQUES FOR SURVIVAL AND SOCIAL RULES . THEY THEN SANK BACK INTO THEIR SPIRITUAL PRESENCE IN WATERHOLES AND OTHER FEATURES OF THE LANDSCAPE .

AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYTHICAL STORIES CONCERNING THIS CREATION PERIOD IS TRANSMITTED FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT BY MEANS OF ART , MUSIC AND DRAMA OF ABORIGINAL CEREMONIAL LIFE . THESE INTRICATELY DETAILED BARK PAINTINGS WERE USED TO INSTRUCT YOUNG MEN IN THE MYTHICAL HERITAGE OF THEIR CLAN AND GIVES GUIDANCE TO THEIR SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE .

THE ART OF PAINTING ON BARK APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PRACTISED IN AUSTRALIA WHEREVER THE ABORIGINES USED BARK TO CONSTRUCT WET WEATHER SHELTERS . HOWEVER THE COLOURFUL CROSS HATCHED BACKGROUNDS AS EXHIBITED HERE BELONG TO THE NORTH EASTERN AREA OF ARNHEM LAND . THE COLOURS ARE TAKEN FROM NATURAL PIGMENTS OBTAINED LOCALLY OR BY TRADE , WHICH ARE GROUND WITH A STONE . THE FIXATIVE IS THE SAP FROM A BROKEN BULB OF THE TREE ORCHID . THREE KINDS OF BRUSHES ARE USED : A NARROW STRIP OF BARK , CHEWED AT ONE END FOR THE BROAD LINES , A THIN CYLINDRICAL STICK FOR THE DOTS AND A FLEXIBLE BRUSH MADE FROM A SINGLE SMALL FEATHER FOR THE FINE PARALLEL LINES AND THE TYPICAL CROSS HATCHED BACKGROUNDS SEEN IN THESE TWO PAINTINGS .

THE MILINGIMBI METHODIST MISSION WAS ESTABLISHED IN ARNHEM LAND , NORTHERN AUSTRALIA IN THE EARLY 20 TH

CENTURY . BETWEEN 1926 AND 1929 WILLIAM LLOYD WARNER COLLECTED THE FIRST BARK PAINTINGS FROM THE MISSION . ONLY GENUINE AND AUTHENTIC WORKS WERE ENCOURAGED AS WARNER BELIEVED THIS WOULD INSTIL 'A SENSE OF PRIDE' IN THEIR ABORIGINAL CULTURE . IT WAS ONLY LATER AFTER THE TIRELESS WORK OF TONY TUCKSON , AND OTHERS SUCH AS DOROTHY BENNETT , THAT THIS ART FORM BEGAN TO BE VIEWED AND COLLECTED SERIOUSLY . THERE IS NO ARTIST CLASS IN AN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY , EVERY MAN CAN , AND WILL BE CALLED UPON TO ACT AS A TRIBAL ARTIST . THE ABORIGINES OF ARNHEM LAND HAVE LIMITED TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT , SIMPLE MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES AND FOLLOW BY WESTERN STANDARDS AN UN-PROGRESSIVE 'STONE-AGE' WAY OF LIFE , YET THEIR ART CONFORMS TO THE SAME PRINCIPLES OF LINE , COLOUR AND BALANCE OF SPACING OF DESIGN ELEMENTS THAT CHARACTERISES THE MOST BRILLIANT AND BEST OF MODERN ART .