

Aboriginal Artistic Expression

Purpose

Aboriginal artistic traditions were created:

- To celebrate the lore of the Land.
- To record stories related to The Dreaming.
- To map significant places.
- As a reminder to take care of the Land.
- To pass on information.
- To record ceremonies.
- To remember history.

Location

Sites containing artwork were often places of spiritual significance. Some were jointly used by men and women, but others were strictly gender specific, i.e. birthing sites or sites for final initiation ceremonies. Drawings, paintings and engravings were often 'redone' by new groups of initiates.

Aboriginal sites of the Flinders Ranges include:

- Yourambulla Caves, with two caves (or overhangs) containing Aboriginal Rock Art
- Arkaroo Rock, with many paintings created in red, yellow and white ochre and charcoal
- Sacred Canyon, with engravings representing animal tracks, people, waterholes and other symbols.

Materials and Technology

The following materials were often used to create Adnyamathanha art:

- Charcoal
- Ochre – some were traded as not all colours used were available in the area
- Ochre (for example) mixed with animal blood or oil (e.g. emu oil) to bind it together.

The oldest etchings were done with rocks that were harder than the carving surface because sites had to withstand years of natural weathering. For example, obsidian, a volcanic glass, was thought to be used because it is very sharp and fractures with a thin edge suitable for etching. (Obsidian is sometimes still used in medical procedures today.)