Kurnti was later to be named Jimmy Pike, was born in the Great Sandy Desert where he grew up as a hunter and knew the land intimately.

Pike started off painting generic landscape pictures, but soon started painting places and stories from his own country. He experimented with form and produced unique stylised aerial views of the land in psychedelic shimmering colours. Pike sold some of his original works in prison art shows. He also produced black and white lino cuts, using the traditional wood carving skills he had been taught in the bush.

By this time Pike was a celebrity and the best known Aboriginal artist since Albert Namatjira. Contemporary Aboriginal art had become internationally recognised.

Kurnti became aware of pale-skinned strangers who had settled in the lands adjacent to the desert. Many of his people were leaving the desert to work for these strangers on their cattle stations, and Kurnti decided to go with them.

Pike applied himself to his studies and became well known in the prison system for his beautiful paintings.

Pike was released from prison and served his parole on a tiny remote outstation on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert. Pike returned to a life close to the one he knew as a child in the bush.

Pat Lowe, a psychologist who met Pike while working in Broome prison, joined Pike on the outstation in the Great Sandy Desert. Pike taught Lowe about the land and his culture and Lowe recorded Pike’s stories, several of which Pike illustrated. These were published as children’s books. Pike and Lowe developed a close friendship, which became a de facto marriage.

Pike and Lowe moved to Broome but continued to visit their camp for shorter stays. They travelled, exhibiting Pike’s art work all over Australia, the Philippines, China, Italy, London (where they met the Queen) and Namibia.

Jimmy Pike left a legacy of superb paintings and prints that made an invaluable contribution to Australian art. Pike’s work continues to be appreciated and is currently being exhibited in Desert Psychedelic.

A referendum was passed giving Aboriginal people equal citizenship rights, including the right to vote and drink. In the same year, Australian Aboriginal pastoral workers were granted equal pay in principle, which was to be phased in over time. This resulted in many Aboriginal people being thrown off stations and forced to live in towns.

In prison, Pike attended school and learnt to read and write, he also took up painting. Almost immediately Steve Culley and David Wroth, the prison art teachers, recognised his talent.

Steve Culley and David Wroth began transferring Pike’s paintings to screenprints to produce limited edition prints, which were sent to Pike in prison to sign. Pike began to gain recognition as an artist through his paintings and prints.

Some of the world’s most exclusive department stores carried the label. This increased the awareness of Aboriginal culture as Pike’s stories were printed on the labels.

Pike was arrested for a drunken dispute. Another man in a drunken dispute was sentenced to life imprisonment for killing another man in a drunken dispute.

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