



**THE HICKS
COLLECTION
EMILY KAM
KNGWARRAY**

1989 – 1996

NOVEMBER 2024

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

D'Lan Contemporary is honoured to be conducting the sale of The Hicks Collection of works by Emily Kam Ngwarray, which has been held in the family's collection for thirty years. The private collection comprises twelve exceptional works by Emily that encompass the artist's entire oeuvre, spanning the trajectory of Emily's stylistic shifts from beginning to end.

Under the friendship, tutelage and exceptional eye of the late William Mora, each work has been meticulously selected for its impeccable provenance, aesthetic quality and overall importance to the collection.

Ian Hicks states:

It was through my great friendship with William that we were able to view and acquire some of the finest works by Emily Kam Ngwarray available through Delmore Gallery in those early days. It was also through this friendship that I was introduced to D'Lan, for which I am also grateful to William.

We will be fascinated to see how the collection is received in New York, and more importantly, we are extremely excited at the prospect of it finding a prominent new home, here in the US.

With a retrospective of Emily Kam Ngwarray to be held at the Tate Modern in 2025, the Hicks Collection is a fitting confirmation of Emily's unequivocal and significant contribution to global contemporary art. Her legacy is unsurpassed in the context of Australian art history.

D'Lan Contemporary proposes to present the sale of the collection as a whole, hosting private preview events at its gallery at 25 East 73rd Street, New York. I look forward to personally welcoming you to this exclusive opportunity.

D'LAN DAVIDSON

DIRECTOR & FOUNDER, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY



Photographer: Greg Weight

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

Emily Kam Kngwarray was born around 1915 in Alhalker on the edge of Utopia cattle station in Anmatyerr Country, approximately 250 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. One of the last generations of First Nations Elders born and raised in a country devoid of impinging settler influence, Emily grew up acutely attuned to the land's riches, its seasonality, and her place within its cycles. By the time she started painting on canvas, Emily was a respected Anmatyerr Elder, keeper of significant ancestral knowledge and co-caretaker of sacred sites in her Country, all aspects of which informed her life and painting.

Emily's complete series is ritualistic repetition at its most refined. The artist's various styles that emerged across her body of work reflect the deep understanding and experience of Alhalker – her physical and spiritual home – and only source of constant inspiration and point of connection. The number of stylistic transitions that Emily produced over a short eight-year period was inspired by Alhalker's spiritual and environmental diversity. From the 'field of dots' to the concluding brushstrokes in her last series, remarkable physical and spiritual strength flowed into her paintings. Although Kngwarray was in her eighties, her paintbrush served as an extension of her powerful hands, arms, shoulders and upper torso, a power formed from years of manual labour and the many years of ceremonial dancing, singing and mark-making that filled her canvases with movement and musicality.

Her work on canvas moved through frequent stylistic shifts, expressing her depth of knowledge and ongoing experience of awely – women's Dreaming ceremony. The anwerlarr (anooralya) yam from Alhalker is another principal motif of her ceremonial designs and the central theme of her oeuvre. The skeletal structure of sinuous lines recalls the yam's underground growth paths and, by association, the emu, which feeds on its flowers and seeds. The rhythmic thrust of Emily's brush on canvas invoked the subterranean life of the yam and is a vital component in communicating the vitality of its Dreaming.

In 1999, works from the Ian Hicks Collection were exhibited in *Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection* curated by Karen Quinlan and Anonda Bell, under director Tony Ellwood at the Bendigo Art Gallery. The exhibition served as a succinct survey of Kngwarray's career between 1989 and 2006, and toured regional Victoria and New South Wales from 1999 to 2000. Reflecting on the collection assembled by Ian and William Mora, Tim Klingender noted that the collection 'includes many of the highest quality examples of her signature styles, particularly those painted under commission from the Holt family at Delmore Downs'.¹

1. Tim Klingender, *Of My Country, Emily Kame Kngwarreye: The Applied Chemicals Collection*, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999.



1989–1991

Emily's early paintings express the lightness and structural layered processes of her batik designs. Moving from silk to canvas, she maintained the same hastened pace of the trailing lines of hot wax flecked with fields of dots that represented the above-ground and below-ground life of her totem anwerlarr – pencil yam. In 1989–1991, Emily transformed these formative aspects of batik practice by harnessing the power and presence of the dot.

Once committing to this technique, Emily found the freedom to push its facility into glorious fields of colour and movement, achieving paintings of rhythmic complexity over both large and small-scale works. However, the principal motif of her ceremonial designs maintained its presence underneath paintings from this period, the meandering, sinuous lines of anwerlarr forming the foundational structure and recalling the life cycle of the yam both above and below ground. The rhythmic thrust of Emily's precise dotting communicates the vitality of its Dreaming.

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Bush Plum Country 1989
synthetic polymer paint on linen
150 × 121.5 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. E059
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

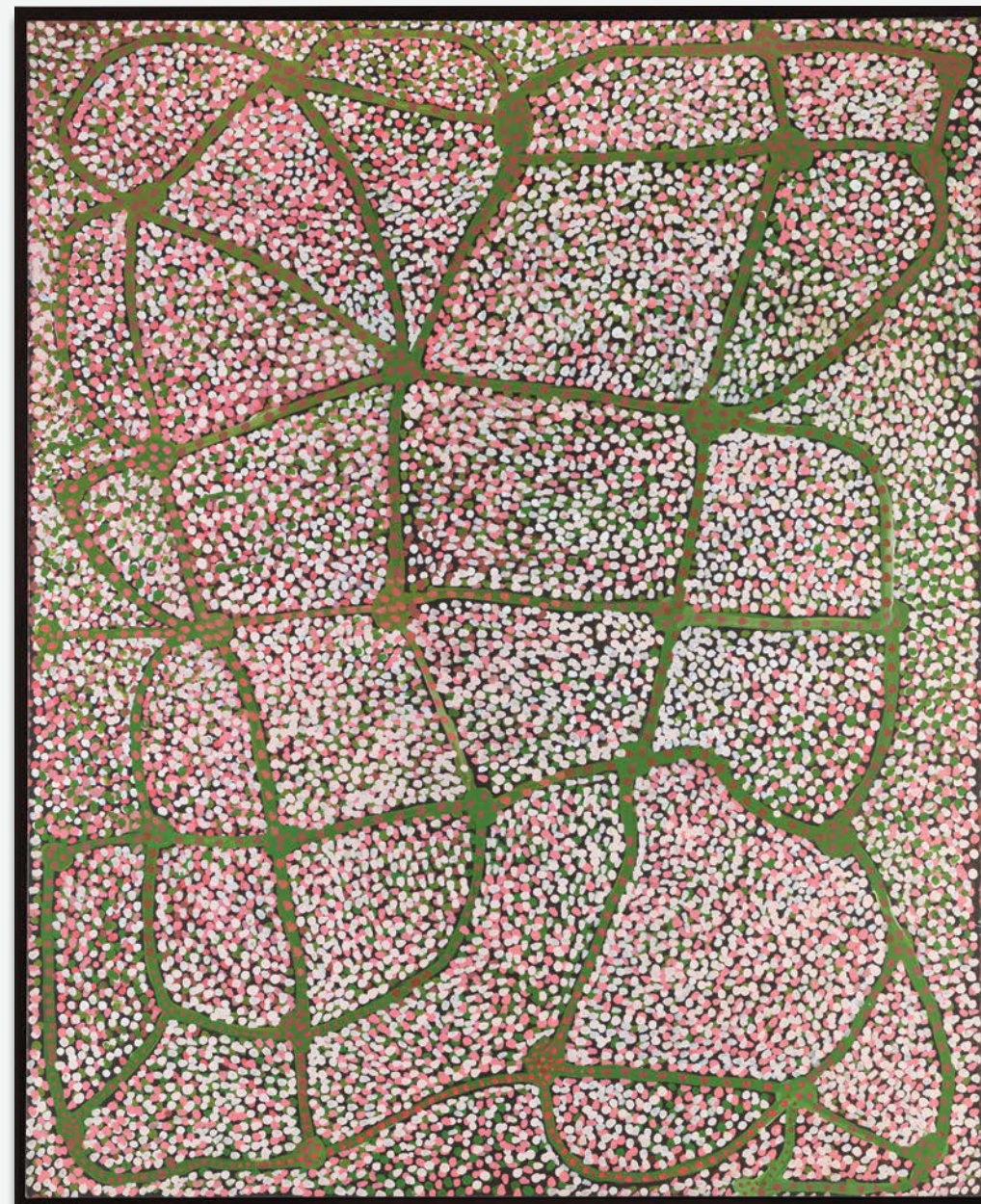
Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999, front cover (illus.)

The contrasting palette and patterns in *Bush Plum Country* relate to the seasonal shifts that shape and colour Alalgura Country. The plotted lines intricately trace the growth of the arnwekety (bush plum), grazed and spread by ankerr (emu) travelling through Country. The ever-changing weather – from extreme summer heat through to times of heavy rains – dramatically affects the plum's colours and the plant is depicted in various stages: from black, representing the seed, to white, symbolising the raw fruit, and pink, for the ripening plum. The artist's custodial responsibility to the bush plum inspires the lyrical colouring in these works and sustains the regeneration of the life-giving fruit of her Country.

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Drawn from the accompanying Delmore Gallery certificate



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Yam Story 1989
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
120 × 90 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Collection, Northern Territory, cat. no. C044
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999 (illus.)

Noted as one of the first paintings by Emily commissioned by Delmore Gallery, *Yam Story*, 1989, embodies the essential connection the artist held to anwerlarr (pencil yam) of which she was a custodian. The lattice line work traces the yam's root system that seasonally parts the earth during the dry, revealing the tubers below that sustain the Anmatyerr people and affirm the women's ceremony associated with the plant.

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Drawn from the accompanying Delmore Gallery certificate



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

The Anooralya Yam 1990
synthetic polymer paint on linen
121 × 91 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. H017
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Bush Tomato 1990
synthetic polymer paint on linen
121 × 91 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Collection, Northern Territory, cat. no. ON15
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999 (illus.)

Rainfall before the wet season is a rare occurrence in the northern desert, transforming the landscape in subtle but striking ways. When it happens, the earth soaks up the moisture, and grasses, plants, and flowers emerge slowly, shifting through muted, dry earth tones before bursting into vibrant colour in the summer.

The year 1990 had one of these rare seasonal anomalies. Illustrated here, the green and grey dotted veil represents katjera, a small wild bush tomato that produces purple flowers from late summer to spring, followed by the ripened yellow fruit.

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Drawn from the accompanying Delmore Gallery certificate



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Emu Country 1991
synthetic polymer paint on linen
148 × 122 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 1W49
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

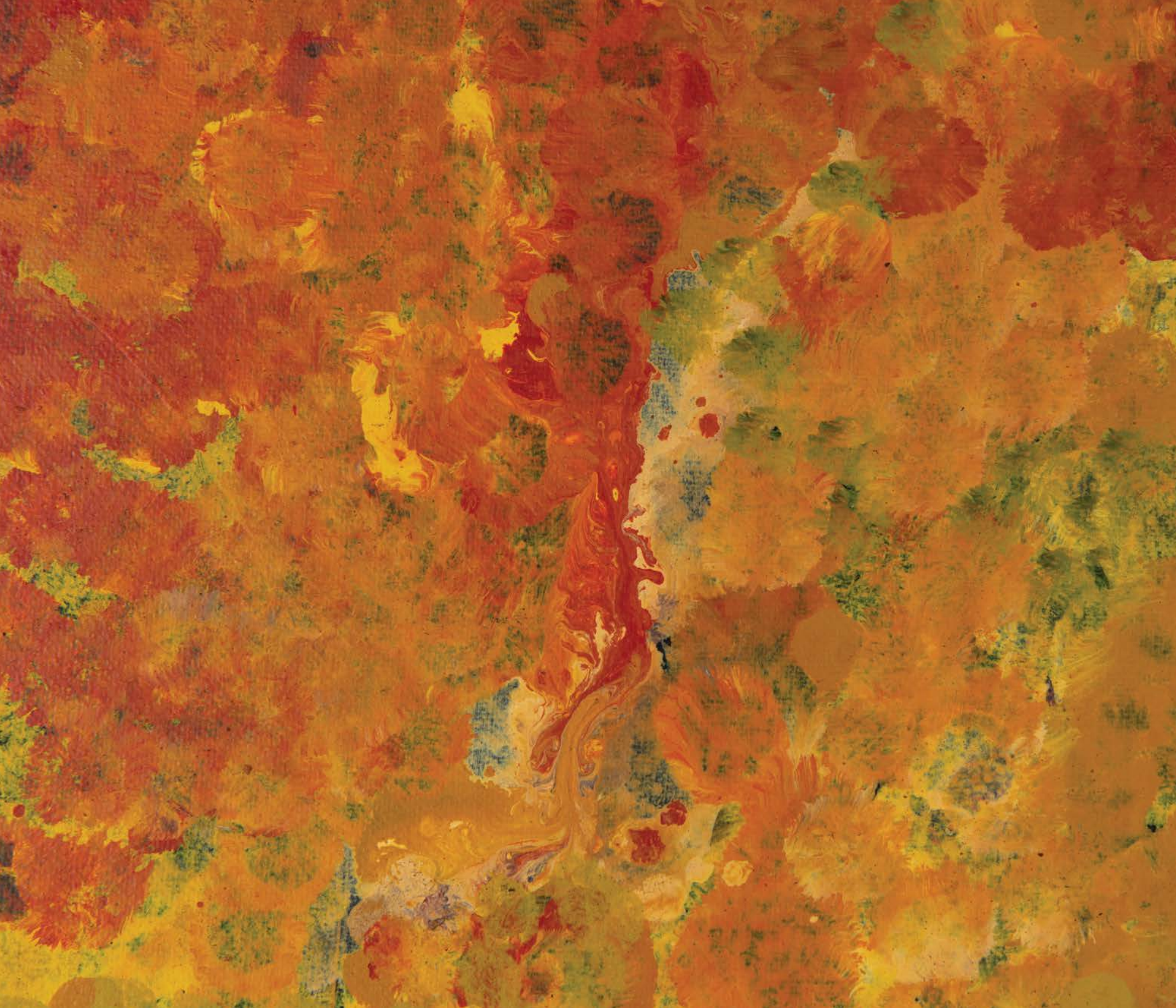
Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999

Often celebrated during awely women's ceremonies, the ntewerrk is a medium-sized shrub that produces a native plum that is deep purple in colour.

Emu Country, 1991 is a rare depiction of the mythological emu moving through country, and the different stages of ndwoorka's maturing process, revealing the vital relationship between the two.

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Drawn from the accompanying Delmore Gallery certificate





1992–1995

Emily entered what has been called her 'high colourist phase', which is characterised by a softened picture plane where dots bleed and converge into various tracks of layered colour across the canvas. Emily's whole body was engaged in mark-making, just as it was in dance, and she would often sing as she painted, a method that stems from the cultural practice of singing Country. The harmonies and rhythms of her works mirror the physical and auditory mechanisms of dance and song. One can sense the movement in her work, the bouncing or 'dragging' of the brush mimicking the dancers' bodies in ceremony as they propel forward, making short shuffling marks in the sand.

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Of My Country, Alalgura 1992
synthetic polymer paint on linen
150 × 121 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 92H029
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999 (illus.)

The movement in colour and form in this work illustrates the explosive energy of growth in desert life forms.

Emily's reaction to the fertile energy that launches such an abundance of growth has inspired a fabulous use of colour, bringing great tonal drama to the canvas. The heat ripens the fruit, and brings the flowers and grass seedheads to full maturity. Gradually, the bloom wanes, everything dries off and the seeds disperse. In ceremony, these life cycles are celebrated and spiritually nurtured. In everyday life, Emily similarly nurtured the social lives of her family, ensuring that they too will survive the erratic nature of the desert's seasons.

The hidden tracking on this canvas is the underground growth pattern of the arlatyey, also pencil yam. Layered above this are scattered seeds, leaves, flowers and dried fruits relating to her main bush tucker stories, namely the bush tomato and the native pine.

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Drawn from the accompanying Delmore Gallery certificate



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Emu Dreaming 1995
synthetic polymer paint on linen
150 × 230 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 95D012
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999 (illus.)





1995–1996

Emily's style evolved directly from women's ceremonial body-painting rituals, where specific markings are applied to the upper bodies using fingers or brushes dipped in desert ochres. In 1994, after Emily began working on paper, the profuse dotting and linear patterns of earlier years ceded to bold, austere black stripes on white. These soon evolved into rapidly applied linear markings on canvas in a crescendo of colours that evoke nature and earth.

Towards the end of her eight-year career, Emily had swiftly moved through several stylistic transitions. The early measured and precise build-up of layers of intense dotting morphed and changed, softening, flattening and merging until the dots disappeared altogether.

Before her last stylistic period of entwined painterly strokes, Emily had given in to her ageing body's protests against the physically demanding practice of repetitive dotting. She then revisited the more streamlined qualities of the line. The under-tracking of the yam roots characteristic of her early paintings returned as the singular focus. Emily's relationship with her medium and tools transformed at the end of her career and life. During this stylistic period, referred to as 'Sacred Grasses', her fist grips the brush tightly as she urgently pushes and pulls the paint.

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Body-Paint Lines 1995
synthetic polymer paint on linen
152 × 92 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Collection, Northern Territory, cat. no. 95J006A
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999

Body-Paint Lines mirrors body-painting ceremonial practices associated with the awely women's ceremonies. Awely involves painting multiple layers onto the body, accompanied by singing, which precedes performed dance cycles. Before 'painting up for ceremony', women would collect leaves, flowers and the bark of certain plants to make liquid cleansers to splash onto the body. After cleansing, animal fat is smeared over the skin, before the intricate ceremonial designs are reverently painted onto each woman's upper chest, breasts and arms. This mark-making repeats the way ancestors made and marked the Country, the phenomenal nature of Emily's approach lying in both the multiple layers of her surfaces and the performativity of her painting. Her affinity with her subject is influenced by the ancestral narratives of Alhalker and the associated awely women's ceremonies. The deep sense of touch which marks and makes Emily's canvases is impressed on our experience as viewers, for we can sense the purpose and potency of her hand.



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Awelye 1995
synthetic polymer paint on linen
152 × 92 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 951054
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999

These gestural lines relate to the capricious spread or growth of the anwerlarr (pencil yam), which is Emily's main story. This plant produces a long, thin tuber that matures as the parent plant on the earth's surface is in decline. One important sign of the plant's maturity is a crack or cracks in the ground. This indicates where to dig for the tuber.

The yam plant's flower, called kam, contains seeds that can be prepared as a seed cake. It is this flower with its assorted shades of colours that largely determines the predominant colours in Emily's colour range – red, yellow and white, and mixes of colour that come from this palette.

The anwerlarr is a fertile and hardy plant, and is considered very important in traditional lifestyle. Ceremonial ritual ensures the continuing life cycle of desert life forms like the yam and its practice affirms the spiritual power of the people of the desert. Emily was considered an authority in these ceremonies with unmatched cultural and spiritual knowledge.

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Drawn from the accompanying Delmore Gallery certificate



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Anooralya 1995
synthetic polymer paint on linen
152 × 91 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 951092
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999 (illus.)



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1910 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Yam Story 1996
synthetic polymer paint on linen
152 x 91 cm

PROVENANCE

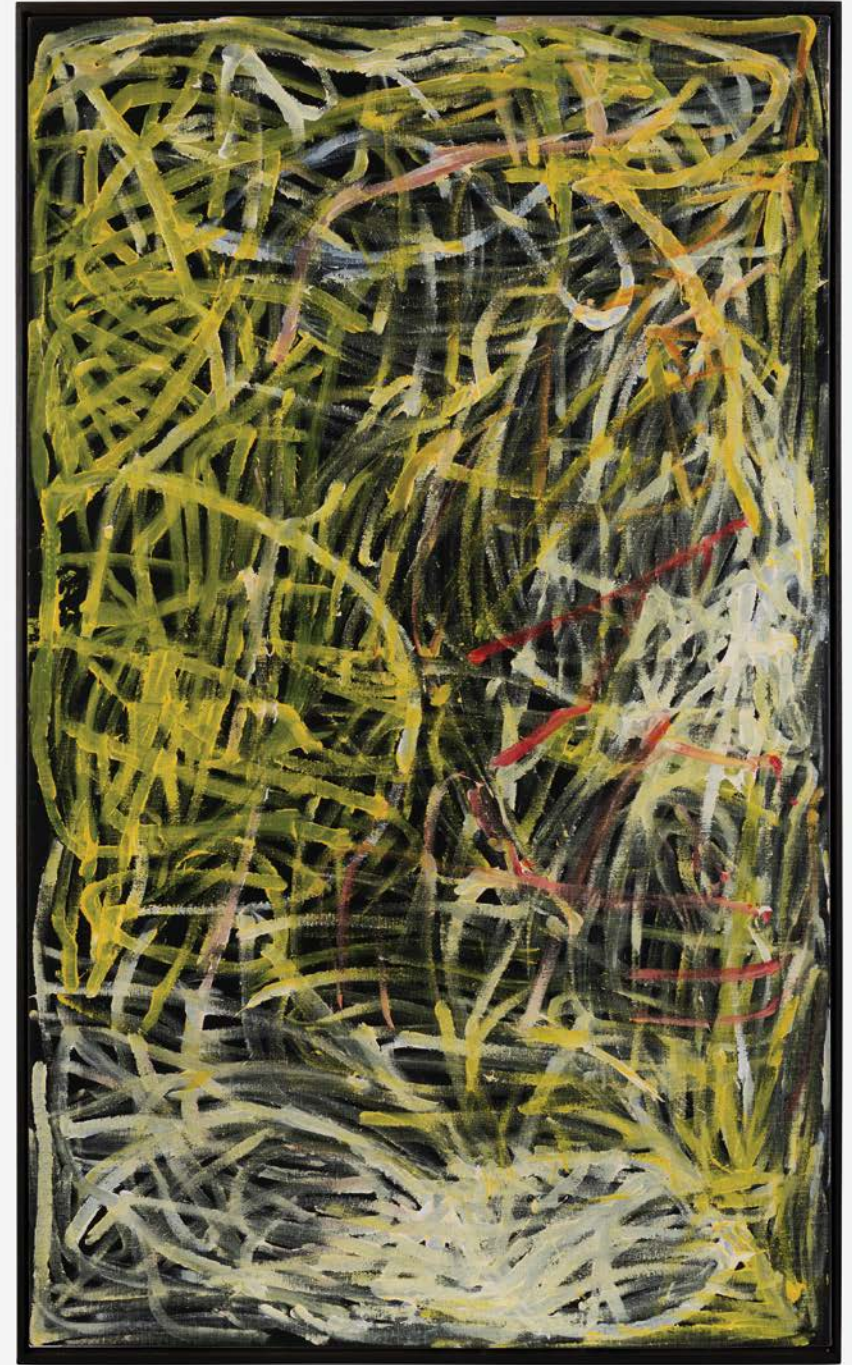
The Artist, painted at Delmore Station, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 96G007
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
The Hicks Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 1997

EXHIBITED

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1–30 May 1999, and touring various venues throughout Victoria and New South Wales, June 1999 – April 2000, culminating at George Adams Gallery, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, 31 March – 30 April 2000

LITERATURE

Of My Country: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The Applied Chemicals Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria, 1999 (illus.)





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ABOUT

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

ETHICS

Our mission is to create a transparent and sustainable marketplace for Australian First Nations 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 First Nations art is:

CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS (1980–PRESENT)

All contemporary Australian First Nations 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 AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS 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 First Nations art, please contact us at: enquiries@dlancontemporary.com.au



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