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Artlink

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INDIGENOUS — Northern

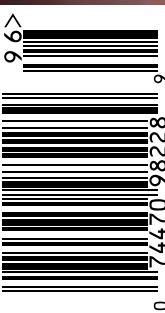
Aboriginal art from the
Kimberley and Top End

CONTEMPORARY ART
OF AUSTRALIA & ASIA-PACIFIC

Issue 36:2 | June 2016

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Image | Jane Skeer, *Quiet Square* (detail with interaction), 2015, VHS tape, steel, adhesive tape. Photo by James Field



Warmun Art Centre Gija Contemporary Art

Warmun Art Centre was established by leading artists of the Warmun (Turkey Creek) community in 1998. Warmun art is an Aboriginal owned enterprise governed by Gija artists. It is located amid the spectacular landscapes of the East Kimberley. Warmun art is a contemporary expression of land and culture central to Gija identity and has a national and international reputation. Artists draw on Ngarranggarni (Dreaming) stories and contemporary life. Buyers can be assured of ethical trading by purchasing directly from the artists through their own art centre.

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**WARMUN
ART CENTRE**

Gija Contemporary Art
Western Australia

Artwork: Phyllis Thomas *Gemerre* 2015 (detail), image courtesy and © the artist.

A close-up photograph of Freddie Timms, an elderly Indigenous Australian man, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a grey fedora-style hat and a dark purple button-down shirt. He holds a large, red and white striped didgeridoo in his hands, with his mouth positioned at the top to play it. A black microphone is visible on the left side of the podium. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with warm, golden light.

Freddie Timms at ANKA Panel Discussion:
Art and Homelands, Garma Festival of
Traditional Culture, Indigenous Creative
Industries Key Forum, Gulkula, Arnhem
Land, 10th August 2009.

"Art is old. It was passed on from our ancestors to our grandfathers to our fathers to us... Art is talking about the land, the sea, about our culture, about our connection, about our kinship relationships - song, dance, names, places, country, sacred sites. All these things are important to us."

– ANKA Directors' Statement

ANKA

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP ART, COUNTRY AND CULTURE STRONG

Working together to keep art, culture and country strong

The Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists, Aboriginal Corporation (ANKA*) is a non-profit, Aboriginal governed, peak advocacy body.

ANKA supports Aboriginal artists, artist groups and 49 Aboriginal-owned Art Centres across one million square kilometres of country in northern Australia.

ANKA is the 'face and voice' of Aboriginal artists from the Kimberley, Tiwi Islands, Arnhem Land and Darwin/Katherine regions, and celebrates its 30th birthday in 2017.

ANKA serves its members by working together to: keep art, country and culture strong; support the development of strong and sustainable Art Centres; develop training and professional pathways for young people to learn; keep our voices strong and respected; and to support the continuing development of the Aboriginal arts industry for its artists.

ANKA member artists make art in hundreds of homelands and outstation communities across northern Australia.

Web: ankaaa.org.au

Facebook: [ANKAAA.Aboriginal.Artists](https://www.facebook.com/ANKAAA.Aboriginal.Artists)

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56 McMinn St, GPO Box 2152, Darwin NT 0801

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Tiwi Design

Darwin/Katherine Region

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Kulumindini Arts
Larrakia Nation Arts
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Marrawuddi Gallery
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Minyeri Art and Cultural Centre
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Wudikapildiyerr Women's Centre

Arnhem Region

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Injalak Arts & Crafts
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Numburindi Artists

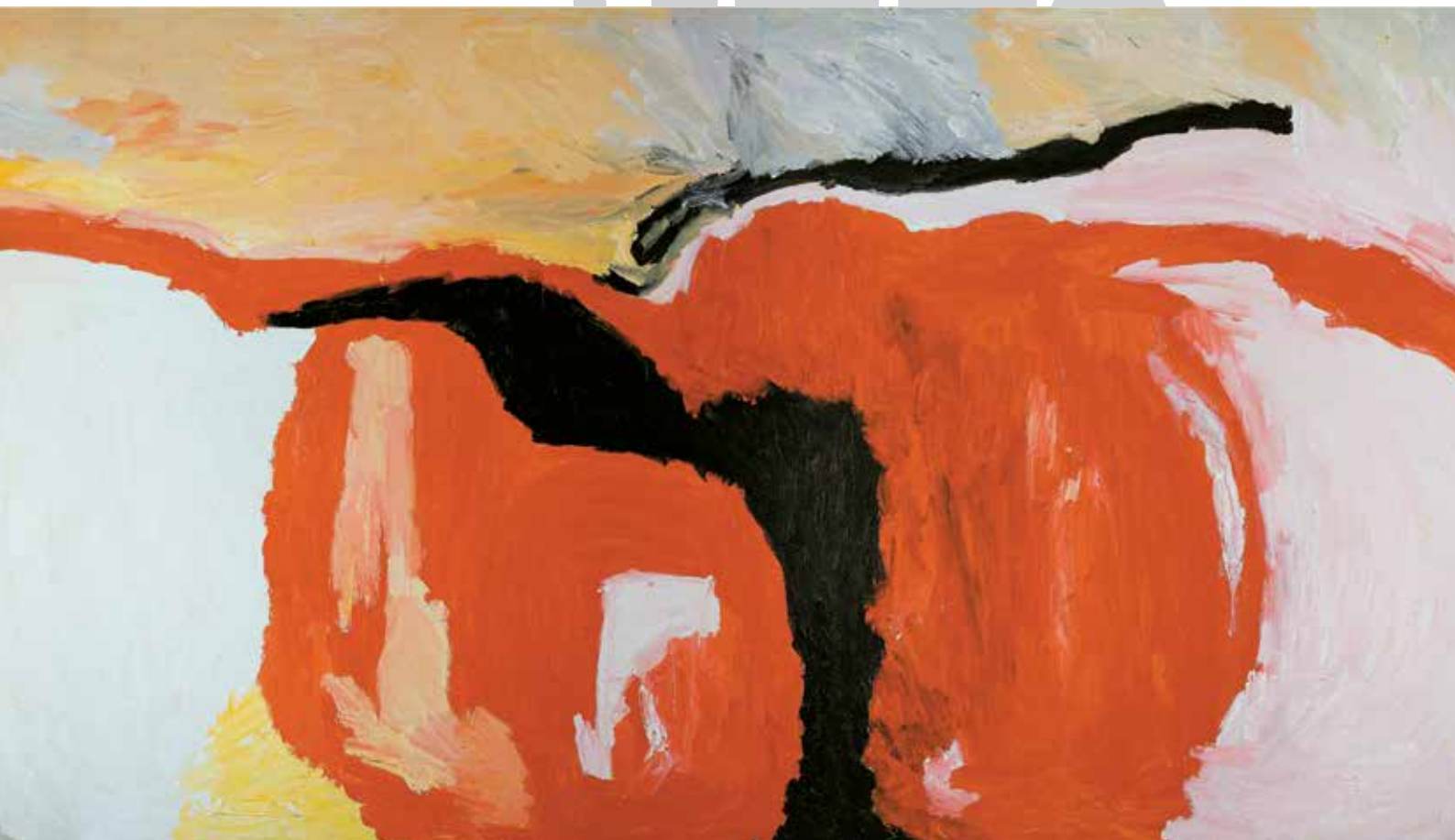
Kimberley Region

Kira Kiro - Kalumburu Arts Project
Looma Arts
Mangkaja Arts
Mowanjum Artists Spirit of the Wandjina
Laarri Gallery
Nagula Jarndu Designs
Waringarri Arts
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Warmun Art Centre
Yarliyi Art Centre
Yirrabii Arts & Crafts
Yulparija Artists from Bidyadanga

*ANKA has had a name change, formerly ANKAAA



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Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori / Dibirdibi Country (detail) 2011 /
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Jukuja Dolly Snell, *Kurtal*, Acrylic on canvas

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Bankstown Koori Elders Group, "After the Rain" Bungle Bungle (detail), 2013, ceramic on particle board, variable dimensions, Shepparton Art Museum Collection, 2014 Indigenous Ceramic Art Award 1st prize 2014.22, courtesy and © the artist.
Image: Jamie Durrant

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Image: Troy-Anthony Baylis, *Postcard (Bella and Cherry)*, 2010, Reconstructed faux-mesh, 167 x 97 cm

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BLACK WHITE & RESTIVE

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AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART

EXHIBITION DATES
28 MAY - 7 AUGUST 2016

SYMPOSIUM: BLACK WHITE & RESTIVE

A day-long symposium bringing together leading academics, curators and artists to discuss the dangers, tensions and nuances of creative exchanges between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous artists in association with the exhibition Black White & Restive.

DATE	Saturday 28 May 10am to 4pm
PLACE	McIntyre Theatre, Newcastle Museum 6 Workshop Way, Newcastle NSW 2300
COST	General: \$110 incl. GST Student concession: \$70 incl. GST Includes morning tea, lunch and drinks with private viewing of exhibition from 5 to 6.30PM

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Cover image:
Mithili Wanambi in Dhapi ceremony, 2011.
Photo: Sara Jane Harvey. Courtesy The Mulka Project

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Proposals should reflect our planned themes for forthcoming issues. See artlink.com.au/issues/future

Issue 36:2 | March 2016 Artlink INDIGENOUS Northern: Aboriginal art from the Kimberley and Top End

Guest-edited by the Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists (ANKA), Aboriginal Corporation

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Regina Pilawuk Wilson

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The Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists (ANKA), Aboriginal Corporation has welcomed the opportunity to guest edit the 2016 edition of Artlink Indigenous. ANKA is the peak body for Aboriginal artists and art centres in Arnhem Land, the Kimberley, the Tiwi Islands and Katherine-Darwin regions. Through its long-term activities in the areas of support, training, advocacy, marketing, referral and regional and cross-regional meeting and shared discourse ANKA has built a strong network of art centres, artists and artworker members, from diverse language groups and cultures across the north, including some of Australia's most remote Indigenous communities and homelands. ANKA has an unbroken record of holding four regional meetings and an AGM and annual conference each year since 2000. This structure has built the backbone for a strong Indigenous lead and interconnected northern artworld.

ANKA is led by a board of twelve Aboriginal artists and artworkers elected from its four regions. Linguistic diversity is at its heart, with artists in the ANKA regions speaking in excess of 50 different Indigenous languages. ANKA directors are typically multi-lingual and use English as a necessary lingua franca. Some directors speak seven Indigenous languages.

The retention of languages and their associated cultural knowledge is a high priority for cultural leaders. Language

issues vary across the diverse ANKA regions. For example in East Arnhem Land where 88% of all people speak an Indigenous language at home, people face the challenge to build English-language skills, while concurrently preserving endangered dialects and languages. In some other regions, daily use of kriols are common among younger people, with elders speaking local Indigenous languages. Many of the essays, conversations, artist and project profiles in this issue are fully crafted in English, although for the majority of Indigenous authors this is not a first language.

The values of ANKA and the viewpoints articulated in this publication are grounded in a broad philosophy of self-determination, which gained legislative authority in Australia in the 1970s when the Australian government introduced platforms for land rights and self-determination, replacing previous assimilation policies. Through the 1970s Aboriginal initiatives led to a widespread movement of people returning to establish homeland or outstation settlements on or near their ancestral countries, which clans had earlier been forced to leave, relocated to "centralised" missions, settlements and reserves.

As foregrounded in several articles in this issue, homelands and outstations remain vital to the contemporary Aboriginal art movement, which accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s with the return to country. Today, many Aboriginal-owned community art centres are situated in



larger Indigenous communities sustained by artists working in homelands and outstations. It is almost universal that artwork created and sold through Aboriginal-owned art centres either refers to or is literally and materially created from the fabric of ancestral country (through the harvesting of ochres, barks, pandanus, bush vines and dye from plant roots and leaves).

The linguistically and culturally diverse artists profiled in these articles have many core values in common. In particular, a dedication to ensuring intergenerational sharing of traditional knowledge and care for country. Intergenerational knowledge exchange is a key focus of the article on the Yirrikala-based Mulka Project, a dynamic multimedia archiving and production enterprise, which gives exemplary practical realisation to aspirations held by most other art centres in the north to work collectively to keep cultural heritage alive for upcoming generations and for the benefit of the contemporary world.

“Working together to keep art, country and culture strong” is the long-held ANKA mission. This reflects an integrated worldview where “art, country and culture” are inextricably interconnected and where, far from being autonomous or embodying an “art for arts sake” philosophy, art practice is typically intricately bound up with practical land-care and ecology, sharing of invaluable traditional knowledge, and agitation to transform the

world. Contemporary northern Indigenous art is often a weapon, a title deed, a talking stick, a means of economic empowerment and/or a crafted philosophical space.

Christina Balcombe Davidson is co-ordinating editor and CEO of the Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists (ANKA), Aboriginal Corporation.

The editorial advisory group for this issue is made up of cultural leaders and present or former directors from ANKA's four regions: Djambawa Marawili AM (Arnhem Land); Regina Pilawuk Wilson (Katherine-Darwin); Ngarralja Tommy May (Kimberley Region); and Jedda Purantatameri (Tiwi Region). Will Stubbs, Co-ordinator, Buku Larrnggay Mulka, Yirrkala, north-east Arnhem Land, is a content advisor. | www.ankaa.org.au

Opposite:
Isaiah Nagurrurrba on Injalak Hill. Injalak Arts, Gunbalanya, Arnhem Land

Above: Yuri Wiedenhofer, Robert Puruntatameri and Declan Apuatimi collecting clay on Melville Island. Photo courtesy Munupi Art Centre

Revealed

We are a sovereign people

Keynote address by **Franchesca Cubillo**
for the 2015 Revealed Symposium in Perth



Photo: Tim Acker

As Indigenous people of this nation we are a sovereign people, standing strong in our culture and remaining true to our heritage. We stand strong in our art; we stand strong in our culture and we stand strong on our country. Our ancestors, communities and families have welcomed many non-Indigenous peoples into this country, and today we see the continuity of our shared culture, history and traditions, I see Aboriginal art and culture at the very forefront of Australian identity and celebrated in such a way that previous generations would not have imagined.

Despite these remarkable achievements, we as Aboriginal people in this country have been continually bombarded by waves of dispossession, racism, marginalisation and genocide. I am both angered and frustrated that we continue to sustain the impact of colonisation on a daily basis some 226 years after invasion. We are not recognised as a sovereign people, we

continue to be governed by a nation that does not recognise us as equals.

Recently the Federal and State government of Western Australia have collectively created an unthinkable scenario whereby 150 (out of approximately 274) Aboriginal communities in remote regions of Western Australia are being threatened with forced closure. Families and communities have suffered the immediate impact of having their electricity and water shut off by officials in an attempt to force people from their homes, their country and their heritage. This is taking place without productive engagement and consultation with our people. What will be the short- and long-term effects on our communities, our artists and their families and what does that say about human rights in Australia's treatment of its Indigenous peoples? What can we do as a sector and how can we strategically respond to this racist government approach.

I believe that we can learn some remarkable lessons regarding the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art within the broader framework of Australia and, in this particular context, the wider Australian Art community.

If we look back over the last 226 years we can see that Aboriginal art has been principally viewed, acquired, interpreted and displayed from a Eurocentric perspective. As

early as 1788, the invading white forces on the frontier began to source, define and categorise Aboriginal people, their culture and their art.

In 1888, a small collection of Aboriginal drawings from the Palmerston Gaol in Darwin was displayed publicly as part of the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne. Known as the "Dawn of Art", this was the first time that Aboriginal art was exhibited and collected as fine art: not as ethnographic object, not as anthropological evidence of a culture that was dying, it was collected as fine art and shown to the wider public in Melbourne as works of art. This occurred because a senior government official, John George Knight, saw the beauty and value of these works and recognised the artistic capacity of these Aboriginal men.

Other non-Indigenous people were also encouraging and promoting the artwork of other Aboriginal men along the south-east coastline of Australia from at least the 1860s. Artists such as Tommy McCrae, Mickey of Ulladulla and William Barack created remarkable illustrations of contact history, despite them and their communities being affected by government policies of displacement, segregation and marginalisation.

Museums and art galleries in Australia and overseas have since acquired hundreds of thousands of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander works of art, adding them to their collections. Anthropologists and ethnographers such as Baldwin Spencer working with Paddy Cahill in Gunbalanya in 1912, Donald Thompson in Central Arnhem Land in 1935–43, Charles Mountford 1946–53, and Ronald and Catherine Berndt 1950s–90s all collectively built Aboriginal collections numbering in the tens of thousands.

Over the past 27 years I've had the privilege of seeing some of these collections that are held in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Germany, France and the United States of America. These significant and informative collections have developed because of mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous custodians. Equally, individuals and

various arts advocacy organisations operated informally to support Aboriginal artists and encourage and promote their artwork, be it a missionary trust fund organised to manage Albert Namatjira's income or a missionary-run art centre established at Ernabella in 1948. These historical collections are rich resources; not of a culture that has died, but of a culture that lives and survives in the very minds, hearts and spirits of the Indigenous peoples of this nation.

Today I am very proud. I look at all my Indigenous brothers and sisters who are artists, who are cultural leaders, who are advocates, who are politically assertive, active people, and I say – we stand beside you in unity. We are here because of the work those artists have done in the past. And we are here because they have fought, and

they have worked with non-Indigenous people, with the missionaries, with anthropologist, researchers and arts administrators. These artists of the past decided to engage with non-Indigenous people and to teach them about our culture and our heritage. And they created beautiful art! It was political and very powerful, including title deeds to country, statements

Below from left:
Wanduk Djuakan Marika (1927–1987), leader and artist of the Riratjingu clan of the Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land, was a co-founder of the Australia Council's Aboriginal Arts Board in 1973 and its first chairman. In 1963 Wanduk Marika helped send the first "bark petition" to the Commonwealth Government protesting decisions to grant mining leases on the Gove Peninsula to the Nabisco Co. and the lack of consultation with Aboriginal communities, leading in 1971 to the first land rights case in Australia.
Photo: Buku Larnggay Mulka

Tommy McRae, *Victorian Blacks – Melbourne tribe holding corroboree after seeing ships for the first time*, c. 1890s, drawing in pen and iron-gall ink. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.



William Barak

Corroboree, c. 1885,
drawing in charcoal and natural earth pigments, over black pencil.
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased from Aboriginal Art Fund from admission charges 1985.



about who we are and where we're come from. And there were non-Indigenous people – missionaries, anthropologists, arts administrators, art centre managers – who took these remarkable artworks and associated stories to the rest of the world. And they showed the beauty and richness and complexity of our culture.

In 1973 the Australian Government formed the Aboriginal Arts Board and again Aboriginal people – artists – were at the forefront. Dick Roughsey and Wandjuk Marika, two Indigenous Arts Board Chairs said: "Australia doesn't recognise the importance of our art and our culture, so we will take it overseas." Approximately 40 Aboriginal exhibitions travelled around the world in the first five years of the Aboriginal

Arts Board. Once the exhibitions had completed their tour they were donated to select institutions in different countries, so that they could learn and appreciate the remarkable work of art by Australia's Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous self-determination and self-management became the catchcry of many official government policies from the 1970s onwards and it also signalled the development of the Aboriginal homelands and outstation movement. Indigenous people were being recognised as legitimate citizens, supported and encouraged as active agents in their future. Aboriginal-owned art centres were established throughout some of the major Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. And we started to see a gradual increase in the

number of artworks emerging from remote Indigenous communities.

The art industry has changed a lot over this 45-year period. There are thousands of Aboriginal artists across Australia with the majority being based in remote communities. Artists from these remote regions have benefited from the establishment of community-owned and governed art centres within their communities.¹ These organisations fulfil a complex and multifaceted role. Their very presence ensures that cultural maintenance of ceremony, ritual, art and culture and connection to country is reinforced and passed on to the next generation on a daily basis. They also operate as an exciting economic hub for the community bringing in additional income into the community through diverse cultural projects. These centres are also the intermediaries between the wider art sector and the artist. They are the agencies who say to the art market: "Stand back a bit. Let our people do what they need to do." They are the ones who say: "No, you should be paying more for that, that's a good painting and that's a strong dreaming." They are the ones who help the artists fill out the government forms. They are the ones who provide that safe place to create and do what they do best. And that is to teach their art and culture to the wider world.

The secondary art market has also shifted in terms of how it engages with

Aboriginal art – it is now much larger, more aggressive in its consumptions of artwork (and artists) and within the last twenty years has also allowed and fostered fraudulent behaviour. There have been a lot of people who have made their fortunes on the back of Aboriginal art. Unfortunately, some Aboriginal artists have also been caught up in this economic frenzy.

What do we do as a sector to respond to this changing landscape? In the first instance, we work together – black and white – through a relationship based on mutual respect and trust. We facilitate Indigenous governance and self-determination at every opportunity. Not as a policy catchcry; but, rather, as best-practice methodology to ensure that our artists and our arts boards are making informed decision about the direction they want to head in. And then we stand together, supporting one another despite the odds. We should all be thinking about and developing a united strategy to deal with the Forced Closures of our 150 communities. Because if you think that the state and federal government will stop at closing 150 then you need to think again. We also need to get sophisticated in the way we engage with government, funding agencies, other arts administrators, curators, institutions, galleries, museums, philanthropic groups and the wider art market. All of these stakeholders

have their own unique agenda and we/you/artists/art centre managers/art centre board members need to be savvy enough to ensure our artists and art centres are getting the very best out of the scenario.

You see, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists will continue to create remarkable works of art. Its part of our DNA, and our ancestors will continue to teach and guides us. Those stories are still so strong, and those ancestors are still teaching. Those leaders are still guiding. We need to ensure we continue to provide those safe places on country where culture, art and the rich Indigenous heritage of this nation can be fostered and shared out to the wider community. Our art centres need to respond strategically to the changing market – always ensuring that we have Indigenous governance at the forefront.

The galleries and museums of Australia and the world can only do what we do; that is, show the very best of Indigenous art work generated through healthy Indigenous-owned and-operated art centres. Indigenous artists are committed and standing strong in their art, standing strong in their culture and standing strong on their land. So we need to ensure our communities are not shut down, we need to become more focused and committed to finding new and exciting ways to beat the system

and continually argue the case for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people as the sovereign people of this nation.

In conclusion, I say to the Aboriginal artists today – keep painting those beautiful works, keep telling all of those stories, the stories about our history, the stories about our country, the stories about our ancestors and the stories about the need for political change in our country. Tell all those stories, because they're all good stories and they all need to be heard.

___1 Around 80 Indigenous-owned art centres, including several mentioned here, receive government funding through the Federal Government's Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (IVAIS) program. The IVAIS program provides base operational funding to art centres, Indigenous art fairs, regional hubs and industry services organisations nationally, as well as providing support for the employment of around 300 Indigenous arts workers in visual arts organisations. The program delivers approximately \$20 million per annum.

This is an edited version of a keynote address presented on 17 April 2015 in Perth, as part of the annual Revealed program supporting emerging Aboriginal artists from Western Australia.

Francesca Cubillo is a Larrakia, Bardi, Wardaman and Yanuwa woman from the "Top End" of the Northern Territory. Francesca has been Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia since 2009, and is Chair of the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair.

A short history of Yolngu activist art

Will Stubbs on acts of art in the 2015 Istanbul Biennial



This is an account of some objects that appeared in the 2015 Istanbul Biennial and how two people responded to them very differently. Carolyn Christov Bakargiev was the curator of that Biennial and the person who identified and assembled the objects for exhibition. She proposed in her accompanying text that the land and sea rights achieved through art from Yirrkala formed perhaps the first case of activist art. And, as reported by *The Australian*, in her opening speech at the media launch “Christov Bakargiev mentioned the bark petition and Saltwater Collection – the theme of the biennial is saltwater – as early examples of art used to further claims to land.” As she stated, “The bark petition triggered the whole process of restitution of lands and it started with this gift of an artwork.”¹

Christov Bakargiev, who is Italian–American, curated the 2008 Biennale of Sydney and the 2012 Documenta in Kassel, Germany, both notable for their strong representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian art. By this time, she had established a reputation as a provocateur on the international curating and lecture circuit when the British *Art Review* magazine named her “the most influential person in the art world”.

In support of that stunning claim, for the 14th Istanbul Biennial in 2015, Bakargiev exhibited the Message Sticks from 1935, some of the Berndt Crayon Drawings from 1947, one of the Yirrkala Bark Petitions

from 1963, the Thumbprint Petition of the same year, some of the Saltwater Bark Paintings from 1998 and a new work by Djambawa Marawili from 2015 which connected the fire-imbued saltwater of Blue Mud Bay with the ancestral political conflicts of the Bosphorus. These were given a central role in the Biennial, with its overriding title *Saltwater: A Theory of Thought Forms*.

By coincidence, at a gathering of finance ministers in preparation for the G20² meeting in Ankara held the same time, the then Treasurer Joe Hockey visited Istanbul with Australian Ambassador James Larsen. In conversation, Hockey asked what the object on display in a glass case was? It was the Bark Petition. The Yirrkala Bark Petition has been on permanent display in the lobby of Parliament House for the entirety of Hockey’s parliamentary career. It has been described as Australia’s Magna Carta, a document originating outside the circle of power that fundamentally altered democratic governance such that it is honoured within Parliament itself. Not only had he never seen it, Hockey – a senior practitioner in Australia’s democratic process for decades – had never even heard of it, expressing surprise that he had to come to Turkey to learn about it. He is now Australia’s ambassador to the United States of America.

In March this year, Ambassador Larsen was almost killed in Ankara while travelling with his daughter near the site of a bomb blast likely set by Kurdish groups seeking



Djambawa Marawili AM at the
Istanbul Biennial, 2015.
Photo: Buku Larnggay Mulka Centre



Djambawa Marawili
Lorr', 2015, natural ochres on bark.
Photo: Buku Larnggay Mulka Centre

Left:
Yirrkala Bark Petition, 1963.
Courtesy National Museum of Australia and presented by permission
of the Yolngu people, Yirrkala

Right:
Yirrkala Message Sticks, 1935.
Courtesy Djapu clan (Yothu Yindi), Yolngu nation



autonomy and sovereignty from the Turkish state. This offers a useful point of contrast for Yolngu people, who have been patiently using art to express their cultural and political identity for over eighty years. Bakargiev asserts that they may be the originators of a tradition that now looms large in global art. But, as Hockey shows us, such patient and sophisticated efforts have not been respected within the very corridors of power that control their destiny in Australia.

Applying the principle of spiritual and intellectual sharing, which the Yolngu have used throughout their resistance to colonial ethnocentrism, this article will describe the objects shown in Istanbul. We have not

all had the opportunity to work side by side with these objects for decades, but may still benefit from the ideas they support without that privilege.

Mâk, The Message Sticks

Bugis seafarers from south-western Sulawesi have visited the northern coastline of the continent they call *Marege* (land of the Black People) for centuries before the British launched an entire “Mars Mission” of a full colony of diseased desperate prisoners to Sydney Cove eighteen years after their one and only visit. From 1770, there had been no intervening reconnaissance, scoping, negotiation, enquiry,

environmental impact statement, audit, interrogatory, surveillance or intelligence gathering. Nothing. And then, eighteen years later, motivated by overflowing human garbage bursting out of the hulks permanently moored in the Thames ... Bang! The full catastrophe set off to claim a new continent in the name of good governance.

The Yolngu, who had been trading with the Bugis and the Gowan Empire for centuries and who had empathised with them when the Dutch destroyed their four-kilometre square palace in 1664, were spared any invasive contact with the English for another century or so after they had been “claimed” in 1788. But in 1903 a “Stop the Boats” policy was enforced which caused economic collapse in Arnhem Land. The South Australian Government would decide who harvested trepang and the circumstances under which that trepang would be harvested.

Effectively, this led to a vacuum that was filled in the period following World War One by aggressive and undiplomatic Japanese and itinerant Europeans who regularly conflicted with the Yolngu. Yolngu men defended themselves and their women and killed many of these transgressors. In 1933, when a white policeman was speared on Woodah Island by an enraged husband for allegedly attempting to rape a Yolngu woman, the situation came to a head. The Lyons Cabinet debated sending a “punitive expedition” to “teach the Blacks a lesson”. The husband, Dhakiyarr, was sentenced to death by the Darwin Supreme Court. Subsequently, an appeal to the High Court of Australia³ acquitted him, but he disappeared immediately upon his release from Fannie Bay Gaol, apparently murdered by the police.

The anthropologist Donald Thompson volunteered to assist in avoiding another sanctioned massacre of Indigenous Australians. He was unpopular within government for his recently filed report detailing “concentration camps” along the Queensland coast where people were being interred and starved to death. It has been suggested that senior bureaucrats in Native Affairs anticipated that the warlike “Balamumu” would execute the young idealist but agreed to his mission. Thompson

was smart and somehow gained the trust of three Yolngu men, Natjiyalma, Larkaya and Māk, who were imprisoned in Fannie Bay Gaol for killing Japanese. He was able to learn enough language and manners to persuade them of his good intent. They gave him a Māk, or message stick, to take to their father, Wonggu, a senior elder of the Djapu clan of the Yolngu nation.

History tells us that Thompson and Wonggu developed a warm friendship and that, within days of receiving Thompson at Bayapula on Caledon Bay, Wonggu called Thompson to him and gave him another *Māk*. A message for those who had sent him that if the Yolngu would no longer be harassed they would cease to kill outsiders. The designs on the object show him sitting down peacefully in his mother’s country. They evoke the state of ecstatic harmony through just dispute resolution characteristic of the Makarratha ceremony.

History also tells us that this marked an end to the serial massacres of Indigenous Australians, which had prevailed since 1788. These two objects can be seen to constitute a Peace Treaty for the continent of Marege between the owners and the new outsiders.

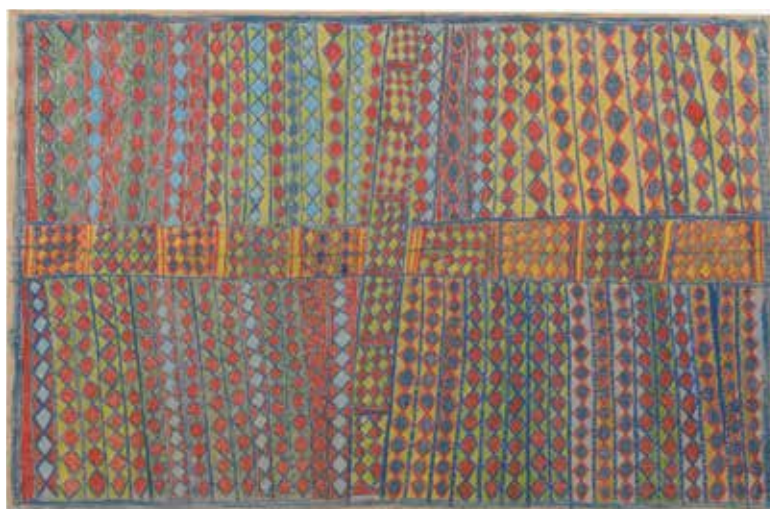
Yirrkala Drawings

Eight years later, Thompson organised with Wonggu the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit of the Australian Army, which consisted of fifty Yolngu ready to resist the full force of the imminent Japanese invasion. It was not until 1992 that this Unit received any pay or recognition by which time all but two were deceased.

In 1947 anthropologist Ronald and Catherine Berndt visited Yirrkala to understand the Law of the Yolngu. Hundreds of bark paintings later, with no sign of the flow stemming, they worried that they would never be able to carry the volume of material being freely generated. Berndt’s father was asked to dispatch crayons and butchers paper as an alternative. He sent the full palette of colours rather than the ochre tones Berndt had intended. The result was 365 dazzling works of philosophy, law and religion made by people who had never held a pencil



Name	Witness Mark	Witness
+	LARTJAH	ESJ
+	MANJAH	ESJ
+	MJAH	Bontoginga
+	GIRIKIRI	Ringam
+	WADJAH	Djalalega
+	DIJAH	Djalega
+	MAKURUJO	ESJ
+	MJAH	wandug
+	DIJAH	Djalalega
+	WILITAH	nyabihiga
+	LARTJAH	Lartjah
+	WITAH	Witah



Clockwise from top:
Yirrkala Church Panels
Photo: Howard Morphy, courtesy Buku Larnggay Mulka Centre

Dhalwangu freshwater at Gangan 1947, lumber crayon and chalk on butchers paper.
Berndt Collection, University of Western Australia

Thumbprint Petitions, 1963,
Courtesy the Department of the House of Representatives,
Table Office, Parliament of Australia

before nor used anything other than earth pigments. These remained largely hidden until the Art Gallery of NSW exhibition *Yirrkala Drawings* in late 2013.

Yirrkala Church Panels

When the reverend C. F. Gribble lied to the Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck, saying that he had attended a meeting of Yolngu at Yirrkala in 1963 where they had warmly welcomed the Swiss Bauxite mine being touted by the Government he could not have expected what happened next. The Reverend Edgar Wells, Superintendent of Yirrkala Mission, announced that not only was the matter never discussed at the meeting, but that he had been prohibited from telling the Yolngu of the plans to excise their traditional land from the Arnhem Land Reserve set up to protect them from just such interference.⁴

What resulted are two of the most important artworks in Australian art history: The Yirrkala Church Panels and the Yirrkala Bark Petition. The Panels are two four metre works on Masonite painted in earth pigments by eight artists from each of the two defining halves of Yolngu reality, *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa*, which reveal previously secret identities of land, people and spiritual realms. Made for the newly constructed Methodist church they were completed but not installed when Prime Minister Menzies announced the appropriation of Yolngu land for the Swiss mining company's hundred-square-kilometre open cut mine. The Yirrkala Church Panels featured no Christian imagery and were an attempt to balance that spirituality with the Yolngu cosmology. They were discarded by the Church and left to rot sometime around 1974 but rescued and brought into the fledgling Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in about 1978.

Yirrkala Bark Petition

The angst and fear felt by senior Yolngu at the shock announcement of their dispossession expressed itself in a unique and telling way. They created a series of petitions typed by Wandjuk Marika on his Remington and affixed to pieces of bark, which were consecrated with *miny'tji* (sacred clan design). Two of these, one *Dhuwa* and one *Yirritja*,

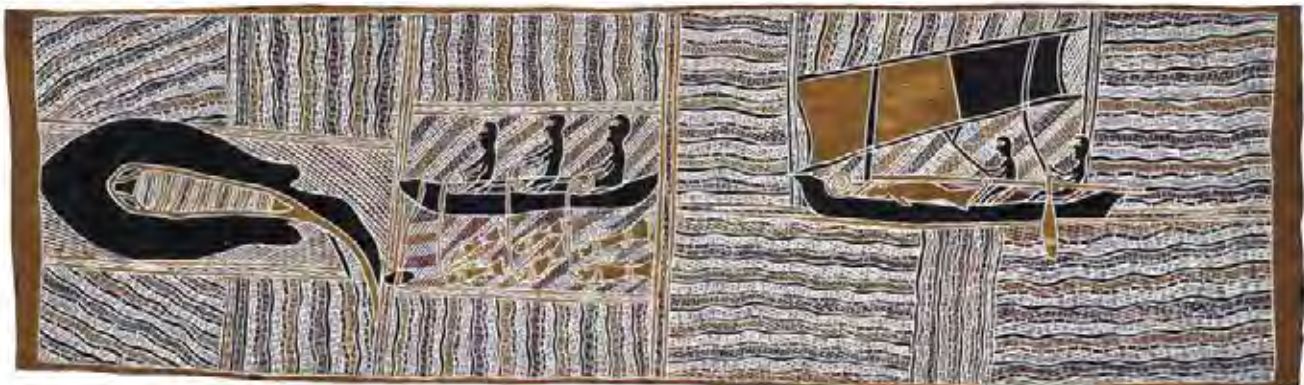
were sent to the Australian Parliament where their tender was rejected by the Government. The Mission hierarchy suggested that the signatories were unrepresentative and possibly underage troublemakers.

The Petition exhibited in Istanbul was one sent to Gordon Bryant MHR, a champion of the Yolngu, which is now held in the National Museum. The wording and signatories are identical to the two in Parliament House. The text of the Petition in Yolngu *matha* and English is so mild and deferential it is difficult to understand what an explosive effect it had on Australian democracy. In effect, it asks that, before they endure the fate of the other dispossessed Australian Indigenous groups that have had their land and sacred sites destroyed, they request that an enquiry be held with appropriate translators so that they may be heard and consulted about the fate of this special place.

Thumbprint Petition

Once the Government declined to table the Bark Petition in Parliament, the Yolngu created a second document. This document is known as the Thumbprint Petition. It directly led to the tabling of the Yirrkala Bark Petition but was never shown in public until it was exhibited in Istanbul. It comprises 33 thumbprints accompanied by crosses or other marks against the names of the full leadership of Yolngu Law, men and women. Each of these appears against the name of the signatory and is witnessed by a missionary or literate Yolngu. It reveals that the Bark Petition was indeed a corporate expression by the Yolngu nation and that the reason for the small number of signatories is that the leadership were unable to read and write.

The Government clearly understood that they could no longer deny the tabling of the Bark Petition but never tabled the Thumbprint Petition whose existence was forgotten in the files of the Office of the House of Parliament until rediscovered by that Office in the lead up to the fifty-year anniversary of the Bark Petition held in Yirrkala in 2013, which was attended by Prime Minister Rudd and the surviving signatories, now all deceased.



From top:
Djambawa Marawili
 Contemporary Madarrpa,
 natural ochres on bark
 Photo: David Silva Photographics

Dhukal Wirrpanda
 Gapuwarriku at Lutumba,
 natural ochres on bark
 Photo: David Silva Photographics

Saltwater Collection

In 2008 the High Court of Australia recognised that Aboriginal ownership of land extended into the sea to the extent of the low tide mark. This decision, known as the Blue Mud Bay case, was initiated by the Yolngu in their *Saltwater: Bark Paintings of Sea Country* collection and national tour prompted in 1997 as a result of a desecration of a Madarrpa clan sacred site by illegal poachers that year. Forty-seven artists created eighty paintings detailing the identity and ownership of marine areas along the entire coasts of north-east Arnhem Land. This stunning legal victory overturned the English presumption that the sea cannot be owned and will be of immense economic, political and spiritual significance in the future.

Northern Australia is characterised by huge tidal ranges, shallow seas and extensive Aboriginal coastal land holdings. Through this victory, countless rivers, creeks, estuaries, floodplains and islands will be protected from the destruction which has been felt in almost all other areas of Australia. It also permits sustainable economic activity by the Yolngu, similar to that which prevailed prior to the cessation of trade with their Bugis kinsman.

Djambawa Marawili created a bark painting specifically for the Istanbul Biennial. *Lorr'* (2015) depicts the patterns of five associated waters adjacent within Blue Mud Bay, to which has been added a sixth state of water – the Bosphorus – at the base of the painting, which is seen to wrap around the home of the lightning snake. Enmities, rivalries, disharmonies, hatreds and rank discord are consumed by Mundukul the Lightning Snake and “spat” across the fire-imbued seas of Yathikpa to the horizon. Incinerating and eliminating poisonous, historical grudges, it brought the cleansing powers of Mundukul to Istanbul in the form of Djambawa, further demonstrating that an act of beauty can be activism too.

In our ancestral law the area of Yathikpa (Grindall Bay within Blue Mud Bay) is affected by the sacred fire. Our ancestor Baru was a human who changed to crocodile form. He lit the fire that burns within the saltwater. That story has been given by our great grandfather to our grandfather and now is given to us. We do want to use these patterns which show the identity of our law which reaches out to other Madarrpa, to Gumatj and other clans. And now the fire is reaching out to meet Turkey. So the patterns have come but not just the fire but the human person who made them is almost coming to Turkey too. I will be there. This is our spiritual way of reaching you. Two messages, the art and the person who made them, are coming too. It is with this faith and this confidence that I can come and meet you. It is in my soul and it is in my blood that I can come and meet you.

I have made a new work to reach out to a new world to go and cleanse the country and to go and stop what has happened before in that country in the first and second world wars. This is what the patterns and designs mean. I think by the art it is really reaching out to better healing the past and finding partnerships and relationships for a long term future. Finding a friendly way of meeting for you guys in Turkey. That's what saltwater can do in our rituals.⁵

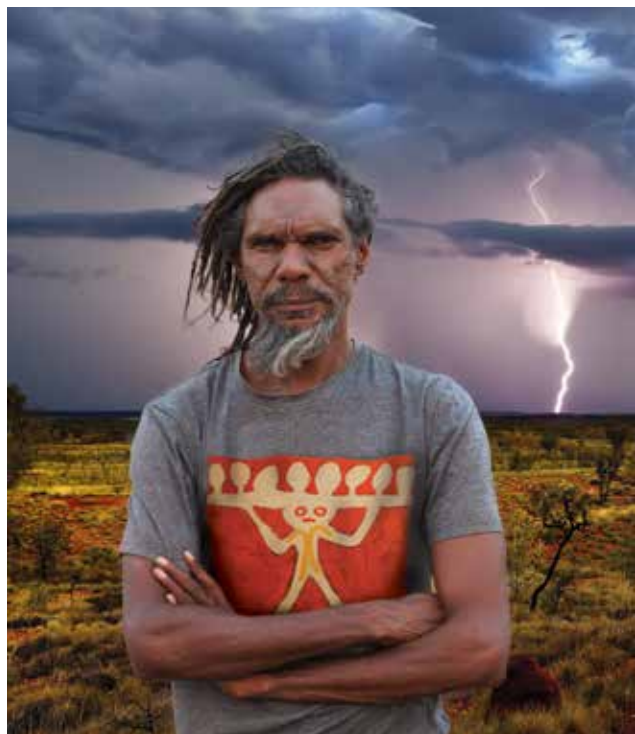
Djambawa Marawili

^{__1} Fiona Gruber, 'Vernon Ah Kee explores racial brutality in the Istanbul Biennial' ^{__2} The meeting Hockey attended was the B20. The B20 leads engagement with G20 governments on behalf of the international business community ^{__3} Tuckiar v The King (1934) 52 CLR 335 ^{__4} Edgar Wells, Reward and Punishment in Arnhem Land, Aboriginal Studies Press: Canberra, 1982 ^{__5} Djambawa Marawili, personal communication with the author.

Will Stubbs worked as a criminal defence advocate in Sydney and the Top End for ten years. In 1995 he began working at the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre with Andrew Blake. After Andrew left in 2001, Will continued as the art centre co-ordinator. In 2015 he was awarded the Australia Council Visual Arts Award for advocacy.

The land and the sea can't talk We have to talk for them

Djambawa Marawili AM and Annette Kogolo with Christina Balcombe Davidson on collective painting projects in support of land and sea rights claims



Through the decade from 1997 to 2009 major collective painting projects played pivotal roles in two of Northern Australia's largest land and sea rights claims. This conversation recalls and celebrates the Saltwater Collection, now held by the National Maritime Museum, Sydney, and *Ngurrara II*, "The Great Sandy Desert Canvas", held at Mangkaja Arts, Fitzroy Crossing.

The Saltwater Collection includes eighty bark paintings by 47 Yolngu artists and the accompanying book, now in its second edition (2004).¹ This extensive collaboration of artists from fifteen clans and eighteen homeland communities in east Arnhem Land was initiated by Madarrpa clan leader Djambawa Marawili in 1997, following his indignation at discovering illegal fishing on a sacred site in his clan estate. The 80 paintings

jointly form a comprehensive map of saltwater country from Wessel Island in the north to Blue Mud Bay in the South, with barks displaying sacred clan designs demonstrating enduring connection to specific sea country. Saltwater was a key catalyst and evidence base for the landmark Blue Mud Bay Federal High Court sea rights case, successfully concluded in July 2008.

The High Court of Australia in the 2008 Blue Mud Bay case confirmed that traditional owners of over 85% of the Northern Territory coast have exclusive rights over the intertidal zone (between high and low water mark) and tidal rivers to the extent of the tidal-influence.² This effectively confirmed that the intertidal zone is Aboriginal land pursuant to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, giving traditional owners the rights to care for and manage the area, and to control access, including for fishing.

Around the same time, Ngurrara people³ in Western Australia were fighting the Ngurrara claim, the largest native title claim in the Kimberley, extending over a vast area of the southern desert. Wangkajunga and Walmajarri elder Ngarralja Tommy May came up with the idea to make a collective canvas.

To start the land claim work we went to Kurtal.⁴ We went twice. The first time we cleaned out the jila and two women were the only ones who painted. Later, we were wondering how to tell the court about our country. I said then, "If Kartiya [Europeans] can't believe our word, they can look at our painting, it all says the same thing." We got the idea of using our paintings in the court as evidence.⁵

Ngarralja Tommy May

The *Ngurrara Canvas II* was painted in 1997 at Pirnini outstation during the first Ngurrara Native Title Tribunal hearing. The collaborative work of 43 Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, Mangala and Juwaliny artist

claimants, the immense canvas, produced over ten days, maps all the living water, the sacred *jila* (water holes) and *juma* (soaks) across the regions of the claim.

The major victory of the Ngurrara claim was determined at Pirini outstation in November 2009, encompassing nearly 80,000 square kilometres of desert country, which the claimants had been driven off in the 1950s and 60s. The 1997 big canvas, which evidenced enduring and specific relationship to ancestral country, was displayed on site. After the 2007 victory the Ngurrara immediately introduced formal care for country provisions. Further small claims were determined in 2012; however Kurtal, the key sacred waterhole for renowned artists Spider and Dolly Snell and Ngarralja Tommy May, is still concluding determination. The artists' quarter-century quest to regain full custodianship of Kurtal is the moving central theme of director Nicole Ma's 2015 award-winning documentary *Putupparri and the Rainmakers*.

Saltwater (2007) and *Ngurrara Canvas II* (2007), are remarkable efforts of artistic leadership and collective intervention. Both toured nationally to museums and galleries during the claim periods; and entered Australian art and legal history. These are activist artworks which continue to work in multiple worlds. Their acceptance as "title deeds" for country, recognises traditional Indigenous as well as mainstream Australian law. They bring sacred (previously closed) knowledge into a new open world and their content guides landcare. As such they actualise, in a very different context, the dream of the 20th century European avant-garde "to re-organise a new life praxis from a basis in art"⁶, and in doing so to make art practical again.



Opposite:
Tom Lawford, promotional still for the film
Putupparri and the Rainmakers,
(Dir. Nicole Ma, 2015).
Image courtesy Sensible Films

From top:
Installation shot of the Saltwater Collection of Bark Paintings of Sea Country,
National Maritime Museum, Sydney, 2000.
Purchased for the NMM with the assistance of
Stephen Grant and Bridget Pirrie of GRANT PIRRIE Gallery.
Photo: Andrew Frolows, courtesy NMM

Nyilpirr Spider Snell dancing Kurtal (snake dreaming)
on the Ngurrara Canvas in Canberra in 1977 to remind those
sitting on the High Court of the depth of his people's claim.

The Saltwater Collection and the Blue Mud Bay Case

Djambawa Marawili from an interview with **Christina Balcombe Davidson**



Above:
Djambawa Marawili AM,
Yilpara Homeland, Blue Mud Bay, 2015.
Image courtesy: Creative Cowboy Films

Opposite from top:
Stills from *Let's Care for Country*
[*The Yirralpa Rangers at Baniyala Homeland*], 2015.
(Dir. Marcus Barber and Djambawa Marawili).
Camera: Marcus Barber and Ishmael Marika, the Mulka Project.
A video about the development of the care for country program and
Indigenous Protected Area following the Blue Mud Bay Sea Rights Case.

Yirralpa Ranger Gurrundul Marawili painting a Larrakidj (hollow log).

Mud flats at Yathikpa, at the mouth of the Gunmurrutjipi River, important
sacred country for the Madarrpa people south of Yilpara Homeland.

It is really important to keep talking about the land and the sea. The message went cold and hidden away recently. Government people say we respect you for your country and your leaders. You know they always say this. But whether they are really sure? Whether they are respecting the land? Whether they are respecting the elders? Whether they are respecting the culture?

For us, it is really important to continue to express ourselves and share what we have done for our people through the land and sea rights. This is still one of the very important things. We need to put that message out there: that Aboriginal people are really connected with those countries by inherited title (given to us Yolngu by Barama, for *Yirritja* people, and Ganguwu, for *Dhuwa* people⁷ and by the ancestral beings). We really want to run our own affairs in our own tribal countries. The Saltwater paintings and book, are telling us this. There are patterns and designs and stories beyond: as sand sculpture, sacred dilly bags, song, dancing and culture. These are our *Rom* (law).

Some people are saying that now the culture is different. The law and the country are different. Or the sea is different. But in those areas along the coast of Arnhem Land and the Northern Territory the patterns are there, and the stories and songs are there, where they were laid by the ancestral beings. Those paintings are documenting and telling people that we really do have our rights to maintain and manage the land, and that whenever big things come into our lives, like mining or other big things, we need to write, to paint, to speak up. So that people can see that we own those places. It is for everyone. For whitefella and blackfella. We have totally a right to manage and speak for those areas, and to share our knowledge and wisdom about the country. And when new jobs are being built up on country, the mainstream needs to look to the owners of that river and that bay. The clan groups who are connected to it by title. They are the right people. It is not enough just to talk about Aborigines.





In the early days people were painting for pleasure, or to show who they are. They did not know how to speak English or to write. But they made objects with their own hands, to tell those early missionaries and visitors who they are. They were describing themselves in those objects. Saying – I am *Yirritja*, I have songs, I have names, I have the patterns and designs for this Country. This is what they were showing through those patterns.

But when my time came from the 1970s, when I became an artist. I wanted to do something to turn things around and make sure everyone understands what I am trying to tell all Australians.

To start with, I was speaking in English and not allowing people to go around fishing in my bay without permission.⁸ But they still did not understand what I was saying. So I had to do it another way. I turned it around and put the message into art with the Saltwater project. The art was coming from those individual bays – from the important places. The bays have patterns and designs and stories – in the bay and on the sea and the land – those designs are titles for the Country. We got together with all the clans and put the patterns and designs on the art, because I knew they were a document of those countries and for individual clan groups. My father [artist Wakuthi Marawili] taught me. In the *balanda* world I think we can say they are documents: a message to the world, and also to Australia, and to the younger generation, our grandsons and granddaughters.

You know that was one of the big things we did with Saltwater. To put our soul out in public. To share our patterns and designs – our souls. Some of our families – *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa* – said to me: Why are you digging our minds? Why are you digging our souls? Why are you draining our knowledge? You are killing us. And I wanted to answer them back. You know – we are not talking about you now. We are talking about the generations who are coming behind us. And that imagination and that vision is what is happening today in 2016 and 2017.

So now when everybody says “Oh they have culture”. No, the story is like this: the land is there, but the land cannot talk. The people who are living on that country, or who are connected to that country – they will talk. They will describe in two ways: by talking in languages [Indigenous languages and English]; and by demonstrating, by singing and dancing and, if they cannot understand that, through patterns and designs. If they cannot read the patterns and designs by connection or cannot listen to the story, then there is sand sculpture. The sand sculpture is really connected onto the country. Every bay has stories and patterns and designs and the sand sculptures are connected onto the country, like a stamp. You know. You go and put a stamp on paper or whatever. This is a stamp. That is what sand sculpture means to me. But to other blackfella and whitefella, they have to realise and know and understand about their own significant sacred sites and sacred areas.

People should listen and learn and understand, because this is what Australia means. Australia has patterns and designs and stories, and objects beyond that. Australia has a culture, a significant culture for both worlds. For blackfella and whitefella to know about and to understand.

What is the meaning of blue white water in the sea? And the green ferrying water running from the inland? And also the aggy baggy blue water inland? It is all meaningful, and they all have stories. And this is what I say; this knowledge is a document for the country. Of course it is.

But we are on a different territory today when new things are coming into our lives, like mining and money affairs, and sometimes Yolngu people don't care about what belongs to us. But if we do care for those bays and rivers, and the water holes and rocks, it is a very powerful part of our connections and titles that we remain to care for those countries.

In the old times in Arnhem Land countries, people were living and doing their art. They were putting it in the church. We used to call it *Ngarra*. *Ngarra* people ran the significant

sacred ceremonies. They put their patterns and designs on their chests like we still do – to tell that the pattern came from their country. This was *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa* all telling each other. There was also a mark – shapes: like diamonds, or curly marks, or stripy ones. The patterns belonged to the different clan groups and they were like titles.

Yolngu people of knowledge don't need to dig. I have knowledge written by my grandfather and my fathers. I don't have to go to initiation any more. I went through all those laws. When I was born, then as a young adolescent, then progressing to being the highest ceremonial leader (in Yolngu systems) as a Djirrikay. It's like you progress through university and become a doctor and a professor. In the beginning it was about things like dancing, singing, making *yidaki* [didgeridoo] and picking up *bilma* [clapping sticks]. Then about going back over again and again. Then I have to be a leader, a spokesman, a warrior. To come to that stage where you have to be peaceful and practice humbleness and kindness, before you come down further and have to be a hunter, then you become a worker. You go from on high and down again to be a spokesman or worker. You have to listen to all the people, listen to the community, be a leader.

That Saltwater Collection shows that we are the artists. We are archaeologists. We are the anthropologists. We have this knowledge in our own right and choose to share it through our art. We bring it into the stage where people can see and learn how to read and understand the country.

Opposite from top:
Sea Rights victory celebrations,
Yilpara Homeland, Blue Mud Bay, 2009.
Image: Isaiah Balcombe Ehrlich

Traditional burning of country
on approach to Kurtal Jila, 2014.
Image courtesy Mangkaja Arts

Film still from *Let's Care for Country*
[*The Yirralpa Rangers at Baniyala Homeland*], 2015
(Dir. Marcus Barber and Djambawa Marawili).
Camera: Marcus Barber and Ishmael Marika,
the Mulka Project.

Ngurrara II: The Great Sandy Desert Canvas and the Ngurrara native title claim

Annette Kogolo

The *Ngurrara Canvas II* is our heritage. It is the map of our country. It tells about the strong lines of our traditional knowledge. It tells us the important places that we need to manage. And it tells the rangers what they need to do on country to keep country healthy. Our caring for country activities need to be linked to this important knowledge. It is a very, very large canvas (about 10 x 8 metres). At the moment, it is being kept at our Mangkaja art centre at Fitzroy Crossing. The Ngurrara Canvas Mangkaja Group was formed in 2015 to manage the canvas and to make sure it is shared with the next generations.

The canvas gives us a map made by our elders. Because they don't understand English and they don't understand how to read and write, they came together and talked about how we are going to tell government that we are the bosses of our land. We are the owners and the keepers of our land. And the important way they thought about it was for the four language groups – the Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, Mangala and Juwaliny people – to come

together and decide to paint together and tell their stories through their art. This was actually a really good way: a picture, to show people where their country is. So they painted from the top and to the bottom and right across, on our country. When we had the people from the native title and the government coming to talk to us about country, the elders came up and stood on their painting and said this is my place. This is where I was born. This is where I once lived, hunted and gathered. It is a very important place. And we very much know that we strongly are the owners of our land.

One of the most important things is that, when we got our native title, our land back from 2007, we said, look what are we going to do about looking after our country? The first thing was to think about employing and encouraging our young people to come back onto country and to learn how to look after it. For the elders to pass on the traditional knowledge, so we can look after the country and work in a better way, and keep things going how it used to be, a long time ago. Since our elders and our



Ngurrara Canvas II produced by 43 artists and claimants in 1997 in support of the Ngurrara people's land claim. Ngarralja was photographed here in 2015 after the inaugural meeting of the Ngurrara Canvas Management Group that was established to direct its future care and use. © Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency



families had to leave the land through to the late 1950s, everything wasn't maintained properly. Our *jila* [water holes]. We are the *jila* people. In the desert we have to dig for our *jila* and the water comes up to the surface. It is always important to protect and look after them. We share them with our animals, and we look after the plants, and everything that lives on the land. So everything has been shared. Making sure that everything is good on country.

Our IPA [Warlu Jilajaa Jumu Indigenous Protected Area] tells us the protocols to look after country.⁹ It was declared on the day of our native title. It was determined in that year [2007]. But it is not only the area of the IPA that needs to be protected. It is everywhere that needs to be protected. That is the most important thing we think of every day, caring for and sharing that knowledge of country. Visting this very larger country, where we work together with the other language groups to make sure these places are being worked on and cared for.

I believe that [native title] is about blackfella law. The painting is only for proof. When I go to court to tell my story, I must listen very carefully before I open my mouth. Maybe the kartiya will say, "We don't believe you" ... That's why we made this panting, for evidence. We have painted our story for native title people, as proof. We want them to understand, so that they know about our painting, our country, our ngurrar. They are all the same thing.

Ngarralja Tommy May¹⁰

___1 Saltwater – Paintings of Sea Country: The Recognition of Indigenous Sea Rights, second edition, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in association with Jennifer Isaacs & Associates, 2014. First edition published 2009 ___2 See Ron Levy, 'The Legal Battle', *Ibid.*, p. 115 ___3 Ngurrurara means home, the place that they "have feeling for" from The Ngurrarawarnto Wulya Martamupurru – Ngurrara Healthy Country Plan 2012–2022 ___4 Kurtal is the sacred Jila (water hole) which Ngarralja Tommy May, and artists Dolly (deceased) and Spider Snell are connected to ___5 Ngurrara: The Great Sandy Desert Canvas, A South Australian Museum travelling exhibition, catalogue, 2007. Unpaginated ___6 Peter Bürger Theory of the Avant-Garde, Translation from the German by Michael Shaw, Manchester University Press, 1984, p.49 ___7 Everything in the Yolngu worldview (including people and everything that is part of the land), is made up of two moieties Yirritja and Dhuwa ___8 The Garranalai sacred site near the homeland community of Yilpara/ Baniyala ___9 The Warlu Jilajaa Jumu Indigenous Protected Area: "covers an incredible 1.6 million hectares of arid scrub and desert wetlands in the north-west of Western Australia's Great Sandy Desert. Cared for by its traditional owners, the Ngurrara, the area is named after the fire they use to keep the land healthy (warlu) and the permanent waterholes ('jila' or 'living water') and seasonal soaks (jumu) that are their key source of water." <http://environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/declared/wa.html> ___10 Ngarralja Tommy May in Chance 2001, p. 38, quoted in Anker 2015, op cit.

This article builds on a session with the same title by the authors at the World Indigenous Network Conference (WIN), Darwin, 2013.

Djambawa Marawili is Yolngu Madarpa clan leader from Yilpara/ Baniyala Homeland in Blue Mud Bay, Arnhem Land. In the 1970s, during the homeland movement he returned with his father Wukuthil Marawili to Yilpara the area where his ancestors had been buried for time immemorial. Djambawa was Chairman of his art centre, Buku Larrnggay Mulka 1994–2000, and of the Arnhem Land and Kimberley Artists, Aboriginal Corporation (ANKA) 2000–16. He has sat on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council and is currently a member of the Prime Ministers Indigenous Advisory Council. Mr Marawili is a Djirrikay, the highest level of Yolngu ceremonial leadership.

Annette Puruta Wayawu Kogolo is a senior Walmajarri woman and traditional owner. Annette is an active member of her art centre Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency and a cultural advisor for the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre and was ANKA Deputy chair 2011–12. She was a claimant and interpreted for the Ngurrara Native Title Determination in 2007 (Justice Gilmore and Mr Dan O'Dea, Member National Native Title Tribunal).

Christina Balcombe Davidson is CEO of ANKA 2007–2016. She previously lectured in Art History and Theory at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney and Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne.

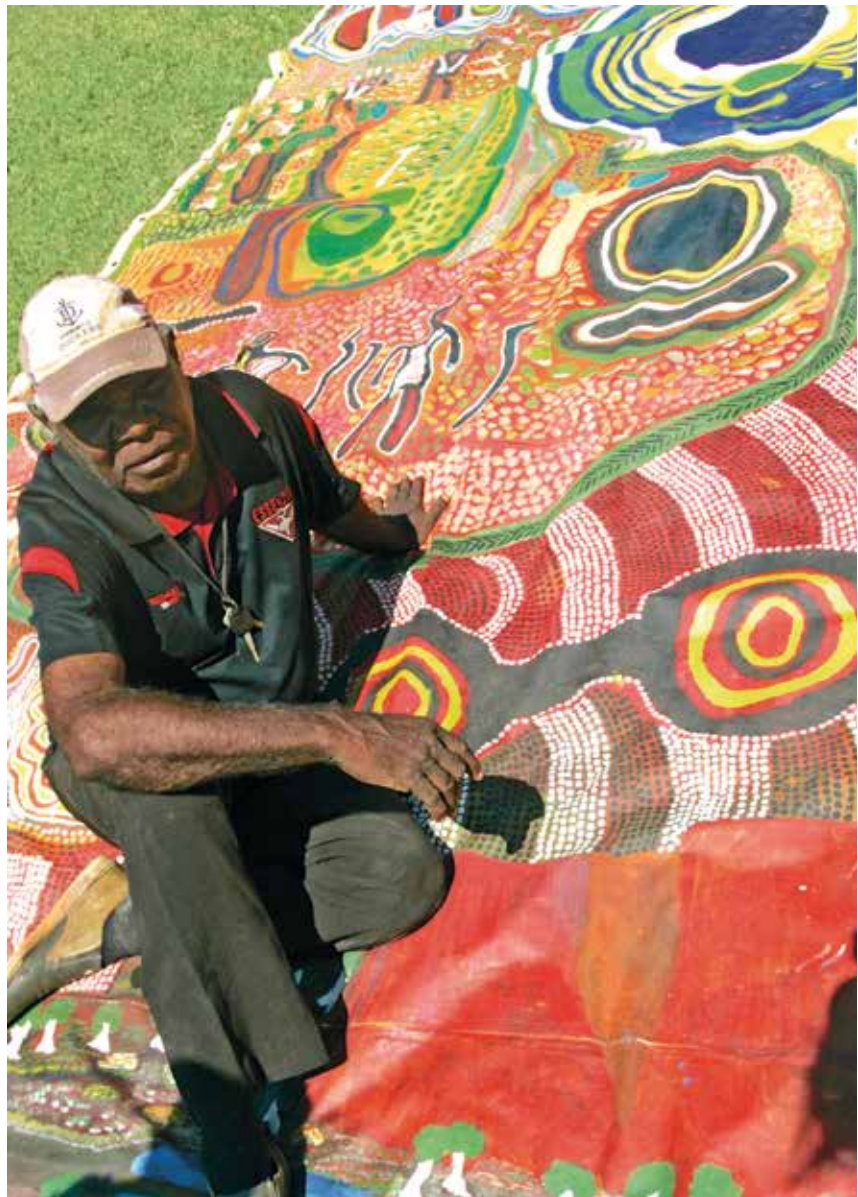
Ngarralja Tommy May

Jila Kurtal

N

Ngarralja Tommy May sitting adjacent to his section of *Ngurrara Canvas II*. Ngarralja was one of the driving forces behind the production of *Ngurrara Canvas II* produced by 43 artists and claimants in 1997 in support of the Ngurrara people's land claim.

Opposite:
Ngarralja Tommy May's section of the *Ngurrara Canvas II*, 1997.
This is where Lawal Lawal died.
Then he changed into a snake and travelled back to his *jila*, Kurtal.
© Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency



I was big when I left my country. I was already hunting by myself. I was with my young brother and my mother. My father was dead by this time. He passed away in the desert. We walked to the north, to Lampu well [Well 49 on the Canning Stock Route]. We came to old Balgo mission and spent time walking around Old Billiluna Station, Old Balgo Mission and Paraku (Lake Gregory).

Countrymen who were already working on the station knew from our *warlu* (fires) that we were there. We knew about stockmen already. Some were from our family; they gave us bullock meat. After living around there for a good while we walked [west] to Jurnjarti; there's a *jila* (spring water) there. We sat down on top of the *jilji* (sandhill) waiting. We were just bushmen, waiting for damper – we were hungry. They brought a bucket of tea and big mob of damper.

We kept walking to Tangku Spring. We stayed there for a while then they took us, to take us to school. We came on an old truck; we came with *ngarka* (pubic covering), no trousers. While we were travelling George Wells, the station manager from Meda came along. He took me to Meda. He was a good manager for me. I got that name May from there [from the May River]. I never got lost. I didn't go to school then but I learnt how to handle horses and cattle at Meda.

I worked around too many places, too many stations, Meda first then the other side of Halls Creek, Wave Hill, Top Springs, Newcastle Waters, Elliot, Eva Downs Station. I didn't have any countrymen with me. I was working with other people. I was thinking, I have to go back to country. I have family back there, my brother, everyone, uncle and all. Maybe I will get a wife from Wave Hill and I'd never come back.

I came for a holiday to the mission [in Fitzroy Crossing]. I was only a young man, still single. I went to work on Cherrabun in the stock-camp. I was working one year there still no wife. That's why I found my wife then, right there at Cherrabun. I stayed for a long time there. After Cherrabun I went to Jubilee. I stayed there a long time too. I was back at Cherrabun then when there was some trouble on the stations and people were walking off: "Come on", that Tarcoola tell us, "Come on. We go. We not live with this station. He can fix it himself. He can handle it by himself." Horses and cattle and everything. Get all the young fellas and make a walk. Big walk. Whole lot."¹ We walked with our swags and camped in Spinifex country. We walked to the highway to wait for



help. They picked us up and left us at the Old Bridge.

We came across the river. Three older men had made a camp where Kurnangki is now. Bunuba people put us right there and we carted water from windmill reserve.² There were a lot of my family there, Wangkajunga people, who had been working on Jubilee, Quanbun, Christmas Creek and Cherrabun [Stations]. We had no jobs then. We were lost. One year later I got work at the mission collecting wood. It was hard work, axe work; no chainsaw like today. There were plenty of young men then, no drinking, unless you had a citizenship paper. If you were half-caste you had to live in the *kartiya* camp, you couldn't go back to *piyirnkura* camp.³ It was like that then. I made my first painting at this time. Ken Neilsen bought it from me I don't know how much, maybe just a little bit of money. A really long time passed before I painted again.

I was living at Junjuwa village with my family. Some men got together and started Karrayili so we could learn to read things like letters from government. From Karrayili we started Mangkaja Arts. The first time I went to an exhibition in the city was in Melbourne [*Images of Power*, National Gallery of Victoria, 1994]. After that I was trying really hard, learning how to paint country. We went to too many exhibitions in Perth, Fremantle, Darwin [NATSIAA] and Broome. One time we went to Canberra [Heritage Commission Art Award, 1993]. Me and Ginger Riley from Boorooloola were winners. I won third prize and he got first, a woman from South Australia came second and fourth was a young bloke from Oenpelli. We went overseas a couple of times too. We went to London and America. We went to Whitby from London. We saw the Captain Cook



Museum. We didn't believe he started from such long way; he started from Whitby when he came to Australia. I also worked with artists from overseas at a workshop at Dingo Flat [south-west WA]. People came from all over the world.

When the word came that we could get our native title to our land, we travelled back to the desert. We went to Kurtal three times. We decided to make a painting for our claim. We made a small one first and then we decided to make a bigger one.⁴ That big painting is for Jila people, as evidence for our land claim. Native title is really a blackfella story. I believe that it is about blackfella law. It seems like a *wangarta* (mad) idea; like us, there are a lot of people fighting for their title. We have to prove if it is our own country or not. It is really *piyirnkura* (Aboriginal) land. We know exactly how we fit together, we know our own country and we know the right people for the other *jila* (waterholes). We don't cut across, we have to go lightly into other people's country. But in *kartiya* law we don't know where we stand. In *kartiya* law it is all mixed up.⁵

Mangkaja was getting stronger and I went to Sydney and Canberra to let government know what we were doing and to look around for some more money. Then ATSIC asked me to sit on an advisory panel for Intellectual Property. I travelled all around for these meetings. Terry Janke was there talking with us.

We started up ANKAAA (now ANKA) 29 years ago. We didn't have [Djambawa] Marawili as a member then. It was a little bit funny for a while – we weren't really involved. We had meetings in and around Darwin but it was very weak, they didn't have strong people. It was up and down, up and down and now it is up again. It is strong now. It has taken a long time to set up the corporation properly. We were trying to get the naming right, to get the words right.

When I was Chairperson we had a lot of old people, *karrayili* [middle age]. They would come in listening. Young men were there too, like Pedro [Wonaeamirri] and some other Tiwi men. Pedro is a good speaker and singer too. There were Roebourne and Carnarvon people at the first meetings as well. When Marawili first came along to the meetings he was just listening, getting the ideas in his mind. He never came in too rough. He didn't take over straight away. When I did ask him to take over I stayed with him for one year to make sure. I moved back but I still went back to make sure. He is really good, strong. That is how we handle this business. I know them

[the artists and directors]. I used to mix up with people helping them to set up everywhere then. They were listening to Mangkaja. Mangkaja was really strong. I was helping people understand [how to run their art centre].

People in Fitzroy Crossing would ask me “why are you going up and down to Darwin, its wrong country” [for you]. I didn’t believe these people. ANKA was set up for all *piyirnwarti* and they are good people too. We all have our story, our background. We all have our own story. This is just some of mine.

__1 Ngarralja quoted in Steve Hawke, *A Town is Born*, Magabala Books: Broome, 2013, p. 160
 __2 Bunuba people are the traditional owners of the land where the township of Fitzroy Crossing is located __3 Kariya and piyim are Walmajarri words for ‘non-Aboriginal’ and ‘Aboriginal’ respectively __4 Ngurrara Canvas I is in the National Museum of Australia collection in Canberra while the artists, family members and broader claimant group own and : or have ties to Ngurrara Canvas II. The Ngurrara Canvas Mangkaja Group has been formed to manage the on-going care and preservation of the canvas and an associated collection of smaller works __5 Ngurrara Canvas II was used to secure a strong native title determination over a significant portion of the country that is painted on the canvas. While Ngarralja has claim to land within the determined area, Kurtal lies outside. It is still under negotiation. This fact, within a broader story of the Kurtal group, is the subject of the recently released and highly acclaimed film, *Puturparri and the Rainmakers* (2015, Dir. Nicole Ma).

Ngarralja Tommy May was born in the Great Sandy Desert. As a youth he was quick to pick up the skills of a stockman. In middle age he was one of the founding members of Karrayili Adult Education Centre and Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency located in Fitzroy Crossing Western Australia. Since the early 1990s his prints and paintings have been exhibited widely. He is now one of the most senior and highly respected members of the Mangkaja Artist group.

The Association of Northern, Kimberley & Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA) officially changed its name to the Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists (ANKA), Aboriginal Corporation in 2016.



Above:
Ngarralja Tommy May
Jilji and Jila, 2015
 paint and pen on marine plywood
 © Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency

Opposite page from top:
 Ngarralja Tommy May points to *jila* Kurtal [sacred water hole], 2014.
 © Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency

Ngarralja Tommy May telling his story at *jila* Kurtal, 2014.
 © Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency

Aerial view of *jila* Kurtal, Great Sandy Desert, WA, 2014.
 Still from film *Puturparri and the Rainmakers*, Director Nicole Ma, 2015.
 Photo courtesy: Sensible Films

Spider Snell and Ngarralja Tommy May at Kurtal, Great Sandy Desert, WA, 2002.
 Still from film *Puturparri and the Rainmakers*, Dir. Nicole Ma, 2015.
 Photo courtesy: Sensible Films.

Regina Pilawuk Wilson

Peppimenarti and Durrmu Arts

Regina Wilson,
Harold Wilson Junior
and **Leon Pungily**
on the establishment
of a community in the
Daly River region



Regina Wilson with fishnet at a local water hole, Peppimenarti,
from documentary *Fi Nginita – Durrmu Arts*, by Natureel.
Photo: Cassie De Colling

The Ngan'gikurrunggurr people first began fighting for a return to their homeland and re-establishment of the community of Peppimenarti in the 1960s. However, it was Regina Wilson and her husband who initially decided to leave their mission and return to their country. Durrmu Arts in Peppimenarti was then officially established in 2001, with Regina still holding the position of Chairperson today.

Robin Hodgson, Peppimenarti Basketweavers,
1988, Northern Territory

The old days

Harold Junior____ Harold [Senior] got taken away from the Daly mission¹ and got sent to Melville Island on the Tiwi Islands. He had no choice – he was part of the Stolen Generation.² And Cornelia [Tipumantimirri, renowned Tiwi artist] grew him up. So he spoke Tiwi, different language from here. But he also learnt the languages from here, when he was young, before he was taken away.

Leon Pungily____ Back in the old days, people were also making art for selling – dilly bags, bark paintings, and weavings like Regina and the other artists make today. But these and many more objects were also made for other purposes. Dilly bags were made for walking through the swamp, collecting eggs – people would put them on their heads. Some men would make dilly bags, fish nets and syaw (airbell fish traps) in those days, and also wommera, fighting shields, didgeridoos, dug out and bark canoes, shovel spears, hook spears ... they used to put paintings on that one. You don't see hook spears being made anymore.

The mat weavings and hair belts, they were a bit different from dilly bags – made from hair. Then they moved to cotton when the missionaries came. They are used for ceremony, women's ceremony.

Building Peppimenarti

Harold Junior____ Harold was probably in his late 20s or 30s when he started the community here [Peppimenarti] in the early 1970s.³ He had to get the skills up first so he went droving. He got a job leading a chain gang at Timber Creek. Then came back and married my mum and they went

to Port Keats. When I was born we went to Bathurst Island, then we came back to Daly River. He had a problem with the missionaries, with the culture changing and starting to break down.

Peppimenarti started off as a cattle station. There were 500–600 people in the community then, and the station employed just about everybody. My Dad was the boss for that. The majority of people who came here, Peppimenarti was their country, or their country was around there.

He established the school at Peppimenarti in the early 80s. He was a hard man to live with, Harold, but if he wanted something, he wouldn't let you sleep until he got it.

At the start there was just a tin shed. Someone from the education department would come out from Darwin to teach the kids. Big mob used to go to school in the mornings. Then the demountable [classrooms] came on the barge, and were dragged 50 kilometres down the coast. The old fellas went there with a grader and bulldozer to tow them back here.



Regina Pilawuk Wilson
Wilson Wupun (Sun Mat), 2014,
Pandanus, Sand Palm & natural dyes.
Photo: Durrmu Arts

Nowadays there are about 150–200 people here. A lot of them move around in the dry season, go back to outstations, when it rains come back in, or move on to another community.

Establishment of Durrmu Arts

Regina Wilson ___ Most of them art things they [the community] were doing already, without knowing it was art. These days most of the prints we do here are from the dilly bag, and people did a lot of dilly bags before, and basket weaving.

We used to have big mobs of tourists coming, back in the 80s, and they bought dilly bags, woomera, didgeridoo ... We used to have big corroborees, every night, and make damper. The tourists would come and watch.

We had corroborees just for family too. That sort of teaching, sitting around the fireside, it was a natural thing.

Either getting ready for ceremony or something else coming up. So that culture teaching was natural, in everyday life.

In the early days, in the mission, you weren't allowed to talk language. And now that teaching is not happening at the school for us. Kids today speak more pigeon; there is a problem with losing language. I teach the young girls every Tuesday. It is important I do this before I pass away so the kids know how to do weaving, so they will keep it up. It's important to keep that strong.

___1 The Austrian Jesuits commenced missionary activity in the Daly River region in 1886 and continued through to 1899. In 1956 a mission was again established by MSC just short of the Daly River Crossing. (Owen Stanley, *The Mission and Peppimenarti: An Economic Study of Two Daly River Aboriginal Communities*, North Australia Research Unit Monograph, Australian National University, Darwin 1985, pp. 8–9.) ___2 Harold Wilson was born in 1938 at Peppimenarti. His mother was a Nganiwuwumeri woman from the Moyle River area and his father was a European (Stanley, 1985, p. 29) ___3 In 1969 Harold and Regina Wilson, their children and four others left the mission to establish a permanent camp at Peppimenarti. After a set back they returned again to start the Peppimenarti community (Stanley, 1985).



Regina Wilson is Peppimenarti's most acclaimed artist. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, and is represented in *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia*, touring the USA and Canada in 2016–19. Destinations include: Newcomb Art Museum, Tulane University, New Orleans; Frost Art Museum, Florida International University, Miami; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno; The Phillips Collection, Washington DC and Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

In 2011 the Peppimenarti Association formed the Durrmu Arts Aboriginal Corporation, representing a now internationally-renowned group of weavers and painters, working with *durrmu* (dot body painting) designs. | www.durrmuarts.com.au

Left:
Regina Wilson with air bell knotted dilly bag, from documentary *Fi Nginita – Durrmu Arts*, 2013, by Natureel. Photo: Cassie De Colling

Opposite:
Regina Pilawuk Wilson
Syau (Fish Net), 2015, acrylic on Belgian linen.
Photo: Durrmu Arts



Gunybi Ganambarr

Giving the trees a rest

Diane Moon on new work created for the 8th Asia Pacific Triennale

Gunybi Ganambarr recently exhibited his work in the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art at Brisbane's Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, representing 80 visual and performance artists from 36 countries (including PNG, Fiji, Vanuatu, India, South Korea, Mongolia and Australia) who shared their cultural, social and political views. Following the conceptual leaps taken in APT5 by elder statesman and celebrated artist Djambawa Marawili (his mentor and father-in-law) Gunybi has thrilled APT8 audiences with his revolutionary sculptural works.

Gunybi lives mostly on his mother's country at Gangan homeland outside Yirrkala, a rich source of inspiration for him. He was chosen early in his life as a ceremonial yidaki player and brings the deep spirituality, focus and endurance required for this role to his visual art practice. Early in his career, Gunybi used stringybark and wood. In a departure from Yolngu conventions, Gunybi now repurposes discarded materials found on the land for his art. He re-examines the age-old tenet set by his elders – “if you paint the land you must use the land” – to include these cast-offs, uncovering forms and surfaces on offer from such unlikely materials as heavy galvanised iron, corrugated Colorbond and dense black industrial-strength rubber.

Gunybi is deeply thoughtful and always open to new ideas. He explains his instinct to innovate as “Ngarraku mulkurr” (coming from his mind) and has the confidence to push creative boundaries. His facility

for using tools, developed during the twelve years he worked as a builder on housing for the homelands and an extraordinary instinct for drawing out the aesthetic possibilities inherent in materials, enables him to realise what he imagines. In recycling the detritus of industry and development Gunybi is also driven by a personal ethos of protecting the natural environment, concerned that if natural species are lost, the songs and narratives attaching to them are also disrupted. Besides, as he says, it “gives the trees a rest” – a chance to regenerate.

Gunybi's installation in the Gallery of Modern Art was dominated by three monumental *larrakidj* (memorial poles), which became contemporary sculptures in his hands. He selected logs with extreme knots and deformities, covered their undulating surfaces with dynamic *rarrk* patterning and emphasised their sculptural presence by positioning the narrowest circumference at the base.

In *Nganmarra* (2015) Gunybi used sheets of iron he unbolted from a disused water tank, etching *Ngaymil* clan designs into its surface through skilful use of an angle grinder. With its sacred abstractions polished to a smooth, reflective surface, he has transformed this unlikely material into an object of great beauty. In contrast, the untreated, galvanised reverse side carries the initials of a close group of young girls who left their mark in red paint in 1996 – a nostalgic memory of happy times at Gangan when they were all together.

Responding to the erosion of

his people's hard-won rights over the last half-century and in particular to a fractured history with the local mining enterprise, Gunybi's art becomes both political statement and healing process. In *Ngaymil* he gouged ancestral narratives deep into the surface of a massive three-metre length of conveyor belt rubber and in *Buyku* (2015) painted natural pigments and sand from his land onto the rubber surface. While acknowledging the role these conveyor belts played in transporting endless tonnes of his “mother earth” to be processed for bauxite, he also reiterates his cultural connections to his country.

On the opening weekend of APT8, and with Yinimala Gumana on yidaki, Gunybi Ganambarr sang his works into the Gallery space, giving his audience further opportunity for a rich cultural experience.

Diane Moon has been Curator, Indigenous Fibre Art at QAGOMA since 2003. Diane has worked continuously in Indigenous art since living in Ramingining, Arnhem Land, 1983–84 and with Maningrida Arts and Culture 1985–95. She has a Masters of Applied Science from the University of Western Sydney and received a Churchill Fellowship in 2002 to research Indigenous Australian fibre collections in international museums.

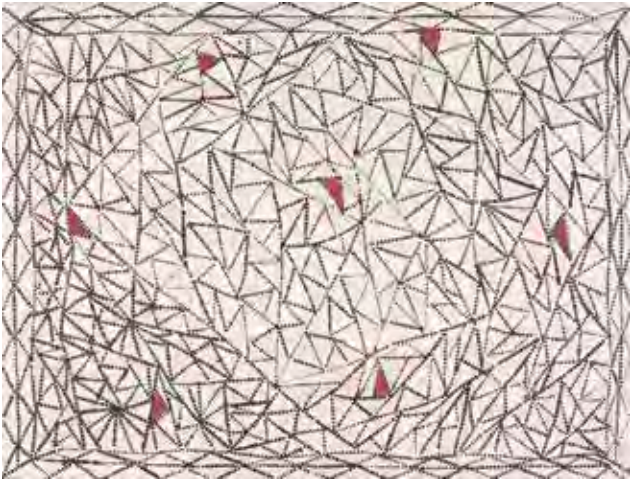


Above:
Gunybi Ganambarr
Garraparra (Larrakitj), 2015,
 wood with natural pigments and sand.
 Installation view, 8th Asia-Pacific Triennale
 of Contemporary Art, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane

Left:
Gunybi Ganambarr
Nganmarra, 2015,
 etched and polished water tank metal with paint.
 Purchased 2015 in memory of David Barnett through the
 Queensland Art Gallery Gallery of Modern Art Foundation

Tiwi now

Maurice O’Riordan on recent Tiwi art-related news



From top:
Laurie Nelson Mungatopi, Bob One Aputimi, Jack Yarunga, Don Burakmadjua, Charlie Quiet Kawngdini, Artist Unknown
Tutini (Pukumani Graveposts), 1959, natural pigments on wood. Gift of Dr Stuart Scougall 1959.
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales. Photo: Buku Larnggay Mulka Centre
© Laurie Nelson Mungatopi, © Bob One Aputimi, © Jack Yarunga, © Don Burakmadjua, © Charlie Quiet Kwangdini. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Raelene Kerinauia
Jilamara detail, 2015, natural ochres on paper.
Museum of Contemporary Art commission. Collection: Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.
© Raelene Kerinauia / Licensed by Viscopy 2016

In March 2016 the French cruise ship *Le Soléal* was the first international liner to drop anchor at a remote community on the Tiwi Islands. After struggling to make the narrow Apsley Strait between the islands, the ship had to anchor a few hundred metres from shore, with small boats “delivering hundreds of high-end tourists hunting for art and unique experience” to the community of Wurrumiyanga (formerly Nguu) on Bathurst Island. Art sales from the visit were anticipated to reach \$250,000.¹

Also in early March, a trio of Pukumani poles (*tutini*) by Melville Island artist Eymard Tungatalum were reinstalled at Charles Darwin University. Tungatalum had first created the poles as a former student at the university in 1993. For this new installation in a more prominent location on campus he was commissioned to restore his work. The unveiling was accompanied by ceremony (involving Larrakia and Tiwi participants), with the university declaring the poles’ symbolic value in marking their “ongoing commitment to Indigenous education”.²

Coming to an end late February was the premier showing at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, of *Being Tiwi*, now on a two-year national tour. Curated by the MCA’s Keith Munro and Natasha Bullock and representing the work of nine Tiwi artists working in art centres on Bathurst and Melville islands, the exhibition, tour and related programming signify the strong curatorial and institutional reach of Tiwi art. The nine artists represented are Timothy Cook, Raelene Kerinauia, Maria Josette Orsto, Eddie Puruntatameri, Nina Puruntatameri, Cornelia Tipuamantumirri, Bede Tungatalum, Giovanni Tinpungwuti and Pedro Wonaemirri.

March was capped off by the Tiwi Footy Final and Art Sale at Wurrumiyanga, an annual drawcard event which celebrates the prominent achievements of the Tiwi as artists and footballers. One commentator on the day talked about collectors arriving well before the game and heading to the art centre displays “on the hunt for works by Cornelia Tipuamantumirri” (born 1929), who works through Munupi Arts at Pirlangimpi (Garden Point), Melville Island.³

This paints a picture of great activity, recognition and desire for Tiwi art: an historic cruise liner berthing; a university commission; high-profile contemporary art museum engagement; and “hunting” for Tiwi art and artists. To some degree, it refers back to the catalysing role that Tiwi art has played in the appreciation of Aboriginal art as contemporary, from the late 1950s when a Sydney-based orthopaedic surgeon and avid art collector enabled the first commission of Aboriginal art by a public art museum. These are the seventeen Pukumani Poles (*Tutini/Pukumani Graveposts*) commissioned for the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1958 by Stuart Scougall, made by six Tiwi artists from Milikapiti (Snake Bay) on Melville Island: Big Jack Yarunga, Bob One Galadingwama, Laurie Nelson (One Eye) Tukialila, Don Burak Madjua, Charlie Quiet Kwangdini and one Artist Unknown.⁴

It is easy to overlook the significance of this commission and its impact on and as contemporary art. The term “contemporary art” in the 1950s did not have the same or specific currency as it has now. The “contemporary” or demonstrably “now” art of 1950s Sydney was more likely to be of the Abstract Expressionism kind practised by Tony Tuckson, then Assistant Director at the Art Gallery of NSW and Scougall’s key collaborator on the Pukumani Poles commission and later commissioning trip to Yirrkala in 1959. Artists then working in similar and other styles also flourished: Sidney Nolan, Ian Fairweather, Rodney Milgate, John Olsen, Donald Friend, John Perceval, Jon Olvig, and Robert Klippel, for example – all names appearing in Scougall’s own contemporary art collection.

A key debate in Australian art at that time was the issue of abstraction versus figuration, generally characterised as a Sydney–Melbourne divide that culminated with the publication of the *Antipodean Manifesto* in February 1959 in defence of the figurative tradition in art. With their human scale as sculpture and abstract painting dimension, the Pukumani Poles seemed to tread a timely path between both camps. They were also firmly and quite literally grounded in their Tiwi context. For the initial Art Gallery



Above:

Barry Kantilla, Ken Wayne Kantilla, Bruce Tipuamantumirri, Graham Tipungwuti
Tutini, 2011, black gesso primer & natural ochre pigments on ironwood, with PVA binder/sealant.
 Installation view, Charles Darwin University Gallery, August 2011; acquired through the Charles Darwin University Foundation from Ngaruwanajirri Inc. in 2012 for the Charles Darwin University Collection

Top right:

Eymard Tungatalum with his reinstalled Pukumani Poles in the courtyard/ ceremonial area of the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Education, Charles Darwin University, Darwin, March 2016.
 Image courtesy Charles Darwin University



of NSW presentation they were arranged like a burial, forming a ring around a mound of red earth from Milikapiti. The intention was to present them “ethnographically and artistically”, which may have compromised their new-found art status but also reflected a debt to anthropology which had long before identified and studied such objects as art.⁵ Nowadays, we might just as easily call such a work installation art and note its cross-disciplinary approach.

Not everyone at the time could make the leap from ethnography to art. Art critic Douglas Stewart from *The Bulletin* wrote: “These Melville Island posts, though they have definite artistic merit of an elementary kind, are really more in the nature of ethnological curiosities than works of art”.⁶ For artist and art critic James Gleeson, the work’s ceremonial and funereal context only enhanced its appreciation as art: “Even in the artificial atmosphere of an art gallery they are impressive, for the painted posts stand above the grave in a protective ring, forming, as it were, a barrier between the world of the living reality and the shadowy world of the spirit”.⁷

Tuckson regarded the Pukumani Poles as Scougall’s most important contribution, in terms of his overall gifts, to the Art Gallery of NSW – totalling 182 items and including a series of epic bark painting sequences commissioned from Yolngu artists Mawalan Marika and Mungurrawuy Yunupingu.⁸ The Pukumani Poles were a catalyst that led Tuckson to curate the first major exhibition of Australian

Aboriginal art, which toured Australia's state galleries in 1960–61. The Pukumani Poles also became Tuckson's own memorial in a sense, prominently installed to commemorate the opening of the institution's new Primitive Art Gallery in 1973, which he had worked towards but didn't live to see.

The Pukumani Poles have been described as the “centrepiece”⁹ of the Gallery's Indigenous art collection and “the finest examples of their kind ever collected”.¹⁰ Needless to say, many public art museums throughout Australia and overseas have, over time, followed suit, acquiring Pukumani poles for their own collections along with many other examples of Tiwi art. The two on display near the entrance to the Charles Darwin University Gallery, *Tapara – tutini* (2006) and *Taparra – Moon Man/Footy Man* (2006) by Romolo Tipiloura, attest to the artform's dynamism: the way it reflects contemporary life to commemorate football, for example, the individual markings and make of each pole and their abiding mythological and spiritual force. In the past, other Tiwi artists such as Albert Croker have incorporated buffalo-related motifs in their *tutini*, the animal embraced by Tiwi mythology and ceremony since being introduced on Melville Island in the early 19th century. Jock Puaatjimi took the form into a whole new medium in his collaborations with Canberra-based glass artist Luna Ryan culminating in a touring exhibition (in 2007) of Pukumani Poles and related objects realised in coloured cast glass. Similarly, the figurative ceramic work of Tiwi Design artists Mark Puaatjimi and C. J. Kerinauia often adopts *tutini* sculptural qualities.

Forty years after Scougall's commission, the Art Gallery of NSW commissioned Milikapiti-based artist Pedro Wonaeamirri to create a series of Pukumani poles for the 1999 Australian Perspecta exhibition, *Living Here Now – Art & Politics*. Pedro gave a contemporary twist on a classical Tiwi artform, honouring and directly inspired by the 1958 Pukumani Poles. Pedro created six poles for this commission, the same number as (Big) Jack Yarunga in 1958. Like Romolo, Pedro's style has a crisp and refined formality, which is even more pronounced in his paintings

on canvas and paper such as *Jilamara* (2015) commissioned for the MCA's *Being Tiwi* exhibition. In this work, the painted iconography or designs (*jilamara*) for *tutini* and ceremonial body markings become an expanded field of abstraction.

Scougall's Pukumani Poles commission has also been described as “salvage ethnography”, driven by a belief that such artforms would soon die out as Aboriginal people became assimilated into mainstream Australian life. Scougall's own ‘Thoughts on Aboriginal Art’ reflect this: “Aboriginal art is almost extinct in some areas of Arnhem Land. There are still centres where it flourishes but with few young painters coming on. All the great mythology should therefore be collected now, almost in memorial form”.¹¹ At the time of Scougall's commission, the Catholic Mission at Wurrumiyanga had banned the practice of Pukumani and other ceremonial life on Bathurst Island along with the use of Tiwi language. Cornelia Tipuamantumirri, of the same generation as many of the artists Scougall commissioned in 1958, grew up on Bathurst Island under the Mission. “She lived in a dormitory with the other Tiwi girls”, writes Jedda Puruntatameri (Board Chair, Munupi Art) of Cornelia's past. “She was never allowed to speak her language or practice our culture.”¹² Like many others, Cornelia's family regularly visited Melville Island where they could more freely be Tiwi.

Come 2010, based at Pirlangimpi near her birthplace on Melville Island, Cornelia decides to take up painting at Munupi Art. It's a very different, in many ways more progressive time for Tiwi Islanders, and Tiwi art has certainly not died out. The “great mythology” – Pukumani – that Scougall sought to preserve with his 1958 commission continues to fuel the work of hundreds of contemporary Tiwi artists including Cornelia and fellow *Being Tiwi* artists. Cornelia's large-scale *Jilamara Design* (2015) painting in this exhibition is a wonderfully loose and expressive rendition, full of vigour and an intensely minimalist patterning. It makes a powerful statement of *jilamara* for *jilamara*'s sake. Paintings in the exhibition by Maria Josette Orsto (*Miyinga, Scars*, 2015) and Raelene Kerinauia (*Jilamara*, 2015, a sixteen-panel work) are



Clockwise from top:

Jock Puautjimi

Pukumani Poles – Poles Buffalo Horns and Fighting Sticks, 2006–07,
kiln-cast crystal, metal, rubber (cast with Luna Ryan).

Image courtesy the artists and Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre.

Photo: Simon Maberley

Jock Puautjimi

Pukumani Poles (detail), 2004–07,

kiln-cast crystal, recycled television screen, metal, rubber
(cast with Luna Ryan).

Image courtesy the artists and Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre.

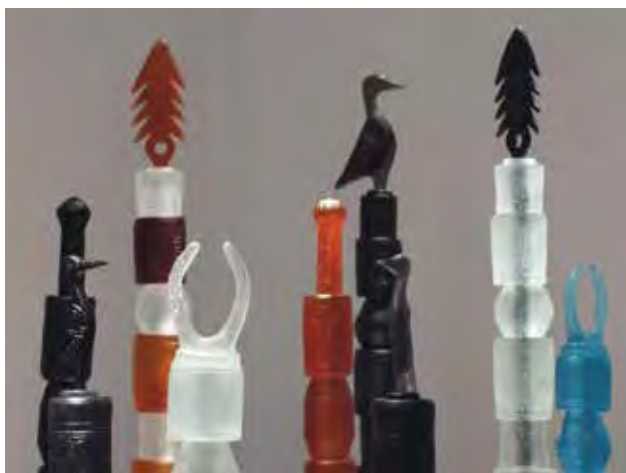
Photo: Creative Image Photography

Romolo Tipiloura

(left) *Tapara – tutini* (2006); (right) *Taparra – Moon Man/Footy Man* (2006),
Installation view, Executive, Administration & Corporate Offices

(Building 12), Charles Darwin University

© Romolo Tipiloura/Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



equally intensely minimalist – just a trio of ochre colours in each imparts such fine and compelling levels of abstraction.

Being Tiwi is not a Pukumani-focused exhibition. It does include some works which specifically relate to Pukumani-related ceremony and mythology, but its cultural and collection-based anchor reveals a particular medium, woodblock printing, and the chance rediscovery in 1996 of 36 original woodblocks at Tiwi Design which were first printed in 1969 by artists Bede Tungatalum, Freddie Puruntatameri, and Giovanni Tipungwuti. A second edition of these woodblock prints was exhibited and the entire suite entered the MCA collection. Remarkably, *Being Tiwi* includes recent prints by Bede and foregrounds printmaking and painting overall as potent mediums for the adaptation of Tiwi artforms (carved Pukumani Pole to woodblock, for example) and translation of ceremonial designs and knowledge. Pedro conveys a sense of this cultural integrity to open the exhibition catalogue's curatorial essay: "It all connects ... doing art, singing and dancing is all one Tiwi culture".¹³

In the naming of the exhibition, *Being Tiwi*, we gain a sense of the distinctiveness of Tiwi identity. Indeed, "being Tiwi" almost becomes synonymous with being distinctive, unique; a perception shaped by the Sydney debut of the Pukumani Poles. Significantly, the exhibition recognises the increasing number and prominence of Tiwi women artists. Four of the exhibition's seven living artists are women including Maria Josette Orsto who also carves and paints *tutini*. Coinciding with the exhibition was *Tiwi Mamirnikuwi Jilamara / Tiwi Women Painting* at Cross Art Projects, Sydney, representing the work of ten artists across three generations, working through Jilamara Arts and Craft and Munupi Art on Melville Island: Kaye Brown, Josephine Burak, Dymphna Kerinauia, Raelene Kerinauia, Nicola Miller Mungatopi, Janice Murray, Natalie Puruntatameri, Nina (Ludwina) Puruntatameri, Cornelia Tipaumantumirri, and Susan Wanji Wanji.

While Scougall's overall Aboriginal art commissioning and collecting can be viewed in memorial terms, the



Above:
Pukumani Poles by (left to right) **John Wilson**, **Pedro Wonaeamirri**, and **Patrick (Andrew) Freddy Puruntatameri**, c. 2000, ironwood and ochre pigments.
 Collection: Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Utrecht.
 Photo: Bert Muller
 © John Wilson, © Pedro Wonaeamirri, © Patrick Freddy Puruntatameri
 Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Pukumani Poles in particular belong to a memorial tradition, as with *larrakitj* or *lorrkon* (hollow log coffins) from Arnhem Land which are also made and commissioned as art. The 1958 Pukumani Poles were a conscious influence on curator Djon Mundine in conceiving the monumental Aboriginal Memorial (1987–88) installation for the National Gallery of Australia: two hundred burial poles made by 43 artists from Ramingining, Central Arnhem Land (where Mundine was then based), memorialising two hundred years of colonisation.

As commissioned works, the 1958 Pukumani Poles did not memorialise the death of any particular person. They certainly failed as memorials to a dying race and/or art. Just by “being Tiwi”, in realising their Pukumani tradition, the 1958 commissioned Tiwi artists achieved the equivalent of Eddie Mabo and fellow Mer (Murray) Islanders in overturning the legal doctrine of *terra nullius*. Through Scougall’s commission, these artists buried the notion that Aboriginal people were without an art. For all his Social Darwinist thinking, Scougall was also acutely aware of how recognition of the art of Aboriginal people could improve their overall standing in Australian society. A few years after this commission, Yolngu artists from Yirrkala would take their art in the form of a bark petition to the federal parliament against mining in their country.

The 1958 Tiwi Pukumani Poles continue to memorialise the death of ignorance.

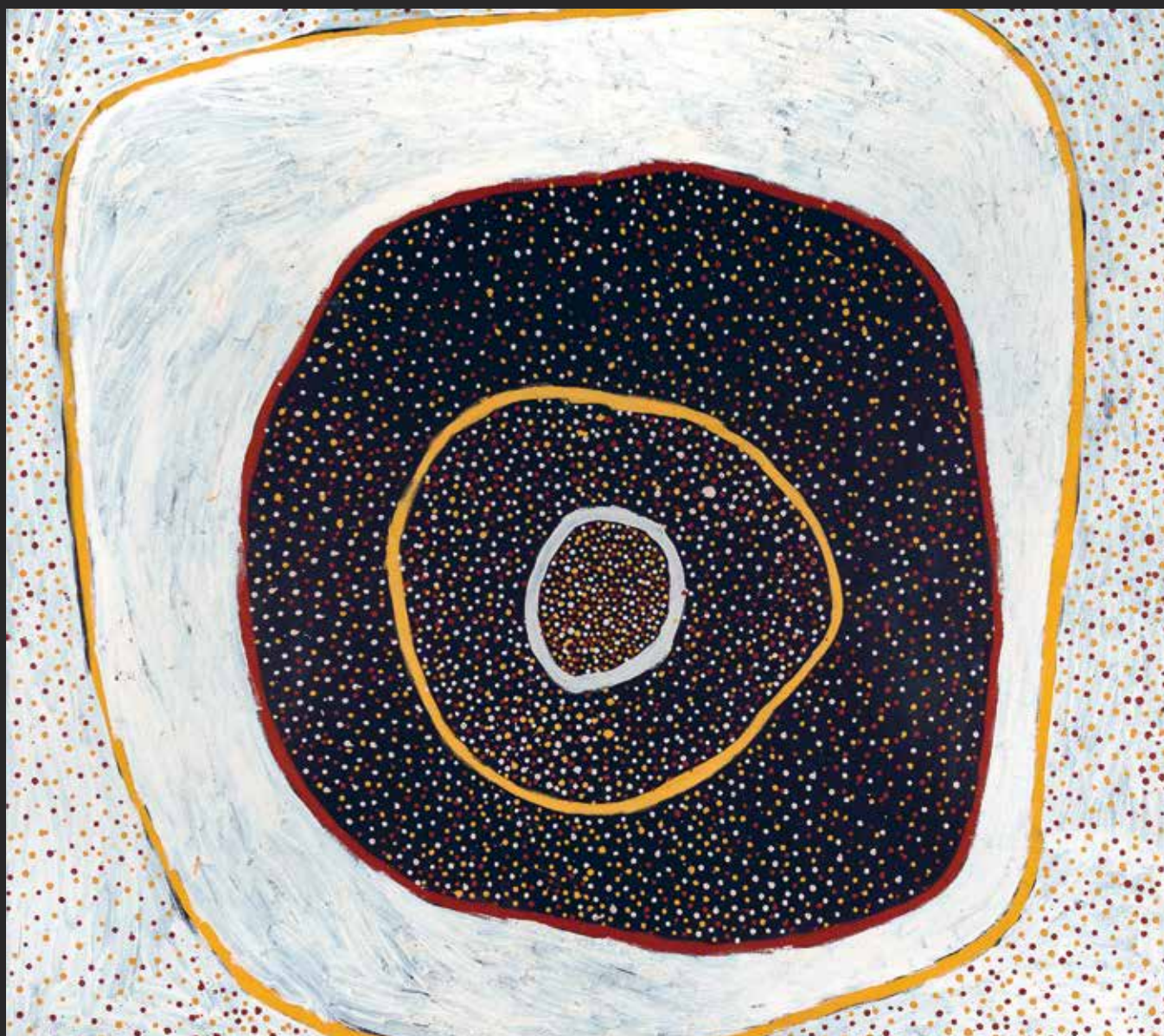
__1 Avani Dias, ‘French cruise ship docks in NT’s remote Tiwi Islands with tourists expected to spend \$250k on art’: [www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-03/french-tourists-expected-to-spend-\\$250k-in-remote-tiwi-islands/7218370](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-03/french-tourists-expected-to-spend-$250k-in-remote-tiwi-islands/7218370). According to one current Tiwi art centre advisor, the \$250k sales figure was a media beat-up __2 ‘Valued Pukumani poles restored at CDU’, media release, Charles Darwin University, 3 March 2016: www.cdu.edu.au/newsroom/pukumani __3 James Coburn, ABC Radio community correspondent, speaking from the event with ABC Radio (Darwin) presenter Lisa Pellegrino, 20 March 2016 __4 This anonymity is puzzling given the direct commissioning context of Scougall’s gift. The Pukumani Poles were also accompanied by painted bark baskets (*tunga*) which also remain unattributed. Correspondence between Scougall and Harry Giese, NT Director of Welfare, indicates these baskets were made by Banjo Timarakiri; CRS F1/0 Item: 1957/649: 31, National Archives NT __5 Margaret Tuckson recalled that her husband, Tony Tuckson, ‘had decided to show them [the Poles] a little bit ethnographically as well as artistically’; interview with the author, 21 February 2000 __6 Douglas Stewart, *The Bulletin*, 1 July 1959, p. 25 __7 James Gleeson, ‘Grave Posts Gift’, *The Sun*, 18 June 1959, p. 44 __8 The Scougall Collection comprises 182 items gifted by Scougall to the AGNSW 1957–64 and collected from a number of Top End Aboriginal communities: Milikapiti, Yirrkala, Maningrida and Liverpool River, the Kimberley region, Wadeye (Port Keats), Wugularr (Beswick), Milingimbi, and Gunbalanya (Oenpelli). Its official designation as the Scougall Collection came with the Yiribana publication commemorating the opening of AGNSW’s new Yiribana Gallery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art in 1994 __9 Margot Neale, *Yiribana: An Introduction to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection*, AGNSW, 1994, p. 82 __10 C. Lloyd & P. Sekules, *Australia’s National Collections*, Cassel Australia, 1980, p. 250 __11 S. Scougall, ‘Thoughts on Aboriginal Art’, *AGNSW Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 4, July 1960, p. 32 __12 Jemma Puruntatameri, ‘Cornelia Pilmirrapay Tipumantimiri’, *Artist Profile, Arts Backbone*, vol. 14, no. 2, Dec 2014/Jan 2015, ANKAAA, Darwin, p. 5 __13 N. Bullock & K. Munro, ‘All one Tiwi culture’, *Being Tiwi*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia: Sydney, 2015, p. 21.

Maurice O’Riordan is Director, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin. *Being Tiwi* is touring nationally 2016–17
www.mca.com.au/touring



Pedro Wonaeamirri

Jilamara, 2015, natural ochres on paper.
 Museum of Contemporary Art commission.
 Collection: Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.
 © Pedro Wonaeamirri / Licensed by Viscopy 2016



BEING TIWI: NATIONAL TOUR

Experience the dynamic iconography, stories and culture from the Tiwi Islands with the Museum of Contemporary Art's *Being Tiwi* as it embarks on a journey across Australia. The exhibition presents prints, paintings and installations showcasing work by nine artists — their expressive work tracing the development of Tiwi tradition, life and culture.

19 Aug – 6 Nov 2016

Murray Art Museum
Albury, NSW

18 Nov 2016 – 22 Jan 2017

Tandanya National Aboriginal
Cultural Institute, SA

10 Feb – 26 Mar 2017

Moree Plains Gallery, NSW

7 Jul – 10 Sep 2017

Glasshouse Port
Macquarie, NSW

7 Oct – 16 Dec 2017

Lawrence Wilson
Art Gallery, WA

Museum of
Contemporary
Art Australia

mca.com.au/beingtiwi



Australian Government
Visions of Australia

10am–5pm Daily
10am–9pm Thursdays

140 George Street, The Rocks, Sydney
Entry via Circular Quay or George Street

This exhibition is supported by the Visions regional touring program, an Australian Government program aiming to improve access to cultural material for all Australians.

Cornelia Pilmirrapayu Tipuamantumirri

Tiwi artist

Jedda Puruntatameri

Arlumpuwaniyo Jamangija [See the saltwater coming in]

Arlumpuwaniyo Jamangija [See the saltwater coming in]

Arlumpuwaniyo Jamangija [See the saltwater coming in]

Lul ...Lul ...Lul ...Lul ...

Arlumpuwaniyo Jamangija [Hear the salt water rushing]

Arlumpuwaniyo Jamangija [Hear the salt water rushing]

Arlumpuwaniyo Jamangija [Hear the salt water rushing]

Lul ...Lul ...Lul ...Lul ...

Tawu

[Hear the sound of rushing water creating a bang, ending]



Ngawarraya Mangi Munupi Murrakupuni.
Let's look after our Munupi Country.

Pili ngawa ampi putuwurupura ngini ngawula ngirramini.
Our stories were given to us from the old people and are connected with songs from the dreamtime.

Cornelia Tipuamantumirri

Under the guardians of the mission, Cornelia Tipuamantumirri grew up on Bathurst Island in the Tiwi Islands. She went to school under the old mission church and was given a slate and chalk. Salvation came in the form of the Catholic nuns. She lived in a dormitory with the other Tiwi girls. She was never allowed to speak her language or practice our culture.

Cornelia's parents worked for the Garden Point Mission, looking after the farm, planting and tending the land. Every bush holiday she went with her parents to Garden Point on Melville Island.

She married Stephen Tipuamantumirri and had a daughter, Dolores. She is blessed with three grandchildren and lots of great grandchildren.

Cornelia has a son whom she and Stephen looked after at Garden Point Mission. His name is H. Wilson Senior from Peppimenarti, the late husband of renowned Peppimenarti artist Regina Pilawuk Wilson. This family has visited her from time to time. Their friendship will last a lifetime.

Cornelia walked into Munupi Art Centre wanting to paint on canvas in 2010. She is an elder who has taken over the art industry like a wild storm. She paints the land and sea from her beautiful Munupi country. Every painting tells a story with a connection to the land and sea.

Cornelia has a strong bond to the waters surrounding the Tiwi Islands, forged by a lifetime of memories living encircled within the tides of the Arafura Sea. She learnt by going to meeting places for ceremonies, in the bush. They just went ahead and did it, despite the church, and no one tried to stop them.

She looks at the moon like it is a calendar: she knows when time is good for hunting, good for fishing. She looks at the trees and reads the signs and passes

them on to her daughter and grandchildren. She just has to look at a tree with yellow flowers and she will say, it's good for hunting possum, turtles. She reads and she interprets different signs. When you see a dragonfly she'll say, dragonfly, dry season is coming, it's around the corner. It's her way of passing it down.

It's not being done so much anymore, but we need to tell our stories with every painting, and write it down.

If you are visiting Munupi Art Centre, come and see Cornelia smiling all the time.

Cornelia Tipuamantumirri is a senior Tiwi artist from Munupi Arts at Garden Point Community, Melville Island. Jedda Puruntatameri is Chair of Munupi Arts and a Director of ANKA. | www.munupiart.com



Above:
Cornelia Tipuamantumirri.
Photo: Munupi Arts

Opposite:
Cornelia Tipuamantumirri
Jilamara Design, 2015, ochre on linen
Collection: MCA, Sydney.
© Cornelia Tipuamantumirri
Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Warmun Arts

You got a story?

Anna Crane, Frances Kofod
and **Alana Hunt** on language and
the image in Gija art

W



Installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, 2006.
Image courtesy the estate of Paddy Bedford and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia
© the estate of Paddy Bedford. Photo: Jenni Carter

Painting at Warmun has long been linked with the desire of the old people to pass on Gija language to children. At the same time as the *Goorirr-goorirr* song and dance cycle was given to Rover Thomas by a spirit, Gija elders were requesting that the Ngalangangpum School teach their language. Paintings carried in the dance helped launch the local art movement and the singers and dancers were also the language teachers. They made objects as teaching aids that are now part of the Warmun Community Collection. Here, the image of Queenie McKenzie includes a painting depicting people going out to collect the small white fruit of *ngoorrwany* or *berenggarji*. McKenzie sits holding a branch of the bush food.

Gija people have always been conscious of the way works of art encode knowledge. Diverse voices circulate in the space around an artwork as Aboriginal artists in remote communities, their non-Aboriginal colleagues and art audiences make, write and speak about art. But what is at stake in such discourse is very different for the Gija artist and the non-Aboriginal writer, linguist, arts worker and audiences for art. Artists and writers enact contrasting positions of power. Texts about paintings in the context of a dominant culture privilege written registers. In part, this is to satisfy the desire and demand from non-Aboriginal audiences to penetrate the visual language of Gija art. There is often an expectation that a painting by an Aboriginal person will provide greater access and insight into Aboriginal Australia. But texts are also produced at the insistence of artists such as Madigan Thomas, Hector Jandany and Beerbee Mungnari who have wanted to share more about their work with their own community and more broadly. The making and exchange of images has always been embedded in Aboriginal Australia. *Wandjina* in the west Kimberley, lightning men in the Victoria River area in the Northern Territory, images of game and hand prints or stencils throughout Australia all speak without words of the people to whom they belong. Before colonisation these were painted or incised on bodies, rock faces, bark, artefacts or in sand. Today they also take shape through a plethora of media and enter the domain of the contemporary art world. Many works by past and present artists living in remote Australia function as warnings to strangers and support ceremony as affirmations of belonging or play. The meeting of Aboriginal art with the international art world that began in the twentieth century saw the



Queenie McKenzie, 1987. Photo: Frances Kofod

development of a cultural economy that is not in every sense radically new. In the east Kimberley the trade of objects, song, story and ceremony were all part of economic transactions between people and nations. In Warmun, as in most of Australia, Gija artists are particular about only creating work that relates to country over which they have custodial rights. The *Ngarranggarni* (Dreaming) created this country and many artists chose to share these stories with prospective buyers. Consequently, within the art market, works without stories are sometimes devalued. But this need not be the case. For example, arresting works by the late Paddy Bedford seen in the exhibition *Walking the Line* are purely abstract plays with colour and form.¹

Bedford used his signature visual language to depict the same story in strikingly different ways. One of his most important Dreamings was the White Cockatoo, the Little Corella who as a man, sat on a rock at a place called *Jawoorraban* and told a travelling group of men to stop. They became part of the country there. He painted this story many times, each showing the White Cockatoo and the line of men but representing them differently. Similarly, with the emu who became wedged in the rock at Mount King, each version shows the mountain, and some also include the neighbouring hills or a red circle marking the Bedford Downs massacre site and an image of something stuck in a long crack. Only in the example in the Art Gallery of New South Wales do we see a recognisable emu.²

Whereas Paddy Bedford played with paint, creating many representations of the same story, Rusty Peters has painted many works with diverse stories. An original



Rusty Peters

Waterbrain, 2002,
natural pigment on canvas.
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales.
Photo: AGNSW.
© Rusty Peters/Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

founder of the Ngalangangpum School Peters sees a direct link between traditional rock painting as instruction for the young and his own work as an artist. Speaking about his work *What This Museum*, exhibited in *Beyond the Frontier* at Sherman Galleries Sydney, 2005, he said:

Dama warna-warnarram, ngarag-garri woomberramande. Wayinigana mard yirrarn-boorrewa warna-warnarram bemberrayangbende-ngarri. Ngarangarag-garri woomberramande nawan-yirr in deg-garri yamberremnya, bemberrayangbende dambi yarriyangem. Wayinigana mard yirrarn-boorrewa warna-warnarram Ngarranggarnin.

A very long time ago the first people made these things. That is why we copy the things they put here. When they made paintings in all the caves and when we looked at what they had put there in our place, we knew how to do things by copying the things they made long ago in the Dreaming.

Peters' monumental work *Waterbrain* (2002), about conception, birth and the development of human consciousness, began with words. After years discussing the concept, the then artistic director of Jirrawun Arts, Tony Oliver presented Rusty with a number of large canvases proposing he create images to go with the story.

For Ralph Juli, a senior staff member at Warmun Art Centre, grave consequences rest on the command of narratives his mother Mabel Juli and uncle Rusty Peters paint and tell with such authority. Juli writes, "I feel good about that *Garnkiny*³ because I've got a story for my mother's side ... *Garnkiny* brings me back to my Mum's place. My own proper place. Like I was saying – if I don't know story, I'm nobody. Someone might come

along and ask me for my country and I'll have nothing. You get some smart *gardiya* (white people) who might come and they'll try to jam you up with questions, and if I don't know properly I'll get tangled up. They'll ask, 'You got a story?' and I'll have to say, 'No'".⁴ Juli describes the instability of knowledge used against Aboriginal people to continue the same dispossession that has left these systems fighting to survive. It is often through a painting or visit to an art centre that younger Gija people first experience the *Ngarranggarni* stories that make up their intellectual inheritance. Journeys and conversations become resources available to assist in protecting and asserting their claim to country through struggles and negotiations over native title, compensation for stolen land and wages, mining and agricultural development.

Through similar processes, non-Aboriginal art centre workers become default archivists contributing to what is sometimes the only written repository of stories told by people who have passed away. Artists sit with staff who document what they want made known about their work. A look through Warmun Art Centre's database reveals a rich but patchy catalogue of place names, oral history accounts, *Ngarranggarni* narratives, details of Gija life before first contact and expressions of artists' feeling for their subject. Much like records held in art centres across remote Australia they are exhaustive here, scant and sketchy there. Spelling of the traditional language is inconsistent and "direct" quotes lie on a spectrum between accurate, approximate and improbable. With limited resources and time, workers do what they can with whatever expertise and linguistic tools are at hand while dreaming of having the capacity to facilitate rigorous archiving. For languages like Gija, clinging on through a diminishing number of speakers, the makeshift becomes valuable. Family members gather together these traces and carry forward



Above:
Rusty Peters
Gooragawarriny Gamkinyoongoo – The Two Mothers of the Moon, 2012.
 Photo: Warmun Art Centre.

Right:
Paddy Bedford
Untitled (Emu), 1999,
 natural pigments on canvas.
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Mollie Gowing Acquisition Fund for
 Contemporary Aboriginal Art 1999.
 Photo: AGNSW © Estate of Paddy Bedford





Mabel Juli

Garrkiny Ngarranggarni – Moon Dreaming, 2012.

Photo: Warmun Art Centre.

© Mabel Juli/Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

a picture of their language as it lived through their loved one, what they made and what they said about it.

Video and audio recordings by linguists and art centre workers are another kind of art-related text. George Mung stands statuesque in his cowboy hat amongst dry grass. The image is digitised from a scratchy 1980s VHS.⁵ He points a wooden digging stick at his painting, at faces of *joowarri* (spirits), hills, rocks, animals, describes places on his country *Jarlaloo* and explains the origins of the moonga-moonga song cycle given to his wife Buttercup. With tears in his eyes after watching the film, artist Patrick Mung Mung said how grateful he was to hear his father's voice and learn from him again. Recording is full of mistakes; we forget to turn on the microphone or bring a wind cover, there is too much glare, we talk over people, ask clumsy questions exhausted by long drives, dust and arguments. Inevitably so much is left outside of the frame but also much packed in with love and vision by the storytellers.

Visual images are surrounded by written and oral discourses through which writers reframe an artist's voice. It is important then to critically reflect on and try to understand the multiple functions Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people play as creators, collaborators and consumers. The documentation of artworks for Gija cultural heritage is of great significance for the people belonging to the culture but operates differently to considerations of providing "story" for the art market. This re-contextualising process has serious implications for Aboriginal communities as well as wondrous potential. After hearing an audio recording of her brother Hector Jandany, Betty Carrington said, "Listening to those stories for my brother I feel *menkawoom* (good). I bin like to hear my brother's voice ... I bin thinking try to do painting for my brother but I didn't know all the story til I bin hear him now ... I'm part of my big brother. I'm talking, learning from him half the story and I want his story going when I'm gone – for my family".⁶



Rover Thomas in Warmun, late 1970s. Photo: Ted Beard.

___1 Paddy Bedford (ed.), Tony Oliver and Bala Starr, Paddy Bedford: Walking the Line, published by Jirrawun Arts: Kununurra, WA, 2003. ___2 See multiple images of the Cockatoo and the Emu

Dreaming in Linda Michael (ed.), Paddy Bedford, Museum of Contemporary Art: Sydney, 2006 ___3 Gamkiny is the Dreaming story of the moon, a story his mother is renowned for painting

___4 From Gamkiny: Constellations of Meaning, Warmun Art Centre, 2014, publication and exhibition at RMIT Galleries, Melbourne ___5 Made by an unnamed visitor with Patrick McConvell in 1986, copy held by Frances Kofod ___6 Thambarlam-ngirri Nyinge-nyinge Ngenarn Girli-girrim – My Feet are Itchy for Walking, Warmun Art Centre, 2015.

Anna Crane is a linguist whose work with Gija people since 2005 has focused on cultural education and language maintenance. Frances Kofod is a linguist and cultural consultant who has been working in the East Kimberley since 1971. Alana Hunt is an artist, writer and curator based in the remote East Kimberley region of Western Australia.

Kabimbebme

It really pops!

Dan Kennedy on some
Kunwinjku art terminology

K



*Nawu Kolobarr dja Dalkken nakka Yirridjdja bokenh
benewokmarnburreni bu kabenekukbimburren. ... Wanjh
Kolobarr bibimbom Dalkken bu biyakwong bibimbom
Dalkken dolkkang kuknarrinj minj djareniwirrinj
nawu Dalkken bikukwarrewong bu bibimbom.
Wanjh Dalkken yimeng ngudda kankukwarrewong
bu kanbimbom dja kundang ngardduk ngimarnbom
mankimuk kandangwarrewong ... bimarneyimeng
Kolobarr ngudda wanjh ngardduk kunkanj.*

The Antilopine Kangaroo and the Dingo were once two Yirridjdja moiety men who decided to paint each other. ... Once the Kangaroo had painted the Dingo, the Dingo jumped up and looked at his body. He didn't like what he saw. He said, "You've painted my body wrong and my mouth is too big!" ... So he told the Kangaroo, "From now on, you will be my meat".

Andrew Manakgu¹

Words are like territories. Like invisible boundaries laid down in the vast forest of experience, they parcel up reality into sections which can be named, like addresses or the clan estates of Arnhem Land. To compare two languages can be like overlaying the maps of two different cultures. Just as Manilkarr clan lands, for example, are split between Kakadu National Park and Arnhem Land, the conceptual boundaries of words in two languages rarely align neatly.

Take even a simple verb like “to paint”. In English it is possible to both “paint” a picture and to “paint” a monochrome background to prepare the surface. But in the Kunwinjku language of West Arnhem Land the idea of painting an image (*bimbun*) and covering a surface with a colour or liquid (*barung*) are expressed with different words. *Barung*, in fact, overlaps with a number of English words. It may refer to actions such as “smearing” ochre on someone for ceremony, “coating” a bark-eating utensil with honey, or ritually “rubbing” underarm sweat on someone’s mouth to lift a silence restriction. *Barung* is not a visual or tactile concept; it is about imbuing one surface with another material, including perhaps its properties and power. It is a mundane word in most contexts, but in others succinctly communicates a belief in the spiritual power of materials.

*Wanjh waral werrk waralno kabirribimbun wanjh
rungalno kabirrikurrme yerre wanjh rarrk kabirrikurrme.
First artists paint the silhouette, then they put down
the outlines, then they fill it in with hatching.*

Andrew Manakgu

Having painted the background, artists usually proceed to paint the *waralno*.² This is the “silhouette” of the figure or object to be painted. *Waralno* can refer to a drawing in general, but also means shadow, reflection or spirit.

Right:

Glen Namundja

Nawaran dja Barrk (Oenpelli Python and the Black Wallaroo), 2015,
ochre on stringybark. Photo: David Wickens, Injalak Arts

Opposite:

Glen Namundja

Kolobarr dja Dalkken (Kangaroo and Dingo Story), 2014,
ochre on Arches paper. Photo: David Wickens, Injalak Arts





Sacred rock paintings are often described with the phrase *waralkurrmerrinj*, “a spirit placed itself (and became a painting)”. In the *Lorrkkon* burial ceremony, the hollow log ossuary would be painted exclusively with silhouettes of animals of the same patrimoiety as the deceased, directly communicating the power of these Ancestral animals.³ In short, *waralno* cannot be perfectly glossed as a “silhouette”, but carries a powerful set of connotations all its own.

The *waralno* also sets the proportions and pose of the figure. The proportions of animals in particular are of great importance in Kunwinjku painting. A well-painted form can be described as *kukmak*, literally “body-good”. In the story above, the Dingo accuses the Kangaroo *kankukwarrewong*, “you’ve done my body wrong”. Many stories tell of how animals gained their current proportions.

In this way, the figures of animals carry an implicit, subtle moral dimension. Not only do these stories have morals in themselves, but to paint a form correctly, *kukmak*, is to correctly reproduce the Ancestral order. Spirits, especially monstrous ones, may be painted with all kinds of distortions, but in the natural world proportion and balance are prized. Like a Classical Greek sculpture, a Kunwinjku painting of an animal is not usually a specific creature but an ideal type. In the words of the ancient physician Galen, classical artists depicted “whatever form is most beautiful in man or in the horse or in the cow ... the mean within each genus.”⁴

There are a number of what could be called “classical poses” in Kunwinjku painting. A crocodile is often shown *kukbarlungmeng*, “turning the direction of its body” to catch a fish. A magpie goose might be shown *komwayhmeng*, “neck raised”, to observe for food and threats. They are not so much individual animals shown scratching themselves or preening their feathers, but representatives within the greater natural order, hunting and being hunted, nourishing life and taking it away.

Ngarridadjdadjke, yibengkan kore
“joint”. *Wanjh rarrk ngarrire*.

Left:
Gabriel Maralingurra
Manimunak (Magpie Goose), 2014, ochre on stringybark.
Photo: David Wickens, Injalak Arts

Opposite:
Glen Namundja
Ngaling dja Kalawan
(*Goannas and Yabbies*), 2014, ochre on Arches paper.
Photo: David Wickens, Injalak Arts





Gabriel Maralngurra
First Creation, 2014, ochre on Arches paper.
 Photo: David Wickens, Injalak Arts

*We divide up the figure with lines at the “joints”,
 you know. Then we paint the hatching.*

Gabriel Maralngurra

Depending on the artist’s style, the silhouette can now be divided into sections using lines. This division can be referred to using the verb *dadjike*, “to cut”, which is used for drawing lines in general. This is an apt if mostly unconscious metaphor in Kunwinjku culture, where the cutting up of animals is a fine and ancient science. In fact, the dividing lines within rock art animals are often a kind of teaching aid. Each cut of meat has a traditional recipient within the kinship system. At this point the internal organs or *ngukno* are also painted. The outline and internal dividing lines can be referred to collectively as *rungalno*.

Dabborabbolk birri-kurrmeng koroyil. Minj rarrk birri-kurmeninj rarrk yak kaluk bolki.

The old people put these internal division lines in like that. They didn’t do crosshatching [in paintings], that’s a recent thing.

Mick Kubarkku⁵

Inside these divided sections artists paint their *rarrk*, the hatching that is perhaps the best-known piece of Arnhem Land art vocabulary. Technically, *rarrk* refers only to the multicoloured crosshatching originally used for ceremonial body painting, although in everyday language any hatching is often referred to as *rarrk*. A rarer term not used by all artists is *koroyil*, which refers to the internal dividing lines of a painting and, by extension, simpler parallel hatching styles. *Koroyil* also refers to the ceremonial string harnesses of the *Wubarr* ceremony. As in the case of *rarrk*, this word links the painted figure in art to the decorated body in ceremony.

Kangukbarme, nangukmakkayhken laik delek nawu.

Ngukmak delek, yiman kabirriyime ngalyod laik ngamedmeng toilet yimeng namekke.

[Good quality] white ochre shines, it’s “great shit”.

“Good shit”, like they say, the Rainbow Serpent whatsit, went to the toilet.

Joey Nganjmirra

Each of the Kunwinjku primary ochre colours has associations with particular ceremonial uses and other materials, although they are also simply colours. For example, *delek* (white clay or huntite) is believed to be the faeces of the Rainbow Serpent, and in fact good *delek* is described as *ngukmak*, literally “good shit”. A bright moon (*dird*) can be described as *dirdngukmak*, which is a perfect analogy for the kind of pure, shining *delek* that is preferred by Kunwinjku artists. *Karlba*, yellow ochre, is often associated with yellow animal fat. Yellow ochre in a particular creek in the Maburrinj estate is said to be the fat of an Ancestral Emu, for example. *Kunrodjbe* (red ochre) can be associated with blood, but it is also simply a conventional background colour.

Of white ochre and *rarrk* in particular can be said to be *kabame*, “it shines”. This effect can also have spiritual connotations, as the body of the Rainbow Serpent is said to be shiny. *Bame* is also the verb for the effect something

bright like *rarrk* can have on your eyes. So you can say *yimimbame*, “your eyes are dazzled”. There is also an opposite verb in Kunwinjku, so when something is dark *kangurlme*, “it darks”. A deep sacred waterhole (or a picture of one, painted with charcoal) could be described with the phrase *kabongurlme*, “the water darks”. *Red yellow minj nganan, because njamed bimbuyung. Kabimyakme, but nawu white kabebbebme. Red and yellow don’t stand out to my eyes, because they are a bit “dim”. The picture is low contrast. But white jumps out at you.*

Gabriel Maralngurra

A desirable effect for Kunwinjku artists is *kabimbebme*, literally “the picture comes out”. This overlaps with the English word “contrast”, but specifically in the sense of an image that “stands out”, like a bright white figure on a dark background. A well-executed, contrasting outline can also give this effect. The closest English equivalent might be to say “the picture really pops”. *Kabimbebme* can also be said of a painting as a whole, especially if it contains a lot of *rarrk* and white ochre. The whole picture seems to jump forward off the wall. A low-contrast picture can be described as *bimbuyung* (dim or faded) or *kabimyakme*, literally “the picture disappears”. Only bright, pure ochres can really give the effect of *kabimbebme*.

These are only a few examples of Kunwinjku art terminology. They may not be in the typical noun forms familiar in English (contrast, composition, juxtaposition), but the verbs and adjectives of Kunwinjku are just as expressive. Of course, Kunwinjku art can be appreciated without knowledge of any of these words. But, like a novel read in the original language, it is never entirely translatable.

__1 Andrew Manakgu produces written texts such as these for artwork documentation and interpretive materials at Injalak Arts. Translation by the author. All other quotes are from interviews with the author in 2016 unless otherwise noted __2 This is an Eastern Kunwinjku and ‘Stone Country’ form of the word. An alternative form in Western Kunwinjku dialects is *kunwaral* __3 Compare discussion in Luke Taylor, ‘Seeing the Inside’, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 112 __4 Galen, de Temperamentis, I, 9 (trans. J. J. Politt), in Hugh Honour & John Fleming, *A World History of Art*, 4th edition, Lawrence King, 1995, p.118 __5 Unpublished interview with Murray Garde, 1994

Graham Badari

Mayhmayh dja Lambalk, 2015, ochre on Arches paper.
Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Prize
Award 2015 Finalist work. Photo: David Wickens, Injalak Arts.

Dan Kennedy was the Arts and Cultural Officer at Injalak Arts in Gunbalanya for two years in 2013–15. He has studied languages and visual arts, but is currently rebelling against his artistic upbringing by studying for a degree in computer science, while working part time at Cooe Gallery in Sydney.



The rock art of Injalak

Felicity Wright, Melissa Marshall, Garry Djorlom,
Christina Djorlom and Roland Burrunali

This is a story of exquisite ancient art and its living custodians and interpreters who generously share the rock art galleries of Injalak with visitors. First-time visitors to Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) are always gobsmacked by the sheer beauty of the landscape. The fifteen-kilometre dirt road leaves Kakadu National Park via Cahill's Crossing and enters West Arnhem land to skirt the edge of floodplains opening up panoramic vistas to the north of green meadows punctuated by billabongs, while to the south and east is the dramatic escarpment of the "stone country" stretching into the distance.

Arriving at Injalak Arts and Crafts, the scenery continues to awe. Beckoning from across Adjumarllarl, the billabong 150 metres from the back fence of the art centre, is Injalak (hill), an outlier of the sandstone escarpment after which the art centre is named. A ten-minute drive around the southern end of Adjumarllarl takes guests to the base of the hill. "The Arnhem Land plateau is considered to be the most significant of Australia's rock art regions. It is estimated that there may be 20,000 or more rock art sites."¹ Injalak is one of the most accessible to visitors with numerous assemblages, all open to the public, illustrating continuous occupation over a period of more than 40,000 years.

Injalak and Gunbalanya are within the traditional lands of the Mengerrdji people. This clan group has lived here for generations and their living descendants, the Gumurdul family, still reside within our community. With the establishment of the Oenpelli mission in 1925 many neighbouring clans began to settle in the community and all of us can speak the common language of Kunwinjku.

In an area rich with spirit and song, Injalak is a special place, that of the creation ancestor *Wurrkabal* (Long-tom fish, *Strongylura krefftii*). *Wurrkabal* are found in waterways throughout the region. Injalak is part of a complex of *Djang* (ancestral creation stories) within the region that includes the two-closest stone outcrops that rise above the floodplain. To the north is the flat-topped *Nimbabirr*, created by *baladj* (Leech) and to the west is the more conical *Arguyluk* (*manimunak* or Magpie Goose) that also gives its name to the suburb that nestles at its base.

Injalak, which means shelter, provides *bininj* (people)

with a place to stay, an abundance of different foods and water, as well as a place to share our stories, songs and dances. These activities are reflected in the myriad *bim* (paintings or art) that overlay each other in numerous shelters around the hill created by overhanging rocks. The creation of rock art in the region has been undertaken by generations of Aboriginal people who have always been here. Explanations of the creation of country, fauna, flora and the presence of clan groups is described through stories and images and an image of *Yingarna* (ancestral creator) depicted in a delicate painting on Injalak Hill, is central to this. Contained too are explanations of the creation of the Arnhem Land plateau, shifting sea levels and changes in the environment.

The rock art sites on Injalak have been visited by non-Indigenous people for more than a century, with or without the permission of the traditional owners. In the first half of the twentieth century Oenpelli and the hill attracted researchers including Baldwin Spencer, Donald Thomson, Charles Mountford and Catherine and Ronald Berndt. Photographs and sketches of rock art images made during those visits made the site famous in ethnographic, archaeological and art history circles. A reproduction of a painting of *Ngalyod* (the Rainbow Serpent) was put on the new decimal currency \$1 note in 1966.

We're working for the future, to take care of country.

Christina Djorlom

In the 1990s Injalak Arts and Crafts was made a *djunkay* (custodian) for the rock art and cultural heritage sites on Injalak hill by Donald Gumurdul, senior traditional owner (now deceased). He made this decision out of concern that non-Kunwinjku were going to the hill and moving around on it without adequate respect or guidance. While most members of the association belong to other clan groups, including *Djalama*, *Ngalngbali* and *Bulurmo* clans, they continue to share the responsibility

Opposite:
Gary Djorlom, former senior tour guide for Injalak Arts
and now guide mentor. Photo: Richard I'Anson

The spirits tell us to speak, to not hide the story
Garry Djorlom





of looking after the hill. This relationship and honour bestowed arose because of kinship, family and reciprocal relationships. While most of the traditional djungkay are Kunwinjku speakers from neighbouring clans they are also connected to the Mengerrdji clan and Injalak Hill itself through ceremonial ties. With representatives of both moieties, *Duwa* and *Yirritja*, our art centre undertakes this important role with deep respect. Mr Gumurdul felt that Injalak Arts and Crafts was best placed to “take care” as it was already supplying and training Hill Tour Guides.

We carry the ancestors with us – you can feel your father apa and grandfather mawah on your shoulder [when taking guests up the hill].

Garry Djorlom

Employing guides and managing hill tours evolved largely from circumstance rather than design. The art centre was built in 1989 to house the activities of the newly formed Injalak Arts & Crafts Association Inc. (NT). The art centre quickly became a community hub with arts, crafts and manufacturing activities six days a week. The centre also became an attraction for business visitors and occasional tourists who would source permits to cross the East Alligator River. Many artists chose to work on site and watching them create superb figurative paintings of animals, plants and spirits crosshatched with delicate strokes of grass brushes continues to be a source of great interest. Although the art centre was set up to focus on



screenprinting on fabric and support local artists and craftspeople, it quickly became the default place for people seeking a local Aboriginal guide to take them “up the hill”.

It makes us feel good and fresh, giving and teaching about the rock art.

Roland Burrunali

At first this arrangement was informal and the rate charged was nominal. Visitors would arrive at the centre and if a painter fancied a walk and chat he’d escort them for a negotiated fee (the tour guides were exclusively men in the early years). During this time, tour operators began to seek partnerships with Injalak Arts to visit the art centre and some wanted to include hill tours on their itineraries. Over time, the guiding became more organised and in 1998 and 2002–3 training and support for the guides was arranged through NTU (now Charles Darwin University) and a number of guides achieved accreditation. A more recent training session was held in March 2016 where senior guides mentored junior and new guides. While nearly all our guides continue to be active as artists they now regard guiding as an important vocation and take the role very seriously.

We are not doing it for the money. [It is] good to pass this message on – we make a life to keep culture strong, keep it alive.

Roland Burrunali



The response from guests is strongly positive and documented in social media forums such as Trip Advisor. People report transformative experiences and it is worth hearing their voices:

A recent visit to Kakadu enabled a day excursion to Arnhemland ... and it did not disappoint. The highlight for me was the guided walk around Injalak Hill itself. Rock paintings wherever you turned! Just spectacular, and to have these interpreted by a local, Roland, was magic.

Barbara R., Sydney, October 2015

I would go out on a limb and say that this is one of the best single-day tours I have done in my life. Thommo [Thompson Nganjmirra], our Indigenous guide, took us on a climb up a rocky hill that is absolutely loaded with ancient rock art and some very special sites. This place is to Ubirr Rock like the Tate is to a regional gallery. I am counting the days I can return to Arnhem Land and again immerse myself in the magic of Injalak Rock.

Segelflieger60, Canberra, October 2015

The images we paint now at Injalak Arts and Crafts and also our designs for fabric printing are a contemporary expression of our culture and heritage that comes from the rock art. The baskets and objects we make today from pandanus and string are also painted there by our ancestors. It's all part of the same story. The fish we eat and the animals we hunt are all there. Taking guests



to Injalak is teaching respect and understanding. For those who visit us, Injalak is one of the few places in the world where rock art that is millennia old can be experienced with the ancestors of the original artists.

¹ From an essay by George Chaloupka, edited by Sally May, 'Contextualising the Rock Art of Injalak', unpublished manuscript.

For more information about Injalak Arts and Crafts and how to visit the rock art of Injalak see www.injalak.com.

Injalak Arts and researchers Melissa Marshall and Sally May are currently working on a publication about Injalak (hill) that will be a resource for visitors, ethnographers and art historians alike and will be published mid 2016.

Opposite from left:
Roland Burrnalli, Injalak Arts tour guide. Photo: Richard I'Anson

Injalak Hill rock art detail. Photo: Richard I'Anson

Above from left:
Visitors to Injalak Hill. Photo: Richard I'Anson

Views west across the floodplain from Injalak Hill. Photo: Richard I'Anson

Two laws protecting Kimberley rock art

Wanjina-Wunggurr-Wilinggin

Rosita Holmes with Rona Charles on the role of law in preserving sacred sites.

Recent changes to the Western Australian Heritage Act undermine the connection between people and country, placing thousands of rock art galleries at risk. Since the introduction of the cattle industry to the Kimberley region during the early 20th century and the subsequent forced removal of Aboriginal people from their traditional homelands, negative impacts on Aboriginal communities have been well documented. The impact on country, when its people are removed, is equally dire according to Ngarinyin/Nyikina¹ artist, cultural leader and land management professional Rona Charles: “You can’t take people, objects, *Junba* [song and dance] away from Country and think nothing will happen. Because water, plant, song, animal, people – they all depend on each other. People, for their identity and social wellbeing, and country for ecology.”

Rona and her Wanjina-Wunggurr-Wilinggin² community use the land management model Healthy Country Planning (HCP) to integrate traditional cultural conservation systems with current technology and science-based methods. HCP recognises that people, and their expression – painting and *Junba* (song and dance) – are part of the ecology of their country. Rona explains that caring for country and cultural practice cannot be separated: “When I go out to Country to work; fire burning, monitoring water quality and biodiversity ... I’m not there to paint, but when I get home that’s when the stories start to come to me. Country opens itself to me and tells me what to paint, what songs we need to sing. Country can look after us if we look after it.”

The recent changes to the WA Heritage Act marks a return to early-colonial “lawful” acts of dispossession. This move undermines the efforts of partnerships that Rona and

other traditional owners have developed with industry specialists (including anthropologists, linguists, art historians, land conservationists, and ethnomusicologists) to ensure the wellbeing of land and people.

One such partnership centres around the Frobenius Collection in the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt, consisting of a large collection of Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunumbal³ artefacts and documentary material collected in the late 1930s. This partnership supported a number of long-term outcomes, including an exhibition at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin earlier this year. *Art From Prehistoric Times* includes commissioned paintings by copyists from the early-20th century that document ancient rock art from all over the world, including imagery belonging to Rona’s ancestral country in the far north-west Kimberley. These rock art sites are at risk of being removed from WA’s Heritage Act under the new legislation.

Rona describes the process of working with industry specialists as positive: “We feel like we’re not alone. We’ve got people here that want to preserve and help and make sure that we are having a say.” She attributes the success of these partnerships to the collaborators’ ability to listen and be guided by Aboriginal law and cultural governance: highlighting that Indigenous people have to navigate “two-ways”, in response to Australian law and Aboriginal law. Rona emphasises that Australia’s cultural heritage needs to be protected by both laws. “Our way never changes, our law never changes. It is sacred. When we do it our way we are doing it the way our ancestors did. *Gardia* [non-Indigenous] law changes all the time but our law never changes.”



Clockwise from top:
Rona's sister, Beryl Charles, visiting a rock art site on her ancestral country during a Rock Wallaby Survey as part of the Wilinggin Healthy Country Plan. Wilinggin Country, north-west Kimberley, 2015.
Photo by Katherine Mitchell, Wilinggin Healthy Country Coordinator.
Image courtesy of Kimberley Land Council

Rona and Kastina Charles, during aerial burning operations prescribed as part of the Wilinggin Healthy Country Plan. These operations replicate the way Aboriginal people have cared for Country for thousands of years through small, cool burns which prevent destructive bushfires that damage rock art sites, flora and fauna. Photo: Anna Pickworth. Image courtesy of Kimberley Land Council

Agnus S. Shultz, North-west Australian expedition, watercolour on paper, 1938. Copyright: Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt am Main.
Rona Charles is a traditional owner of the Country that this imagery originates from. Rona's daughter Mary-Lou Divilli refers to this site in her artwork.

__1 Rona identifies as both Ngarinyin and Nyikina. "Ngarinyin" refers to both the language and nation of Ngarinyin people. Ngarinyin Country (Homelands) are located along the Gibb River Road region of the west Kimberley in Western Australia. Similarly, "Nyikina" refers to both the language and nation of Nyikina people. Nyikina Country (Homelands) are located in the west Kimberley region, east of Derby, WA __2 Wanjina-Wunggurr-Wilinggin refers to the collective of Ngarinyin people that fought for Native Title rights over their traditional Homelands. The Wanjina-Wunggurr-Wilinggin Native Title Claim was the first of the three Wanjina-Wunggurr claims to be successful. The Wanjina-Wunggurr is one group of people, consisting of three language groups (Ngarinyin, Wunumbal and Worrorra) who share a law and custom associated with Wanjina and Wunggurr __3 Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunumbal are the three language groups that make up Wanjina-Wunggurr and share a distinct law and custom.

Rona Charles is a Ngarinyin / Nyikina women living at Yumurlun (Pandanus Park) Community in the far-west Kimberley region of Western Australia. Rona is an artist, working with the Mowanjum Art and Culture Centre, a land care consultant with the Wilinggin Aboriginal Corporation, and a research assistant at Melbourne University.

Rosita Holmes is an Art Development Coordinator. She has worked with artists in their communities and homelands in the Kimberley region of Western Australia since 2011. She work's collaboratively with elders, linguists and educators to design and deliver cultural revitalisation and art development projects.

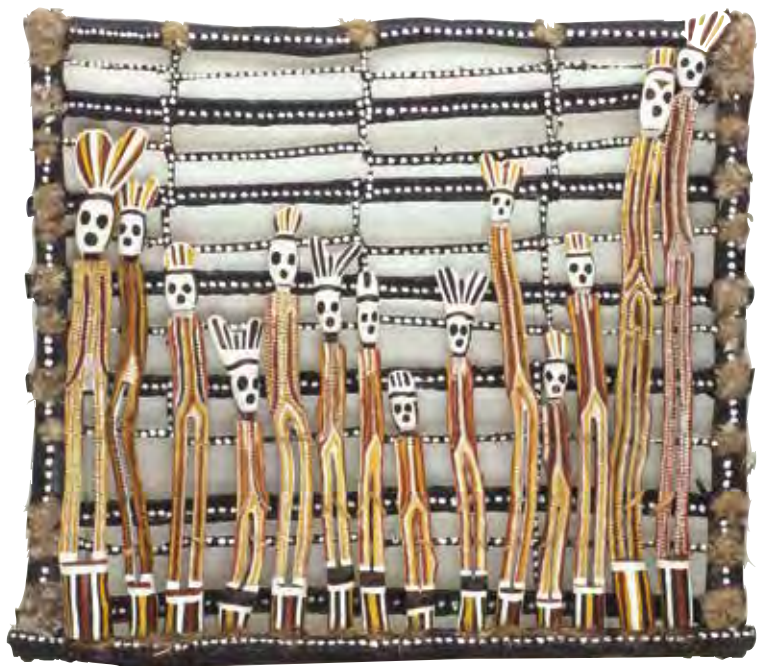
Yidumduma Bill Harney

Bush Professor



Above:
The Little Lightnings Lirringining and Kite Ancestors
at Gornbun-ya, Garnawala area.

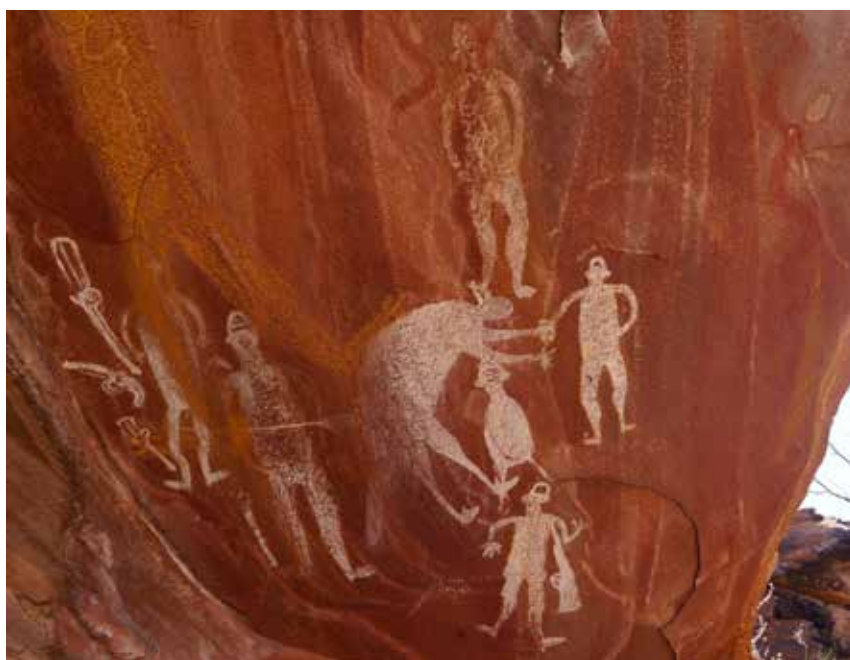
Right:
Yidumduma Bill Harney
Lirringining Grasshoppers, 2007,
bark, natural pigment, vegetable fibre and feathers on wood.
Courtesy Stephen Roseman and Rosa Saladino



Well, from the beginning, I was born in the bush and growing up in the bush. First was the blackfella way. I was grown up with the story, right through till the time I moved into the European (stock) camp... Now today I put the Aboriginal lifestyle and the European lifestyle together, and I know both laws. When we first lived in the bush we were learning all about the art and all sorts of things growing up in the bush, us young ones. They were teaching us just drawing in the dirt, on the rock, onto bark of the gum tree, all that sort of thing. Then we became a stockman. We were getting motivated to be good smart workers on the white man side in the cattle work and horse work. But when we got back to our side we were very interested how to make our own spears to go hunting... That's what motivated me all the way.

Now I've done a lot of jobs over the years. In 1987 I was a fencer at Tindale, fencing the rock art too. Then I started my own tourism business because people wanted to see the rock art. Before then I started making carvings and other things for Mimi. Then George Chaloupka came along and he said, "Can you make some bark painting?" But I said, "No we don't have any bark painting, but we make it (painting) out of shitwood". I went ahead painting and the museum in Darwin organised a show. Then I said, "Bugger it, I'll go with the canvas!" From then on I went all the way. Might be some others the same age as me, they had the knowledge but they died too, see. I'm the only one, the last Wardaman to have the knowledge, so I've got to show all this in my painting before I finish.

Yidumduma Bill Harney, Bush Professor is on exhibition at the Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre, Katherine, 6 May – 16 July 2016. | www.gyracc.org.au.



Above:
Yidumduma Bill Harney
Wangga, 2009, synthetic polymer paint on canvas.
Courtesy Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre

Left:
Contact painting at Wynbarr of the "first explorer" being welcomed by the Red-backed Kangaroo.

Design on country

Printing textiles in Indigenous art centres



**Raylene Bonson, Maxine Charlie, Gracie Kumbi,
Isaiah Nagurrgurrba and Vivian Warlapinni with
Frances Grant and Belinda Foster**



Beginning with batik printing at Ernabella in the APY Lands in the 1940s, hand-printed textiles in Indigenous art centres have become a rich and varied tradition. It has emerged as a significant art form in recent years, particularly for art centres in the Top End.

The Tiwi Islands has one of the longest traditions, where the Bima Wear women's centre has been printing and designing since 1969, alongside Tiwi Design and the Pirlangimpi Women's Centre. Tiwi textiles are known for their bright colours and bold designs, and are often worn by the local community.

In Arnhem Land, Babbarra Designs in Maningrida and Injalak Arts in Gunbalanya have been printing since the 1980s. These centres are known for translating traditional designs used in bark painting and weaving onto fabric. Merrepen Arts in the Daly River region, closer to Darwin, has also been printing since the 1980s. Merrepen now screenprints complex,

multi-layered designs. Nagula Jarndu in Broome is currently developing new and contemporary styles.

These art centres have engaged in a series of exciting collaborations in recent years, as Indigenous textiles have come to be appreciated for their beauty, accessibility, and cultural significance. These collaborations include Babbarra's work with Spotlight, Injalak's range of handmade accessories, Merrepen dresses (one of which won the Melbourne Cup Fashions on the Field) and Tiwi printers working with a range of homewares companies and designers. There have also been several significant exhibitions and institutional acquisitions of Indigenous textiles in Australian and internationally, including a recent and notable acquisition by the Kluge-Ruhe collection at the University of Virginia (USA).

Babbarra Designs printed fabric at Nomad Art, Darwin.
Image courtesy Nomad Art



Gracie Kumbi, Merrepen Arts_____

I've lived at Naiyu Community all my life. It's a quiet community and a good place to go out bush and collect bush tucker and pandanus. I take my kids out to teach them about their culture. There's a rich river and billabong and we fish for turtle, barramundi, and all sorts of bush foods.

I work at Merrepen Arts as the Indigenous Art Coordinator. Most days I print textiles. My design is the Merrepen sand palm, which represents the dilly bag. We get the string out of the palm, roll it up and make dilly bags; we also eat the middle of the palm. I also have stingray and yam designs. I used to go fishing with my husband and see the big fish being chased by the stingray, that's what made me do that design.

We began printing in about 1987, but it wasn't like it is now. We had a workshop five years ago to learn more complicated techniques, and we've been printing like that ever since.

The most exciting thing about working at the Art Centre is creating new designs, printing them and choosing new colour combinations. I love people wearing my designs in dresses. It makes me proud. I don't like to wear dresses myself. I turn my fabric into tablecloths for my house.

Raylene Bonson, Babbarra Designs_____

I am a printer and designer at Babbarra Women's Centre, in Maningrida. I've lived here all my life. Sometimes I stay in an outstation – Mumeka. We go fishing there, and collect pandanus to weave. At work, sometimes I do screen-printing, sometimes teaching other people how to print, sometimes drawing and cutting. Local people here love wearing the skirts that we design. That makes me proud. I've got my own designs made into skirts – maybe I'll wear them for the Darwin art fair!

My dad was a bark painter. Some of my designs are inspired by my dad's artworks, like the mimih spirits. I've thought about my own designs, like fishtraps and dilly bags, since I was a little girl when I was watching my dad. I used to draw my designs in the ground from when I was a tiny girl. Fish traps, dilly bags, that's my story. We used to catch fish in the traps, then put them in the dilly bags. It's special to me that those designs are now on fabric. Our fabric art isn't like those bark paintings; we use bright colours, acrylic colours, not ochre. I hope in the future we have more exhibitions and collaborations, and see more people wearing our designs.

Isaiah Nagurrurrba, Injalak Arts and Crafts_____

I am currently the co-manager at Injalak in Gunbalanya, and have been working at the art centre for more than 25 years.

Gunbalanya is my birthplace. For a long time, my brother and I have sat with the old people here, especially our grandparents. We used to sit with our grandfather while he painted on bark, and he would tell us the stories. He would tell us that we would paint our stories in the future.

I always do rock art style, because my grandfather used to do painting on bark, traditional way using clay and ochre. So, for me, I always do rock art style, using red and white, to represent the rocks and the ochre.

Rarrk represents ceremony. Ceremony is still happening here, so *rarrk* represents people's country, and a person can only paint their own ceremony. *Rarrk* is really important to us, in bark painting and in fabric. Our printing is going really well at the moment. We've had some really exciting exhibitions, and we've got a good relationship with a factory in Cambodia that turns our fabrics into clothes and bags and things.

In the future, I want to see more young people coming in and working here – as tour guides, printers, everything. Especially my grandkids!

Vivian Warlapinni, Tiwi Design_____

I live in Wurrumiyanga, formerly Nguiu, on Bathurst Island, in the Tiwi Islands. The missionaries came here in 1911, and it's still a strong mission base, so we now do a lot of cultural things with a Catholic influence. For example, when we have a funeral ceremony, we do a Catholic service first and then traditional way.

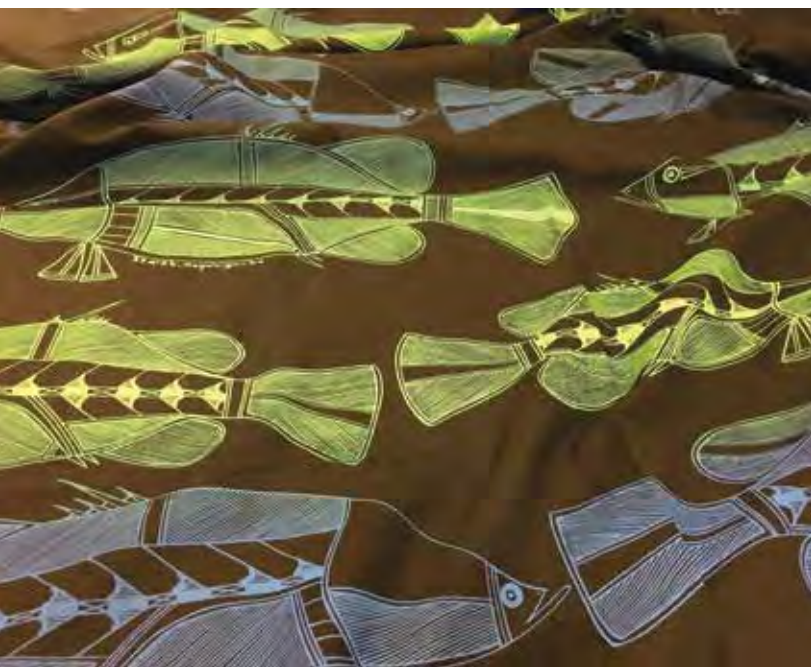
Most of the designs that you see are by the old people, and some of them have passed away now. The patterns represent peoples' tribes, and represent Jilamara, which means body design. These designs used to go on the face and body in ceremony and now they're printed on fabric. Each family has their own design, and everybody in the family wears that design. It's like tartan in Scotland – every family has their own design.

My father worked at Tiwi Design for over 30 years. It started with woodblock printing, then screen-printing, and then fabric printing. I've been working at the art centre since I was a teenager, and I've been there full time since 2007. I do screenprinting and crush ochres for the artists to paint with. I also stretch canvas and am a tour guide when tourists



Above:
Elizabeth Gandabuma
Mudripples, screen print on silk.
Image courtesy Nomad Art

Opposite:
Gracie Kumbi.
Photo: Merrepen Arts



come to visit. I tell them stories about our culture, and explain how we do things here.

Probably one of the most exciting things that has happened was travelling to the Festival of Pacific Arts on the Solomon Islands to do printing there. It's also exciting to see our fabric being worn: once in Darwin I saw a man wearing a shirt in fabric that I had printed!

Maxine Charlie, Nagula Jarndu_____

I live in Broome, in the Kimberley. Our language is Yawuru, and us ladies at our Nagula Jarndu art centre are trying to keep it strong. We also teach it to the kids at school, and cultural dancing, it's important for the kids to learn from the elders.

I print whenever I get the chance, using foam cut-outs, which we make by drawing a design, cutting the shape out of the foam, leaving the negative space. My designs are very contemporary and about my surroundings; if any of the elders want us to do dreamtime stories they will tell us. The old people never wanted us to do traditional art – they keep the traditional culture for dancing. Printing makes me happy; it's a healing thing.



Arlene Bonson, Maxine Charlie, Gracie Kumbi, Isaiah Nagurrurrba and Vivian Warlapinni are artists and arts workers from art centres across Northern Australia. Interviews with the artists were conducted by Frances Grant, and interviews were edited and compiled by Frances Grant and Belinda Foster from the Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists (ANKA), Aboriginal Corporation.

Opposite clockwise:
Maxine Charlie with her crocodile design at Nagula Jarndu Designs.
Photo: Frances Grant

Tiwi Footy Sale at Tiwi Designs, Bathurst Island.
Photo: Belinda Foster

Vivian Warlapinni outside Tiwi Designs.
Photo: Frances Grant

Isaiah Nagurrurrba
Djenj (Fish), 2011, screen print on linen.
Image courtesy Nomad Art

Kieren Karritpul

Old ways, new eyes

Tina Baum



Above:
Kieren Karritpul in front of his textile work *Fish Net (Syaw)*.
Photo: Frances Grant.

Right:
Kieren Karritpul
Yerrgi, 2014, winner of inaugural Youth Award at the 31st Telstra National
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in Darwin, 2014



Kieren Karripul is a quiet but dynamic Ngenwurmirri/ Ngangkurrurr artist from the Nauiyu Nambiyu community at Daly River, about 230 kilometres south of Darwin in the Northern Territory. Born in 1994 in Darwin he was named after his great-grandfather Karripul by his mother Patricia Marrfurra. Kieren first remembered wanting to be an artist as a five-year-old after watching his mother, aunty and grandmother make art. Coming from a family of talented artists including brother and fellow printmaker Aaron McTaggart, it's no wonder he became an artist too.

Working out of the Merrepen Art Centre, which has a long history of printmaking since the 1980s, Kieren started screenprinting after specialised workshops on textile design and printing were run in 2011. Although Kieren is a multidisciplinary artist who is also a painter, weaver and printmaker (etchings), he is most well-known for his stunning and intricate textile designs. Working in textiles was a conscious choice for Kieren as, "It was something different to paintings and sculptures and weavings".¹

"My love of painting and textile design comes from being able to tell really old stories passed down to me from my elders and telling these stories in a whole new way by placing them on textiles and paintings."²

His talent as a designer and printer was evident when he won the inaugural Youth award category at the 31st Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in Darwin with his stunning large-scale textile work Yerrgi (2014). This work showed his mastery of the medium, his strong cultural knowledge and his ongoing development as an emerging artist. As Kieren says: "I was very proud I won, I am the first one from my community to win it".

Traditionally Yerrgi (*Pandanus spiralis*) are collected, processed and dyed with natural colours from roots and

berries by the women in Kieren's family as material for their bags, baskets and mat weavings. His depiction of this plant, processed and gathered in long bundles ready for use after dying shows his keen observation, intimate knowledge and memories of a time when as a young boy he would listen to the old stories being told while the women worked. This strong connection to the women in his family is evident in his various designs.

As a young man telling his family's matrilineal stories, surrounded by his rich culture and abundant country, Kieren will continue to play a major role along with all the artists at Merrepen Arts in the ongoing development, innovation, recognition and resurgence of textile arts in Australia.

¹ Unless otherwise acknowledged, all quotations are from an interview between the author and artist in March 2016 ² Artists statement sourced from Nomad Art: Nomad Art, Artist statement, 2015 www.nomadart.com.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Kieren-Catalogue-15-LR.pdf.

Tina Baum is from the Larrakia/Wardaman/Karajarri peoples of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. She's been the Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra since 2005 and is curating the next National Indigenous Art Triennial in 2017.

The Mulka Project

Wukun Wanambi and Ishmael Marika on the digital archive connecting Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land



Yolngu people, the traditional Aboriginal owners of North East Arnhem Land, use the word *mulka* to describe a sacred, but public, ceremony. *Mulka* also means to protect and share things that are important to us – things that hold our identity, our culture, our connection to country and our past. When our people decided to bring together the films, photographs and audio recordings made in and about our community, The *Mulka* Project was born.

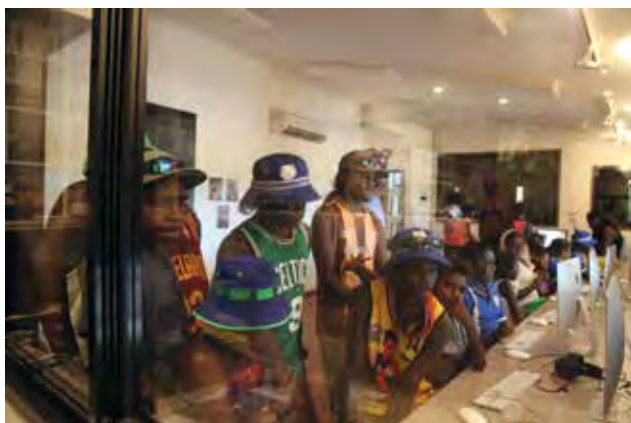
Anthropologists have been coming to north-east Arnhem Land and recording the sounds and

images of our communities since the 1920s. Missionaries came to our community in the 1940s, then school teachers came from the 1950s, and they recorded many aspects of our daily life. Then, in the 1970s and 1980s, Yolngu people started taking their own photographs and making their own videos and films.

Ten years ago we realised there were thousands of sound and image recordings of our community spread across Australia and around the world. In 2007 senior artists working with our Art Centre in Yirrkala, Buku Larrnggay *Mulka*, decided it was time

to bring these records together in one place. The aim was to protect and share the Yolngu cultural knowledge of northeast Arnhem Land so that future generations could look back and learn from us. We wanted The *Mulka* Project to show current and future generations how our Grandfathers and Grandmothers lived so that Yolngu culture remains strong.

Our idea was to create a library filled with stories, images and sounds from the past which could be seen and heard today, and into the future. From the start we talked about building a digital archive



made up of films, photographs, and audio recordings of music, singing and people speaking. We hoped the films, photographs and recordings would show how Yolngu people have lived over time – our ceremonies, country, art and achievements.

Money raised from a successful art exhibition, *The Saltwater Collection*, was used to kick-start the project under the leadership of community members. To start we brought together all the things we had here in the community – the photographs, films and audio recordings stored or hidden around the

place. Then we went searching for the films, photos and recordings from our community that people had taken away with them, and we brought them back.

In the process, we started to think more about how we could get better at recording, storing and sharing the new things happening in our community. We also had to learn how to use new equipment and technology, and involve our young people, so we could all get better at documentation. In the beginning it was hard. We had very little – just one small room with three computers and only a couple of cameras. We

believed each time we took a step forward, things would get better and bigger, so we just kept taking steps forward, even though it was new to us.

Opposite:
Garriwin and Yinimala Gumana recording song lines in Gangan.

Above clockwise:
Ishmael Marika recording song lines.
Photo: Buku Larnggay Mulka

Mulkun Wirrpanda recording Milkarri.
Photo: Buku Larnggay Mulka

Any given afternoon in Mulka's Yälu learning centre. Photo: Buku Larnggay Mulka

Mulka Music Studio.
Photo: Buku Larnggay Mulka

Over the past nine years The Mulka Project has grown. It is now a thriving digital archive, multi-media production house and community learning centre. We have an archive of more than 80,000 photographs, sound recordings and films, which is owned, managed and operated by Yolngu people. There is a video-editing suite, a music-recording studio, and a digital learning centre, the Yalu (nest), where community members do media training. The films, videos and photos in the archive show Yolngu people engaged in all aspects of community life and ceremonial law, dating back as far as the 1920s. There are images of people performing ceremonies, fishing, hunting, playing sport, collecting bush materials, making art and meeting with special visitors. The sound archive includes recordings of language, songs and music, and interviews with our grandfathers and grandmothers over time.

The Mulka Project is not just about holding on to things from the past. It is also about documenting the present, which is a big part of what we now do. We are the media centre for all the activities that happen in our community. It is our job to document the world around us, as it happens. We film or record everything – from football grand finals, to cultural ceremonies, school graduations, and old people singing and telling stories.

We are often commissioned to make films and documentaries for media partners such as the ABC and NITV, and we get paid for this work. When we started out, there

were only a few of us working on the ground, but now we have a staff of ten people working with us. There are two Yolngu cultural advisors, a project manager, and a pool of Yolngu trainers, translators, and technicians working under a Yolngu Board.

Another important part of our work is travelling to museums and galleries across Australia, and overseas so we can see their collections. We have been through all the major museums and galleries across Australia, helping their staff refine their collections and looking for material for ours. Many Australian museums have large photo archives of “unknown” Aboriginal people. One of our jobs has been to help the museums “name” the people. When we find photos, sound and film footage from our communities we ask the museum for a copy and then we add it to The Mulka Project. We really enjoy this two-way learning, where we work with the museum teams to improve their knowledge and we get to learn more about collections.

The ways in which The Mulka Project connects with our communities has changed as we’ve grown, which is one of the most exciting things for us. When we started out it was difficult for us to accommodate school groups because we had no space and only three computers. Now we have more space and thirteen computers so teachers from the school bring their students to us for lessons and to use the archive for research. Also, now that we have more resources, we can work with the homeland communities

across north-east Arnhem Land. We have given many of the homelands a computer and a hard drive, which has our archive on it, so they don’t have to come in to Yirrkala to access it. Homeland people can document their activities and add to their hard drive, which we can copy, so our archive is always growing.

Homeland people also ask us to come out and make films, so we get to teach new skills, share ideas, and give everyone the chance to be involved. Another really exciting part of our work is getting to reunite families with archive material of their relatives and ancestors from the past. It can be a very powerful and emotional experience when a person sees a photo or film footage, or hears sound recoding, of a deceased family member. Having a digital archive means we are always connecting families, and our people are passing messages to each other, and the wider world, across time.



Wukun Wanambi is an award-winning artist. He won the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award for Bark Painting in 1998 and was highly commended in the 3D category in 2003. He is a cultural director of The Mulka Project. Ishmael Marika is an award-winning filmmaker and artist. He is one of the senior film directors at The Mulka Project. | Buku Larrngay Mulka Art Centre, www.yirrkala.com.

Mobile phone remix

Miyarrka Media

Paul Gurrumuruwuy with **Jennifer Deger**
on a Yolngu art of digital connection

Yolngu have always had art inside our *rumbal* (bodies) and our *doturrk* (hearts). What people make depends on their aims, skill and style. With mobile phones and video cameras we're making a new kind of Yolngu art. But it still comes from inside. It still comes from Yolngu *doturrk*.

We started working with mobile phones back in 2009. That was when Yolngu first started grabbing this new technology and making little films, photographs and slideshows. People loved looking at these and sharing them. They still do. The kids make different kinds, but especially *biyarrmak* (funny) videos, grabbing bits and pieces from here and there, mixing up music and dance moves, putting on silly costumes to film themselves. It's really just for fun, to make family laugh. Yolngu have been doing funny dances for a long time in circumcision ceremonies. Now we know how to use technology to gather new things together and make fun in different ways. Like, for example, sometimes they use their phone to film straight from the TV screen while they talk in Yolngu *matha* (language), making jokes and pretending they're the actors. Remix, the young people call it.

Many Yolngu also spend hours on their phones making family *bitja* (pictures). They search the Internet for everything they need and then add in some of their own photos. Often they will put in images of lost loved ones to make the *bitja* really powerful. As the elements come together, that *bitja* becomes *wanggany*: a coalescence of



From top:
Blue skirt series (Sweet dreams), 2010, video still.
Courtesy Miyarrka Media.

Mokuy in the forest, from the exhibition *Gapuwiyak Calling: Phone-made Media from Aboriginal Australia* at The Cairns Institute, James Cook University 2015. Photo: Jennifer Deger



From top:

Artist: Kayleen Djingawuy Wanambi, 2014.

In photo: (top) Warren Gurruwiwi, James Ganambar, Evan Wyatt; (bottom) Fiona Wanambi, Enid Gurunulmiwuy, Kayleen Djingawuy Wanambi Jennifer Deger, Oliver Lanzenberg, Meredith Balanydjarrk, Paul Gurrumuwuy. Courtesy Miyarrka Media

Artist: Simeon Rigmawuy Wunungmurra, 2013.

Courtesy Miyarrka Media

Opposite from top:

Ringtone, 2016, video still.

Courtesy Miyarrka Media

Gumu boys, 2010, video still.

Courtesy Miyarrka Media

feelings, stories and riches. You can look at these collaged images just like *gamunungu*, like the sacred designs on bark paintings. They will touch your heart and make you worry for those people who've passed away, and for the *wanga* too.

One way or another, everybody's using their phone to connect. It's new. But then again, it's not. Even your ringtone can call you back to country, back to family, back to where you belong. Yolngu record clan songs from funerals with their phones and set them up as their ringtone. Whenever someone phones you hear that *manikay* (public clan song) and boom ... you're there. Just like sitting on the ground.

Of course, it's not just good things like dancing, music and *bitja* happening through the phones. Bad things come through the phones too. Our work with Miyarrka Media is about acknowledging how kids have learned to use their phones in the right way – in ways that support law, kinship and identity. They are having fun and still taking pictures the right way.

With every exhibition we have to make sure that families are happy for us to use their images. As the senior Yolngu man, it is my responsibility to sit down with people and explain exactly what we are doing. We need to make sure that families understand and support us, so that we can share Yolngu life in these new ways, opening new windows and doors for our kids and grandkids.

Paul Gurrumuwuy is the Yolngu leader of Miyarrka Media, a collective of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists and filmmakers established in 2009 under the auspices of Gapuwiyak Culture and Arts Aboriginal Corporation. Jennifer Deger is an anthropologist and co-founder of Miyarrka Media and is based at the Cairns Institute, James Cook University. Miyarrka Media are currently completing a book, *Phone-made: An Aboriginal Art of Connection*. Their mixed media installation, *Christmas Birrimbirr*, is being exhibited at the Moesgaard Museum, Denmark, until 2017; the film *Manapanmirr in Christmas Spirit* (2012) will be screened by the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection (University of Virginia) in December; and their latest film, *Ringtone*, will be released by Ronin Films in 2016. | www.gapuwiyakcalling.com, www.miyarrkamedia.com



Jonathon Saunders

They walk among us

Jo Holder

Hat shading face, hoodie up, sunglasses on. Is this minority racial profiling or a disguised action hero hunched on the car bonnet in this poster-scale artwork? In Darwin they know the answer: for justice and equal rights writ large you can turn to the art collective TaNTrum, co-founded by Jonathon Saunders with artist Koulla Roussos to celebrate Darwin's creole splendour – Indigenous, Greek and Southeast Asian – sometimes called Darwin Pop. This small band of art heroes fight against Offshore Money and Oil Inc., especially the destruction of the ragged geography of the city's built form, with witty group exhibitions or manifests in paste-ups in declared laughter zones aka street art spaces.

Jonathon Saunders' work channels street art stencil techniques, digital methods (anime's washy backgrounds with key characters in outline) and the old-fashioned black-and-white art of the graphic novel (the comic book "9 cell" narrative technique). Not surprisingly, since 2009 a growing group follows his solo exhibitions eager to see more of the amazing adventures of his independent artist-hero. Saunders' dramatic investigations of classic themes of corruption, heroism and identity resonate in new ways with Australian colonial history where rights and agency confronts the power of might, money and weapons. It is one big continuum and remains the key inquiry of our time.

Here Saunders' work sits within a black art history: the comic drawings by the brilliant artists Kevin Gilbert and Lin Onus, especially Onus's satirical Kaptain Koorie who emerged with powers fully formed sometime during the 1988 Bicentennial as the anti-superhero to Captain Cook. Thereafter, it is a direct line to Pauline Hanson's fish and chip shop and collective anti-racist works by Brisbane's Fireworks Group and Richard Bell.

Dramatic public art-making also aligns with Darwin's noble anti-totalitarian and resistance-driven printmaking

tradition, often within a brutally antagonistic social and political context. Darwin has long been a de facto headquarters for activists — from land rights to homelands to Timorese independence movements. As a Darwin-based Indigenous visual arts graduate from Charles Darwin University, Saunders' visual literacy was honed by the effective and efficient world of posters and the surprise and shock provoked by good graffiti. But Saunders' anti-hero is someone different for a different decade, and for what he calls a "post-human" superhero, doubting and agonistic.

O Fortuna, the medieval complaint about Fortune the inexorable fate that rules both gods and men, also recently known as the opening and closing movement of the opera *Carmina Burana*, is a staple in popular culture for dramatic or cataclysmic situations. In Darwin the great wheel turns back from the bitter harvest of the contested riches of the Timor Sea, to the destruction and rebuilding of the Top End after the bombing of Darwin and Cyclone Tracy. The new superhero fights as an independent against the new neoliberal landscape of unregulated greed. It is a battle that may not be winnable, but in the end the only choice is to fight. And, with this note, Jonathon Saunders hopes to continue with adventures in animation and a graphic novel. Watch the streets for more signs of action.

Jonathon's work can be found on his art blog "Astounding Tales of Art Fiction" at jonathon-saunders.tumblr.com.

Jo Holder is a curator and writer who works with contemporary artists, scholars and activists both inside and outside gallery contexts, in communities and in public spaces. She is director of The Cross Art Projects in Sydney.



Clockwise:

Jonathon Saunders

Screen capture from *Astounding Tales of Hero Fiction*, animation test, 2015

Jonathon Saunders

Paspaley, 2014, digital image

Jonathon Saunders at DVAA Studio, 2013

Jonathon Saunders

Limits (detail), 2014, 4-colour screenprint (Red Hand Print), A3

Jacky Green

Desecrating the Rainbow Serpent

Jacky Green with Seán Kerins

I am a Garawa man. My country is in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria.

When I was young there was no whitefella schooling for us Aboriginal kids. My school was the bridle and the blanket, learning on the pastoral stations where my father worked. Our future was set as labourers on whitefella stations. This is the reason I don't read and write. I'm not ashamed of this.

I was taught our law by my grandfathers, father, uncles and other senior kin from the southwest Gulf peoples: the Mara, GudANJI, Yanyuwa and Garawa. Knowledge came to me through ceremonies, hunting, fishing, gathering and travelling through our country with the old people. We sing the country.

For the last thirty years I have worked with the Aboriginal people of the southwest Gulf, fighting to get our country back and then to protect and care for it. There's lots of important sacred sites and song-lines throughout our country. Many are powerful places that have to be cared for the proper way.

I started painting so I can get my voice out. I want to show people what is happening to our country and to Aboriginal people. No one is listening to us. What we want. There's a lot of mining going on in our country. The mining companies aren't talking with us properly. Things are always rushed. It's always about someone else's plan for our country and not our own plans. I want the government and mining companies to know that we are still here. We aren't going anywhere. We aren't dead yet. We are still here, feeling the country.

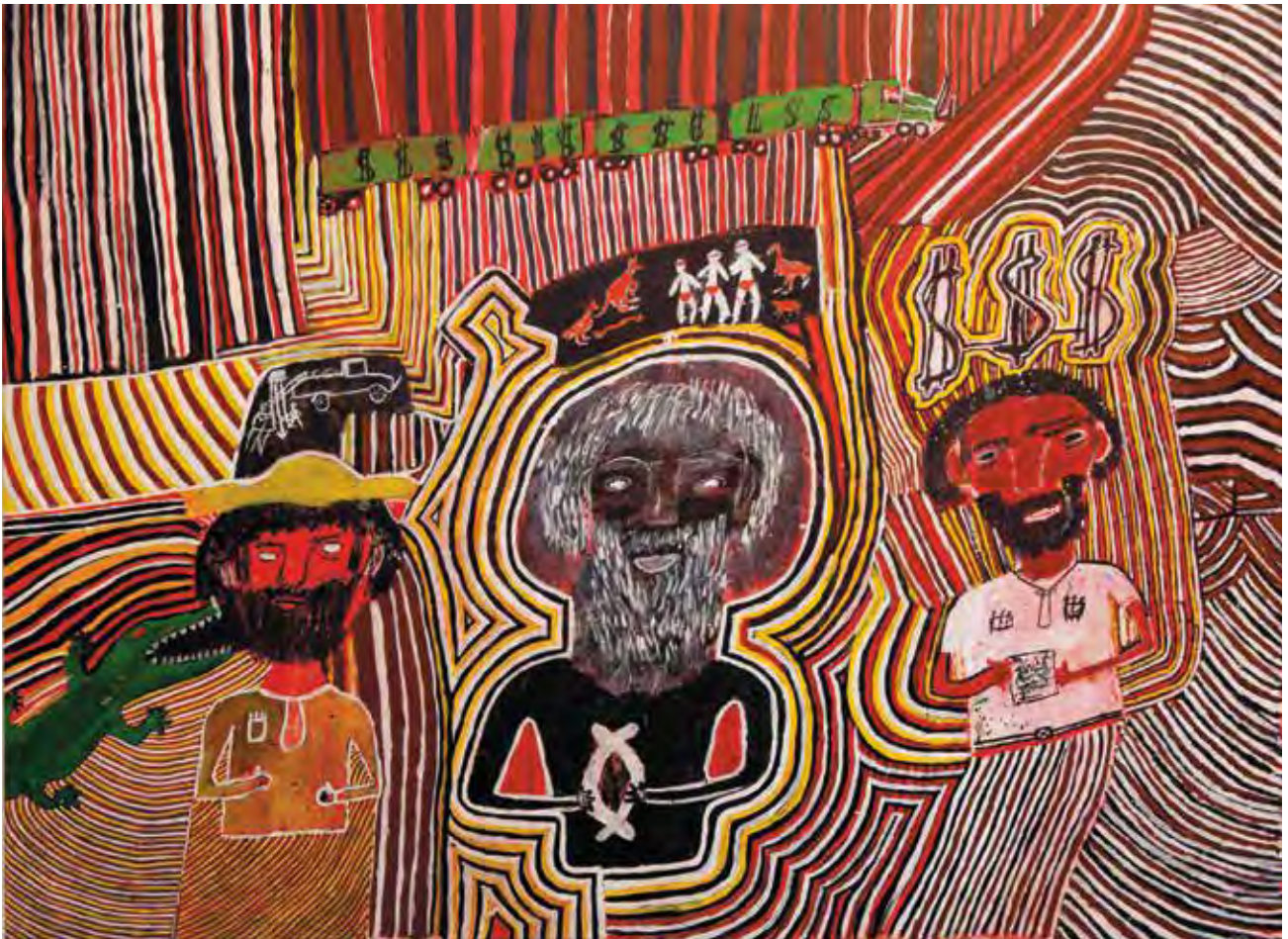




Jacky Green *FIFO*, 2012, acrylic on canvas. Private Collection. Photo: Seán Kerins. © Jacky Green/Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

I call this painting Fly In and Fuck Off. It tells the story of how the government mob and mining mob fly into our country to talk at us. They fly in, use complicated words and then fly right back out, real quick. The people sitting in the painting are us Aboriginal people. We all focused on the government people standing with their whiteboard. Many of us don't read and write so the words on the board mean nothing. That's why some of them just sittin', scratchin'

their heads and others they got their hands up wantin' to ask questions. Why they here in our country? This top-down way of talking with us been going on too long. Things gotta change. We want things to be explained to us proper way so we can sit and talk about it amongst ourselves. We be switched on then and make our own decision to say yes or no. No more of this Fly In and Fuck Off stuff.



This painting represents how we feel about the mining activity in the southwest Gulf country. The man on the left, in yellow with the thumbs up represents the mining company. There's a drilling rig above his head. The crocodile represents me. I am the crocodile. I want to slow 'em down just like a crocodile can slow you down when it has a go at you.

The man in the white shirt is the government man. He knows he's going to get a lot of money from the mining company. The paper he's holdin' is the agreement the government has with the mining company. In the middle is an Aboriginal man. He's Junggayi (Boss for country) and he's worried about his country, his bush tucker and his song lines. He doesn't know what's going on with the miners and the government. He's just watching his country get destroyed. The road train with the dollar signs represents the wealth being taken away from us, from our country.

Jacky Green

Lots of Money Moving Around Over Aboriginal Heads, 2012, acrylic on canvas. Private Collection. Photo: J. Boylan.
© Jacky Green/Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

At the top of the painting, guarded by the Junggayi (Boss for Country) and Minggirringi (Owner of Country), are the eyes of The Rainbow Serpent. The Junggayi and Minggirringi are worried that The Snake is being desecrated. The Rainbow Serpent is one of our powerful ancestral beings. It rests under McArthur River in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria. Under our law we are responsible for protecting its resting place from disturbance, and for nurturing its spirit with ceremony and song – just as our ancestors have done for eons.

The left of the painting represents a time when we had authority over country. We lived on country, hunted, fished and gathered our food on country. We used fire to care for it and protected our sacred places within it.

The right of the painting represents the present time (2014) when we have no authority over all of our ancestral country. The resting place of The Rainbow Serpent has been smashed by McArthur River Mine. Country, torn open. To make this mine they cut the back of our ancestor – The Rainbow Serpent – by severing McArthur River and diverting it through a 5.5 kilometre diversion cut into our country.

Interfering with these powerful places, it pulls people down. Seeing our land suffer, we suffer. Men tried to fight but got pulled down. I might be the next one, or the *Junggayi* will go down. The mining executive might go too. All this pressure, it's no good.

Jacky Green is an artist and the senior cultural advisor to the Garawa and Waanyi/Garawa Rangers based in Borroloola, NT. His work has received attention for its political commentary on mining, fracking and other incursions on country. This text was developed with the assistance of Seán Kerins, Research Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, and Waralungku Arts, Borroloola. A version of this article was first published in Arena Magazine Issue 124 (June/July 2013).

Jacky Green
Desecrating the Rainbow Serpent, 2014,
 acrylic on canvas. Photo: Jo Holder.
 © Jacky Green/Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



My country, no home



A photo story by **Miriam Charlie**

I am a Yanyuwa/Garrwa woman. This series explores living conditions in our community of Borroloola in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Northern Territory.

I call it “My country, no home” because we have a country but no home, people are living in tin shacks, in matchbox-sized houses. Even traditional owners here don’t own houses. I wanted to take these photos to show the world how my people are living. The project is not to shame them.

My history came from teachers and linguists who came down here taking photos of us. We had those box brownie cameras and we had those instant cameras. One day in 2015 I was at my grandmother’s house and she showed me that white ants were eating the ceiling, so I took a photo for evidence to show those people who fix houses. And then I started taking photos of other houses.

There are four Indigenous language groups whose traditional

lands are in and around Borroloola – the Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Gudanji and Marra. Each group has a “camp” or residential area within Borroloola and there is a new area called the “sub”, short for subdivision, where people from all four groups live, as well as non-Indigenous residents. My photos represent houses from each of these areas.

I grew up here and I’ve seen the changes. The government comes, has a look and goes back to their air-conditioned offices.



Miriam Charlie Jacob Riley, Mara elder

This is a photo of Jacob Riley, a Mara elder. Jacob lives in a small tin shed with no fans, kitchen or electricity. It was built in the early 1970s. There are three other houses like this that other elders live in. He has to walk about 400 metres to go to the toilet, through the rain and at night, because there is no sewerage or water.



Miriam Charlie Penny Sing and the Johnson families

This house is in Garrwa One camp, where 26 people live in this two bedroom, matchbox size house. It has a very small lounge room and a tiny kitchen. They have to take turns to use the bathroom, standing in line to use the toilet and shower. It's a health hazard this house.



Miriam Charlie Children from the Yanyuwa camp

This photo is of the children from the Yanyuwa Camp. The photo was taken in December and shows the young boys enjoying play wrestling in the blow up pool. Kids in Borroloola have no youth centre to go to so they get bored and have to make up their own games. They were looking forward to Christmas coming up.



Miriam Charlie Linda Jupiter

Linda Jupiter lives in a tin house as well. These are the oldest houses in Borroloola. She tries to make her house look nice by planting gardens, painting flower pots and recycling things she collects from the dump. She puts tarps up to keep the rain out in the wet season. Her mum, Kathy Jupiter, and her son, Wesley, live there with her too.



Miriam Charlie Dinah Norman, aged 84

This is a portrait of my grandmother, Dinah Norman, 84, who is a Yanyuwa elder. She is a strong woman who still has her cultural knowledge. She is one of the last speakers of Yanyuwa and knows the Law and ceremonies that were handed down by her ancestors.

Dinah has lived in this tiny three bedroom house for over 39 years. The house is overcrowded with her eldest grandson, his wife, six kids and other relatives. There is not enough room to put a lounge chair to watch TV; the kitchen is small and the shower and toilet are outside. The ceiling is being eaten by white ants and sometimes the water pipes leak.

There are lots of big families living in houses just like this around our community. One family I know has 26 people living in one house.

Miriam Charlie is a Yanyuwa/Garrwa woman and Art Centre Liaison Officer at Waralungku Art Centre, Borroloola. Her photographs have been shown at Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, and will be exhibited at the Centre for Contemporary Photography in 2016.

Jukuja Dolly Snell

Belinda Cook



On 30 December 2015, Jukuja Dolly Snell, one of the Kimberley's most treasured senior artists and significant cultural leaders left us, her spirit returning to the place of her birth and her family, to Kurtal in the heart of the Great Sandy Desert. She passed quietly with her devoted husband, Nyirlpirr Spider Snell, and grandson Japeth Rangì by her side.

Jukuja was born around 1935 near jila Kurtal in the Great Sandy Desert. She lived through a historically tumultuous time, shifting first from her desert life into the world of station work and servitude and then to the town camps that formed the foundation of Fitzroy Crossing.

She was still a young girl when she came to the station country with her mother. They came first to Balgo and then Bililuna Station. They were living at Old Bohemia Downs when Jukuja's promised husband, Nyirlpirr, came for her. Once together they were rarely seen apart, and were officially married at the old Burawa mission in 1986.

Jukuja and Nyirlpirr had two children, Henry and Dorothy Snell and they raised Lisa Uhl as their own. Her children have vivid memories of their parents working on the stations. Jukuja worked in the gardens and kitchen and Nyirlpirr worked in the stock camp. Henry recalls going back on school holidays, eating the bread and tea his mother made and going hunting. Jukuja taught her family about their culture,

about hunting, traditional foods and desert life. Her daughter Dorothy remembers, "she took me all around to hunting places. My father used to get meat like wild cat and wirlka (small sand goanna) and she used to take me to get all the bush tucker".

Jukuja was devoted to her family and helped her children to raise theirs. Her daughter Dorothy remembers, "when I had all of my kids – I had eight – she was there for me". Jukuja's granddaughter Rosetta calls her the "Kurtal Queen", "For me she taught me everything about desert life. She showed me what to eat. There were so many things that she did for me and for my life." Japeth her grandson recalls, "I started living with my grandmother in Fitzroy Crossing. When I was little she looked after me very well; she liked me. When I was old enough to go to school I moved to Djugerari community with my parents. Every time we came back here to Fitzroy she would see me and cry. This is how much she missed me. I felt sad and loved. I used to look back to her and always stayed with her for holidays."

Jukuja started painting at Karrayili in the late 1980s. From that time she painted consistently through Karrayili Adult Education Centre and later Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency in Fitzroy Crossing. She was a founding member of both of these organisations. Jukuja worked alongside her peers from across the Great Sandy Desert as one of the leading artists responsible for the production of the iconic *Ngurrara II* native title canvas in 1997. She stood with her fellow artists and claimants and continued to fight for the legal ownership of their country. The ownership of Kurtal under *kartiya* law is now well on the way thanks to her and Spider's unyielding commitment to recognition.

Jukuja was one of the artists that shaped the Aboriginal art boom of the 1990s. She featured in significant group shows such as the National Gallery of Victoria's groundbreaking *Images of Power* in 1993. She developed a successful solo career with a distinctive style and voice. Her vibrant palette was masterfully layered with delicate detail and soft shapes that celebrate the iconic beauty of her country. She received the ultimate acknowledgement of her achievements when she was awarded the esteemed overall prize at the Telstra Art Awards in 2015. Her attendance and acceptance speech for the award brought all in the crowd to tears. Her work is held in many public and private collections including



the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

Jukuja had a clear strong voice and she was determined that her culture would continue. She had the foresight to ensure that her culture and country would be recognised by the broader Australian and international communities through her artworks and her role in the films produced about Kurtal, most recently the award winning Putuparri and the Rainmakers. Along with her husband, Jukuja was a key guide and provided strong direction for filmmaker Nicole Ma and the Mangkaja Arts team. On the 2015 release of the film, she watched it repeatedly at Guwardi Ngadu hostel with her husband and daughter.

Dolly Jukuja Snell was a joyous and passionate woman, a force for change and a gentle heart who welcomed everyone. Not a visitor would enter Mangkaja Arts studio without being called to sit with her and hear the story of the painting flowing from her brush. She had the gift to make everyone feel included and to gain the support of all around her to raise the profile of her culture and beloved country. When it came to cultural celebrations she was known for her singing. Her voice was audible above all others when her grandsons danced just as she and her husband had taught them.

We will remember her as her grandchildren do:

“She was happy, happy for everything; for talking, telling stories, funny jokes and singing. She made us laugh. She had a lot of visitors in her camp. They would come from everywhere, Yakanarra, Wangkajunga and neighbours here in Mindi Rardi. Sometimes kartiya would come”.

It is with heavy hearts that we farewell this phenomenal and cherished woman. We celebrate her life knowing that she is with us all in spirit. Her legacy lives on in her life’s work – the generations she has raised and taught. May she rest peacefully.

Belinda Cook is the manager of Mangkaja Arts, an Indigenous owned and operated art centre based in Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Jukuja Dolly Snell was one of the centre's founding members and a highly regarded senior artist.

www.mangkaja.com

Opposite:
Jukuja Dolly Snell sings Kurtal on arrival at the site 2014. Photo: Paul Elliot

Jukuja Dolly Snell painting at Mangkaja Studio.
Photo: Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency

B



The Wanarn Painters of Place and Time: Old Age Travels in the Tjukurrpa

By David Brooks and Darren Jorgensen
UWA Publishing, 2015, 100 pp.

While the mid-twentieth century feud between art and anthropology over the same object of desire, Aboriginal art, still reverberates in some quarters, a productive tension between the two has animated discussions on the subject for some time. A good example is *The Wanarn Painters of Place and Time: Old Age Travels in the Tjukurrpa*, jointly authored by an anthropologist, David Brooks, and art historian Darren Jorgensen, in which anthropological insights add a depth to the art historiography, and art historiography provides an edge to its anthropology.

This short book shows how good these two disciplines are for each other. I read it in one session and it felt like a classic – a complete and singular vision, and a new way to think through Aboriginal art. With only 20,000 words it struggles to fully take us there. But it does point the way, which is also perhaps the vital ingredient of a classic. The book's success in part derives from its interdisciplinary reach beyond the discipline-specific themes and tropes of anthropology and art history to ones they share, such as philosophy, the psychology of old age and ruminations on relationships between universal and culturally specific aspects of culture.

These themes allowed for an inaudible shifting of gears between the disciplines: the fracture between the two disciplines is relatively seamless despite the tropes of each being easily discerned. More importantly, they added new dimensions or layers to the book, giving it a depth and sense of purpose beyond its apparent innocuous subject: art made at an Indigenous aged-care facility in

remote Australia, most of it by little-known and in some cases unknown artists. Despite its subject, *Wanarn Painters* is not about art therapy, which is the main purpose of art programs in aged-care facilities. Rather, it addresses deeper existential questions about what drives Indigenous people to paint. The only artist (I know of) ever to commence and conduct a highly successful career entirely from an old person's home is the Mornington Island artist Sally Gabori. This book is not about her, but it goes some way to explaining what drove Gabori – who had never painted before – and what gave her the energy to paint so many large and vigorous paintings. Her works have their wobbly moments but by comparison the works discussed here tend to be much smaller and more rickety affairs – not tentative but thoroughly shaky. Some might even think them bad Aboriginal art, so rough is their manufacture.

In putting a range of seemingly disparate ideas into a new Gestalt, *Wanarn Painters* casts new light on conventional understandings of Aboriginal art. While a classic must do this, it must also, as this book does, welcome and even seduce the reader into its flow as if a third participant in its conversation. It is not a perfect book. Like looking out the window of a speeding train, some views too quickly race by. Yet there are recurring features in the landscape, the most intriguing being the examination of *tjukurrpa*. Brooks and Jorgensen chase it here and there in all its twists and turns, and we follow just as eagerly. In this chase, essential aspects of Aboriginal cosmology are revealed: it is a purely existential thing without

essence; it comes into being only in its performance; it is not so much a mythography (Dreaming narratives) or a set of rules (law) – the usual explanations – but a way of what the authors call “*tjukurrpa*-thinking”.

Brooks is an experienced anthropologist with an intimate knowledge of the Ngaanyatjarra people who are residents of the Wanarn Aged Care Facility. Jorgensen is a new generation art historian who accidentally landed in the discipline from science fiction studies (in which he did his PhD). He has already contributed a new term, “wobbly”, which names the style of the many old artists who feature in the Aboriginal contemporary art movement, of which a particularly wobbly contingent is the subject of this book.

While admitting that the wobbliness of old people’s art is due to “the necessity of expression that comes with weary limbs and fading minds”, this does not satisfy the authors. Seeking more, the authors – and I suspect Jorgensen is the lead figure here – are not afraid to compare the Aboriginal artists to their Western counterparts, which also has its famed wobbles. They might be few but they are amongst its masters. Examples given are Titian, Rembrandt, Turner, Cezanne and Monet, each celebrated for his late wobbly style. But as the authors point out, this celebration is a modern phenomenon, as if their very wobbliness strikes a chord with how being in the world is experienced today.

The authors’ argument falters somewhat in this comparison in an examination of the details. Cezanne died at the age of 67, which hardly qualifies him for this elect group, and Matisse (who died bed-ridden aged 84) is given as a counter-example, providing the exception that proves the rule as his final paper cut outs are celebrated for their vigour rather than decrepitude. “Instead of the [Aboriginal] artists overcoming their age with new discoveries” like Matisse, Brooks and Jorgensen write, “at Wanarn age remains victorious”. By implication, the victory is that of *tjukurrpa* and the earth calling their bodies back from the world their lives had made. And one of Matisse’s last works, the Stations of the Cross mural at the Vence Chapel, is a classic wobbly. Further, the Western wobbles are celebrated for the vigour of their vision and innovation. A similar vigour of vision and intellect is *tjukurrpa* in full flight in the Wanarn paintings that are also, ironically, all the more apparent for their wobbliness, as if *tjukurrpa* is never so evident as in this falling or crumbling body.

The main achievement of this book is to transform what initially was a descriptive term for a foundational

concept in art history – style, as philosophical discourse. The fragmenting and disintegration of the body as it approaches death, indexed in the wobbly style of aged painters, reveals an essential quality of *tjukurrpa* – that it has always been molten and in flux. Such art, Brooks and Jorgensen argue, is less about specific *tjukurrpa* stories and more about the being of *tjukurrpa*, of how it appears or becomes. Thus they elevate the apparently subjective contingent character of wobbliness as a style into a metaphysical proposition about the nature of being.

The effect of this argument is to give the utmost agency to these elderly artists who, after a lifetime of battling the worldly forces of colonisation and modernity, now face death. Thus Brooks and Jorgensen dismiss Elizabeth Grosz’s relatively popular Deleuzian and romantic excursion into Indigenous art, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (2008), arguing that its assumptions of Indigenous anthropological deterritorialisation are too quickly made. It’s a good point but one that might have been pushed further given Deleuze and Guattari’s rather liberal approach to the concept. Do these wobbly paintings evoke, in a metaphysical sense, an absolute deterritorialisation? Or is their imminent return to *tjukurrpa* a reterritorialisation? Instead Brooks and Jorgensen turn to Heidegger’s metaphysics, arguing that *tjukurrpa* is the unconcealing of Earth. Indeed, their account of *tjukurrpa* echoes Heidegger: “to ask any metaphysical question, the questioner as such must also be present in the question” (Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*). But if I were Heidegger I would have used Norman Lyon’s *Kularta* (2010), illustrated on page nine, rather than Van Gogh’s *Shoes* (1886), to investigate the metaphysical origins of art.

There is much more to this book than the metaphysics of wobbly paintings by old people, if only because metaphysics, as Heidegger also insisted, is always about everything. A sub-theme of the book is gender, and the authors – here I suspect Brooks is leading the argument – proffer an interesting theory on why women dominate Indigenous contemporary art production in remote Australia. As well, there is a fascinating if abbreviated account of the little-known history of these southern parts of the Western desert, including even lesser known early examples of watercolour and acrylic painting before the contemporary art movement in these parts got under way. Besides their historical value, these accounts emphasise the agency of the artists. Of most value from



an art historian's perspective is the attention given to individual artists and their paintings: it provides insights into not just their individual practices but also into the nuances of Indigenous life and the extraordinary diversity that exists in how Indigenous people come to know and articulate *tjukurrpa* thinking, as if, against the grain of common belief, *tjukurrpa* is highly individualised.

The book is well illustrated with fifty images, and their order has its own narrative, proceeding from wobbly to a reterritorialisation of sorts and then back to wobbly, ending with a final whimper – these lines of bare existence marking the coordinates of first and last consciousness. My major complaint about this otherwise elegantly produced book is that it lacks a list of illustrations, lessening the importance of the artists and their works. Such big ideas would also have a greater afterlife if supported by an index.

Ian McLean is Senior Research Professor of Contemporary Art in the Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts, University of Wollongong

Opposite:
Norman Lyons
Kularta, 2010,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas.

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Rachel Mipantjiti Lionel, *Kapi Wankanya* (detail) 2016
Acrylic on linen, 100 x 121 cm ©Ernabella Arts





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Image: Chantal Henley, *Together again 2015*, Un-gaire (swamp reed). Courtesy of the artist.

Redland Art Gallery is an initiative of Redland City Council, dedicated to the late Eddie Santagiuliana



IMAGE: Bernadette Klavins, *The first rain* (detail), 2016, limestone, water, timber, plastic vessel, fixings, 200 x 18 x 120cm. Photo: Alycia Bennett

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Image: Steaphan Paton
Cognitive Dissonance #2 (detail), 2015
Acrylic on cotton and wool
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Image: Yidumduma Bill Harney, *Warding, Young Initiate* 2012, *Warranggin (Ceremonial) Low Man* 2012, *Guimgga (Low Man)* 2012, natural pigments
and feathers on wood, 108 x 16 x 10 cm; 137 x 14 x 10 cm; 130 x 16 x 10 cm. Courtesy of Ross Bonthorne. Image courtesy of Jayne Nankivell.



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Image: Warwick Keen, *Trespassers*, 2014, Digital Print on Art Rag, 73 x 110cm

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Jai Walker: Detail of *Mary Bundock Women*. Acrylic and pencil on canvas.

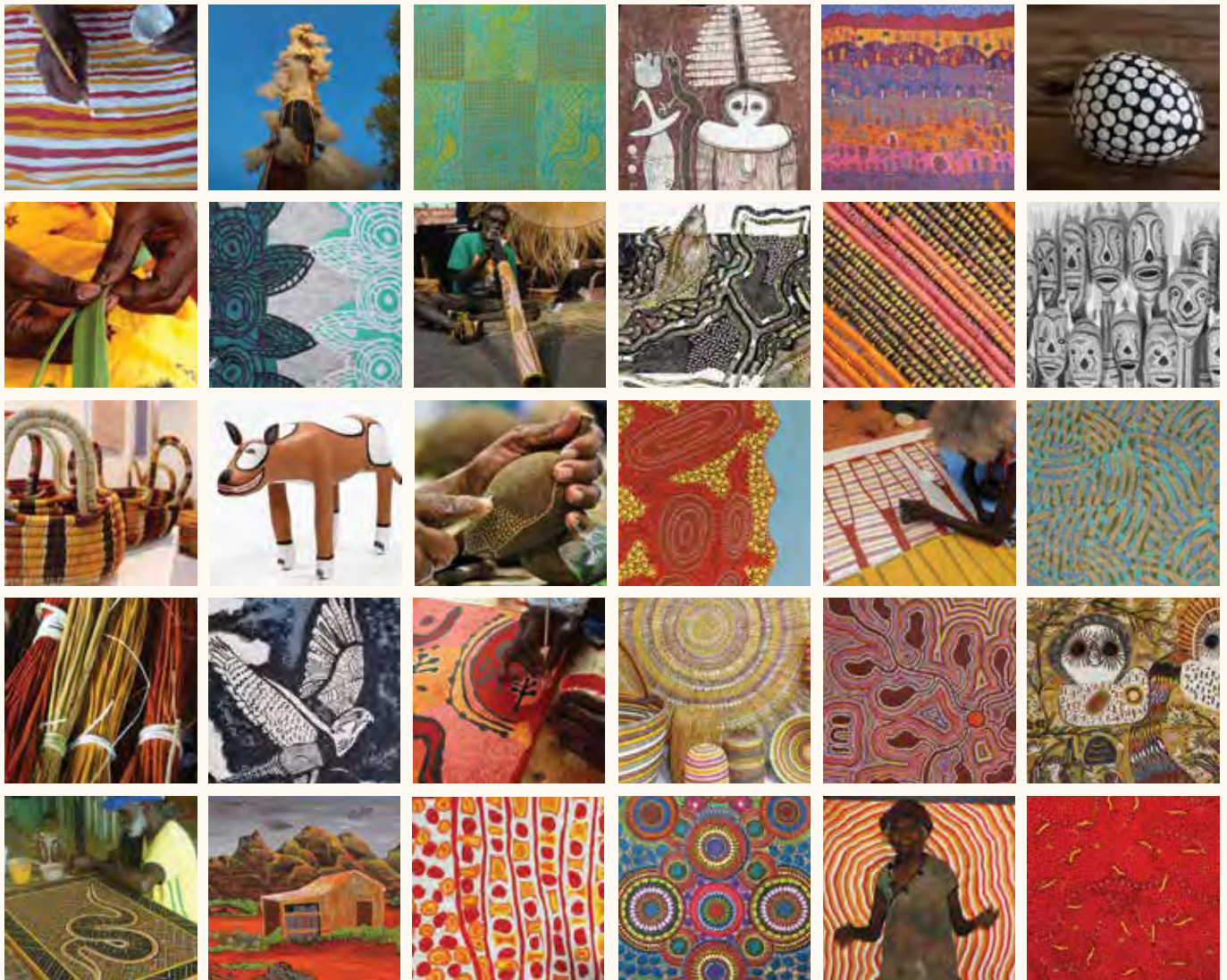


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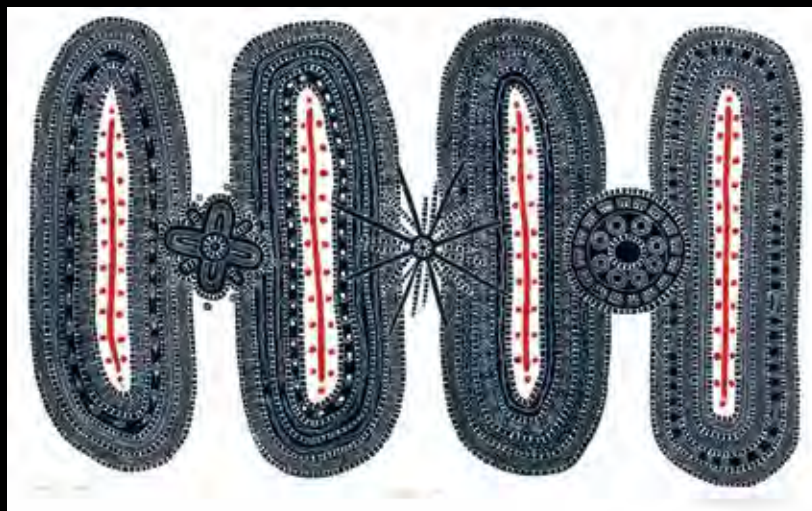
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Tehu Ropayam, Ambula (pima) (we are one) 2015. Vinyl-cut print on paper, 80 x 120cm. Edition of 40. Image: Courtesy the artist.

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Image: Sam SCOUFOS *Portrait of a Greek Man and Son* [detail] 2015, 120 x 80 cm, Giclee print. DUO Magazine Percival Photographic Portrait Prize Finalist.

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Luke Willis Thompson's exhibition is generously supported by Creative New Zealand. Nicholas Mangan's exhibition is co-produced by Kunst-Werke, Berlin, and MUMA, Melbourne, and is generously supported by the Australia Council for the Arts.



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Visual Arts and Craft Strategy





Desert Mob 2016

08.09.16 - 23.10.16

Araluen Arts Centre

Opening 8 September 5.30pm

Symposium and DanceSite 9 September

MarketPlace 10 September

[f/desertmob](#) [#desertmob](#) www.desertmob.nt.gov.au

Image: Desert Mob 2015 exhibition installation with works by Yarrenyty Artere Artists

Araluen Arts Centre
Larapinta Drive Alice Springs NT 0870
10am - 4pm Mon to Fri, 11am - 4pm Sat & Sun
t. 08 8951 1122 | e. araluen@nt.gov.au
www.araluenartscentre.nt.gov.au





BLACK MIST BURNT COUNTRY



**TESTING THE BOMB MARALINGA AND AUSTRALIAN ART
BURRINJA TOURING EXHIBITION**

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ONE TREE. PAUL OGIER

