



Minnie Pwerle, *Awelye*, 2002. Acrylic on linen,
286 x 197cm. COURTESY: FLINDERS LANE GALLERY.

of her sisters she will remove.

Pwerle most likes painting on her verandah at home. Nearby is an important women's site along the banks of a wide, usually dry, creek bed. Eucalypts border its edges and flat rocky outcrops lead from its sandy reaches into terrain which despite its apparent aridity supports much wildlife to hunt, grass seeds and other bush foods and sources of underground clear water.

On a fine winter's day it is peaceful and silent. Summer – with its hot winds and over 40 degree heat is very different – especially before painting offered an alternative lifestyle.

"I'd see Minnie, like most people sitting under mulga trees in the heat sometimes with strong hot winds carrying the stinging red centre sands, no running water, hundreds of flies and lots of dogs all fighting for a morsel to eat or living in a humpy made of scrap roofing iron, branches and leaves," says Alice Springs' Mbantua Gallery director **Tim Jennings**. "This can seem like a hugely uncomfortable and difficult life. But Aboriginal people often choose to live this way as breezes can cool, the stars can be seen and people can sit around a fire telling and re-telling stories."

As a police officer visiting the area, Jennings knew Pwerle for 18 years before she started painting. Now a leading gallery director specialising in artists of Utopia, Jennings is one of Pwerle's and Weir's main dealers.

To Tim Jennings Pwerle's painting career has given this shy, self-contained woman a new dimension late in her life. "She understands about mythology and about every insect, animal and plant, has participated in hundreds of ceremonies, and spent thousands of evenings watching the stars, crying over loss and laughing about the tiniest of things," he says. "This is reflected in her paintings which express an energy, and a perhaps hidden personality. There's a richness without inhibition – clean and vivid, a briskness about life, a beautiful innocence which, in the twilight years of her life, is being expressed in colourful and free flowing brushwork. To me it indicates that she is happy with her place in this world." ■

Framed Gallery Darwin will be showing recent work by Minnie Pwerle as part of the *Artists of Utopia* exhibition until 12 April 2005.