

Snakes alive! It's DIY design work



■ **Pavement art:** Aileen Buchanan, eight, puts the finishing touches to a snake while Emma Symes, nine, leaps over her at the chalk-in.

TIM MCGUINNESS



■ **Mystical:** An Aboriginal painting.

Dreamtime art on show

By **DAVE BLACK**

PAINTINGS by Australian Aboriginal artists which depict legends about the creation of life on earth have gone on show in the North-East.

The highly-abstract works – incorporating images of snakes, lizards and ancestral figures – feature in an exhibition at the Queen's Hall arts centre in Hexham which opened at the weekend.

The paintings have come to Hexham from the Rebecca Hossack Gallery collection in London.

Rebecca travelled to Australia and worked with artists from the Aboriginal communities, often presenting their work at her two London galleries.

The paintings on show at Hexham can be unfolded and read as if they were a story or a map. Some are known as dreamings and represent the Aboriginal Dreamtime.

Queen's Hall arts centre curator Tamara Lucas said: "The Dreamtime explains the origins of, and reasons, for life and conveys the time when ancestral beings, in the form of people and animals, travelled the land creating all its features.

"They are fine examples of the dot-dot painting motifs so characteristic of traditional Aboriginal paintings. It is a remarkable technique which takes considerable skill developed through many years of practice."

The Dreamtime exhibition is part of the *Songlines* summer programme organised by Rebecca Hossack to mark 15 years of presenting Aboriginal art.

It is being staged at the Queen's Hall as part of Visual Arts UK 1996 and runs until Saturday, September 28. The arts centre opens Monday to Saturday from 9.30am to 5.30pm.

■ Local artists yesterday teamed up with the public for a mass chalk-in – giving everyone the chance to draw their own designs.