



FACING EAST

Masterpieces from

BUKU-LARRNGAY MULKA CENTRE



D'LAN CONTEMPORARY
40 Exhibition Street,
Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia
Wurundjeri Country
+61 3 9008 7212
enquiries@dlancontemporary.com.au
dlancontemporary.com.au

Cover:
RERRKIRRAWA MUNUNGURR
Untitled 2014 (detail)

Inside & back covers:
Yirrkalā Sunset, image Steve Strike

The family members of those who have recently passed authorise the use of their loved ones' names in written form but request that their names not be spoken aloud in the presence of people from Arnhem Land or in the Miwatj region. Their spirits have a long journey to go on to return to their origin points. Calling their names aloud could distract and delay the spirits' return in a new form.

Text for this catalogue has been drawn primarily from the artwork certificates provided by Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre. Other references have been attributed accordingly.

MAP OF YOLŊU HOMELANDS



Image: Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre

FACING EAST

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BUKU-LARRNGAY MULKA CENTRE

24 MARCH – 5 MAY 2023





WUKUN WANAMBI
1962–2022
Marrakulu clan
Wawurritjpa 2016 (detail)

FACING EAST

It is difficult to imagine that there could be a more urgent time than now to learn the lessons exhibited here from our First Nation artists at Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre. These significant works of art, bark paintings, larrakitj (hollow logs) and visual symphonies of poetic paintings, are brimming with ancient narrative, song and poetry and embody the spiritual connection of all things within nature. Facing East is a collective breath of life as we face the rising of the sun. It is the embodiment of the Yolŋu philosophy of daily life.

It is an honour to be able to present these works of art, and it is a timely moment within history to be able to share these lessons with the world, journeying off the shore of this island of Australia. As the wisdom of these lessons winds and flows and takes root in the consciousness of all who witness these ancient epic visual poems and songs, we hope that they are received with the wonder and respect and attention that they deserve. For a Western reference, I guide your attention to the ancient classic tomes by such minds as Homer and Ovid that we take for granted, ancient stories of transmutation, of talking into being, of singing into creation. The classic Yolŋu epic poetry is as sacred and ancient, scholarly and mystical as these accepted Western canons, perhaps more so, as it flows from the early river of life, from the sun, from the interconnectedness of the roots deep within the earth since time began. We are looking at the undeniability of the connection among us all and how quickly we will falter if we do not take heed.

Facing East is a collection worthy of any public museum. Individual artworks themselves stand alone in outstanding quality. Overall, this collection reveals beautifully the complexities of time within Indigenous culture, akin to a quantum physics interweaving of past, present, future, ancient, new, classical, changing but permanent at the same time, reverently constant and scholarly, referring always to the teachings of the ancestors, but equally experimental and evolving forward.

Congratulations to all of the artists involved in this exhibition and thank you to the collectors who have entrusted their works to us. We would like to thank Will Stubbs for his contribution and support and his consistently beautiful writing on the artists and the art centre he knows so well, providing a profound insight into the complexities of Yolŋu culture, traditions and art. Included is a spectacularly powerful piece by Djambawa Marawili AM measuring an extraordinary 272 centimetres and also a free-form, organic sculptural larrakitj by Wukun Wanambi measuring 243 centimetres, significant standouts that I encourage you to seek comfort and inspiration from. Thank you to the collectors and other consigners for contributing to this important curated show. We urge all of our friends and gallery supporters to visit this exhibition and experience it with an open heart and an open mind as we all face east together.

MARIELLE SONI
Senior Specialist, D’Lan Contemporary

MASTERPIECES FROM BUKU-LARRŊGAY MULKA CENTRE

Facing East is a collection of works made by Vicki and Wayne McGeoch beginning in 2010. This Melbourne couple did not self-identify as canny, astute collectors. They bought what they liked. And they liked the art from Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre at Yirrkala. ‘Buku-Larrŋgay’ means ‘sunlit face’. We are the easternmost tip of the Top End and face the dawn.

It is a marvel to me how prescient in their selections these two were way back then. Although I was intimately involved in the art centre as one of the coordinators from 1995 to the present I can more easily recognise the quality of what was acquired in hindsight. Eight of the fourteen artist are winners in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. Six of these have won multiple times. Three have won the prestigious overall First Prize. Five of those that have not won are still alive, with every prospect of being recognised in the future. Two of the artists, Nongirrŋa and Nyapanyapa, have had their own solo retrospective exhibitions in a major institution.

But at the time that these pieces were bought most of this was yet to happen. Almost all of these works were bought from exhibitions we held with our gallery partners in Australia and overseas such as Raft Artspace, Outstation Gallery and Harvey Art Projects (USA). But following their initial visit in 2012, and on the subsequent annual trips up to 2017, our relationship developed. Vicki and I would often have long philosophical chats on the phone and artists would visit them in Melbourne. Memorably, Gunybi made a small touchup to one of his poles on their dining room table.

They did not seek advantage through this closer relationship and continued to support our commercial gallery partners through buying at exhibition. Instead they became true patrons. As we struggled with the logistics of casting into bronze a pair of actual size brolgas by Gunybi they stepped in to help. They committed to purchasing one of the resultant sets. This allowed us to make an edition of three. One is in a French château. One pair sits in our pond here and inspires the local children to dream big. The third set was donated by Vicki and Wayne and graces a small lake at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. They have also donated to our digital arm The Mulka Project and they were happy to loan one of Baluka’s poles to be used in Warwick Thornton’s film *We don’t need a map*.

The most profound example of the selfless assistance they gave us was in their acquisition and subsequent gifting to the NMA of 120 barks and poles by Mulkuŋ Wirrpanda which formed the basis of her collaboration with John Wolseley in the Miḏawarr/Harvest exhibition. The catalogue (which is more like a text book of Yolŋu native plant use) is dedicated to them.

The grammatic tense within which Yolŋu sing/paint/discuss the creation forces that shape their world is unknown to non-Indigenous. Sometimes simplified as ‘Dreamtime’ in English it conveys a temporal union between prehistory, the present and the distant future. All of these time zones are happening simultaneously! This is the tense in which the creation events



GUNYBI GANAMBARR

born 1973
Naymil clan
Dhanbarr – Larrakitj 2007 (detail)

happened/are happening/will happen. The sacred designs on Yolŋu art are actually encoded poetry. They are text. A literate person can ‘read’ the hundreds of 20–50 stanza songs ‘written’ in the pattern. The Yolŋu bosses and owners of the centre and the culture it represents insist that these ancient templates never be tampered with or compromised. This sounds like a recipe for artistic stagnation and endless uninspired repetition. That this did not happen is largely due to two artists. Djambawa Marawili, who broke the mould with his innovative Buwayak-Invisibility approach which let the miny’tji (sacred design) flow over the figuration like the water it represented. And the nextgen superstar Gunybi Ganambarr, who took this relaxation of convention as a starting point to develop multiple permutations including the FOUND movement.

Meanwhile a cadre of old women painted away from, and outside, this Law in ways that reflected their upbringing as powerful, autonomous bush heroes. Striding through an extreme landscape with all the confidence of the true owners of the continent, Gulumbu, Nongirrŋa, Barrupu and Nyapanyapa set a different rythym. They generally all chose to paint within the courtyard of Buku as the fountain tinkled under the feet of those bronze brolga.

Although time is a circle and not a line, as Einstein confirms, this collection is a moment in the fictional art historical arrow of time. It captures the best doing the best. When I first looked through these works I could not quite comprehend how they all seemed to be painted a few years earlier than I thought they would have been. This is the leading edge of a wave which is now well recognised. Excellent artists pursuing their own version of excellence supported by a centre that knows what it is meant to be doing.

WILL STUBBS

Coordinator at Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, Yirrkala

DJAMBAWA MARAWILI AM

born 1953

Maḡarrpa clan

Yathikpa 2012

natural earth pigments on hollow log
272 cm

PROVENANCE

Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4483A
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 45,000



Yolŋu Country in north-east Arnhem Land is divided into estate areas, each relating to the action of a particular ancestral being or set of ancestral beings. Yathikpa on Blue Mud Bay is a place belonging to the Maḡarrpa clan. In ancestral times, Bāru plunged into Yathikpa and was transformed from human form into that of a crocodile after a violent fight led his wife, Dhamilingu, blue-tongued lizard, to set fire to the bark hut in which he slept. With flaming sheets of bark burning onto his body, Bāru dove into the sea to quench the flames, yet the fire continued to burn under the waves, manifest in the fields of waving seagrass beneath the surface of the water.

The complex miny'tji (clan designs) appear to move to abstraction, yet the sacred Maḡarrpa designs depict associated aspects of this ancestral event. The elements of fire, smoke, ash and salt water commingle to create the skin of the crocodile, represented by the teeming diamond pattern that engulfs the hollow log. Hidden among this maelstrom are the two ancestral beings Burrak and Garramatji of the ancient Yirritja moiety, who took to the sea in their dugout canoe from Blue Mud Bay.

Djambuwa Marawili AM is one of Australia's most respected Indigenous leaders and most successful Yolŋu artists of recent times. He has spearheaded

several significant innovations within the tradition of Yolŋu art. Key among these is buwuyak (invisibility), a development that has seen his contemporaries move beyond the explicit configuration often employed by their immediate descendants. As chair of the Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre at Yirrkala, Marawili has been the driving force behind many of the centre's most important projects. In 2010, he was appointed a member of the Order of Australia (AM); in 2013, he was elected to the federal government's Indigenous Advisory Council; and in 2022, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Melbourne. In 2015, he devised the exhibition *Maḡayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala* and was one of the exhibition's lead curators. Organised by the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia in partnership with Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, the exhibition debuted at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, in Hanover, New Hampshire, USA, in September 2022.

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Maḡayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala, Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, 2022.



**WUKUN WANAMBI**

1962–2022

Marrakulu clan

Wawurritjpa 2016natural earth pigments on hollow log
243 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 1442-16
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 55,000

Destiny drives Buku-Dungulmirri or Wawurritjpa, Sea Mullet, to travel from river to river and ocean to ocean to eventually be carried on the tide of the Gurka'wuy River into the mouth of Trail Bay. In sacred song, Bamurruru, a solitary rock in the mouth of Trial Bay, lies submerged within the waters of the bay, surrounded by these fish. Yolŋu of this area speak of a hole submerged under these rocks, from which bubbles are seen rising to the surface. The life force alive in these bubbles is a direct ancestral connection for the Marrakulu.

When the Marrakulu clan perform the ritual dance for events depicted in this painting, participants move towards a held spear representing the steadfastness of the rock, which splits the dancers, who then surround the stone Bamurruru. The characteristic fish that stream around this larrakitj jump the 'trap' created by Bamurruru the same way that the soul slips its earthly bonds. These fish also form some of the detail of Wukun Wanambi's award-winning earlier works.

A highly acclaimed artist, filmmaker and leader of the Marrakulu clan, his innovative work is in numerous important collections, including the British Museum and the National Gallery of Australia. Alongside Djambuwa Marawili, he was a leading curator of the recent exhibition *Madayin: Eight*

Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala. The inside cover of the catalogue reads: 'Dedicated to Wukun Wanambi, whose wisdom, courage and willingness to work across cultural and geographic boundaries made this project possible.'

Wukun's determination and generosity in his communication and sharing of Yolŋu culture can be observed throughout his oeuvre. Wukun's father, esteemed clan leader and renowned painter Mithili Wanambi, passed away before his son could learn from him. Yet, in 1997, the Djunggayi – caretakers and preservers of clan knowledge – taught Wukun the designs he started painting and created for the 1999 *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country*, a collection of eighty bark paintings that share the sacred knowledge of sea country now part of the Australian National Maritime Museum collection, where he re-introduced motifs that had not been painted since his father's death.

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Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Painting of Sea Country: Recognising Indigenous Sea Rights*, Jennifer Isaacs Publishing and Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, Neutral Bay, NSW, 1999.

GUNYBI GANAMBARR

born 1973
Naymil clan
Baraltja 2010

natural earth pigments on
incised eucalyptus bark
181 × 82 cm

PROVENANCE

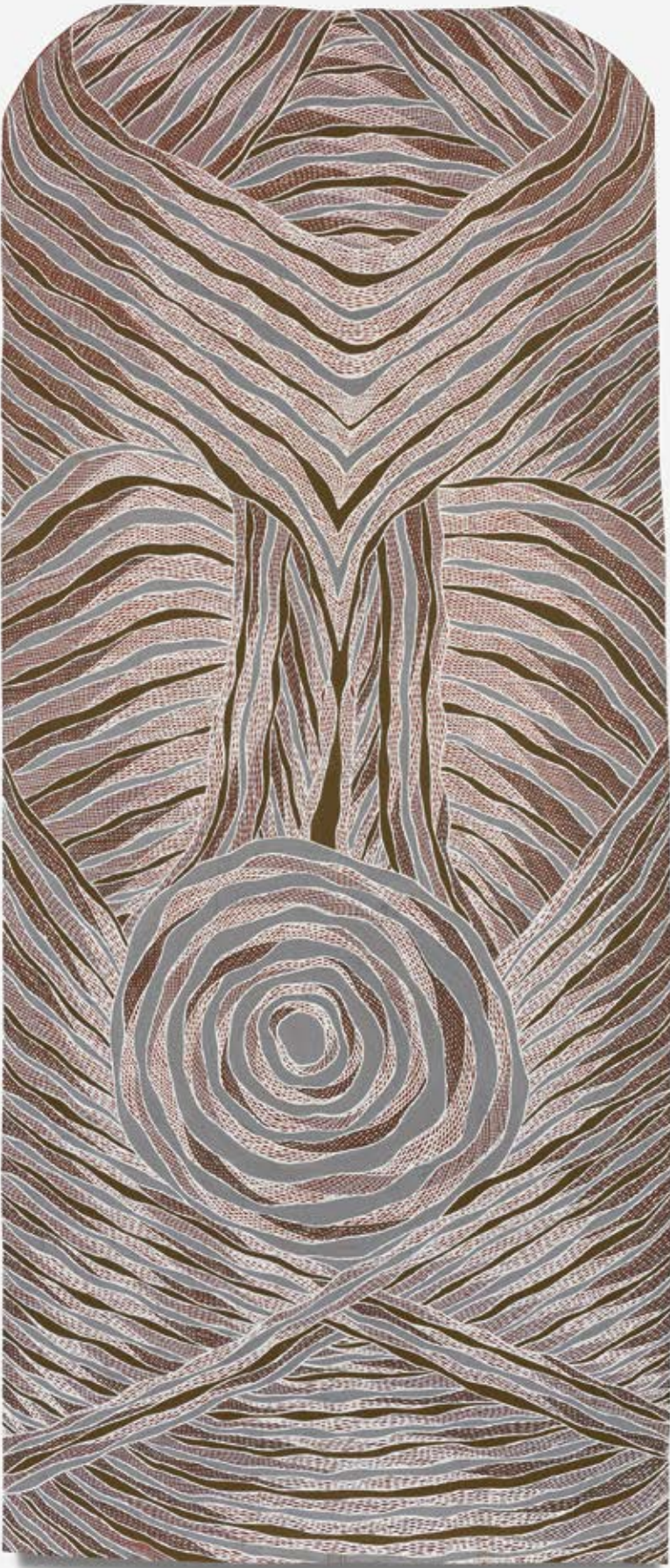
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 37011
The Le Pley Collection, Western Australia

AUD 25,000

Gunybi Ganambarr is considered to be one of the most radical innovators among contemporary Yolŋu artists. In 2006, he was the first to incise the surface of his barks and began experimenting with texture, shape and found materials. During 2007, he produced several other significant incised barks, one of which was shown at Annandale Galleries’ 2008 *Young Guns II* exhibition. *Dhanbarr – Larrakitj* 2007 was Gunybi’s first major work after this exhibition; in this work the dramatic amount of wood removed almost alters the form itself so that the larrakitj is no longer a regular cylinder but has become a sculpture. The following year, Gunybi was the winner of the Xstrata Coal Emerging Indigenous Artist Award with his groundbreaking relief work of sacred art, the boundaries of which he continued to push, going on to win both the Western Australian Indigenous Art Award in 2013 and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2018.

Gunybi continues to be visionary, inspiring other artists to experiment with found materials in the representation of their miny’tji (clan designs). The revolutionary exhibition *Murrŋiny: A Story of Metal from the East*, 2021, was led by Gunybi, who expanded the local decree ‘If you paint the land, you use the land’ to claim the aluminium sheets that lay discarded across Yolŋu territory. These bold innovations maintain the Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre as one of the leading forces of cultural activism and transformation in the evolution of contemporary Australian art.

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Murrŋiny: A Story of Metal from the East, Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, Salon Art Projects and the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, 2021.



GUNYBI GANAMBARR

born 1973
Naymil clan
Dhanbarr 2007

natural earth pigments on hollow log
236 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 3072T
Raft Artspace, Alice Springs
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 35,000



GUNYBI GANAMBARR

born 1973
Naymil clan
Dhanbarr – Larrakitj 2007

natural earth pigments on hollow log
268 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 3008Y
The Le Pley Collection, Western Australia

AUD 36,000





NONGIRRŊA MARAWILI

born circa 1938

Maḍarrpa clan

Lightning 2017

natural earth pigments and synthetic

fixative on eucalyptus bark

212 × 81 cm

PROVENANCE

Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre,

Northern Territory, cat. no. 4176-17

The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 35,000

Nongirrŋa started life as one of the numerous children of the Maḍarrpa warrior Mundukul (c.1890–c.1950), a famed leader/warrior with wives from the Marrakulu, Dhudi Djapu and Galpu clans. Nongirrŋa was a child of one of the four Galpu wives, Bulungguwuy, and was born on the beach at Darrpirra, north of Cape Shield on the oceanside. Her family were Wakir’ – camping and moving around – living nomadically as part of a clan group with a flotilla of canoes between Groote Island and the mainland. Their special place is Baratjula, north of Cape Shield, where Nongirrŋa focuses on creating her distinct paintings. Her father’s name, Mundukul (Lightning Snake), is also the name of the serpent or Water Python, Burrut’ji, or *Liasis fuscus*, which lives deep beneath the sea here. She identifies as part of the cyclonic, crocodile-infested waters of this area, with its huge tides and ripping currents.

Nongirrŋa Marawili is among the most acclaimed contemporary Australian artists. She is the mother of Rerrkirrwaŋa Munungurr and Marrnyula Munungurr, both significant artists, and the sister of the leader

Djambuwa Marawili. Her works are held in every state collection in Australia, and in 2018 she was honoured with a retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney. Nongirrŋa’s designs show the rock set in deep water between the electric ‘curse’ that the snake spits into the sky in the form of lightning and the sea spray trying to shift the immovable rock foundation of the Maḍarrpa. Yurr’yunna is the action of the rough waves overtopping the rock and the sea spray flying into the sky. The energies captured in this painting are almost a match for those of a Top End wet season.

A shift in the journey from the sacred to the descriptive takes place in works such as these. Nongirrŋa has reduced the Law to its elements, unclothed in sacred design. Her identity cannot be separated from her art, so although she disavows any sacred intent, the echo of miny’tji (clan designs) persists.

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Cara Pinchbeck (ed.), *Nongirrŋa Marawili: From My Heart and Mind*, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, 2018.

NYAPANYAPA YUNUPIŊU

born circa 1945
Gumatj clan
Borum 2012

natural earth pigments on
eucalyptus bark
164 × 73 cm

PROVENANCE

Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4181K
Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney
Private Collection

LITERATURE

Luke Scholes (ed.), *The Moment
Eternal: Nyapanyapa Yunupiŋu*,
Museum and Art Gallery of the
Northern Territory, Darwin, 2020.

EXHIBITED

*The Moment Eternal: Nyapanyapa
Yunupiŋu*, Museum and Art Gallery
of the Northern Territory, Darwin,
25 April – 25 October 2020.

AUD 45,000

Nyapanyapa’s work has been highly valued for the spontaneity and texture of her hand, expressing her capacity to live in the moment. There is no calculation or even regard for the audience in her renditions. Yet, devotional followers of her work have embraced the ‘emptiness’ of her mark-making as a meditation open to non-Yolŋu eyes.

Her earliest works were small carvings and barks, and she was one of the first artists involved in the Yirrkala print space after it opened in 1996. On being prompted to tell the story of her almost fatal goring by a buffalo in the 1970s, Nyapanyapa threw over the traditional conventions of Yolŋu art and unleashed a unique set of personal narrative paintings revolving around her own experiences. This subjective, individualistic and linear narrative construction was totally out of step with all previous Yolŋu art. Following a nightmare that occurred on the night of her 2008 Telstra NATSIAA award win, she vowed never again to paint the buffalo.

In 2009, Nyapanyapa made a more dramatic departure from the previous conventions of Yolŋu art, and her practice began to change. The narratives that graced the barks of her prolific practice until this point swirled around stories of her life and the

plants and animals in it, stretching to Sydney and back again before settling on depictions of larrani, or bush apple trees. The narrative element of her practice gave way to the pleasure in the pure act of mark-making. The forest that was witness to her near-death experience absorbed all figuration before it disappeared entirely into hues of fine cross-hatching in white and pink. According to Yolŋu, these paintings were mayilimiriw (meaningless). Although wholly outside the Yolŋu tradition, these paintings shifted the Western concept of what Aboriginal art can be and, ironically, projected the innocently pure rhythmic practices of Nyapanyapa into the heaving waves of contemporary art discourse. Her extraordinary oeuvre was celebrated in 2020 with the exhibition *The Moment Eternal: Nyapanyapa Yunupiŋu*, a significant milestone, as it was the first major survey exhibition of a First Nations artist developed by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

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Luke Scholes (ed.), *The Moment Eternal: Nyapanyapa
Yunupiŋu*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern
Territory, Darwin, 2020.



NYAPANYAPA YUNUPIŊU

born circa 1945
Gumatj clan
Mayilimirw 2010

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
138 × 68 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 3931I
Harvey Art Projects, USA
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 35,000



NYAPANYAPA YUNUPIŊU

born circa 1945
Gumatj clan
Nyiblit 2011

natural earth pigments on hollow log
123 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4103S
Harvey Art Projects, USA
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 28,000



NYAPANYAPA YUNUPIŊU

born circa 1945
Gumatj clan
Larrani 2011

natural earth pigments on hollow log
153 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4129Q
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 35,000



NYAPANYAPA YUNUPIJU

born circa 1945

Gumatj clan

Untitled – Larrakitj 2013natural earth pigments on hollow log
211 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4125G
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 45,000



**GULUMBU YUNUPIŊU**

circa 1945 – 2012

Gumatj clan

Ganyu 2009natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
129 × 74 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 3601R
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 28,000

Gulumbu Yunupingu – also known as the star lady – was the daughter of major Gumatj artist Mungurrawuy Yunupingu. Gulumbu grew up in Yirrkala, attending school at the old mission house before marrying Djapu artist Mutitjpu Munungurr and having four children. As an artist, Gulumbu worked in a range of different mediums, such as weaving, jewellery and printmaking, before she began to focus on bark painting and sculpture. Gulumbu explored concepts of the universe that evolved from her knowledge of traditional Yolŋu stories transmitted through ganyu (stars), some of which the artist explains are special for Yolŋu. In 2000, Gulumbu developed the star motif in the *Ganyu* painting depicted here, which became her signature style. Her celestial barks first came to public attention in 2004 when she won the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award with three larrakitj (hollow logs). Since then, she has painted a screen of sixty small star-based bark paintings for the World Expo in Hanover, Germany, and has been represented through many solo and group exhibitions, including *Garak: The Universe*, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, 2004, and

National Indigenous Art Triennial: Culture Warriors, National Gallery of Australia, 2007.

Gulumbu's paintings refer to, yet do not specify, two Dreaming stories that the artist's father told her as a child, each representing different constellations in the night sky. As she retold these stories for children of the next generation and the broader art-appreciating public, Gulumbu's abstract paintings became unlike any other north-east Arnhem Land art, which was almost always based on refined cross-hatched sacred design. Even works that were considered to be decorative would employ lines rather than dots. What is unusual about this work compared with other paintings of the region being produced at the same time, and even with Gulumbu's own work of that period, is the absence of any symbolic or figurative imagery. This bark can be read openly as a non-specific depiction of the Ganyu Dreamings, with no differentiation made between the two stories.

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Myles Russell-Cook (ed.), *Bark Ladies: Eleven Artists from Yirrkala*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2021.

GULUMBU YUNUPIŊU

circa 1945 – 2012
Gumatj clan
Garak I 2010

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
74 × 51 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 3949X
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 16,000



NAWURAPU WUNUJMURRA

1952–2018

Dhalwaju clan

Mokuy 2012carved and painted hardwood
241 cm; 122cm; 252 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, Northern
Territory, cat. nos 4137Z; 4140L: 4152O
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 34,000



Mokuy is the ghost or spirit of a deceased person. These mortuary figures of mokuy carved by Nawurapu Wunujmurra are derived from the square-sectioned and painted grave post figures called wuram. These, in turn, were influenced by the grave posts of the Makassans, traders from Sulawesi in present-day Indonesia, who visited the shores of Arnhem Land for some 400 years up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Nawurapu Wunujmurra was renowned for his sculptural work and installations in which clusters of mokuy spirits float and spin in dancing poses. In 2010, Nawurapu won in both the new media and people's choice prize categories of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. The mokuy spirits were suspended in an installation along with archival footage of traditional ceremonial dances. Thirty-six of his sculptures were acquired by the National Maritime Museum in Sydney and featured at Tarnanthi at the Art Gallery of South Australia in late 2017.

The artist says about this work:

... these are happy spirits. They are going home. The mokuy or nanuk (spirits) come in together, Dhuwa and Yirritja, to the sacred ground called Balambala, past Gängan, the other side for all mokuy to get together. The spirits go there and that's where they make the yidaki sound. It's like showing Yukuwa (sacred yam emblem) and Morning Star feathers – they are different. Like same goes with yidaki, different sounds for Yirritja and Dhuwa. The Yirritja and Dhuwa play yidaki to call in the mokuy to the same ground, Balambala. The Yirritja mokuy come in on the birds, djilawurr (scrub fowl) and bugutj-bugutj (banded fruit dove). The Dhuwa mokuy they come in from rangi side (saltwater).

Quote from the Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre artwork certificate.



BARRUPU YUNUPIŊU

circa 1948 – 2012
Gumatj clan
Gurtha 2010

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
119 × 64 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 3932E
Harvey Art Projects, USA
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 7,700

The totemic significance of fire to the Yunupinju family of the Gumatj clan is paramount. It is said that the Gumatj clan language, Dhuwalandja, is itself the tongue of flame. This language or tongue, like the flame, cuts through all artifice. It incinerates dishonesty, leaving only the bones of the truth. In the initial interface between Yolŋu sacred art and the Western art world, an early decision was made on the Yolŋu side to use figurative painting to cover the miny'tji clan design in paintings. This 'miny'tji' is the source and record of the sacred identity of the Law and land portrayed.

In ancestral times, the leaders of Yirritja moiety clans used fire for the first time during a ceremony at Ŋalarrwuy in Gumatj Country. This came about as fire brought to the Country of the Maḏarrpa clan by Bāru, the ancestral crocodile; the fire soared north and swept through the ceremonial ground, spreading further from there to other sites. Various ancestral animals were affected and reacted in different ways. These animals became sacred totems of the Gumatj

people, and the areas associated with these events became important sites. The diamond patterning is the miny'tji (motif or sacred clan design) of the Gumatj clan and this place. It summons the theme of this fire: the red flames, the white smoke and ash, the black charcoal and the yellow dust.

Barrupu Yunupinju is the daughter of the renowned bark painter Mungurrawuy Yunupinju, and the sister of artists Gulumbu Yunupinju and Nyapanyapa Yunupinju. Like her sisters, Barrupu draws on the legacy of their father to create unique works that operate within the strict codes of Gumatj miny'tji, yet her barks have revolutionised the diamond pattern that represents Gurtha, the ancestral fire. Rather than presenting the patterning as a backdrop on which to place figurative forms, Barrupu presents the patterning itself in the work, in macro view.

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Tradition Today: Indigenous Art in Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2013.



**BARRUPU YUNUPINJU**

circa 1948 – 2012

Gumatj clan

Gurtha 2009

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
92 × 36 cm

PROVENANCE

Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 3572T
Short St Gallery, Broome
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 6,600

YUMUTJIN WUNUJMURRA

born 1953
Dhalwaju clan
Untitled 2012

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
196 × 55 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4157K
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 12,000



YUMUTJIN WUNUṀMURRA

born 1953
Dhalwaṇu clan
Gāṅgan Burrut'tji 2011

natural earth pigments on hollow log
158 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrṅgay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4123G
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 8,800

Barama, the ancestral creator being, directed the instigation of lore for the Yirritja. It is said that during the times of Waṇarr – the period of the first mornings – after travelling from the coast of Blue Mud Bay, he emerged from a freshwater billabong at Gāṅgan . Barama carried a sacred staff symbolic of deep-seated knowledge and, with weed hanging from his arms and water steaming from his body, he strode ashore. Here at Gāṅgan, Barama was met by his devotees, and an initiation ceremony was performed for the Yirritja moiety – given to the Dhalwaṇu. From here, the creator beings travelled to what was to become Yirritja land, giving Law, language, song, dance, totems and madayin (restricted business) to the Yolṅu.

Yumutjin Wunumurra holds a principal position of ceremonial responsibility in the Dhalwaṇu clan and the Yirritja moiety. One of the top lawmen in the region, Yumutjin practises his art with a precise hand, emphasising his work’s spiritual and intellectual qualities. In this larrakitj, Yumutjin’s designs reference the initial events described above, depicting the sacred waters of the Gāṅgan and Dhalwaṇu totems that witnessed the first coming. The diamond fields manifest the streams of water that run down the body of Barama as he emerges from the waters at Gāṅgan.



**MANINI GUMANA**

born 1977

Dhalwaju clan

Garrapara 2013natural earth pigments on hollow log
201 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrgay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4471M
Marshall Arts, Adelaide
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 12,000

Garrapara is a coastal headland within Blue Mud Bay. This sacred design shows the waters of Djalma Bay chopped up by the blustery south-easterlies of the early dry season. Garrapara marks the spot of a sacred burial area for the Dhalwaju clan and a site where dispute was formally settled by Makarrata – a ceremony in which wrongdoers were subjected to ordeal by spear. Garrapara has been rendered by the wavy design for Yirritja salt water in Blue Mud Bay called Munurru. The Munurru is deep water with many states and, via currents and tidal action, it connects with the sacred waters coming from the land estates. Other clans of Blue Mud Bay that share similar ancestral stories also paint this deeper salt water that links them.

Manini Gumana began a radical shift in Yolŋu art that epitomises the innovative approach among the younger generation of artists at Yirrkala. She developed her unique system in 2012, being the first to render the skeleton of the composition using just marwat – a brush made from human hair. Previously, designs were outlined with a thick brush, and the marwat was used to fill in with cross-hatching. Manini was also the first artist to remove the layer of earth pigments in the ground of the painting, initiating a practice of applying the design directly onto the bare wood or bark.



MANINI GUMANA
born 1977
Dhalwarju clan
Garrapara 2013

natural earth pigments on hollow log
191 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4473C
Marshall Arts, Adelaide
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 10,000



RERRKIRRAWAŊA MUNUNGURR
born 1971
Gupa-Djapu clan
Gurtha 2013

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
23 × 47 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4324J
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 6,600



RERRKIRRAWAŊA MUNUNGURR
born 1971
Gupa-Djapu clan
Untitled 2014

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
39 × 45 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4693D
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 7,700



**RERRKIRRWANA MUNUNGURR**

born 1971

Gupa-Djapu clan

Untitled – Larrakitj 2015natural earth pigments on hollow log
210 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, Northern
Territory, cat. no. 4684K

The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 18,000

Clans owning corresponding parts of this sequence of ancestral events share variations of this diamond design. The shallow waters of coastal Biranybirany and the associated hinterland bear this design. The gamata (seagrass) waving in the shallow bay mimics flames and indicates the fire within this water. There are other levels of meaning, including an analysis of the constituent parts of guku (bush honey), which resides in the hollow stringybark tree; the skin, blood, fat and bone of a Gumatj person; and the mud and weeds of a billabong close to this place, which is a home of Bäru, the crocodile, who itself is a Gumatj power totem metamorphosed through fire. The inclusion of white dots is significant, referring to matters within the secret realm. The fire leaves such deposits of white ash once it has passed. Sometimes a slow-burning fallen tree such as a casuarina can leave a complete silhouette of itself in pure white ash in an otherwise blackened landscape.

Rerrkirrwaṇa Mununggurr is the daughter of the acclaimed artists Djutjadjutja Mununggurr and Nongirrṇa Marawili. She paints the designs of both her own Djapu clan and the Gumatj clan of her husband, Yalpi Yunupinju. This work is solely the miny'tji of the Gumatj embodying gurtha, or fire.



YALANBA WAṂAMBI

born 1973
Marrakulu clan
Bamurruru Gudultja 2007

natural earth pigments on hollow log
242 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 3279V
Outstation Gallery, Darwin
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 11,000



YALANBA WAṆAMBI

born 1973
Marrakulu clan
Bamurruru 2011

natural earth pigments on hollow log
210 cm

PROVENANCE

Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4129A
Outstation Gallery, Darwin
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 10,000



YALANBA WAṆAMBI

born 1973
Marrakulu clan
Bamurruru 2012

natural earth pigments on hollow log
194 cm

PROVENANCE

Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4135G
Outstation Gallery, Darwin
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 10,000

A set of three rocks stand in the mouth of Trial Bay, submerged either completely or partially within its waters. The waters of Gurka'wuy River flow out through Trial Bay past these rocks, conflicting and clashing in a turbulent unity with the incoming tidal waters from the deep ocean. Their names, rarely spoken, are Dundiwuy, Bamurruru and Yilpirr.

Yolṇu of this area speak of a hole submerged under the rocks, from where bubbles are seen rising to the surface, sometimes bursting forth with a rush. The bubbles are seen as a life force and a direct ancestral connection for the Marrakulu. In sacred song, Bamurruru, a sacred and monolithic rock in the mouth of Trial Bay, lies submerged within its waters surrounded by the fish Buku-Dungulmirri or Wawirritjpa, Sea Mullet.

When the Marrakulu perform ritual dance for the events depicted in this painting, participants move towards a held spear representing the steadfastness of the rock, splitting the dancers, who then surround the rock known as Bamurruru, moving as does the sea to the song and rhythm of yidaki and bilma.

Yalanba Waṇambi is the younger brother of Wukun Waṇambi. Like the work of his brother, Yalanba's works focus on the Marrakulu waters of Gurka'wuy as they flow in from the deep ocean, mixing with the waters of the Gupa-Djapu and Dhapuyṇu clans as they clash upon the sacred rock Bamurruru.



**BALUKA MAYMURU**

born 1947

Mangalili clan

Untitled – Larrakitj 2013natural earth pigments on hollow log
221 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4450Q
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 18,000



BALUKA MAYMURU

born 1947
Mangalili clan
Untitled – Larrakitj 2013

natural earth pigments on hollow log
259 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4469F
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 22,000



BALUKA MAYMURU

born 1947
Mangalili clan
Untitled – Larrakitj 2013

natural earth pigments on hollow log
260 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4466M
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 22,000



BALUKA MAYMURU

born 1947
Mangalili clan
Untitled – Larrakitj 2016

natural earth pigments on hollow log
262 cm

PROVENANCE
Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 2226-16
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 22,000





BALUKA MAYMURU

born circa 1947

Mangalili clan

Nyapiliṇu 2013

natural earth pigments on carved hardwood
78 cm

PROVENANCE

Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4450R
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 8,800

Nyapiliṇu is a spirit woman who lived in Wangarr times, the Dreaming. Nyapiliṇu set out from Ambakamba (Groote Eylandt) in a paperbark canoe and travelled to the mainland and north and west as far as the central Arnhem Land coast. Wherever she went, she marked the Country with her activities. She is remembered by the people at these sites, who sing and dance her story.

Nyapiliṇu shared culture with the people whose Country she passed through. She wrapped herself in a sheet of paperbark so that men could not see her body, so women followed her in this. She used wapitja (digging stick) to collect food and peel the bark from the stringybark tree and made containers from paperbark, which she carried on her head. These are identified with her today. Nyapiliṇu also taught women how to look for the waterlily 'Yoku' and prepare it for eating, and to make string and weave

pandanus for bathi (dillybags). The possum-fur string she wore in a cross-shaped arrangement across her chest is a signature of hers. The patterning on the rest of the carving belongs only to the Mangalili and has many levels of meaning.

Manifest in this carving is the cycle of life. The faces represent Nyapiliṇu's life and death. The ritual surrounding mortuary practices sends the soul of the deceased on the ancestral path back to Milṇiyawuy or the Milky Way, the reservoir of souls for the Mangalili.

Baluka is an artist of truth, a senior of the old school. His art is of high integrity, solemn intent and, most often, hauntingly beautiful. In making his art, he sees little distinction between the realms of his sacred cultural practice and that of the art world. Nyapiliṇu is particularly important to the Mangalili people. One of their most important sacred sites, Djarrakpi, is associated with her activities.

BALUKA MAYMURU

born circa 1947

Mangalili clan

Nyapiliṇu 2013natural earth pigments on carved hardwood
55 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4450T
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 6,600

**BALUKA MAYMURU**

born circa 1947

Mangalili clan

Nyapiliṇu 2013natural earth pigments on carved wood
53 cm**PROVENANCE**Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4450V
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 6,600



BARAYUWA MUNUNGURR

born 1980

Gupa-Djapu clan

Larrakitj (Memorial) 2014

natural earth pigments on hollow log
198 cm

PROVENANCE

Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 4567Y
The McGeoch Collection, Melbourne

AUD 16,000

In ancestral times, a whale called Mirinyunju lived in the ocean at Yarrinya. The whale, being of the Munyuku clan, was in its own Country. Munyuku spirit men called Wurramala or Matjitji lived and hunted in this Country. According to Yolŋu kinship classifications, the whale is the ‘brother’ of these men. The men killed their brother Mirinyunju, who washed up on the beach, contaminating it with blood and fat, which turned putrid. The men used stone knives to sever the whale’s tail from its body and cut its body into long strips. Then, in self-disgust, the men threw their knives out to sea, forming a dangerous and potent hidden reef of the same name as the whale, Mirinyunju.

Barayuwa Munungurr paints his Djapu designs and the Munyuku clan designs of his mother Bengitj’s homeland. He has been exhibiting since 2007, with

exhibitions including *Young Guns II*, Annandale Galleries, in 2008, and *New Generations: Yirrkala Artists*, Creative Economy, Brisbane, in 2008. In 2013, Barayuwa started to hide the elements of a whale skeleton in his designs. The directions of the bands of miny’tji (sacred clan design) relate to the sacred salt water of Yarrinya, the chop on the water’s surface and the ancestral powers emanating from it. This work was created after Barayuwa was awarded Highly Commended by the 2014 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards judges for inclusion in *Primavera* 2014, curated by Mikala Dwyer at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney.

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Murrŋiny: A Story of Metal from the East, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, Salon Art Projects and the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, 2021.





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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.

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS VISUAL ART (NEIVA)

The National Endowment for Indigenous Visual Arts (NEIVA) is an independent charitable trust fund established to centralise and distribute proceeds from art sales back to Australian Indigenous artists and their working communities.

D’Lan Contemporary allocates 30% of annual net profits to NEIVA.

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, Hermannsberg 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–70s.

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@diancontemporary.com.au

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DANIEL WALBIDI

New York | 11 May – 22 June 2023

In association with Short St Gallery

D'LAN CONTEMPORARY
4 East 81st Street
New York, NY 10028 USA
DLANCONTEMPORARY.COM.AU

DANIEL WALBIDI b. 1983
Winpa 2022
synthetic polymer paint on linen
150 × 180 cm
© Daniel Walbidi / Short St Gallery

NEIVA

The National Endowment for Indigenous Visual Arts.

neiva.org.au

The Indigenous art market is an important and central vehicle to meaningful reconciliation.

It provides economic development opportunities in remote communities and facilitates awareness of Australia's unique First Nations heritage and culture.

The National Endowment for Indigenous Visual Arts (NEIVA) was established to enable commercial galleries and the art market to meaningfully contribute to the social, cultural and economic empowerment of Indigenous Australians.

Proceeds from art sales are often the main or only source of non-government income for remote Indigenous Australian communities.

However, the primary and secondary Indigenous art markets do not currently generate sufficient revenue to support all artists and their working communities.

NEIVA provides a vehicle for ethical art market representatives to share success and help steer industry change.

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More information

For details on NEIVA's funding programs please visit our website: neiva.org.au



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