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**Book review | Volume 68 (Jun. 2009)**

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**article title:**

Book review: *Rock Art of the Kimberley: Proceedings of the Kimberley Society Rock Art Seminar Held at the University of Western Australia, Perth, 10 September 2005* by Mike Donaldson & Kevin Kenneally (eds)

**year:**

2009

**volume:**

68

**page numbers:**

77

**publication year:**

2007

**publisher:**

Kimberley Society

**publish town:**

Perth

**isbn:**

978-0-9587130-1-6

**no. pages:**

x+158pp

**text:**

It is always wonderful to see new books on Kimberley rock art, especially when they are full of colour pictures. *Rock Art of the Kimberley* is packed with superb images, including pictures of rock art not published elsewhere. The book is a proceedings volume, in this case of the Kimberley Society Rock Art Seminar which took place in 2005. There are eight chapters by a diverse range of authors followed by a 'Discussion' chapter. The Kimberley Society president and geologist Mike Donaldson sets the scene with an introduction and overview of Kimberley rock art. Donny Woolagoodja, a Worrorra elder and artist, then illustrates how Kimberley rock art has long been an inspiration for contemporary Aboriginal painting. Next, geologist Jim Ross, who has an interest in human evolution, gives a rather one-sided overview of the peopling of Australia and modern human origins. Archaeologist Sue O'Connor then focuses in on the Kimberley region to discuss changes in interpretations of the Aboriginal occupation of the area. Finally we get a focused chapter on what the book is all about, Kimberley rock art, by rock art researcher David Welch, who concentrates on Gwion Gwion or 'Bradshaw' paintings. Anthropologist Ian Crawford follows on with reminiscences of 1960s fieldwork related to his classic *The Art of the Wandjina* (1968) publication. A totally irrelevant chapter on natural deterioration of Pilbara (not Kimberley) rock art hastened by bacteria, by anthropologist Denis Callaghan, follows. This chapter would have best been left out of the volume. The final proper chapter looks at rock art in Kimberley limestone ranges and is by geologist Phillip Playford.

At the end, there is a very brief 'Discussion' chapter which is simply a verbatim transcript of questions, comments and responses after the papers were presented during the seminar. Disappointingly, there is no proper 'Discussion' at all.

The book is not much more than an edited record of the seminar and, in my opinion, would have benefited greatly from better editing. It is extremely irritating to read a chapter full of statements made by authors while they were interacting with their live audience. For instance, statements like 'David Welch is going to talk about these fascinating figures ...' (p.15) or 'The title of my talk is a bit different ...' (p.59) or 'What I would like to do in today's talk is ...' (p.63) is extremely annoying to read when such comments appear frequently throughout printed chapter texts. Indeed, the book really suffers as a consequence, appearing amateurish and awkward. Callaghan's chapter should never have been included in the publication and all chapters would have benefited from rewriting. David Welch's chapter is by far the best and it includes some of his most outstanding research results. Donny Woolagoodja, Sue O'Connor, Phillip Playford and Ian Crawford also produced good and informative chapters. Others provide excellent contextual information and all chapters have great pictures.

I highly recommend the book to students and interested members of the general public as it will provide lots of useful information. Others will appreciate the pictures and in this regard it is a welcome addition to the slowly growing number of books on Australian rock art.

## References

Crawford, I. 1968 *The Art of the Wandjina: Aboriginal Cave Paintings in Kimberley, Western Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.