



Desert Mob Marketplace

RHONDA PLUMMER painter



A lot of people go to this *Desert Mob Marketplace*. We have heaps of people like waiting there when it opens because that is one time of the year that you get a bargain from the art centres.

Everything is sold for under \$200.

I work in Tennant Creek at Julalikari Art and we attend *Desert Mob Marketplace* every year. We take a lot of paintings from our art centre to this marketplace and to sell them to the public. Everybody gets very excited about it and getting our artworks ready. We come in on the Friday and go back to Tennant Creek on the Monday. There are probably 12 coming from our centre. We catch up with other people and look at the artwork and see what other artists are doing around the central region.

We set it out on the tables. Each individual artist has got their own work on the tables and it's good. Sometimes it can get a bit hard when some artists see that other paintings have been sold. That can make it a bit hard but for most, it's good.

The buyers, they really like Aboriginal art and we just sit there and look at them you know, and watch them how excited they get. They are just so excited just to look

through our paintings and all the artworks around them. It makes me want to do more for next time.

Last year one man came in and pointed for me down the back. He sort of put his thumbs up and asked for my paintings. There was some on the table and he looked through that and then he asked for more and there was more rolled up and he wanted to look at that as well. Finally he said he'd buy it all. Yes, he bought it all. I brought 15 paintings and they all got sold. He must have been a big fan of mine because he bought some others the year before as well. Now he's coming to visit me soon at Tennant Creek.

When I was young, I painted with my mother. She used to paint when my father used to carve things from wood, handmade, and she would paint those things. I would watch her. But I think I started painting just a couple of years ago when I went to the art centre to start to work again as an artist. The art centres are very important for us, giving the support with all the resources and getting us recognised for our artwork.

I do abstract sort of paintings. I work with all the colours but also the colours of the spinifex, like from the spinifex country, you know? I did some grass paper made of spinifex with the colours of the country and the spinifex grass all over it. And two abstract paintings of a bush fire and after the bush fire. I'm using the greys and the whites and the ashes then, you know, the new green growth coming out of the charcoal. They got sold. I paint the turtles and fish. The

short-neck turtles are around the land and that is the sort of thing I do.

I think of myself as a painter now. With the marketplace and when I get people requesting for my artwork, I feel I'm becoming an artist. I am a painter.

Raewyn Kavanagh, Desart office manager

Can I just add a little bit about Rhonda's role on the executive of Desart? She's our deputy chair. She doesn't speak up a lot about herself but she's done some excellent work in the last 12 months. Desart is a member organisation for 43 art centres and there have been many challenges in the last couple of years, including the government intervention. Rhonda's work on the executive involved advocating for art centres. She was up in Canberra and I actually have a magazine with a photograph of Rhonda standing next to Peter Garrett. She's looking very proud with her art centre t-shirt on. It says 'Art Centres – keeping strong together'. So Rhonda's done some very good work speaking up for those art centres that are so important for communities.

About Desert Mob

The *Desert Mob Symposium* features Indigenous artists leading a day of stories, images and histories.

The *Desert Mob Marketplace* in 2007 was a feast of 27 stalls. Almost \$15,000 was taken in four hours by participating art centres.

Dance Site brought a crowd of more than 1,000 to watch and enjoy dancers from the Central Desert.

