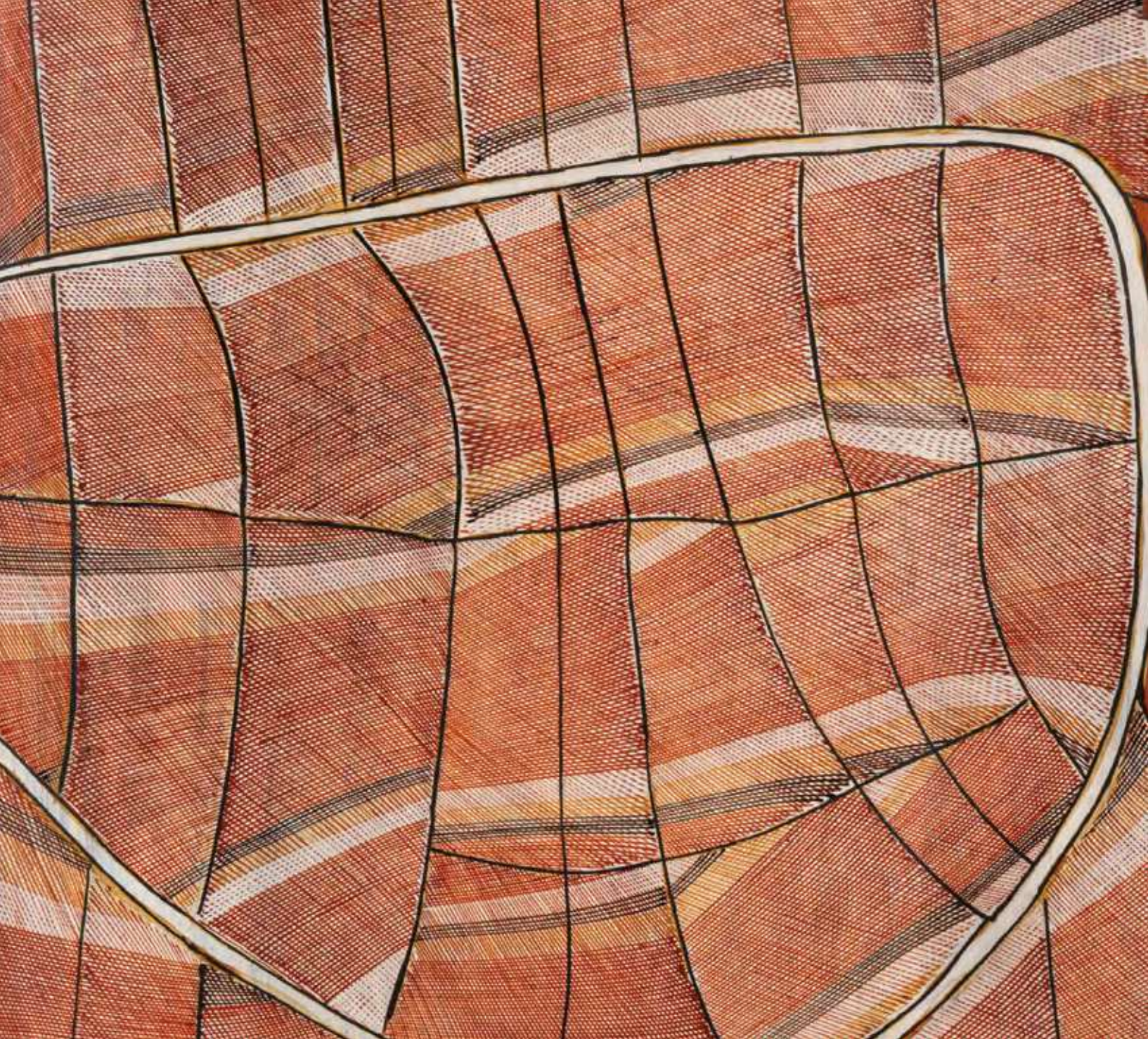




JOHN PAINTING THE SPIRIT
MAWURNDJUL

8 APRIL - 12 MAY 2022

JOHN PAINTING THE SPIRIT
MAWURNDJUL

8 APRIL – 12 MAY 2022

including works from the Bill & Anne Gregory Collection

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40 EXHIBITION STREET
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

FOREWORD

words by bill gregory

DIRECTOR/OWNER, ANNANDALE GALLERIES

Life is lived forward but understood backwards. This is the wisdom of the ancestors. In the three decades that I've known the great artist, John Mawurndjul, it's a lesson I've been learning through the wisdom and beauty of his art. We met in Maningrida in 1996. We've been friends ever since.

I do not say "great artist" lightly. Occasionally – not often – an artist comes along with the power to change fundamentally how I respond to what I'm seeing. They generate an alteration in both my thinking and my capacity to react emotionally to art. I have been lucky enough to have this experience with several artists exhibiting at Annandale over the years. Brian Blanchflower, in the late nineties, shifted things for me. William Kentridge continues to inform my thinking in unexpected ways with every new exhibition. John Mawurndjul has perhaps had the biggest impact of all.

My view of Mawurndjul's international stature is summed up by a picture I took in Basel in 2005. *Journey Through Time* was the first retrospective of an Australian artist in a major European museum. It would travel to the Sprengel Museum in Hanover in 2006. My photograph is of the 2005 posters for the Tinguely Museum's exhibitions. Willem DeKooning. John Mawurndjul. Rene Magritte. He fit right in. A few years later at Annandale we exhibited international stars Zadok Ben David and William Kentridge on either side of a solo show by John Mawurndjul. His art stood out, regardless of the company.

I've known him as Johnny for so long that's the name I use in my memories of him. And I have, by now, quite a good collection of memories of Johnny. From our first meeting, we seemed to enjoy each other's company. I made frequent visits to Maningrida. He had an extraordinary sense of humour combined with an obvious depth of

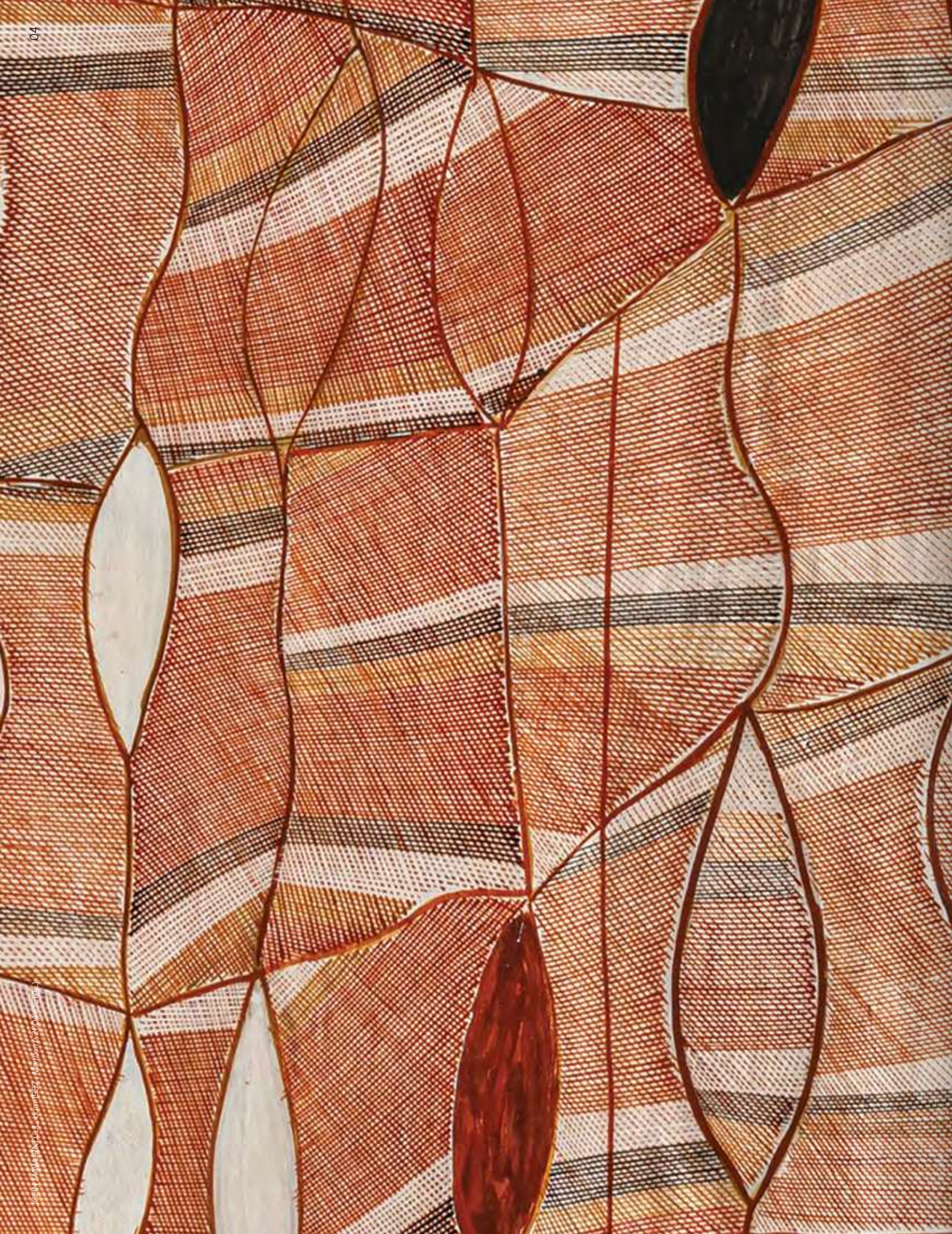
spiritual knowledge and a palpable commitment and belief in his work. I loved to sit next to him outside his home and watch his extraordinary sleight of hand work its magic. He guided me to what he felt were some of his best paintings and this relationship informed both the Annandale exhibitions and our own collecting.

Over the years our friendship grew. Of course, there were his visits to Sydney for his openings, always in the company of his wife Kay Lindjuwanga, a well-known artist herself and his rock. The arts advisor and a few others from Maningrida would often be present. "Pizza corroborees" followed the openings downstairs in the private area. Collectors, curators, writers and artists would mingle, eat pizza, drink beer and soda, make speeches and propose toasts to the artists and the exhibition.

When I was visiting in Maningrida, Johnny invited me to his country outstation and showed me some of the sacred sites, including the billabong where the rainbow serpent lived that he so often depicted in his earlier work.

In Basel for the opening of *Journey Through Time* in 2005, Kay, Johnny, and I went to Colmar, France, to see the *Isenheim* altarpiece by Grunelwald, one the world's great art treasures. I was fascinated by the intensity of Johnny's interaction with the works. It was almost as though I could watch his mind ticking over, not trying to evaluate the work – he was more interested in the emotions the work evoked. He related to Grunelwald as a fellow artist with whom he was communicating across the centuries – not as an icon of western art. He was entirely in the present. He was always guided by his own enthusiasm and curiosity when looking at unfamiliar art.





I remember visiting the Chinese terracotta warrior show at the British Museum with Johnny. When he realized that the works were depictions of ancestors, his eyes brimmed with tears. We were in London for the memorable exhibition *RARRK* in association with Josh Lilley Fine Art in London in 2007. Afterwards I remember him outside, sitting under a banner *The Last Emperor* – the title of the show. He had understood the importance of ancestors in the show in a way westerners have largely forgotten. Johnny’s guardianship of the past, especially through his position as a senior elder in the Mardayin ceremony referred to by Luke Taylor in his marvellous essay in this catalogue, allowed him to live and make his art in the present.

Another event sticks in my mind. His opening speech, translated by his friend Professor Jon Altman at the *Crossing Country* show at the Art Gallery NSW. Despite the translation and the huge crowd, he communicated his energy and passion, making us aware of the opportunity we were being given to see this amazing show of paintings and sculpture from Arnhem Land curated by Hetti Perkins. Johnny held the audience spellbound.

And this. A snapshot of Johnny at work.

He was painting the hinged cladding for his permanent piece at the Musee du Quai Branley Museum in Paris. The room was unheated, and the pole was over five metres in height and 70 cm across, making it the largest work ever covered in traditional rarrk or crosshatching by one artist. The building was being renovated. It was winter and the room was unheated. After watching for about half an hour I was freezing and asked Johnny if he was cold. He simply answered “yes.” But when I asked him if he would like to retire to a café for a break to warm up he just as quickly answered “no.” He had work to do and the absence or presence of ‘comfort’ did not come into it. Johnny’s paintings and his life are not informed by “what if” (warmth and plenty of time) but by “what is” (cold but I have work to do). The mammoth undertaking, now a permanent installation at the museum, was completed in just over three weeks!

It is, however, a name with very specific associations – among them a quality stars often have: absolute confidence about what he is doing. Johnny knows his art is transformative both to westerners willing to look and to fellow artists, Aboriginal or otherwise, willing to see.

By the mid-nineties, my wife and co-director, Anne Gregory, and I were increasingly of the view that bark painting was not getting the attention it deserved. We’d seen the *Sugar Bag Moon* exhibition of the work of Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerreck and Mick Kubarku at the Australian Museum in Sydney. Our investigations took us to Djon Mundine, then at the National Gallery, who had been the director of a bark and sculpture cooperative in Ramingining. He pointed us toward Maningrida.

Our first of many solo exhibitions of his work was held at Annandale Galleries in 1997, with the help of Maningrida Arts & Culture Arts advisor Andrew Hughes. Solo exhibitions for Aboriginal artists were rare in those days, but Hughes could see the potential for an expanded audience for bark painting at Annandale, given our reputation for bold, innovative international art. We were able to expose an entirely new set of collectors to Aboriginal art.

The works in this exhibition span a period from 1987 to 2015 – a rare opportunity to see the development of a great artist over nearly twenty years. The works span the earlier figurative works from the 1990’s through the massive change in palette and the abstract Mardayin Ceremony paintings that heralded his mature style in 2003.

I would like to thank D’Lan Davidson for arranging this extraordinary exhibition, for his expertise and his unbridled passion and belief in the work. Also Apolline Kohen who transformed Maningrida Arts as Director and facilitated us at Annandale to help promote Mawurndjul here and overseas. Lastly, on behalf of my wife Anne & myself, I would like to thank Johnny for his friendship, his unwavering support and for the art he has left the world. It has been an honour to be involved.



JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Lukanaya and Marrayka 1987

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark

110 x 47 cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts and Culture, Northern Territory

Shirley Williams Aboriginal Art Gallery,

Darwin, acquired in 1987

Private Collection, South Australia

AUD 28,000

These two women of the Dreamtime used to wander around Western Arnhem Land gathering food, which they placed in woven panadas dilly bags. Likanaya, the older woman, also held a length of woven bush string in one hand.

One day they came upon a waterhole at a place called Malwan. Around this waterhole were big rocks which acted like stepping stones. The sisters spent all day wandering around the waterhole. Towards sundown, they were stepping from rock to rock, side by side, when two men crept upon them and tried to grab them.

To avoid the men, the two women slipped into the water. As they did, their feet changed into fishes tails, and they swam away from their assailants.

They enjoyed themselves so much in the cool freshwater that they decided to stay there forever. The bush string is a sacred string used for binding wads of paperbark into ceremonial items such as diver duck or other emblems used in song and dance ceremonies.

As appears on the Maningrida Arts and Culture certificate attached verso.

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Baby Ngalyod 1988

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
117 x 48cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts and Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. MAW73 and 5-72
Private Collection, Sydney

AUD 20,000

Ngalyod is a ubiquitous presence and resides with the other ancestors who entered the earth at the end of the creation period. Delek, the brilliant white pigment buried and mined at the important site of Kudjarnngal, is understood to be the faeces of the serpent, the transformed bodies of the ancestral beings that she ingested.

Baby Ngalyod, 1988 was painted in a watershed year in the evolution of Mawurndjul's iconography. The dazzling white Delek illuminates the face of the infant rainbow serpent, reflecting both the essence of Ngalyod's power and the intensity of Mawurndjul's enthusiasm for artistic experimentation. Mawurndjul reveals the inner life of this powerful ancestral being with a mirrored mortality of humans. Like human life cycles, creation beings are also conceived, born,

infancy, give birth and die. The rock art sites that accentuate the Kuninjku clan lands had provided the creative and conceptual wellspring for Mawurndjul throughout his career. By studying the inner lives of the spirits and the ancestors depicted throughout his country, Mawurndjul drew on concepts that expressed spiritual life in ways that would educate his successors and alert Balanda – non-indigenous people – to the layers of Kuninjku culture.

VANESSA MERLINO

Luke Taylor, 'Fire in the Water: Inspiration from Country' in Hetti Perkins (ed.) *Crossing Country: The Alchemy of Western Arnhem Land Art*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2004.





JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Yäwōk Yäwōk – Female Water Spirit 1994

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark

166 x 55.5 cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts and Culture, Northern Territory cat. no. 032/94

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

Collection of Bill and Anne Gregory, Sydney

LITERATURE

Museum Tinguely, Basel, Christian Kaufmann (Eds.) <<rarrk>>

John Mawurndjul : Journey through Time in Northern Australia,

The Museum der Kulturen Basel guest of the Museum

Tinguely, Crawford House Publishing, 2005 p.106 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

<<rarrk>> – *John Mawurndjul : Journey through Time in Northern Australia*, The Museum der Kulturen Basel guest of the

Museum Tinguely, 21 September 2005 – 29 January 2006

AUD 120,000

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

words by luke taylor

ADJUNCT FELLOW AT CENTRE FOR SOCIAL & CULTURAL RESEARCH, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

John Mawurndjul is one of the most influential artists living in Arnhem Land and his works convey the unique spiritual heritage of Kuninjku speaking people. As a very senior man he lives mostly now in Maningrida with occasional visits to Milmilngkan, an outstation on his own lands, that was developed through his income from painting. His paintings have received sustained world acclaim over decades, and he has inspired a whole community of Kuninjku language speakers at Maningrida to investigate the aesthetic potentialities of geometric abstraction derived from ceremonial arts.

He was born in 1952 at Kubukkan, a campsite on the Liverpool River floodplain near Marrkolidjban, before the town of Maningrida was established. Mawurndjul grew up in the bush and was encouraged to move to Maningrida from 1963. However, his father Anchor Kulunba was keen to resettle and care for his Kurulk clan lands and established the outstation of Mumeka at the Mann River crossing of the Darwin/Maningrida road around 1970. In the 1970s, art made for sale accelerated as an important means for supporting the relative independence of outstation life. Kulunba is known for weaving striking, and sturdy, vine fishtraps called *mandjabu*. A massive cast metal copy of one of Kulunba's *mandjabu* now hangs in the foyer of the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. Mawurndjul's mother Mary Wurrddjedje was a consummate weaver. Mawurndjul's parents tutored him in the stories for country and of ceremony. He developed as a bark painter under tuition from his brother Jimmy Njiminjuma and his uncle Peter Marralwanga.

Mawurndjul's intense concentration, fine skill at painting, and enormous energy to complete large and complex works, soon brought him broad-based acclaim. His career is unprecedented when compared to previous generations of bark painters. This says much about his personal talent and, also, about the development of Maningrida Arts and Culture as a support organisation, the productive engagement

with private galleries such as Annandale Galleries from 1997, and recognition of the medium of bark painting as a contemporary art form by major arts institutions in Australia and across the world over the last four decades.

'We don't paint the actual body, but its power. We represent its power with crosshatching, we don't paint its human form, no. We only paint the spirit, that's all.'

Mawurndjul, 2004, in Crossing Country: The Alchemy of Western Arnhem Land Art, edited by Hetti Perkins, p. 138.

Mawurndjul's career highlights include a major personal retrospective <<rarrk>> *John Mawurndjul Journey Through Time in Northern Australia* at the Museum Tinguely in Basel in 2005 and *John Mawurndjul: I Am the Old and the New* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney in 2018 that toured nationally. The catalogue and website for this latter exhibition provide in-depth materials about his life and art. He won the Clemenger Contemporary Art Award at the National Gallery of Melbourne in 2003. His expansive ceiling mural *Mardayin at Milmilngkan*, 2006, giant hollow log *Mardayin*, 2005, and bark painting *Ngalyod with Horns*, 1991 are on permanent display at the Musée du Quai Branly Jacques Chirac in Paris. Mawurndjul shared a beer with this



JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Bikkurr, lorrkon at Kudjidmi 1999

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark

127.5 x 76cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts and Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. M 2565 1999BP

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

AUD 80, 000

Kudjidmi is the name of a billabong and wetland area belonging to the Darnkolo clan. Teeming with birdlife and frogs, this small site with its lush, marsh-like surroundings is within John Mawurndjul's mother's country. Although Mawurndjul had depicted the frogs associated with this site in earlier paintings, he moved on from this explicit representation to other aspects held within this place.

In this superb, middle-period painting, Mawurndjul has depicted instead a central lorrkon, hollow log and two bikkurr, eel-tailed Catfish (*Neosilurus* spp.) of which the murrngno or spikes are visible. *Bikkurr, lorrkon at Kudjidmi* 1999, was painted on the cusp of what has been described as Mawurndjul's 'third phase' of painting when the rarrk designs began to increasingly dominate the bark, both filling the interior and the surrounding space of his figures.

Here, the shimmering rarrk that endlessly occupies and drives Mawurndjul's creative visions are expansive within the design's figurative simplicity and reminiscent of his early studies of biological species in the early to mid-1980s. The purity of form speaks of the essence of painting on bark; it is of the land and literally from it. The transformative qualities of ochre imbue the bark with ancestral presence and resonate with the narratives of the region.

VANESSA MERLINO

John Mawurndjul: I am the old and the new, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, 2018, p. 94.





Kakodbebuldi is an outstation community on the Mann River about 50km south of Maningrida. It is Mawurndjul's mother's country and is a site with a large chain of billabongs in lowlands surrounding the Mann River. In one small billabong is the Mardayin ceremony sacred site.

This painting depicts wongkor, 'a sacred dilly bag' used in the Mardayin ceremony. The cross-hatching here represents a kind of power associated with the ceremony. The line of yellow ochre at the upper lip of the dilly bag represents man-budbud, 'string' placed across the chest of the dancers in the ceremony.

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Mardayin at Kakodbebuldi 1999

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark

84 x 36 cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 21881999BP

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

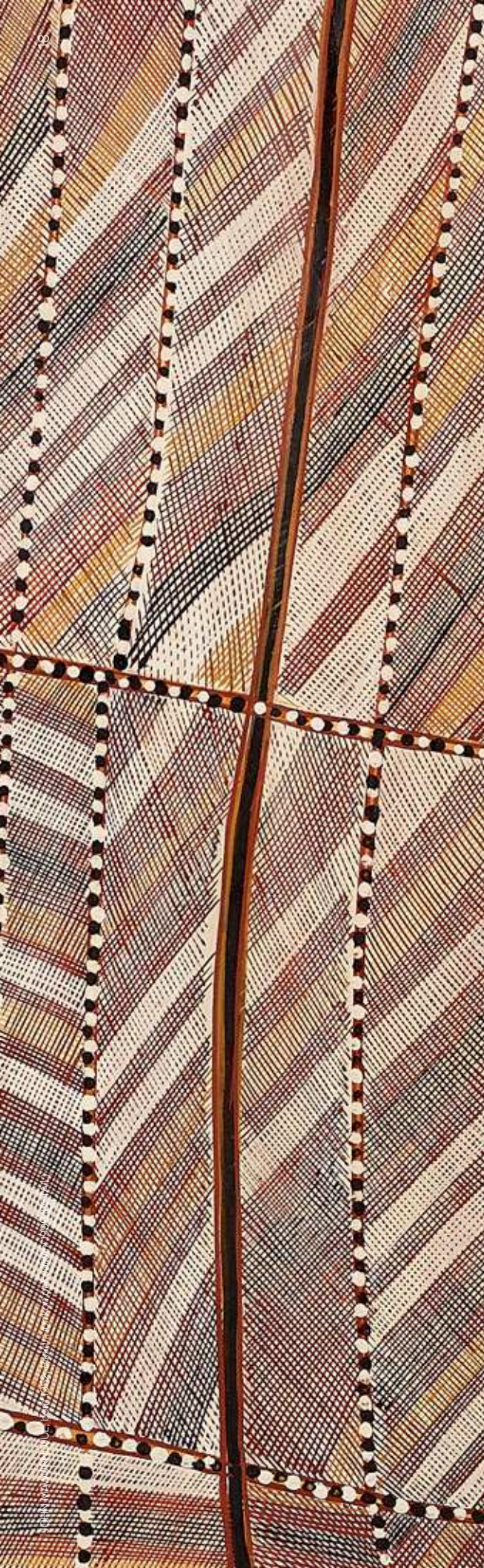
The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

AUD 30,000

Just as the ceremony conceals secret mysticism, the rarrk 'cross hatching' represent the concealment of the ceremonial meaning. This theme of underlying layers of hidden meaning being covered over by either a concrete feature (such as the dilly bag) or some other opaque abstraction is a thread that runs through much of Mawurndjul's art.

MURRAY GARDE & ADAM SAULWICK

As appears on the Maningrida Arts and Culture certificate attached verso.



former French President at the opening in 2006. His work *Buluwana, Female Ancestor*, 1989, jointly owned through an innovative agreement between the Tate Modern, London and Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney is currently on exhibit in the in *A Year in Art: Australia 1992* at the Tate Modern.

Mawurndjul’s art venerates the first creator beings who made his country called Djang. Djang made the earth and important sites, also called Djang, that are imbued with everlasting power. As a feature of this creativity, Djang placed the souls of unborn humans at these sites. Mawurndjul regularly paints the stories of the locations Milmilngkan and Dilebang which are Duwa moiety Djang in his own Kurulk clan lands. He also paints Kakodbebuldi, Mukkamukka and Kudjidmi that are places in adjacent Darnkolo clan lands belonging to the Yirridjdja moiety associated with his mother. Mawurndjul paints these latter places as a ritual ‘manager’, as opposed to ‘owner’, and they are particularly associated with the Mardayin ceremony.

Involvement in bark painting for the market is important for income and as a way of sharing knowledge about these central features of Kuninjkul belief. Mawurndjul has welcomed many international and Australian visitors to share the shade of his studio veranda at Milmilngkan and to look out on the billabong there which is the home of the creator Ngalyod. Paintings of the story for this place are an important form of veneration and Mawurndjul is extremely passionate to discuss his work and its inspiration. I remember both myself, and Hetti Perkins, exhausted after an interview with Mawurndjul about his work for the exhibition *Crossing Country* in 2004. We got the impression that, after a couple of hours, he was just warming up in discussing his ideas!

An account of Mawurndjul’s success must also mention the disastrous effects of recent federal and state government policies and how they undercut Kuninjkul culture, particularly life based at outstations. As Mawurndjul’s good friend, the researcher Jon Altman, and others, have shown these moves are deliberate by governments to promote mainstream values although they undo many of the gains of previous decades. Techniques employed include enforced welfare income management; prohibitions regarding school attendance; compulsory work and training programs for the jobless; the creeping criminalisation of the young who do not wish to conform; and a redirection of development funds away from outstations to support the fiction of ‘growth towns’.

There are tragic consequences for people like Mawurndjul, who wish to promote a healthy lifestyle living on country. The material and spiritual benefits that Kuninjkul gain from living on country are profound and contemporary engagement in the activities of art marketing and ranger programs on Aboriginal land volunteered as Indigenous Protected Areas are surely excellent, and more appropriate, models of a ‘two-way’ future in this very remote locale.

Over some three decades of painting from 1979, Mawurndjul’s development as an artist moved from single figure works, to compositions of multiple overlapping figures, and finally to geometric abstraction inspired by ceremonial paintings used in the Mardayin ceremony. His figurative work draws on the heritage of rock painting that is abundant and spectacular in western Arnhem Land, although Mawurndjul’s figurative works develop a complexity quite unlike these precursors. Mawurndjul’s later abstract bark paintings veer away from the geometry of ceremonial designs, toward asymmetry, and more loose fields of intricate crosshatching and flows of colour.

The zenith of Mawurndjul’s figurative work comprise elaborate arrangements featuring Ngalyod. As he said of these paintings at an Annandale Galleries exhibition in 1997, Ngalyod gets ‘in my head’. This being is of tremendous importance for all people of western Arnhem Land. Ngalyod is associated with the protection of all sacred Djang sites where it dwells in sacred waters. Kuninjkul say that it ‘guards’ these sites in association with other Djang and they emphasise is dangerous qualities. Seasonally, Ngalyod is also said to rise from its’ home and release the shattering force of the wet season. Water and torrential rain are conduits of Ngalyod’s power that bathes the land and bring about renewal and rebirth in the natural and human realms. Rainbows reveal Ngalyod’s movement into the sky and rainbows in other contexts are signs of Ngalyod’s presence and power. Mawurndjul’s thinking about Ngalyod followed these many lines of association that generated extraordinary compositions in his figurative work.

Transformation is a key feature of Ngalyod’s essence and artists can choose to paint a variety of its many guises. Ngalyod and its babies are said to live in a small waterfall at Dilebang in Mawurndjul’s country. The work *Baby Ngalyod*, 1988 in this collection refers to this place. The being is shown in serpentine form with the inclusion of human features – unborn humans are imagined to be like small rainbow serpents at this place.

By 2000, Mawurndjul sublimated the figurative aspect of his work in favour of abstract elements such as lattices of dotted lines and experiments with *rarrk*. He said that his focus became explorations of the power conveyed by rarrk. The identity of the individual Djang is implicit rather than visualised.

Works such as *Mardayin at Kakodbebuldi*, 1999 (45391999BP) and *Mardayin at Mukkamukka*, 2000 (19182000BP) link to early figurative paintings. Ancestral power flows between circular elements representing sites. However, the later works are developed within a rectangular frame. Such paintings reference paintings made upon the chests of initiates in the Mardayin ceremony that are also rectangular in form. The designs depict the clan country of the initiate; they are effectively mapped with spiritual affiliation.

Mawurndjul describes such paintings as his ‘Mardayin style’. He was initiated to this ceremony as a young man and cares for its sacred objects. Major performances of Mardayin by Kuninjkul have now ceased although the designs are used in other ceremonies. Mawurndjul is clear that his bark paintings are ‘inspired’ by ceremony – they are not a reproduction.

Mardayin at Kakodbebuldi, 1999 (21881999BP) and, particularly, *Mardayin at Mukkamukka*, 2000 (302000BP) reveal contrasting coloured dotted grids woven with waves of swirling rarrk. Mawurndjul possessed a superb facility to produce extremely fine line work and his Mardayin paintings hum with pulsing vitality that we must inspect closely to understand. *Mardayin at Mukkamukka*, 2000 avoids a rigid symmetry, yet the forces of the paintings are corralled and balanced.

In later works, the grids of his Mardayin paintings are formed without dotting. This feature becomes a relatively loose or curvilinear grid. The focus alters to the rich saturation of the colours of the rarrk, their glow, and flowing movement. Waves of rarrk seemingly run behind the grid, refract, curve, or fade altogether, as Mawurndjul moves his arm to inscribe the parallel lines across the different sections.

In *Manburre*, 2004 the grid doubles as a representation of the tuberous roots of a particular species of bush potato that grows in the rock country. The rhizomic growth of such plants is developed as an important theme in Mardayin as the lushness of the earth is seasonally rejuvenated by the wet. *Mardayin Design*, 2004 and *Mardayin Site*, 2007

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Mardayin at Kakodbebuldi 1999

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark

133 x 69cm

PROVENANCE

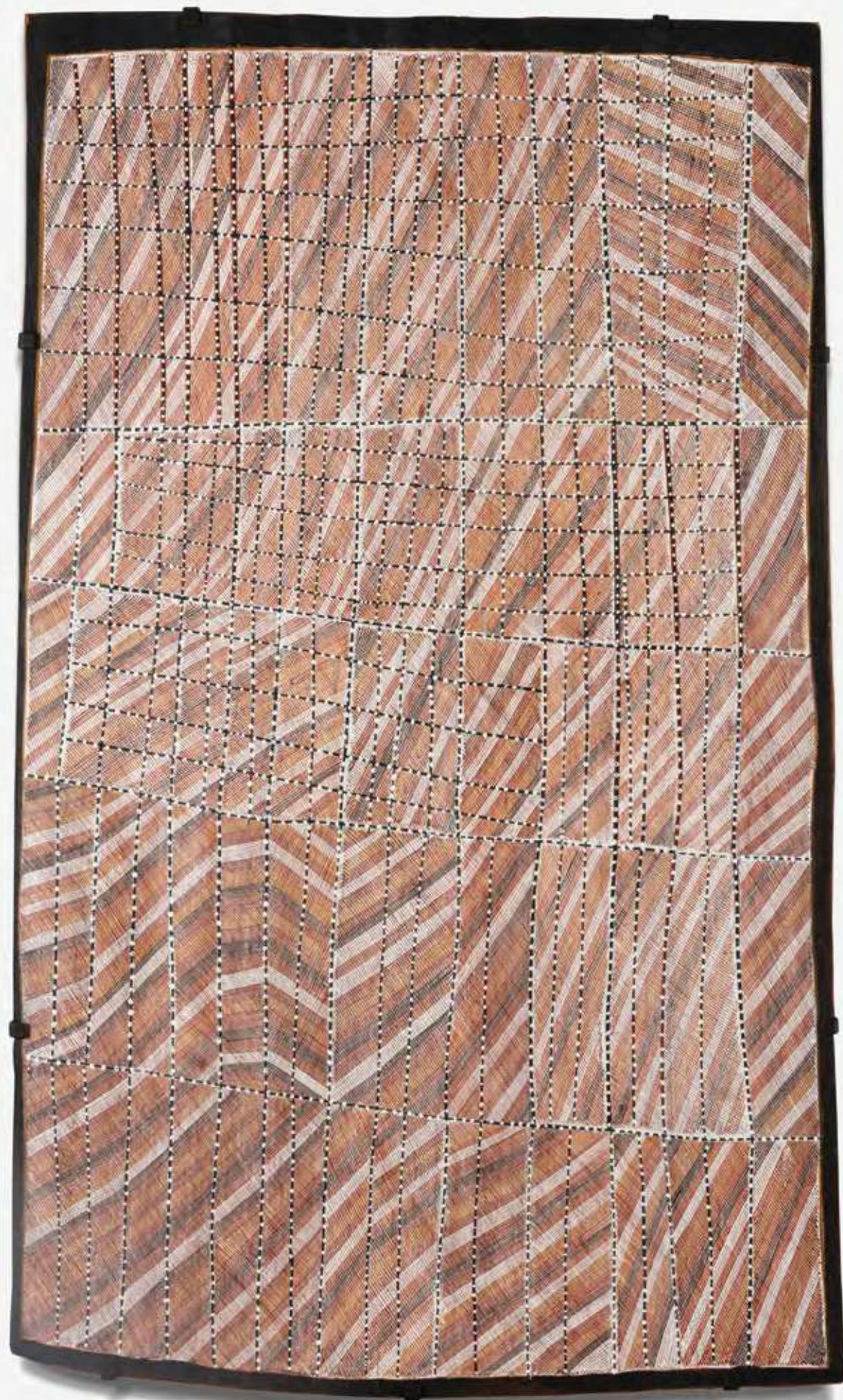
Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 43391999BP

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

Private Collection, Sweden

AUD 120,000





This work by Mawurndjul concerns a major patrimoiety ceremony of a secret and sacred nature called Mardayin. Much of the meaning of the iconography in the painting is not in the domain of public knowledge and cannot be explained in detail here.

Mukkamukka is the name for a large area of land around the Mann River about 50km south of Maningrida, and it is the most important Mardayin ceremony ground. It encompasses Mawurndjul's mother's country and a large chain of billabongs in lowlands surrounding the Mann River. In one small billabong is the Mardayin ceremony sacred site which is depicted in this painting.

The cross-hatching here represents a kind of power associated with the ceremony. Just as the ceremony conceals secret mysticism, the rarrk 'cross-hatching' represents the concealment of the ceremonial meaning of the blue lights that glow in the water at night. This theme of underlying layers of secret meaning being covered over by either a concrete landscape feature (such as plants or a hollow log) or some other opaque abstraction is a thread that runs through much of Mawurndjul's art.

MURRAY GARDE

As appears on the Maningrida Arts and Culture certificate attached verso.

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Mardayin at Mukkamukka 2000

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
148 x 76cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 19182000BP

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

AUD 160,000

Nani djang namekke nani karh-di. Nakkan njamed Mardayin

(pointing to the circle in the middle).

This is a scared site from that place. This is [connected to] the Mardayin [ceremony].

Namekke ka-rung Mardayin Barrangkarrl namekke nanih nawu.

This is something from the Mardayin ceremony which glows. This here is barrangkarrl (a kind of plant, which, it is said, glows blue in the water at night).

Nani Mardayin namekke njamed nga-bimbom namekke djokkohmeng.

This Mardayin subject which I have painted has closed over everything.

Barrhbom namekke rarrk, rrark namekke barrhbom.

The cross-hatching has covered it over.

Mardayin namekke kanjdji ka-rung namekke.

The Mardayin phenomena is underneath glowing with power.

Kanjdji ku-ronj ka-rung. Kukak ngarrnan namekke. Ngarre

nawu ngarri-bimbun ngarre ngarrnan namekke.

It glows under the water . At night we can see it. This thing which we paint here, we can see it when we go there.

Nagarrinan yiman ngokkowi kunronj ngarrnan ngarri-bomang

ngarrinan ka-rung kanjdji. Kakodbebuldi Mardayin namekke

mani kunronj mani ka-yo. Manekke kubokimuk la kanjdji

kayo Mardayin namekke. Kulabbarrl manekke maneh.

When we go to get water there at night we can see that it is glowing in the water. It is there in the water which is at Kakodbebuldi. There is a large body of water there and the Mardayin phenomena is down underneath the water. It is a billabong.

NARRATIVE BY JOHN MAWURNDJUL,
TRANSCRIBED FROM KUNINJKU INTO
ENGLISH BY MURRAY GARDE



JOHN MAWURNDJUL
born 1952

Mimih Spirit c1997

natural earth pigments on carved wood
170 x 10cm

PROVENANCE
Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory
Annandale Galleries, Sydney cat. no. JMA 587

AUD 28,000



JOHN MAWURNDJUL
born 1952

Mimih Spirit 2002

natural earth pigments on carved wood
242 x 14 x 17 cm

PROVENANCE
Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 24882000CW
Annandale Galleries, Sydney
The Peter and Sandy Geyer Collection, Melbourne

LITERATURE
John Altman, et al., *John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2018, pp. 271 & 274 (illus.)

EXHIBITED
John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 6 July –
23 September 2018; Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide, 26 October 2018 – 28 January 2019

AUD 35,000



JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Manburre 2004

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
184 x 69 cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. M379

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

LITERATURE

Hetti Perkins and TarraWarra Museum of Art *Earth and Sky*/

John Mawurndjul and Gulumbu Yunupingu, Curator: Hetti Perkins,

TarraWarra Museum of Art Healsville, Victoria 2015, pp. 18 & 19 (illus.)

John Altman et al., *John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the*

New, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and Art Gallery

of South Australia, Adelaide, 2018, pp. 254 & 255 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: New paintings & ceremonial poles, Annandale

Galleries, Sydney, 27 September – 30 October 2004

Earth and Sky/ *John Mawurndjul and Gulumbu Yunupingu*,

Curator: Hetti Perkins, TarraWarra Museum of Art Healsville,

Victoria 28 March – 8 June 2015

John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New, Museum of

Contemporary Art, Sydney, 6 July – 23 September 2018; Art Gallery

of South Australia, Adelaide, 26 October 2018 – 28 January 2019

AUD 240,000

In this significant yet delicate bark, *Manburre*, 2004, Mawurndjul paints the woody vine that climbs high in the surrounding trees and grows in the rocky country of Western Arnhem Land. Its leaves range from narrow to broad oval-shaped, and its mauve and purple funnel-shaped flowers travel up the vine along with bulbous capsules of its fruit. Manburre – the tubers or yams of the vine are roasted on coals before being eaten. It is also the favourite food of mimih, the tall, slender and shy spirits who live in the rocky environments of Western Arnhem Land

where it grows. Mimih are thin and elongated, and their necks are so delicate that they would break in a strong wind. For this reason, they only emerge on windless days and nights to hunt. The mimih are said to have taught humans the foundation of their culture, including ceremony song, hunting skills and survival in the rocky escarpment country.

V A N E S S A M E R L I N O





Mardayin Design 2004 concerns a major patrimony ceremony of a secret and sacred nature. Much of the meaning of the iconography in the painting is not in the domain of public knowledge and so it cannot be explained in detail.

We paint the public aspects of the Mardayin ceremony, but there are also “inside things”. The dangarrk lights [phosphorous water plant] give off blue light at night in the water at Mardayin sites. At Kakodbebuldi. The dangarrk lights glow under the water. We can see it at night...

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Mardayin Design 2004

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
152 x 65cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 1531-04

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

LITERATURE

John Altman, et al., *John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2018, pp. 150 & 151 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 6 July – 23 September 2018; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 26 October 2018 – 28 January 2019

AUD 160,000

This is Mardayin – the glowing of the lights is the spirit essence of the Mardayin. The lights are calling out. I went and saw these Mardayin lights glowing at night. I put the experience in my head and went and collected bark, scraped it down, painted the background until the surface was finished and then painted the same thing I had seen in cross-hatched form.

John Mawurndjul, 'I am a Chemist Man Myself' in Hetti Perkins (ed.) *Crossing Country: The Alchemy of Western Arnhem Land Art*, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2004, pp. 135-139.

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Billabong at Milmilngkan 2004

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
216 x 60cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 1865-04
Annandale Galleries, Sydney
The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

LITERATURE

Museum Tinguely, Basel, Christian Kaufmann (Eds.) <<rarrk>>
John Mawurndjul : Journey through Time in Northern Australia,
The Museum der Kulturen Basel guest of the Museum
Tinguely, Crawford House Publishing, 2005 p. 149 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: New paintings & ceremonial poles,
Annandale Galleries, Sydney, 27 September – 30 October 2004
<<rarrk>> – *John Mawurndjul : Journey through Time in
Northern Australia*, The Museum der Kulturen Basel guest of
the Museum Tinguely, 21 September 2005 – 29 January 2006

AUD 200,000

John Mawurndjul has depicted the billabong at Milmilngkan where
Ngalyod – the Rainbow Serpent – resides under the water.

Kuninjku people say there are two Rainbow serpents. One is Yingarna,
who is said to have been the original creator of all ancestral beings, the
'first mother'. Yingarna's firstborn is a Rainbow serpent called Ngalyod.
Yingarna or Ngalyod is a common subject in contemporary Kuninjku
bark paintings.

Ngalyod is very important in Kuninjku cosmology and is associated with
creating all djang – sacred sites in Kuninjku clan lands. For example,
ancestral stories relate how creators or ancestral beings had travelled
across the country and had angered Ngalyod, who swallowed them and
returned to the earth to create the site. Today, Ngalyod protects the
areas, and its power is present in each one.

Ngalyod has both powers of creation and destruction and is most
strongly associated with rain, monsoon seasons and rainbows, which
manifest Ngalyod's power and presence. Ngalyod is associated with the
storms' destructive power and the plenty of the wet season, being both
a destroyer and a giver of life. Ngalyod's power controls the fertility of
the country and the seasons.

John Mawurndjul lives at Milmilngkan near this billabong and says that
underneath the water lies the power of Ngalyod. In this painting, he
depicts the power of the place with rarrk – cross-hatching which
contains Mardayin power.

As appears on the Maningrida Arts and Culture certificate attached verso.



develop looping frameworks punctuated with tiny circles representing sites. *Mardayin at Dilebang*, 2005 provides two circle forms in brilliant white as the central focus. They contrast with the moiré patterning of rarrk. Billabong at *Milmilngkan*, 2004 shows elaborate topographic detail of his outstation home. *Milmilngkan*, 2006 depicts the same site with detail pared back to focus on wave forms of rarrk.

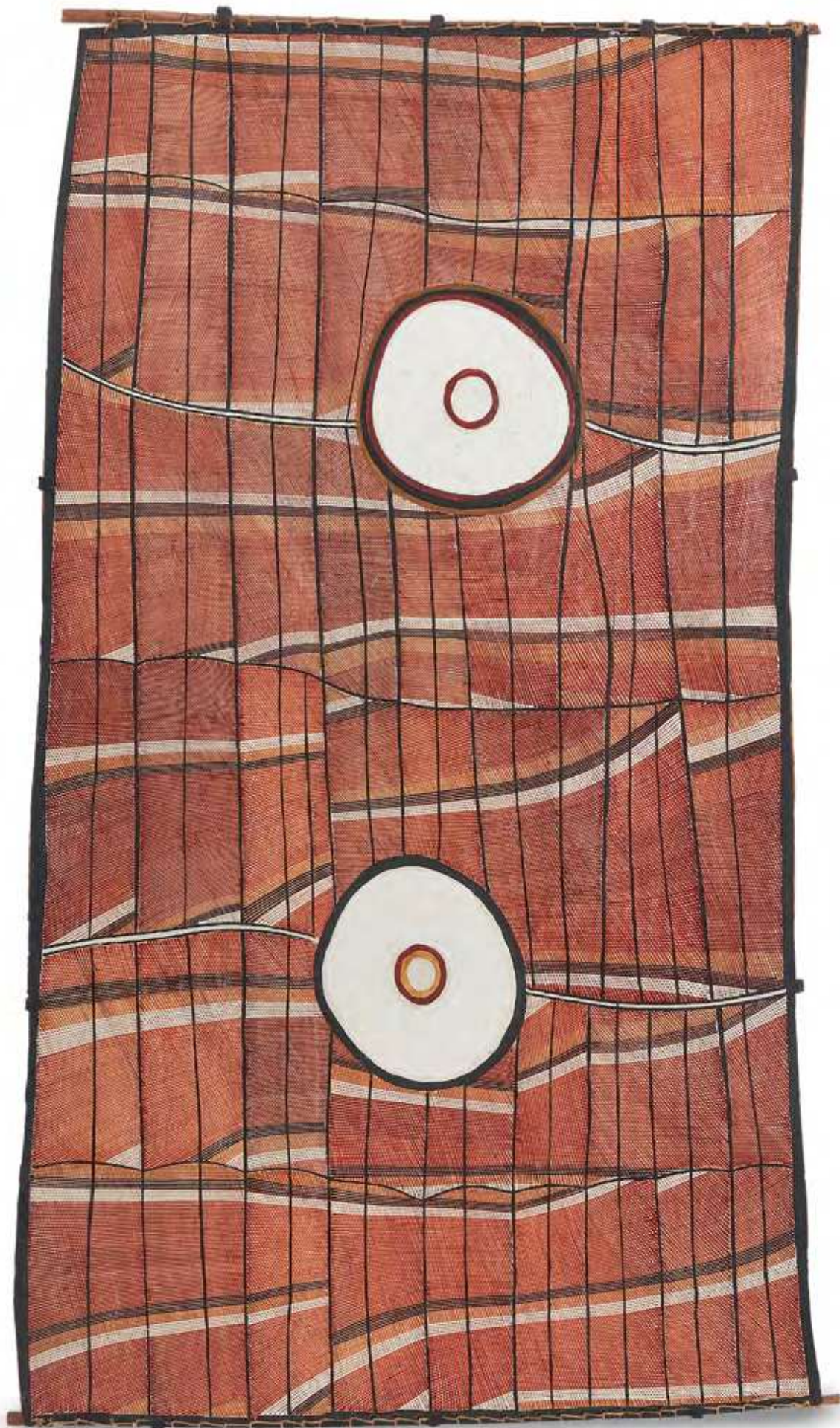
In the latest phase of his painting, Mawurndjul emphasised the disjunctive surprise created by incorporating brilliant bands of delek, or sacred white paint, that slash across the work. These paintings commenced with his winning entries in the Clemenger Contemporary Art Award, that included *Mardayin at Kudjarnngal*, 2003 purchased by the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne. Delek is a particular pure form of magnesium carbonate created by Ngalyod at Kudjarnngal and other sites in Kurulk lands. Kuninjkun mine small nodules of this powerful substance, said to be the faeces of the snake, and trade it throughout the region. In order to preserve this precious resource, titanium white powder is now sometimes distributed by the art centre to the artists. However, earlier barks and body paintings gained their Ancestral power directly through the application of delek. In works such as *Dilebang*, 2008, *Milmilngkan*, 2009, and *Billabong at Milmilngkan*, 2009 the brilliant full colour sections of white create visual surprise in juxtaposition with the darker toned reds and yellows of rarrk. White banding in the rarrk echoes the central feature. The white sectioning indicates the white paint in Mawurndjul's country and the dramatic event of Ngalyod swallowing other ancestors and grinding their bones to be expelled as ochre. Using a restricted palette of four culturally important colours, Mawurndjul continually strove to contrast varieties of colour and form to create the dynamism in his works.

Mawurndjul is also a sculptor. The *I Am the Old and the New* exhibition included many of his sculptures of Djang and carved and painted hollow log coffins called Lorrkkon. In the Lorrkkon ceremony, the bones of deceased people are placed in the pole and the performance directs the soul of the deceased to return to its' land. Ritual paintings on the hollow log effected

this spiritual journey. Artists at Maningrida started making Lorrkkon as sculptures for sale from the 1960s. One of the most important art works featuring Lorrkkon is the *Aboriginal Memorial*, a collection of 200 works made in 1987–88 by multiple artists across Arnhem Land commemorating Aboriginal people who have died in the colonial struggle. The work was assembled by Djon Mundine in cooperation with multiple art centres across the north. The collection in its entirety was purchased and is now housed permanently in the foyer of the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. Mawurndjul was included in this collection. Mawurndjul also hand-painted the huge Lorrkkon that is a permanent feature of the Musée du Quai Branly bookshop and can be viewed from outside the building at the same time as one takes in a view down the Rue de l'Université to the Eiffel Tower. There are many photographs of Mawurndjul working on this massive task over several weeks in Paris. Mawurndjul paints his Lorrkkon with rarrk. In many respects the designs take a similar format to his bark paintings – as if they are wrapped around the cylindrical pole. In the current collection, *Lorrkkon*, 2007 and *Lorrkkon*, 2006 reveal this format. Banding in the rarrk twists up and around the log. *Mimih Spirit*, 2002 is Mawurndjul's carving of a trickster spirit of the rock country. While many *mimih* carvings in Maningrida are short and thin, this is a major work. The manner of painting suggests a Mardayin initiate with *rarrk* painted on their chest.

While this collection reveals key moments in Mawurndjul's personal artistic explorations, we may also note Mawurndjul's role in changing all the art made by Kuninjkun at Maningrida. Mawurndjul taught his with Kay Lindjuwanga to paint and his daughters Anna Wurrkidj, Josephine Wurrkidj and Semeria Wurrkidj and his son Noah Wurrkidj. Now an old man, he is the source of many important stories about country and ceremony. More than this, many artists from his own and other clans have asked him for permission to adopt a similar Mardayin style. They have required his guidance in finding avenues of creativity that don't infringe the older ceremonial laws. Mawurndjul has helped to unleash the creative force of the community just as his own life stands, for all time, as a peak of personal artistic achievement.





A painter of light, in *Mardayin at Dilebang*, 2005, John Mawurndjul has created a luminous mnemonic of ceremonies conducted at a sacred place. Swathes of finely cross-hatched rarrk ripple across the surface of the painting as a river flowing around two freshwater springs. The rarrk is set upon a white ground to produce a radiant effect—a visual metaphor for the light of revelation that finds a counterpart in rituals where participants, their bodies painted in similar designs, gain ancestral knowledge. Mawurndjul describes the site of Dilebang as the home to an ancestral Rainbow Serpent with a Carpentaria palm tree protruding from her back; it is also the site of a cemetery containing the bones of the artist's forbears.¹

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Mardayin at Dilebang 2005

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
143 x 74cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. M475
Annandale Galleries, Sydney
The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

LITERATURE

John Altman, et al., *John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2018, p. 154 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 6 July – 23 September 2018; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 26 October 2018 – 28 January 2019
Special Selection: International, Australian & Aboriginal Paintings and Sculpture, Annandale Galleries, Sydney, 8 August – 29 August 2020

AUD 150,000

Mardayin at Dilebang was painted in the year the Museum Tinguely in Basel and the Sprengel Museum in Hanover hosted the artist's retrospective exhibition, *Rarrk—John Mawurndjul—Journey through time in Northern Australia*.

WALLY CARUANA

¹ Mawurndjul, J., *John Mawurndjul: I am the old and the new*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, and Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2018, p.135.

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Milmilngkan 2006

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
160 x 70cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no.1429-06

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

LITERATURE

John Altman, et al., *John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New*,
Museum of ContemporaryArt, Sydney and Art Gallery of South
Australia, Adelaide, 2018, p. 204 (illus.)

Hetti Perkins and TarraWarra Museum of Art (Eds.) *Earth*

and Sky/ John Mawurndjul and Gulumbu Yunupingu,

Curator: Hetti Perkins, TarraWarra Museum of Art

Healsville, Victoria 2015, pp. 22 & 23 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: Mapping Djang, Annandale Galleries,

Sydney, November 7 – 9 December 2006

John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New, Museum of

Contemporary Art, Sydney, 6 July – 23 September 2018; Art Gallery

of South Australia, Adelaide, 26 October 2018 – 28 January 2019

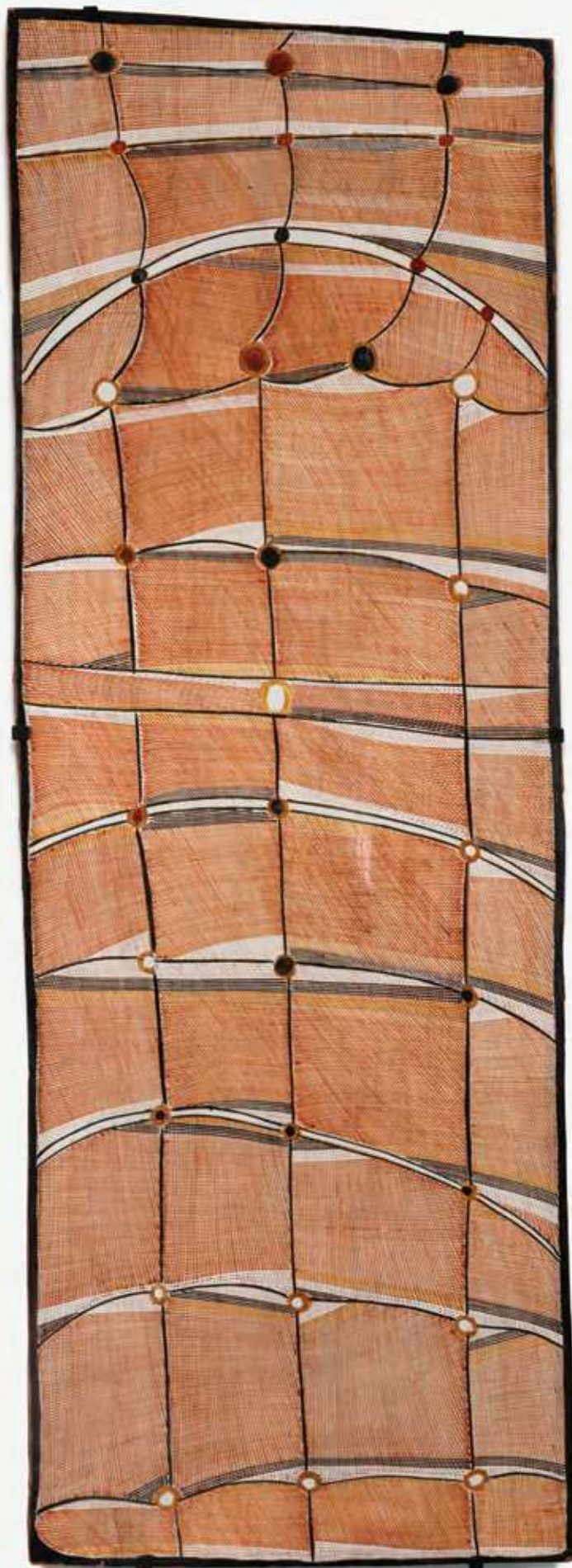
Earth and Sky/ John Mawurndjul and Gulumbu

Yunupingu, Curator: Hetti Perkins, TarraWarra Museum

of Art Healsville, Victoria 28 March – 8 June 2015

AUD 150,000





JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Mardayin Site 2007

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
138 x 48cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 2946-07
Annandale Galleries, Sydney
The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

LITERATURE

John Altman, et al., *John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2018, p. 111 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

Spirit in Variation II: All New Work, Annandale Galleries, Sydney, February 13 – 8 March 2007
John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 6 July – 23 September 2018; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 26 October 2018 – 28 January 2019

AUD 85,000

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Lorrkon 2007

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on hollow log
137 x 10 cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory
Annandale Galleries, Sydney, cat. no. JMa 584
The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

AUD 35,000



JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Lorrkon 2006

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on hollow
209 x 23.5cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 3840-08
Annandale Galleries, Sydney
The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

LITERATURE

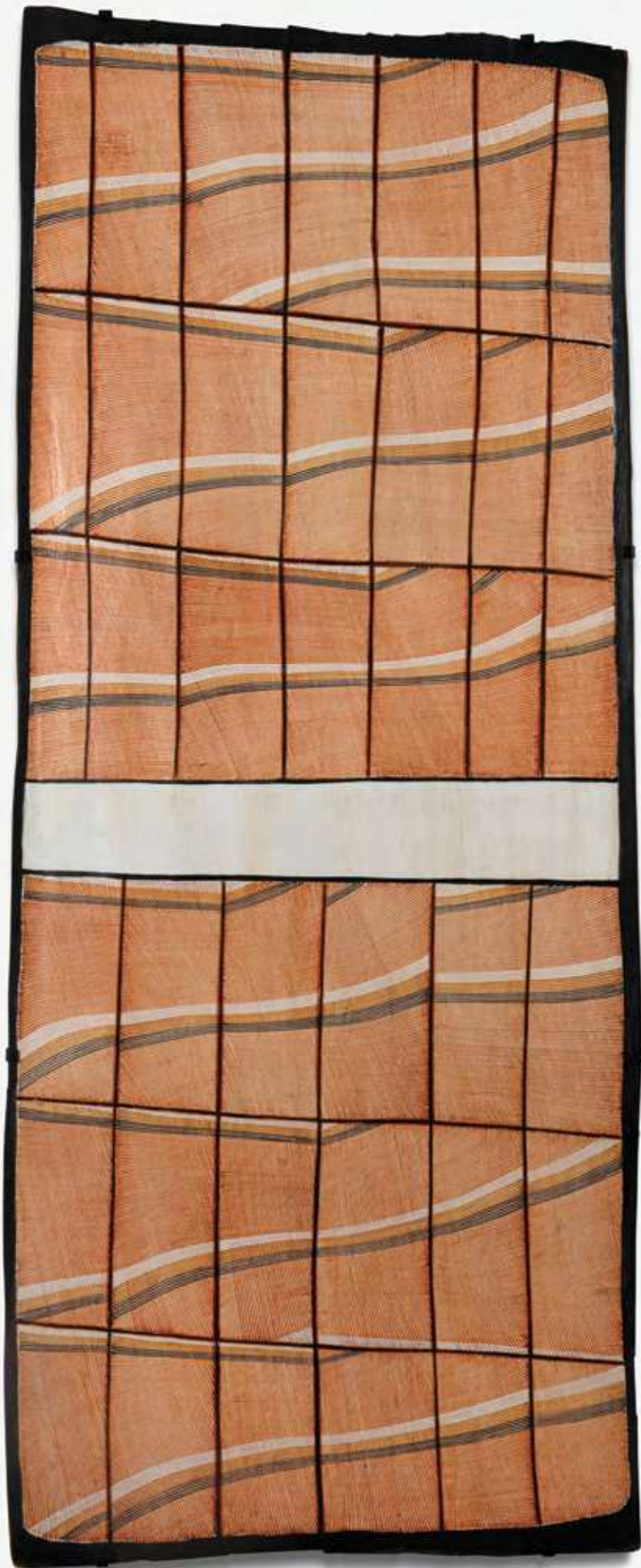
John Altman, et al., *John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2018, p. 298 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: I am the Old and the New,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 6 July –
23 September 2018; Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide, 26 October 2018 – 28 January 2019

AUD 85,000





JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Dilebang 2008

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark

147.5 x 58.5cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory

Annandale Galleries, Sydney, cat. no. JMa 58

The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: Barks and Sculpture, Annandale

Galleries, Sydney, 20 May – 27 June 2009

AUD 85,000

The painting refers to a site, Dilebang, which is an important ceremonial place for the Kuninjku people. This place is also related to Buluwana and her family. In the ancestral time of creation, there was a great drought. During this time, Buluwana and her family camped at Ngandarrayo on Kurulk clan land. They were weak from thirst and close to death. The gigantic malevolent form of the Deaf Adder snake confronted the group. Buluwana attempted to run away with the rest of

her family but was crushed and turned into stone. Today at Dilebang, an arrangement of rocks remains Buluwana's present-day form. Only her head protrudes as a prismatic standing stone; the rest of her body is under the ground. Other human remains to lie on rock ledges are said to be the remains of early ancestors.

As appears on the Maningrida Arts and Culture certificate attached verso.

JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Milmilngkan 2009

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
155.5 x 91cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat.no. 384-09

Annandale Galleries, Sydney

The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: Barks and Sculpture.

Annandale Galleries, Sydney, 20 May – 27 June 2009

AUD 85,000

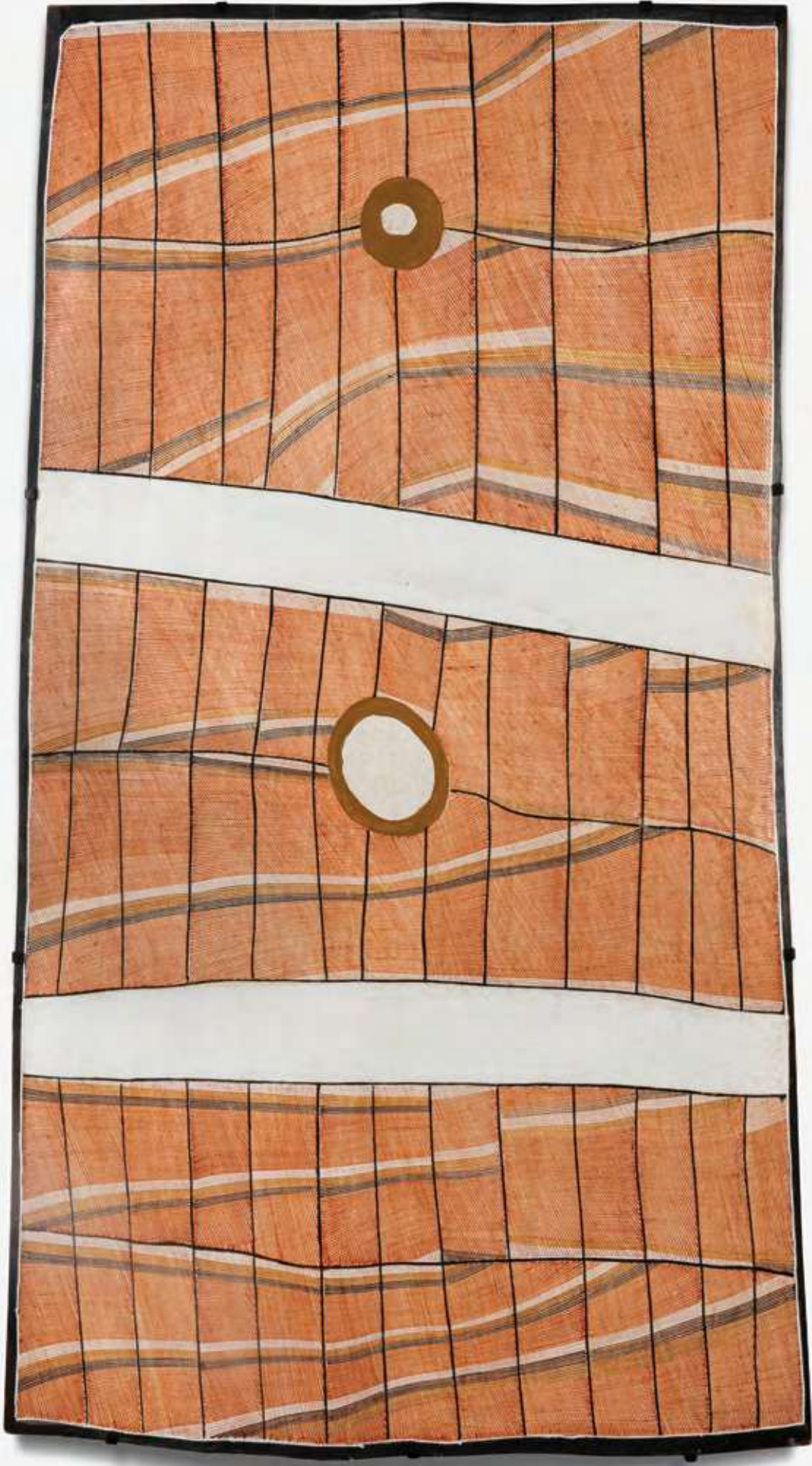
*Yoh Milmilngkan manch yinah kunronj manekke mane
yi-na. Ka-bo-bebme. Djal njamed 'spring'.*

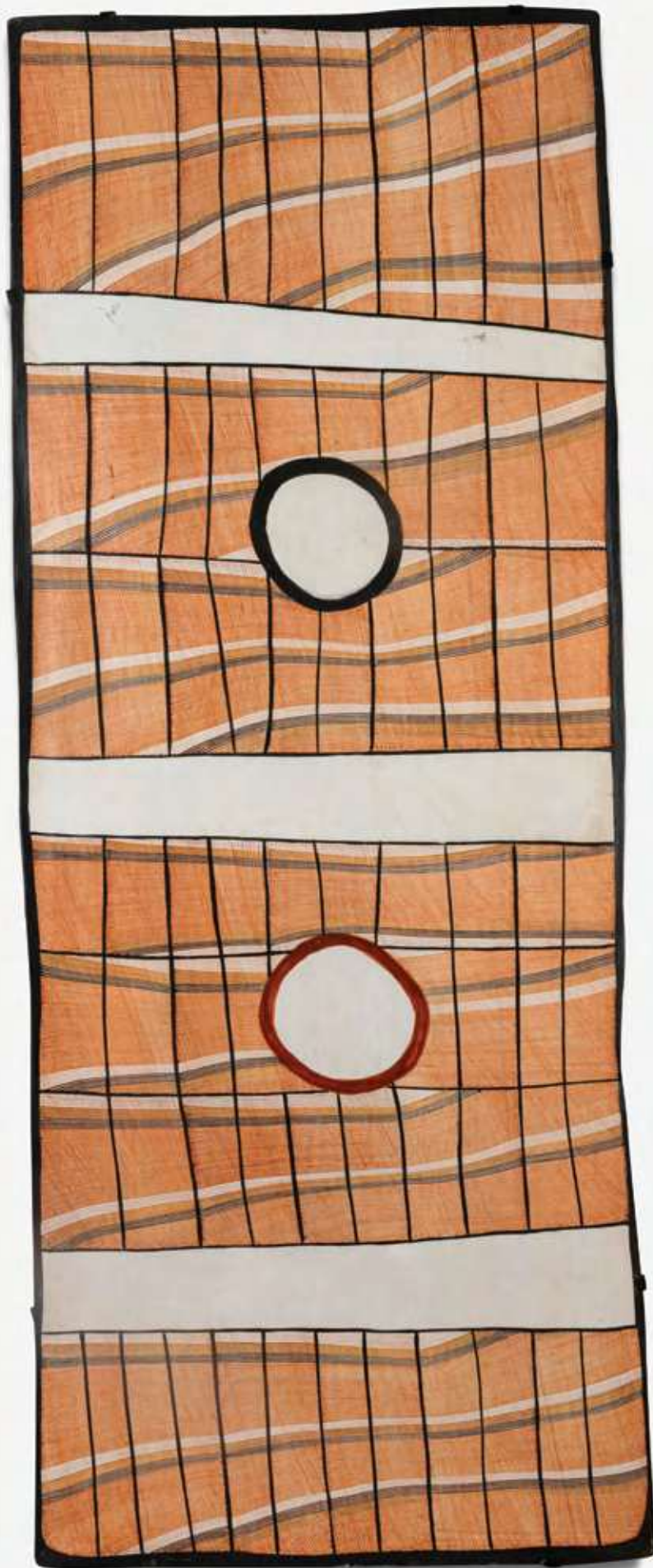
Yes, this is the site at Milmilngkan and these represent water, you can see here. The water comes out [the four circles are water/springs]. They are springs.

*Kam-borrolkan Milmilngkan kunred but manekke njamed ka – karrme
man – djimdjim spring kunronj kam-bobebme. Ngalyod might be
kanjdji mayh ka-yo ngalyod. Mani rarrk nga-bimbom. Kunred
manekke. Kuning ka-yime bonj ka-borrohdolkan nga-nang boyen.*

The water comes out at Milmilngkan and there are springs there surrounded by water pandanus (Pandanus aquaticus) where the water comes out of the ground. This might be caused by rainbow serpents which live under the ground there. This is all cross-hatched here. The cross hatching represents the country there. That's what happens there, I've recently seen the water come out of the ground there.

NARRATIVE BY JOHN MAWURNDJUL,
TRANSCRIBED FROM KUNINJKU INTO
ENGLISH BY MURRAY GARDE





JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952

Billabong at Milmilngkan 2009

natural earth pigments and synthetic binder on eucalyptus bark
183.5 x 77cm

PROVENANCE

Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern Territory, cat. no. 1612-09
Annandale Galleries, Sydney
The Bill and Anne Gregory Collection, Sydney

LITERATURE

Hetti Perkins and TarraWarra Museum of Art Earth and Sky/John Mawurndjul and Gulumbu Yunupingu, Curator: Hetti Perkins, TarraWarra Museum of Art Healsville, Victoria 2015, pp. 32 & 33 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

Earth and Sky/John Mawurndjul and Gulumbu Yunupingu, Curator: Hetti Perkins, TarraWarra Museum of Art Healsville, Victoria 28 March – 8 June 2015

AUD 120,000

WE ONLY PAINT THE SPIRIT

words by *vanessa merlino*

HEAD OF RESEARCH, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

TRANSFORMATIONS OF JOHN MAWURNDJUL

In one sense, *John Mawurndjul: Painting the Spirit* is a celebration of transformation. One of the most recognisable First Nations Australian artists, Mawurndjul has been a conduit of spiritual, personal and creative evolution, which he channelled into his eminent artistic practice. Spanning 22 years, this influential group of paintings

offers a glimpse into John Mawurndjul's prevailing magic, an intimate snapshot from the personal collection of those who followed and nurtured no small part of the artist's journey. In the foreword to this catalogue, Bill Gregory, Director of Annandale Galleries, speaks of the ways in which his relationship with Mawurndjul's practice altered his perspective, changed his ideas and informed his thinking. This effect is reflected in the enduring celebration of his work and the impact his bark painting and sculptures had on Australian contemporary art.

The exceptional, transformative qualities of Mawurndjul's work have emerged from across the spiritual, material and conceptual terrain. The key to his unprecedented innovations and creative achievements lies in these specific sites of transformation.

The first transformation is in creative materials sourced in the country around Maningrida where Mawurndjul lives and worked. The bark of the stringybark trees, which were cut to a larger and larger scale throughout his career, are cured over fire and flattened to make the base. Trunks of stringybark, ironwood or woolly butt are burned down to cooled, cracked chunks of charcoal gathered for the black pigment. Red and yellow ochre are picked from the ground and powdered, but the white clay, the delek from Kudjarnngal, has the most transformative quality of all his materials. For it is the ingested bodies of spirits that Ngalyod – the rainbow serpent – excreted

into the earth to be found in brilliant white lumps. Mined by the artist's hand, this radiant white clay is the substance and first coat of Mawurndjul barks, shining through the spectacularly fine cross-hatching or rarrk.

The rarrk, as Mawurndjul states, is representative of the spirit of Ngalyod. Though only one component in the complex whole of the ancestral being, it is most fluid and malleable to Mawurndjul's expansive representations. Just as Ngalyod is considered the first ancestor and protector of all other ancestral beings, its depictive power represented through rarrk forms the genesis of Mawurndjul's ground-breaking style. As transformation is the critical feature of Ngalyod's essence, noted in Luke Taylor's essay, it is not surprising that the rarrk technique applied to capture the spirit drove his aesthetic investigations towards abstraction. Mawurndjul dedication was to pursue the many iterations of an endlessly shifting spirit, a fluid essence across his career. The intricate cross-hatching that became so identifiable as Mawurndjul's innovation are the vehicle through which he transcends local aesthetic realms and captures the imagination of Balanda (non-Aboriginal) audiences.

Finally, the viewer's spirit is also transformed in the presence of Mawurndjul's work. Expanded and transformed, the explorations of the Mardayin designs reflective of Ngalyod's spirit, occupy the late period of works. At this point, the secret design elements have been liberated to an 'open' realm, hitting a resonance that reverberates in the chests of the uninitiated audience. The rarrk is the principal vehicle for engagement with non-Aboriginal people. To stand in front of a John Mawurndjul painting is to experience a visceral response to power, self-confidence, creative belief and higher knowledge. One cannot help but be altered in recognition from one spirit to another.

Occupying both affective and conceptual realms of engagement, Mawurndjul knew that his work held authority. His determination to stay and work on his country was integral to the assurance of its transformative qualities. This group of works in *Painting the Spirit* are markers of Mawurndjul's creative genius and an opportunity to witness a small yet powerful set of statements on transformation. His unwavering belief to transfigure and reconceptualise the complexities of his Kuninjku culture broke new ground in art history and the presence of his work suggests the possibility of an ever-evolving spirit.



STEVE STRIKE



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