

YURLUPIRTI
FOREVER WITHOUT END (ETERNAL)

—
Daniel Walbidi

NEW YORK

26 APRIL – 31 MAY 2024

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—

Daniel Walbidi

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In association with
Short St Gallery, Western Australia

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

After a sellout solo presentation in New York in 2023, Daniel Walbidi returns this year to reveal a transition in his artistic practice, exploring in greater depth his personal beliefs and cultural perspectives – which invariably are grounded in the land. Daniel has never lost the attention of the Australian art market, and, as was highlighted recently in the *Financial Times*, his inspiring art practice is now at the forefront of the global search for significant art outside of the Western canon.

In a powerful interview with Emily Rohr conducted earlier this year, Daniel shares keen insights into his creative practice. He openly discusses the spiritual dimensions of his Yulparitja/Mangala heritage and how the knowledge handed down from the older generations has deeply affected his approach to navigating the modern world. I urge you to read this interview and accompanying texts by Emily Rohr and Lucy Foster.

This year's exhibition represents a new direction for D'LAN Contemporary, coinciding with the move to our new second gallery on East 73rd Street. This space will house curated exhibitions of predominantly living/working Australian First Nations practitioners. This expansion of our business since the opening of the first Daniel Walbidi show last year is a testament to the momentum in his work and the growing appetite for Australian First Nations art more broadly.

What sets this year apart is the rare opportunity to meet Daniel in person at this opening in New York. This exclusive event allows collectors to engage directly with the artist, gaining unique insights into his work and world. Our gallery manager, Lucy, and I will welcome Daniel and Emily to our new primary gallery space at 25 East 73rd Street, and we look forward to personally welcoming you to this extraordinary presentation and opening event on April 25.

We are deeply grateful to Daniel and his primary representative, Emily Rohr, at Short St Gallery for entrusting us with this profound exhibition.

DANIEL WALBIDI
Winpa 2023 (detail)

D'LAN DAVIDSON
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

FOREVER WITHOUT END: THE WORK OF DANIEL WALBIDI



Having left a significant mark on New York, Daniel Walbidi brings with him a unique perspective that explores the complexities of his ancestral landscapes and cultural narratives. His paintings, adorned with metallic hues and vibrant colours, continue to captivate and intrigue his viewers.

Daniel Walbidi originates from Bidyadanga, a coastal community 250 kilometres south of Broome and the traditional homeland of the Karrajarrri people. Initially established as the La Grange Mission, this remote area in Western Australia served as a settlement for Indigenous people migrating from the desert, many of whom assisted in building cattle stations. Daniel's upbringing in this diverse environment fostered a deep appreciation for tradition and cross-cultural connections.

At sixteen, Daniel embarked on a journey of self-expression through art, using diverse mediums like wood boards and old doors. Motivated by a deep desire to explore his heritage, he asked community elders to join him in his artistic endeavours, enriching his journey and shaping him into the artist he is today.

As Daniel's journey unfolds, his art remains deeply rooted in his people's traditional teachings and experiences. His latest works pay homage to his Yulparitja/Mangala heritage, with water emerging as a central theme, reflecting its significance in desert life. Daniel mirrors the fusion of coastal and desert environments through an intense colour palette, offering a visual narrative of his ancestral connection to Country.

Challenging conventional notions of ownership and law, Daniel highlights Australian First Nations perceptions of reality and the importance of acknowledging land. For Daniel, the land is not merely a possession but a fundamental aspect of identity and well-being for his community – 'If you are born in the land, you are of the land.'

As Daniel's paintings grace the walls of our new space in New York, his art and words offer a poignant reflection on the importance of preservation and the enduring resilience of Australian First Nations cultures. Daniel's artistic contributions have transcended borders, with his work showcased internationally, including at the prestigious Metropolitan Museum in New York. His accolades, including the painting prize at the 2014 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards and recognition as one of Australia's Most Collectible Artists in *Australian Art Collector*, stand as a testament to his talent and dedication. In 2019, his signature installation and video piece were featured in the Desert River Sea exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, further solidifying his status as a distinguished artist.

LUCY FOSTER
GALLERY MANAGER, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

DANIEL WALBIDI × EMILY ROHR

Interview with Daniel Walbidi by Emily Rohr
Broome, 12 March 2024

Contemporary art has become very embedded in conceptual-based dialectics, while the tradition you come from is more imbedded in wisdom-based learning that is experiential and layered. Can you talk about this in relation to your practice?

Even though people see my art as contemporary, the subject matter always remains – it is Country and water. To desert people, water is of great importance, and it's in our songs and stories. It is like a religion for us. This knowledge of water has been passed down to us from our ancestors and is essential for survival in my Country. Coastal people even know through ceremonies where water may lie in the desert – if they have experienced the ceremonies that teach about the sacred nature of water. My art comes from this history and real-life experience of desert survival. My art is not of the Western conceptual world but is very much of the physical desert world.

Your painting style and understanding of your Country was taught to you by the old people who grew up living very traditional lives. Why do you think so many of them were exceptional artists? And can you tell us how they inform your perspective and understanding of your subject matter?

They saw the country differently. When they say Country, it is not land. Respectfully speaking, Western people work hard and they see land as a plot or deeds to be owned, but it is very different for my culture. Western people have milli milli (paperwork) as entitlement to land. We know our Country intimately, we know where our land starts and finishes, it is part of us, and we are part of it. The old people knew every part of it. They had an encyclopaedic understanding, and deep, very real experience of Country, so paint it with infinite, eternal wisdom and knowledge of this part of themselves. I always try to bring this perspective and understanding to what I am painting.

You speak of the old people, who were extraordinarily gifted artists, 'walking differently' in the world. What does this mean, and why was their sense of the world so profound?

They see everything differently to the Western systems. We have a very different system. They saw things with a very deep view – it is beyond the physical, it is much deeper, it is more true to reality in many ways. I know personally many great men and women can travel through song. They can carry themselves to different places, without leaving home – this is part of our Law and culture and is very sacred.

I know people who can be sitting in the Kimberley but travel right down to the Great Australian Bight, and to other places. We still practise these sacred traditions, and still have men and women of high degree with very profound powers and abilities because they can transcend the limitations of the physical world by a deep knowing and wisdom of the true nature of the physical world. I don't think Western traditions understand this or can really comprehend it. Western law is on a piece of paper, our Law is written in the land. I think this is the difference. Paper is easily destroyed, our Law withstands all the elements. Western laws change all the time, our laws cannot be changed. Probably our culture is more like Jewish culture, when God gave the commandments of how to live. Our ancestors were given the law of the land, and it cannot be broken.

You have just had one of the biggest group of young men going through Law (lore). Do you think that traditional cultural practice is growing, and why do you think this is the case?

It is like a religion. If you have no Law, you are nobody. I don't mean this as a cliché. It is everything, it is tradition and custom, and we have no choice but to maintain it and grow it. It is not just about us, it's about our land, our ancestors, and all that was and all that will be. We try to scrutinise very closely who is choosing to go through, as the Western system is leading to greed and land grabs from people who are not really entitled to learn the Law but want it to gain money, land and power. We do not welcome these people. We encourage people who have a more profound understanding of our systems.



How do you think people from other cultures view your work, and is there anything you can tell us to give people more insight into your motivation for doing such transformative, powerful paintings?

Like I always say, 'Be still, be calm, let the painting talk to you. Listen and watch.' It is the same philosophy our old people tell us. The painting will speak, and reveal the things that cannot be seen, beyond the physical.

You have an amazing colour sense, and incredible line in your work, but many people would not see the diversity of colour in a desert that you seem to see. Can you tell us more about your palette and what informs many of your extraordinary colour choices?

It's like a marriage of the desert and coastal. I live in both worlds. The coast penetrates into the desert. It is a mixture of these two places. My colours are all from the natural world.

Weaver Jack once told me that she used dots because nothing is solid. How do you perceive this understanding of the desert painting tradition of dot painting? Your work is so intricate and layered in its dotting, and I am curious if this touches on Weaver's understanding of this technique of painting.

Our culture and our understanding of land and songlines is not a straightforward thing. It is not like the highway running through Australia. Our culture zigzags, and penetrates deep into rocks and lakes and mountains. It is not so easy to give a quick answer to this question, as it is complex. It is only a very small part of it, but indicates greater things. Each tradition, in the Aboriginal world, is different, and they are all entwined and point to the same things. It is just a technique indicating a deeper understanding of how things really are, which we learn from our Country, the great teacher.

How do you feel about your pictures being seen and exhibited in New York, so far from the desert and such a different world? Do you think that people will see their importance and relevance in this very different context?

Well, my main ambition is not only to be a successful artist but also to be someone who is able to make our culture known and understood, and to give a different perspective of what land is to Aboriginal people. The laws of the land extends to New York. There is a long tradition through the Native American community, who I often think about, and I often wonder about the First Nation people in America. New York people need to understand this also, so I think it is relevant to people everywhere, because we all walk on the same land, although with different traditions. The fundamental laws for existence are all written in the land. My aim is to share our perspective, because it will shift the approach and understanding of Western people. If you are born in the land, you are of the land.

DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Winpa 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen
80.7 × 67.1 inches (205 × 170.5 cm)

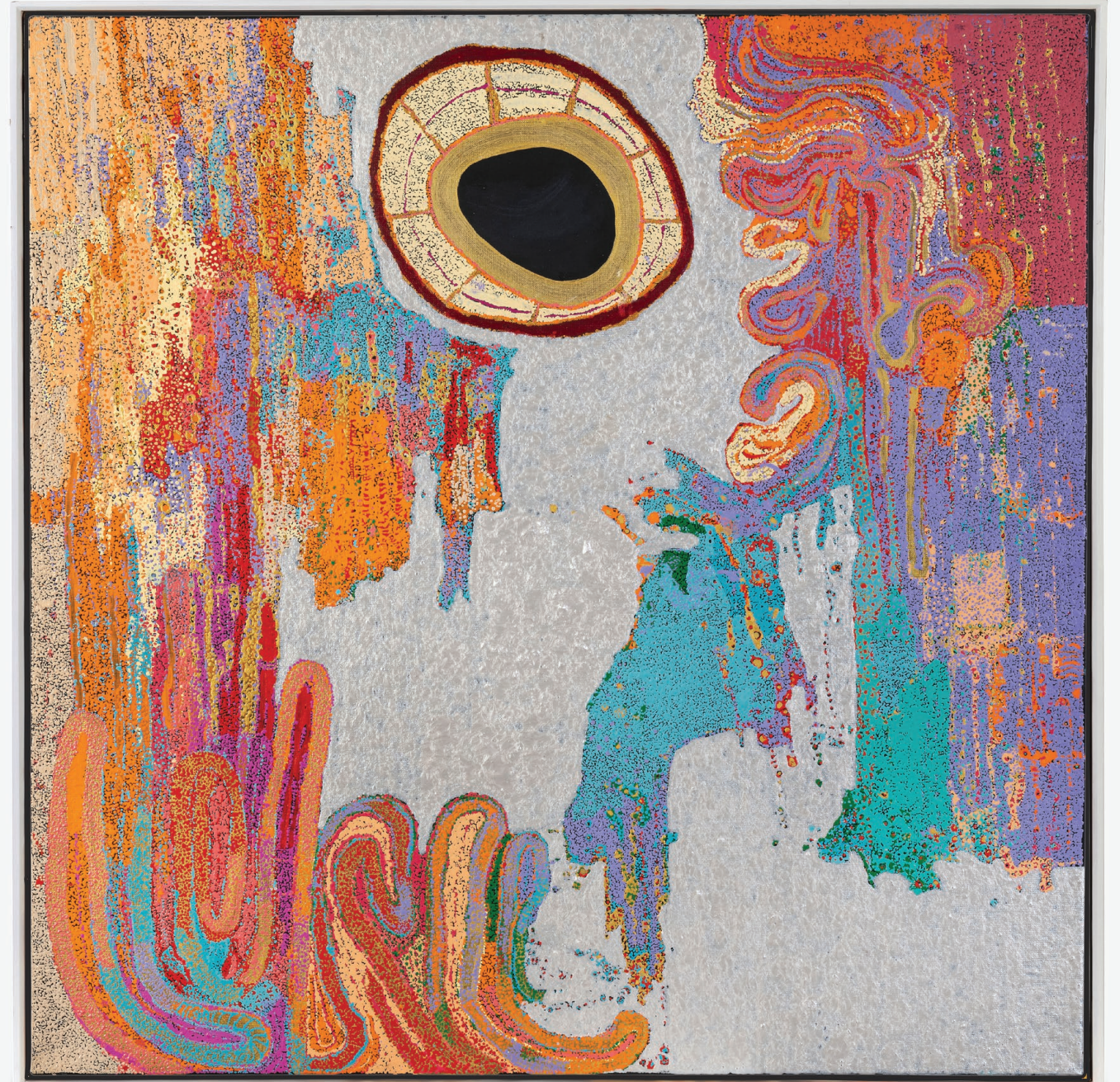


DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Winpa 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
39.3 × 39.3 inches (100 × 100 cm)



DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Winpa 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
39.3 × 39.3 inches (100 × 100 cm)



DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Winpa 2021

synthetic polymer paint on linen
69.2 × 34.6 inches (176 × 88 cm)

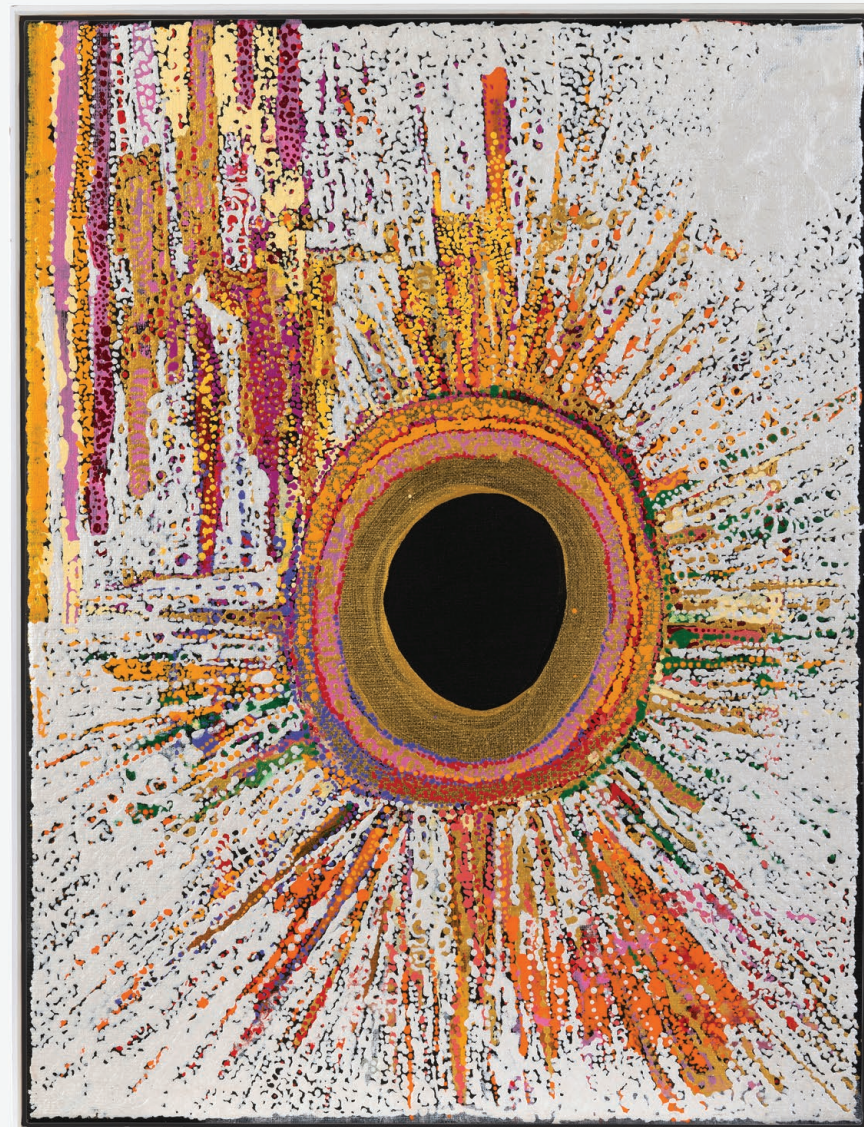


DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Winpa 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
24 × 18.1 inches (61 × 46 cm)



DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Kirriwirri 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
31.4 × 11.8 inches (80 × 30 cm)



DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Untitled 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen
66.9 × 78.7 inches (170 × 200 cm)



DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Kirriwirri 2024

acrylic on linen

70.8 × 50.1 inches (180 × 150 cm)



DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Kirriwirri and Mungunkurlu 2023
synthetic polymer paint on linen
70.8 × 37.4 inches (180 × 95 cm)



DANIEL WALBIDI

Yulparitja and Mangala languages
born 1983

Winpa 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen
70.8 × 37.4 inches (180 × 95 cm)





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ABOUT

Formed in 2016, D'Lan Contemporary sources, exhibits and sells exceptional works of art by leading and emerging First Nations Australian artists in Australia and overseas.

ETHICS

Our mission is to create a transparent and sustainable marketplace for Australian Indigenous art and to respect and protect the integrity of the artist, the buyer, the seller – and the marketplace – from fraudulent sales or unethical procurement.

We maintain strict ethical practices and only exhibit and sell works of art with a clear line of provenance.

D'Lan Contemporary allocates 30% of annual net profits to centralise and distribute proceeds from art sales back to Australian First Nations artists and their working communities.

PROVENANCE

Every work of art exhibited and sold by D'Lan Contemporary has a clear line of provenance.

Documentation we draw upon to establish provenance includes:

- Community Art Centre certificate of provenance/authenticity
- Transfer of ownership documentation
- Purchase receipt or invoice
- Inclusion in academic / art historical publications
- Inclusion in exhibitions, and exhibition catalogues (private and/or public institution)
- Collection/exhibition inventory numbers (private and/or public institution)
- Inclusion in auction catalogues
- Documented appraisals

D'Lan Contemporary's guidance on best practice for buying Australian Indigenous art is:

CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS ART (1980–PRESENT)

All contemporary Australian Indigenous works of art should be accompanied by documentation linking the artwork to the artist via their Community Art Centre or their primary gallery/representative.

Community Art Centres operate with an ethical focus and establish their own individual guidelines by which all artworks are sold.

Primary market artworks should only be bought from a Community Art Centre or an official artist gallery/representative.

Secondary market artworks should only be bought with a source of provenance from a Community Art Centre or an official artist gallery/representative.

MODERN INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN ART (1950S–1980)

For artworks created prior to the establishment of Community Art Centres, such as bark paintings, Hermannsburg watercolours, Papunya boards and sculptural artworks made for sale, there is less necessity for Community Art Centre provenance.

However, artworks from this period with no traceable history are likely to have less market value than those that do – even when an artwork is clearly authentic.

Highly desirable provenance for artworks from this period includes Papunya Tula Artists, Stuart Art Centre and Maningrida Arts, or a clear link to a primary collector such as Geoffrey Bardon, Dorothy Bennett, Sandra Le Brun Holmes or Dr Scougal – who were all active in the 1950s–1970s.

ARTEFACTS AND OBJECTS (1880S–1950)

With artefacts, often much of the important collection history has been lost over time. Therefore, proven provenance can greatly impact value.

Before acquisition, research should be undertaken to ascertain the origin of the artefact or object, and how and when it left its country of origin.

Best practice in this segment is to obtain advice from a trusted industry expert before buying or selling.

PROTECTION OF MOVEABLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT

The *Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1985* (PMCH Act) implements Australia's obligations under the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970 (1970 UNESCO Convention), to which Australia is a State Party.

The 1970 UNESCO Convention requires State Parties to ensure that no collecting institution accepts illegally exported items.

The Australian Government administers the PMCH Act through the Ministry for the Arts. The PMCH Act regulates the export of Australia's most significant cultural heritage objects by implementing export controls for objects defined as 'Australian Protected Objects'.

If you have any questions about acquiring or selling Australian Indigenous Art, please contact us at: enquiries@dlancontemporary.com.au

DLANCONTEMPORARY.COM.AU

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