



Emily Kame Kngwarreye

## Awelye

Utopia Art Sydney

4th – 28th May 2016

### For Immediate release:

1994 was a momentous year for Emily Kame Kngwarreye. Unwell and weak, she was still determined to work, so working on paper became the solution.

When Kngwarreye tentatively revealed her first six works on paper, they were astonishing and unlike anything she had previously created. In due course I showed them to James Mollison, then Director of the NGV. We stared at these six sheets for some time and then he said, "They 're just black lines on white paper, but why are they so good?"

This was the beginning of a body of work that was a dramatic breakthrough for Kngwarreye. These lines were 'awelye' to her. In simple terms, body paint, but in the Anmatyerre understanding these lines represented the breadth of knowledge held by the women for their beloved land, Alhalkere. They encompassed the ceremonies, songs, dances, and stories. Perhaps this was why they were so good!

From a gallery perspective this new work was very exciting, and for the next few months we began to build a collection of paintings and works on paper, which eventually formed the exhibition 'A New Direction' in August 1994.

What was done was to simply allow the artist to pursue her vision. Interestingly Kngwarreye did not reveal this new work to others, they probably would have rejected it anyway!

The show opened to a really strong reaction, it was forceful, demanding work, appreciated by many and testing others. Kngwarreye once again had made an indelible impression.

This exhibition will provide the most comprehensive look at Kngwarreye's 'awelye' works since the historic exhibition in 1994. Included are three major paintings that travelled to the Venice Biennale in 1997, several works that were exhibited in 'A New Direction' 1994, works from Kngwarreye's retrospectives that toured Japan and Australia, and a few works from private collections never seen publicly before.



Emily Kame Kngwarreye, 1994, Untitled (awelye), synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 6 panels each 190 x 56.7 cm, private collection (exhibited in the Venice Biennale 1997)

Utopia Art Sydney Director, Christopher Hodges is available for interview.

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