

## **The Mates Kimberley Project & the AILAE**

Kevin Shaw's Mates Collection of images from the Kimberley was exhibited within the Imagined Australia' event of the AILAE at Palazzo Vaj, Monash University Prato Centre, Italy in May 2007.

The Mates Collection is the visual point of aggregation for the Mates Kimberley Project, and the AILAE is the custodian and curator of the Collection in Europe.

### **The Mates Kimberley Project: A bit of history.**

The introduction of the Australian Federal Government's National Native Title Act in 1993 (NNTT 1993) fostered great hope among Indigenous people that their world would undergo enduring change for the better. It is now 2007, and for sociologically significant numbers of Indigenous people the NNTT 1993 is a highly expensive and flawed corporate symbol bereft of ecologically sustainable social and material referents.

The Mates Kimberley Project, coordinated locally by the Mates Kimberley Project group, initially comprised of Kimberley Indigenous people with unbroken links to their ancestral clan estates and local professional facilitators, is now linked also to the philosophy of the AILAE and its emerging network of referral and facilitation.

### **Aims of the project.**

The initial aim and scope of the project is to purchase a Kimberley cattle station that substantially encompasses an Indigenous (traditional) clan estate. The money to enable this purchase will be generated by, but not limited to, the sale of artworks depicting the Ngarrangkarni (Dreaming) of Indigenous clan estates, films on sustainable Kimberley ecology, and low volume-high value visitation (otherwise known as eco-cultural tourism).

AILAE endorses all efforts to establish meaningful exchanges and sustainable activities, to fulfil the project aims.

### **Sustainability and integrity.**

The project is based on principles of sustainable ecology, and symmetrical exchanges that resonate with integrity, quality and fairness for all parties. Importantly therefore, it is not a welfare organisation dispensing handouts to the deserving poor. Although for the present, professional facilitators work on a cost recovery basis, as the project is not yet able to pay full salaries.

The Mates project is unique by Australian standards as it receives no government funding, including government money redistributed vicariously by NGOs, and nor does it accept money or services from corporations intending to buy 'corporate social responsibility' in exchange for ecologically unsustainable resource extraction.

### **Project and support.**

The professional participants in the project have a long association with the Kimberley and Indigenous people. For example Kevin Shaw is the former Kimberley administrator of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 WA* and author of Mates: Images and Stories from the Kimberley and Work is Sacred: the Journey out of Welfare. Kevin and his mate Ngarra, a senior Indigenous

artist of international reputation, are the architects of sustainable ethical art practice in the Kimberley producing quintessential visual accounts of the Ngarrangkarni and clan estates. Ngarra, in all probability, is the first Indigenous artist to have his work documented and registered in a manner that makes it possible to determine whether an artwork is authentic, or a fraudulent misrepresentation.

The Mates Kimberley Project is beginning in earnest, and the Kimberley based group looks forward to authentic exchanges with European artists, thinkers, practical dreamers, philanthropist ecologists, lawyers and other professionals who value a philosophy of genuine inter-cultural engagement and a meritorious fair go.

**If you wish to know more of the Mates Kimberley project or would you like to promote an exhibit of the Mates Collection in Europe contact AILAE:**

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