



In background, acrylic on canvas: *Litjardi* (detail), 2005, Raymond Tjapaltjarri.



In background, acrylic on canvas: *Lupul*, 2005, Walangkura Napanangka. In foreground, ochres on wood: *Tokwampini*, 2001, Leon Puruntatameri.

Crossing Cultures



Ochres and acrylic on milkwood: *Freshwater Crocodile*, 2002, Craig Koomeeta.

Dazzling Aboriginal Australian works featured in new show at art museum

By ROD LOCKWOOD
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Visitors to the *Crossing Cultures* exhibition at the Toledo Museum of Art will be struck immediately by a sense of movement. The Aboriginal Australian artists who created these vibrant, uniquely contemporary works conveyed the undulations of a desert landscape that is often in flux. There are shimmering and pulsating effects within the art and hidden stories that tell of a past, present, and future that are simultaneous and called the “every-when.”

“It’s a deliberate strategy on the parts of those artists to evoke that energy and make you feel like you’re in the presence of something that is grand and spiritual,” said Will Owen, a University of North Carolina librarian, who along with his art-collecting partner Harvey Wagner collected the paintings that are featured in the free exhibition that runs until July 14 at TMA.

Some of the works, which range from acrylic on canvas to bark paintings, sculptures, and photography, have a three-dimensional aspect.

The artists live in remote regions and the art is part of their family stories, said TMA Director Brian Kennedy. He said that some of the paintings reverse the foreground and background so that “secret sacred knowledge” is embedded in the art but hidden behind the “shimmer” effect, almost as if it is underwater.

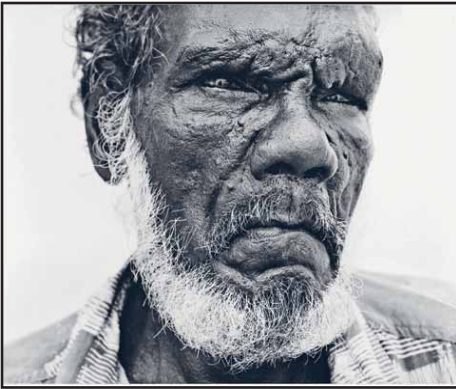
Texture and earth tones convey a sense of the rough-hewn environment in which the Aboriginal people live, but there is nothing old-fashioned about these works, most of which were created after 2000. Don’t expect to see quaint paintings of kangaroos and turtles.

“For us, this has always been contemporary art,” Mr. Owen said. “We were very interested in pop art and minimalism, color-field painting in America in the ‘60s and ‘70s, and not so much in neo-symbolism, and this was contemporary art for us.”

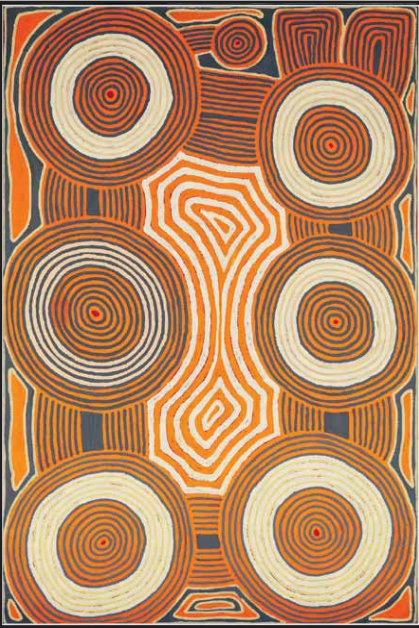
The paintings, sculptures, and photographs are part of a collection that is housed at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H. The exhibition was curated by Stephen Gilchrist of the Hood.

Crossing Cultures: The Owen and Wagner Collection of Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Art from the Hood Museum of Art will be on display at the Toledo Museum of Art, 2445 Monroe St., until July 14. Admission is free. A number of gallery talks, films, and other activities will take place during the exhibition. For details, go to www.toledomuseum.org.

Contact Rod Lockwood at:
rockwood@theblade.com
or 419-724-6159.



Photograph: *Wik Elder, Arthur* (from the series *Returning to Places that Name Us*), 2000, Ricky Maynard.



Acrylic on canvas: *Fire Dreaming at Murmunya*, 2003, Ronnie Tjampitjinpa.



Photograph: *Black Gum #2* (from the series *Australian Graffiti*), 2007, Christian Thompson.



Inkjet print on paper: *Untitled* (from the series *Cloud*), 2004, Michael Riley.