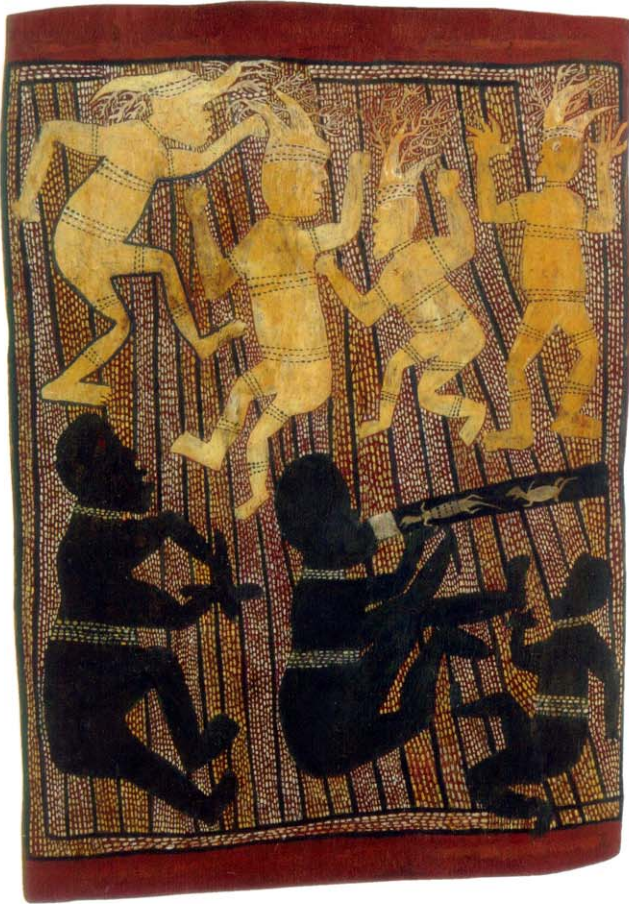


mossgreen
GALLERY



IMPORTANT EARLY ABORIGINAL
BARK PAINTINGS & ARTEFACTS

INTRODUCTION BY PAUL SUMNER



Welcome to the third exhibition of important bark paintings that Mossgreen has staged and the first in our new headquarters in Melbourne.

As I write this, the country is gearing up for its long awaited apology to the indigenous owners of this country for the undeniable wrongs of the past.

In cataloguing this collection of works from a largely overlooked chapter of Australia's rich visual arts history, one feels that thanks are also due — for the great legacy of powerful imagery and inspiring culture that is encapsulated in much early indigenous art.

We have an opportunity to understand this art form through what has been preserved. And through it uncover the ancient history of this country. If we did understand more, the heritage we have such, as the threatened rock art at Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia, would be an issue that everyone understood and cared about.

As one studies this field more and understands the imagery better, a separate and almost secret world emerges. One that in some ways is at odds with our largely urban existence and one that stamps its authority on our imagination.

These works were created at a time when the commercial influences of advanced trade were less. To my mind they benefit from this with an unrepeated strength and integrity. The custodianship of them is a proud and absorbing interest.

I am sure that this field will be recognised further by Australian art collectors as we move forward to recognise and gain a better understanding of our country's indigenous history. Selling exhibitions in this era may well be looked back on as the Halcyon Days of collecting for this area.

Many artists work and indeed whole collecting fields have gone through a familiar process of ultimate recognition: existence - obscurity - discovery, and I am sure that this area will be the same.

Early bark paintings capture the early evolution and genesis of an entire art form. They reflect the core beliefs of the culture that we are moving towards a better understanding and relationship with.

Paul Sumner
February 2008