



In one dazzling pink painting, oils gently pressed with fingerprints upon the canvas depict *Desert Flowers after the Rain* by Emily Kngwarreye, the eighty-seven-year-old Grandma Moses of the Aboriginal artist movement which Rebecca supports with gallery shows in London. She also took the artist Clifford Possum to meet the Queen, who asked him to paint the panelled doors of her bedroom.

Rebecca Hossack, who was born in Melbourne, went to look at the early Papunya Tula paintings north-west of Alice Springs, 'where the local teacher gave the Aboriginals canvases to paint their myths and legends, before they succumbed to Western education. At first I didn't like them. But their power was extraordinary.'

She brought the paintings to the gallery she had opened in London, so successfully that they were later shown in *Songlines* at the Barbican. The name recalls the invisible lines made of songs which tell of the creation of the land, ritually sung by Aboriginals. The late Bruce Chatwin, who made 'songlines' a worldwide catch-phrase for dream-time with his extraordinary account, often visited Rebecca Hossack's gallery.

In her eighteenth-century apartment, she still gets 'a buzz, from these energizing paintings'. Even the daily utensils that Aboriginals used are beautifully carved and shaped – decorative message-sticks that were carried like passports through unknown territory, shields with the Rainbow Serpent, a *coolamon* trug for carrying things, sacred bark from the Holy Tree – objects which the Aboriginal carried with him on dream-time exploration.

'These objects are purely functional,' Rebecca declares. But as the Aboriginal traveller today loads up the Golf with supermarket goods, they may no longer be made. Rebecca's marketing of paintings is of crucial importance in keeping alive the applied arts of the Aboriginals.



REBECCA HOSSACK : AUSTRALIA

Iridescent Aboriginal paintings manage to stand up to Rebecca Hossack's joyful celebration of colour and light in her apartment, where the wainscot is painted purple and the walls above it are splashed with glowing ochre. Aboriginal paintings dancing with pinpricks of light depict the Holy Serpent as he snakes his way across myriad thumb-prints in the sandy desert, or constellations in the sky. There is the Snake Spirit slithering, the Cockatoo Man in feathers, the Witchetty Grub's lozenge pattern, and leaves unfurling.

'Camp fires or footprints, waterholes or breasts – you can't track the symbolism in every picture. Like poems, they have different meanings,' says Rebecca Hossack.

Issey Miyake prints make good camouflage for Rebecca Hossack and her Aboriginal patterns