



SIGNIFICANT

MELBOURNE

SIGNIFICANT

30 MAY – 12 JULY 2024

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Welcome to this year's annual exhibition *Significant*. This broad representation spans modern works from the 1960s to the highly contemporary works of the present day, allowing us to dive into the depths of quality and perception within First Nations art in Australia.

This year, we honour the historical narrative of Australian First Nations art by arranging the collection chronologically to help create a clearer interpretation for our audiences – both within Australia and abroad. Over the course of the past twelve months, we have hand-selected a phenomenal collection identified as possessing not only exceptional quality but also impeccable provenance.

We are truly honoured to represent the masterwork of an often-overlooked Yolŋu artist, Narritjin Maymuru. *Yingapungapu at Djarrakpi* circa 1962 is an incredible discovery, having never appeared at auction in Australia before. *Rain Dreaming with Ceremonial Man*, another masterwork, this time by Johnny Warangula, is regarded as the most encyclopaedic of Warangula's Kalipinya paintings. I encourage you to read Professor Howard Morphy's and John Kean's authoritative essays on these irreplaceable pictures.

We enthusiastically revisit significant works from 1972 by Thancoupie and fine Bardayal 'Lofty' Nadjamerrek bark, and are thrilled to rediscover Alec Mingelmanganu's *Wanjina* circa 1980 – one of the last large-scale canvases by this most important artist to remain in private hands.

Another significant highlight within the group is *Emu* 1990 by Emily Kam Kngwarray. This distinctive picture resonates with iconic qualities – and was exhibited in the first important retrospective for Emily, which travelled to Japan in 2008 before being viewed in Australia. This work has remained in the same private collection since 2003.

Other highlights from the highly contemporary selection include work by Gordon Bennett, John Mawurndjul, Makinti Napanangka, Ronnie Tjampitjinpa, Willy Tjungurrayi and Tommy Mitchell, all of whom are strongly represented through paintings of unsurpassed quality.

Finally, Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri's monumental masterwork *Rockholes near the Olgas* 2007 caps off a truly remarkable body of institutional-quality work within the catalogue.

Our Team and I look forward to welcoming you to this year's opening event and exhibition at our CBD gallery in Melbourne.

D'LAN DAVIDSON
DIRECTOR, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

NARRITJIN MAYMURU

circa 1912 – 1981
Manggalili

Yingapungapu at Djarrakpi circa 1962
natural earth pigments and synthetic
fixative on eucalyptus bark
159 × 56 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted in the Yirrkala
region, Northern Territory
Likely James Davidson, Melbourne
Private Collection, United
States of America
Private Collection, United States of
America, acquired from the above
Private Collection, Western Australia,
acquired from the above in 2020

AUD 30,000

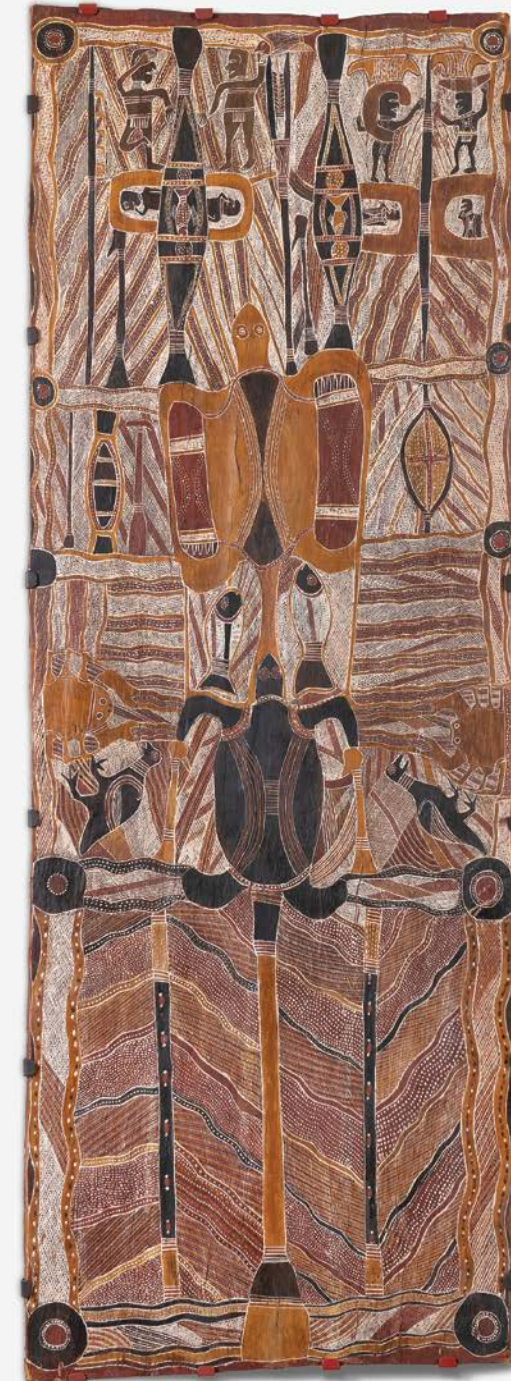
This painting is an exquisite example of Narritjin Maymuru's work and is likely to date from the early 1960s. At that time, he played a leading role in the painting of the Yirrkala Church Panels, which the art historian Charles Green recently referred to as 'the most important paintings ever made in the context of the Australia nation-state'. The scale of the painting is breathtaking and its coverage is exceptional. The painting creates an unfolding of time, connecting events that happened in the Wangarr Ancestral past with the contemporary world through the depiction of ceremonial performance.

The underlying narrative involves the Nyapililngu Ancestral Women who travelled from Groote Eylandt to Djarrakpi (Cape Shield) in Manggalili Country on the mainland. There they lived gathering wild plums and native cashew nuts, while their brothers fished and hunted turtles. The Nyapililngu were very shy and concealed their bodies from strangers behind sheets of stringybark. They shaped baskets by bending and folding stringybark and used their digging sticks to knock down wild plums and dig for yams. Their brothers spent much time at sea in their dugout canoes hunting turtles with harpoons and spearing

parrot fish (yambirru). One day they failed to return from the hunt. The Nyapililngu standing on the shore looked out to sea and saw a great storm on the horizon. They feared for the lives of their brothers. Days later, the body of one of the men washed up on the shore. The women made a sculpture in the sand shaped in the form of the elliptical hollow they would scoop out for burying fish remains. The sculpture (yingapungapu) became the resting place for their brother's dead body and is recreated today as a central feature of Yirritja moiety mortuary rituals.

The painting is divided into three connected panels. The upper panel is divided in half by a two-pronged fish spear. The left side is the women's and the right the men's. Yingapungapu ground sculptures are shown on either side. One of the Nyapililngu covers herself with a sheet of bark, the other carries a basket on her head. Between them is a ceremonial digging stick. On the left side, men are shown dancing at the head of a Yingapungapu. We can see a ceremonial hook spear and below that a spear thrower and then the upturned boat with a floating paddle and harpoon.

The lower panel is an evocation of the drama out at sea. The storm that overturned the hunters' boat



was generated by the anger of the Ancestral Turtle. In the centre of the panel the hunters' paddle extends from the tail of the turtle. The pattern represents the wake of the turtle as it moves powerfully through the sea. The background cross-hatching expresses the turbulence of the sea, the cross-cutting movement of the waters at the height of the storm, the foam and spray. The colours evoke the sense of danger, the lack of control the hunters felt.

The central section links the other two sections. It is centred on the intertidal zone and illustrates the themes of Manggalili burial ceremonies. The tide is out and a female turtle is dragging herself up on the beach to lay her eggs in a nest beneath the sand. The beach becomes alive as sand crabs emerge from holes in the sand and scurry around; birds follow their prey along the tidemark, feeding off the crabs. Their actions are engraved in the surface of the beach. The background patterns show the turtle's tracks, the mark of the tide as it moves up and down the beach, and the marks made by the crabs as they dig for food through the sand. The white dashes represent the maggots that thrive on the remains of fish. When the tide comes in, it sweeps the beach clean, then as the sea moves out, life returns to the beach again, in a never-ending cycle. The songs and

dances that enact these themes at burial ceremonies are allegories of life and death, of looking back and looking forward. On what might be the back of the turtle, in the central panel, there are two footprints. These signify the footprints of the person who has passed away, but also the eternal footprint of the Ancestors in the land.

Narritjin Maymuru was a great teacher and innovator and his continuing influence can be seen in the work of many Yolŋu artists today. The dialogue between figuration and abstraction that is such a leitmotif of this art tradition is reflected in the ways in which the limbs of the crabs are incorporated in the background design. And it is almost possible to feel the play of emotion and delight that the artist felt as he worked on the complex cross-hatching that so powerfully expresses the Ancestral storm at sea.

PROF. HOWARD MORPHY

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Reference: Charles Green, 'Why the year 1962 matters now more than ever before: war, conflict, crisis and postnational art history', in Ian McLean and Charles Green (eds), *Postnational Art Histories: What Is Postnational Art History*, COVA x Perimeter, Melbourne, 2023, pp. 73–87.



DEAF TOMMY MUNGATOPI

circa 1925 – 1985
Tiwi

Untitled – Tutini circa 1965
natural earth pigments on
carved hardwood
120 × 23 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, carved and painted
at Milikapiti, Melville Island
Lady Alice Bettine Grounds,
Melbourne, acquired from the above
By descent
Private Collection, Melbourne

AUD 25,000



JOHNNY WARANGULA**TJUPURRULA**

circa 1922 – 2001

Pintupi

Rain Dreaming with Ceremonial Man 1971
synthetic polymer paint
and natural earth pigment
on composition board
91 × 75.5 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Papunya,
Northern Territory
Geoffrey Bardon, Sydney
By descent
Mrs Lois Bardon, Sydney
Sotheby's, Melbourne
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above
by private sale in 2012

LITERATURE

Geoffrey and James Bardon,
*Papunya: A Place Made After
the Story: The Beginnings of the
Western Desert Painting Movement*,
The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne,
2004, p. 164, painting 71 (illus.)

POA

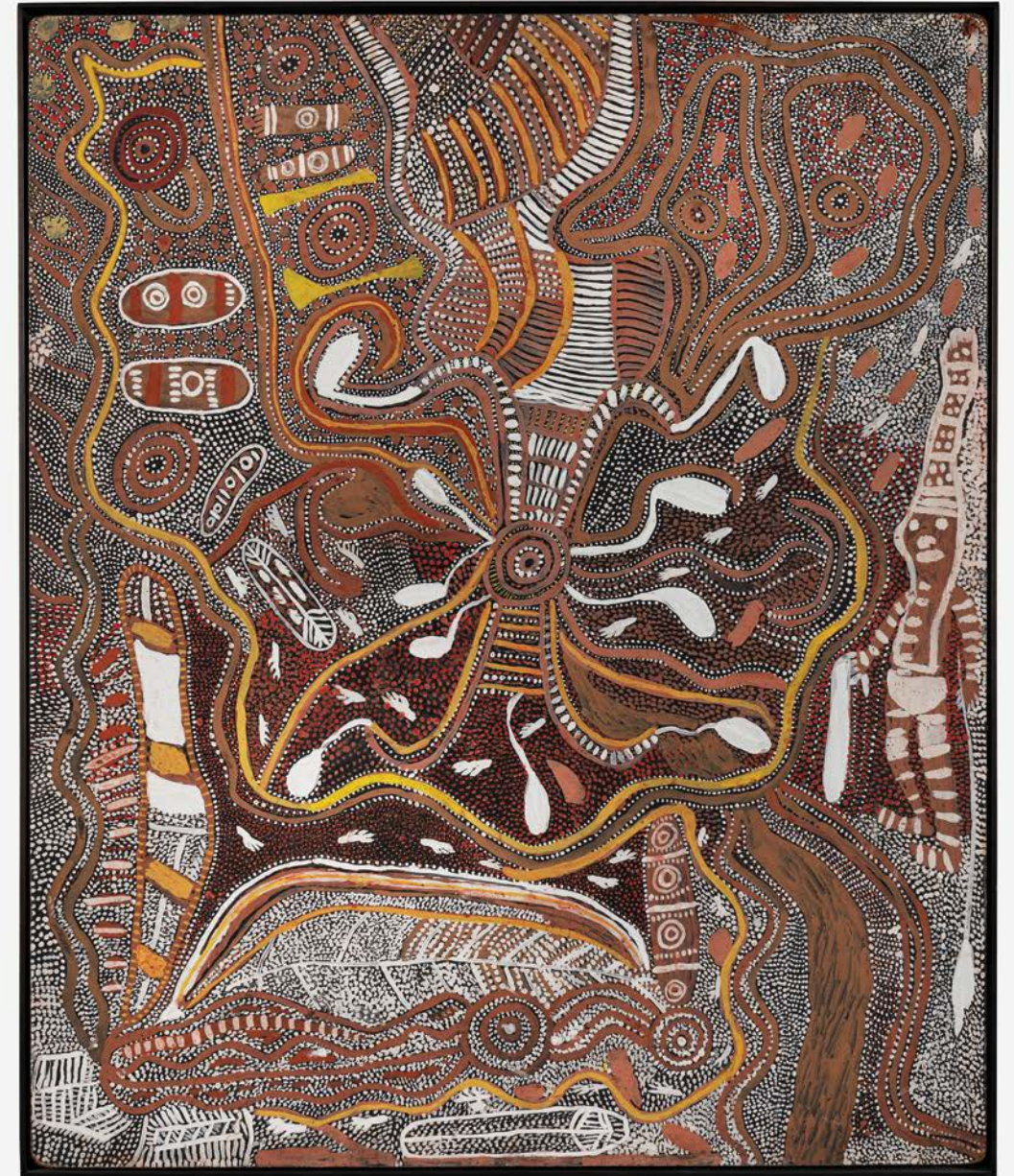
Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula was a Western Desert man whose passion for his Country found form in his role as songman, storyteller and painter. Warangula was also a rainmaker, a capacity that grew from his association with the Water Dreaming songline. *Rain Dreaming with Ceremonial Man* 1971 is a complex and intricate work that describes the creation of a storm at Kalipinypa, the resulting flood and the abundance of bush foods that emerge from the earth after inundation. Kalipinypa is a rare permanent water-place, set into an otherwise unwelcoming gravelly plain, almost 500 kilometres west of Mparntwe/Alice Springs.

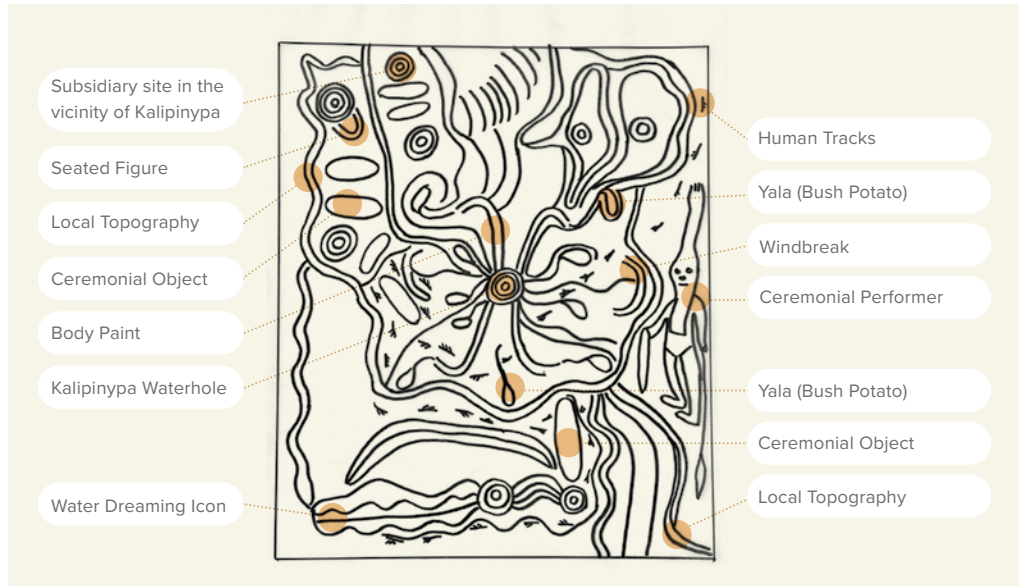
In 1971, Warangula was among a group of senior men who began painting on board at Papunya. His singular approach was forged during a remarkable period of creativity in the first year of the movement. Curiously, for an artist who is now regarded among the most fluent and poetic of the founding Papunya Tula artists, Warangula's first works were awkward and relatively unadorned. His conceptual breakthrough came in the summer of 1971/1972, when painting his first large-scale work, *Rain, Lightning and Stars at Night* 1971 (Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory). Warangula took the iconographic elements available to him, through his inherited rights to the Water Dreaming at Kalipinypa, and reconfigured them as personal statements – his

energy animating every gesture. Within months of taking up the brush at Papunya, Warangula discovered the plastic qualities of the medium, establishing an analogy between the dotted field (traditionally associated with ceremonial decoration) and natural phenomena (including rain, hail and various types of vegetation). I have argued elsewhere that Warangula profoundly affected the direction of Papunya Tula art, especially during the movement's critical first decade when his peers observed how he repurposed the dot (an irreducible element of desert iconography) to describe natural phenomena.¹

According to Geoffrey Bardon, *Rain Dreaming with a Ceremonial Man* was created in December 1971, though it may have been painted in the early months of 1972.² Interestingly the painting bears a very strong resemblance, in both its treatment and iconography, to his *Water Dreaming* 1972 (Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory), a work that was included in Consignment 8, and was delivered to Pat Hogan's Stuart Art Centre in March 1972. The resemblance between the two works is so strong, and Warangula's stylistic evolution was moving at such a rapid pace, that the paintings must have been created within a month of each other, perhaps even in sequence.

The summer months of 1971/1972 in Central Australia were wet. Papunya experienced





particularly heavy downpours in November (122 mm), December (48 mm) and then March, a whopping 282 mm being recorded in an area with a median rainfall of 275 mm per annum.³ While rainfall records are not generally a critical factor in the writing of art history, they are relevant when looking at the work of a rainmaker. The extremely wet seasonal conditions at Papunya are critical to appreciating this painting's vitality, for it is apparent that Warangula's sense of purpose was bolstered as the rain pelted down on the corrugated iron roof of the Men's Painting Room.⁴

According to Bardon, who supported the artists during this formative period, Warangula painted 'longer and harder and more often than anyone at Papunya; he was indefatigable and his great charm and strong style made him popular and also very influential among the other painters'.⁵ Bardon regarded the paintings Warangula produced from December 1971 to July 1972 as 'the finest achievements of the Western Desert Painting Movement'.⁶

Driven by the frequency of the downpours, in combination with the verses of his rainmaking

songs, Warangula created a new form of improvisation that went beyond an orthodox restatement of ceremonial icons with new media. Photographs taken by photojournalist Michael Jensen in the winter of 1972 show the artist applying the filagree of lines and dots to an almost finished board, *Water Dreaming at Kalipinyapa* 1972 (John and Barbara Wilkerson Collection), and significantly, a pair of boomerangs can be seen formally laid out at Warangula's feet as he paints. Customarily, boomerangs are clapped to accompany sacred verses, and Jensen's photographs reveal Warangula as a songman who understood that performance and painting are intimately connected creative acts.

Rain Dreaming with Ceremonial Man is the most encyclopaedic of Warangula's Kalipinyapa paintings. The extensive inventory of painted icons include: several sacred objects (understood to possess the ancestral essence of the site), a ceremonial ground design, ceremonial body paint, trackways of ancestral heroes, the symbolic representation of a figure, windbreaks, local terrain including the waterhole at Kalipinyapa, meteorological

phenomena, bush fruits and tubers, as well as a figurative representation of a ceremonial performer. All these elements are set within a topographical overview. The references to the ancestral narrative and to the contemporary ceremonial celebration of Kalipinyapa demonstrate Warangula's exceptional capacity to convey the passage of time telescoped within a single composition.

According to Warangula, Winpa the Lightning Boss sang up a huge storm at Kalipinyapa. Winpa clapped his boomerang and stamped as he sang out the verses that Warangula would learn as a young man. Dark clouds formed, thunder cracked, hail pelted the ground and torrential rain scoured the earth. Winpa propelled the storm eastward, creating a series of waterholes, which now mark the path of his songline.

Following the inundation, new life burst from the land. Plants flourished and the fruits wilkalpa, yunguli and kampurarra were plentiful. In this version, the artist focuses on the growth and underground expansion of Yala (bush potato, *Ipomoea costata*) following the storm. The Yala is shown in both ritual mode, as a performer, and in vegetative mode, spreading across the land.

Firstly, the centrally located roundel, which at one level signifies the water-place at Kalipinyapa, is also conceived as being at the centre of a ceremonial body. The 'J-shaped' curves emanating from the roundel represent body paint that stretches from the performer's stomach to his chest and over both his shoulders. The body paint is further elaborated with rows of short white bars that denote rainclouds. Understanding the figurative references is rendered challenging, as the design is mirrored at the top and bottom of the central roundel.⁷ The adjacent white lines, terminating in round organ-like swellings, signify the tubers of the Yala ancestor, while the sinuous brown and yellow lines (that also emanate from the concentric roundel) show the expansion of the roots of the Yala deep under the earth. The larger red dots are a number of different bush fruits proliferating on the earth's surface.

Warangula continued to paint the Kalipinyapa storm and its life-giving effects throughout his

career. Works such as *Egret Dreaming* 1972 (National Gallery of Australia), *Water Dreaming at Kalipinyapa* 1972 (John and Barbara Wilkerson Collection), *A Bush Tucker Story* 1972 (National Gallery of Victoria) and *Water Dreaming* 1972 (Art Gallery of Western Australia) stand out as exemplars in his meditation on various aspects of this single site.

Rain Dreaming with a Ceremonial Man marks an important moment in the evolution of Johnny Warangula's account of the storm at Kalipinyapa. Realising the potential of the new media, Warangula goes beyond the reiteration of 'classical' elements of the Rain Dreaming epic to recombine them as jazz-like improvisations that communicate the percussive passion of lightning and thunder, the white noise of torrential rain, together with the rushing sounds of the flood as it courses through the swales, pushing a wall of accumulated debris before it. This particular work focuses on the abundance of Yala that spreads through the sodden earth. Continually fracturing and recombining iconographic elements, Warangula orchestrates a dynamic, multi-layered composition to revivify the ancient vocabulary of sinuous lines, dashes, arcs and dots.

JOHN KEAN

1. John Kean, *Dot, Circle and Frame: the Making of Papunya Tula Art*, Upswell, Perth, 2023, pp. 247–327.
2. Geoffrey and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2004, pp. 157–169.
3. Bureau of Meteorology, 'Monthly Rainfall Papunya', http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/ncc/cdio/weatherData/av?p_nccObsCode=139&p_display_type=dataFile&p_startYear=&p_c=&p_stn_num=015612 (accessed 12 April 2024).
4. John Kean, 'Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula: painting in a changing landscape', *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, 2001, 41, pp. 47–54.
5. Bardon and Bardon, *Papunya*, p. 81.
6. Bardon and Bardon, *Papunya*, p. 32.
7. A couple of months after painting *Rain Dreaming with Ceremonial Man*, Warangula painted *Rain Dreaming at Kalipinyapa* 1972 (Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory), in which the central roundel is once again elaborated upon to create a (spectacular) ceremonial figure.

JOHN TJAKAMARRA

circa 1937 – 2002
Pintupi

Men and Big Totem

Corroboree 1972

synthetic polymer paint on
composition board

47 × 38 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Papunya,
Northern Territory
Stuart Art Centre, Alice
Springs, cat. no. 19183
Private Collection, New South
Wales, acquired from the above

AUD 80,000

John Tjakamarra, or Wingantjirri as he was known to his peers, could disappear in a group. He and his countryman Yala Yala Gibbs Tjungurrayi were the quietest of the Papunya painting men. On completion of a painting, when interviewed by a fieldworker, Tjakamarra characteristically whispered, 'Tingarri', and then would perhaps utter the name of the site he envisaged. Tjakamarra said little about himself, or his art, which leaves his paintings to be assessed predominantly for their artistic merit, and the ritual intensity that they convey.

For decades, the art world has focused on more charismatic artists, such as Uta Uta Tjangala, Timmy Payunka Tjapangati or Ronnie Tjampitjinpa, whose paintings, like the men who created them, command attention. All the while, paintings by their quieter countryman have remained in the background, perfect in their self-contained minimalism. Paintings that John Tjakamarra produced in 1972, of which *Men and Big Totem Corroboree* is one, comprise an extraordinary suite, distinguished by relaxed symmetry and the considered application of each brushstroke. The slightly oblique angle at which the artist held his brush while dotting imparts upon these works a delicate, internalised energy.¹

Men and Big Totem Corroboree is typical of the work that Tjakamarra produced during the 'interregnum', a period commencing after

Geoffrey Bardon left Papunya in late July 1972 and concluding on Peter Fannin's employment as Papunya Tula Artists manager in December of the same year.² Without the oversight and artistic direction of a non-Indigenous manager, the interregnum was a period of extravagant experimentation for the artists who gathered in the Men's Painting Room. By way of contrast, the paintings John Tjakamarra created are notable for their measured consistency. His paintings' compositional structure (frequently symmetrical diagonals radiating from a single roundel) and disciplined dotting (often using obliquely applied white dots, regularly interspersed with smaller black dots) appear unaffected by the experiments that were swirling around the room. *Men and Big Totem Corroboree* is a typical John Tjakamarra work from the period. The painting's elements are likely to be derived from the designs applied on performers at a Tingarri ceremony, in combination with an abstracted reference to a sacred object that is manipulated during the ritual.

JOHN KEAN

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1. Vivien Johnson, *Once Upon a Time in Papunya*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2010, p. 48.
2. Both the Art Gallery of South Australia and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory hold a number of Tjakamarra's works from this period.



UTA UTA TJANGALA

circa 1926 – 1990
Pintupi
*The Kungka Kutjarra and
Yina at Kampurarrpa* 1974
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
57 × 43 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Yai Yai
outstation, Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern Territory
Aboriginal Arts and Crafts
Pty Ltd, Canberra
Private Collection, New South
Wales, acquired from the above
AUD 96,000

Uta Uta Tjangala was the most charismatic, explosive and playful of the Pintupi men who founded the painting movement at Papunya. The eruptive energy of *The Kungka Kutjarra and Yina at Kampurarrpa* 1974 matches the artist's oversized personality.

Uta Uta identified with the songline of Yina, an old man possessed by an uncontrollable libido. After leaving Kampurarrpa, where he is ignored by the Kungka Kutjarra (Two Women), Yina trudged west through Ngurrpalangu (the site of the artist's conception), before continuing to Yumari, where, against all conventions, he had sex with his mother-in-law.

The Kungka Kutjarra and Yina at Kampurarrpa was painted at Yai Yai outstation in March 1974, when a young PhD candidate, Fred Myers, was also living there. Myers (now Silver Professor at New York University) has generously provided access to his original documentation of the painting, upon which the following notes are based.

Uta Uta's iconography typically operates on two levels. The first is as a narrative, in this case describing the interaction of Yina and the Kungka Kutjarra. The second level of signification refers to the totemic topography of the site, Kampurarrpa (Mt Russell in the Henty Hills).

Focusing first on the narrative, the largest set of concentric circles, in the middle of the composition, is Yina lying down at Kampurarrpa, while the adjacent 'U-shapes' (facing in), show the Two Women seated nearby. Yina is singing *ilypintji* (love magic), which he hopes will attract the women. His magic is ineffective, however, and the women (now described by outfacing 'U-shapes' at the top and bottom of the board) head away from Yina – his advances frustrated. The four sets of middle-sized concentric circles represent the breasts of the women, focal points for Yina's unrequited desire. The smallest sets of concentric circles (to the right and left of the principal roundel) symbolise the women collecting *kampurarrpa* (bush raisin, *Solanum centrale*) and *pura* (bush tomato, *Solanum chippendalei*).

Turning to the representation of the landscape at Kampurarrpa, the central roundel denotes a water-place, while other sets of circles signify various topographic features, including prominent rocks, the transmorphied bodies of the Two Women. The site gets its name from the abundance of *kampurarrpa* collected by the women in the vicinity of Yina's camp.

JOHN KEAN



BILLY STOCKMAN TJAPALTJARRI

1927–2015
Pintupi

Bush Potato and Two Men
Dreaming at Ilpitirri 1973
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
60 × 45 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Papunya,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. BS730622
Private Collection, New South
Wales, acquired from the above
AUD 60,000

Contemporary desert art has the capacity to bring together multiple perspectives on the same picture plane, and this early painting by Billy Stockman is a fine example of the plasticity of the revolutionary artform developed at Papunya in the early 1970s.

Billy Stockman was conceived at Ilpitirri, the site depicted on this board. As a baby, in 1928, Tjapaltjarri's parents were killed when settler vigilante groups attacked Anmatyerr and Warlpiri people at their camps in atrocities now referred to as the Coniston massacre.¹ Despite the horror and dislocation he experienced as a child, Billy Stockman maintained an enduring relationship with Ilpitirri, which features in many of his most revered works.

Ilpitirri is associated with several distinct Dreamings, at least two of which are songlines that pass through the site. There are also other narratives (non-travelling) that relate to resident entities. The custodial clan for Ilpitirri are familiar with these localised stories. The current painting, *Bush Potato and Two Men Dreaming at Ilpitirri*, combines the travelling songline of Yala (bush potato, *Ipomoea costata*) with the localised narrative of Two Men, who reside at the site. Stockman has played with perspective, depicting Yala plants and the torsos of the Two Men realistically in elevation, while other aspects of the site are shown as a stylised plan view.

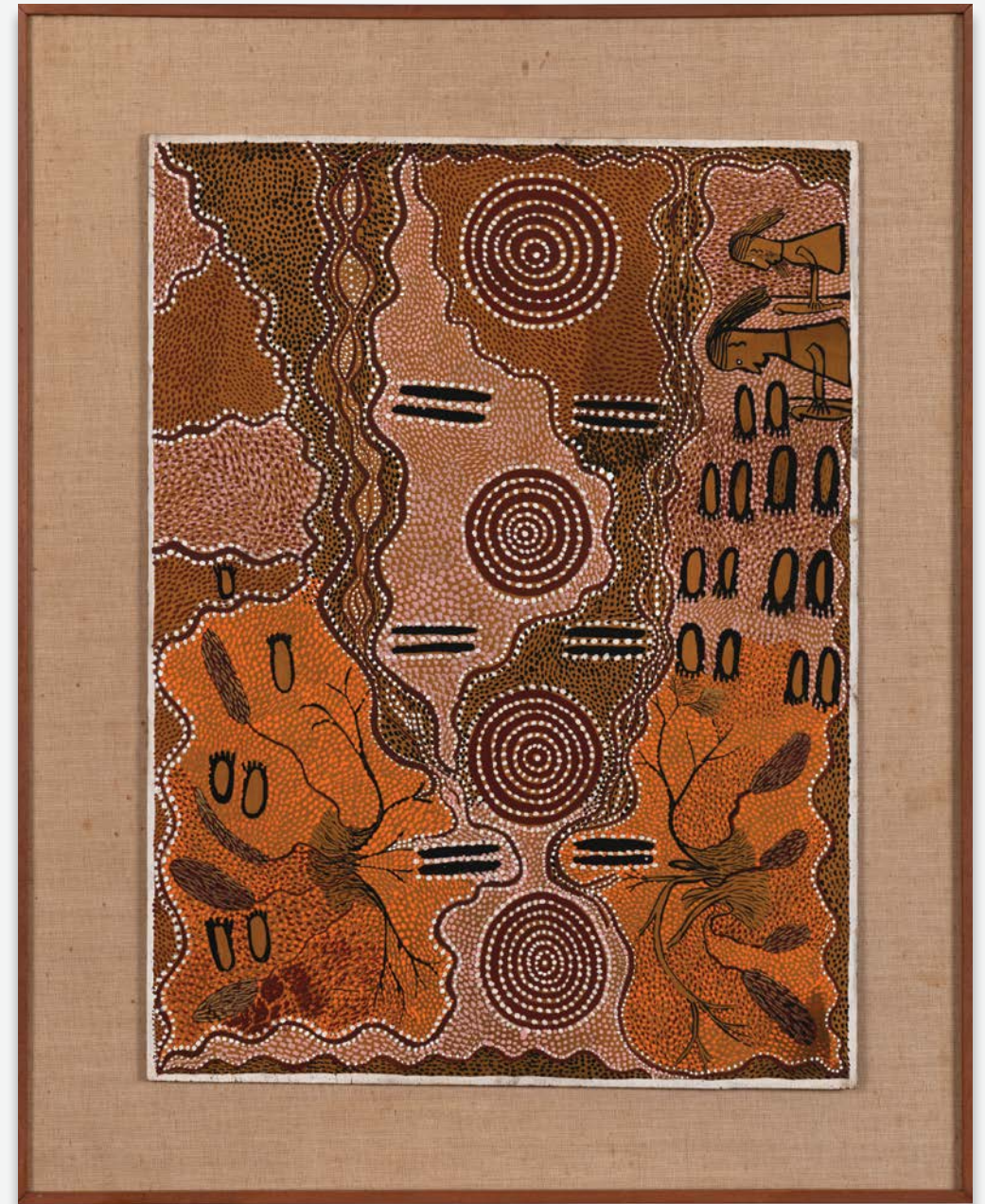
The artist has chosen to represent both the above-ground vines of the Yala and the moisture-filled tubers under the earth's surface. These tubers can swell to the size of a large sweet potato. This 1973 version appears to be a more developed treatment of the artist's *Bush Tucker Story* 1972 (Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern

Territory), which shows similar realistically represented Yala plants within a conceptualised plan of the site.

The men appear to be a father and son (the old man has a prominent beard, whereas the younger man is shown beardless).² Stockman's figures bear a strong resemblance to those on the perimeter of Mick Namarari's *Ceremony at Tjilka* 1973 (Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection). It is notable that both works employ yellows in an unusually high key to great effect. Given these similarities, it was no surprise to discover that both were created within a month of each other.³ It appears, therefore, that although Stockman and Namarari were from different language groups, they shared ideas about the representation of figures in space. Furthermore, both works are very likely to have been created in Australia's most famous atelier, the Papunya Men's Painting Room, in the cooler months of 1973.

JOHN KEAN

1. Bill Wilson and Justin O'Brien, "To infuse an universal terror": a reappraisal of the Coniston Killings', in *Aboriginal History*, issue 17, 2003, pp. 59–78.
2. The artist's classificatory brother Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri frequently painted his father and grandfather in the 'totemic landscape'; see Jason Gibson, 'Painting and sing-em-up mob: the Anmatyerr painters', in *Out of the Boxes and Into the Desert*, no. 16, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Crawley, WA, 2019, pp. 15–23.
3. A reading of the Papunya Tula Artists catalogue numbers for the respective works (BS730622 and MN730710) suggests that *Bush Potato and Two Men Dreaming at Ilpitirri* was painted in mid-June and *Ceremony at Tjilka* was painted in early July 1973.



EDDIE ETAMINTJA TJAPANANGATI

circa 1928 – 2001
Pitjantjatjara

Untitled – Emu Dreaming 1973
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
122 × 20 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Papunya,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. EE731162
Private Collection, New South
Wales, acquired from the above

AUD 18,000

Eddie Etamintja is a lesser-known Papunya Tula artist, despite having been recorded as painting from 1972 through to the mid 1990s.¹ Etamintja's relative obscurity, though, belies his intimate connection to the key founders of the Western Desert art movement.

When I was working as art advisor for Papunya Tula Artists (1977–1979), Etamintja frequently accompanied me. He would jump into the passenger seat of the company Toyota and then together we would follow the outstation loop that took us to a string of artists' camps: first to Yai Yai, then further west to Mt Liebig, then south to Kungkayunti before finally returning to Papunya via Haasts Bluff on the southern side of the ranges. During the two-day trip, Etamintja often regaled me with stories of his youth as a stockman, which routinely concluded with himself as the subject of a self-deprecating joke. Etamintja was always great company, and this work captures both his bright spirit and his nomadic lifestyle.

Etamintja was a Pitjantjatjara speaker whose Country is closer to Uluru than to Papunya. As a young boy, he peeked over the ledge above Kulpi Tjuntinya/Lasseter's Cave (to the west of Uluru), where he witnessed Harold Lasseter, the gold prospector, perish.² Later in his boyhood, Etamintja lived at Ntaria/Hermannsburg Mission, and this is likely where he first came into contact with his lifelong friends Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri and Charlie Tarawa (Wartuma) Tjungurrayi. As a young man, Etamintja worked at Tempe Downs with the

legendary bushman Bob Buck, whom he regarded as being 'like a father'.³ In the early 1950s, after courting Valmai Tjuljata in Alice Springs, he moved with her to Haasts Bluff, where he camped with the Pintupi songmen who, many years later, would found Papunya Tula Artists.

While documenting *Untitled – Emu Dreaming* 1973, I spoke to the artist's son, Rex Eddie Tjapanangka (who is married to Wartuma's daughter, the highly regarded painter Eileen Napaltjarri). According to Rex, the site most likely represented on this board is Kalaya Murpu (literally Emu Ridge), between Kaltukatjara/Docker River and Yulpanali (the artist's birthplace) near the Northern Territory/Western Australia border.

Etamintja cannily uses the length of the board to emphasise the passage of a group of ancestral Emus across his Country. The travelling Emus are depicted by their tracks (reverse arrows) leading from one site to the next (sets of concentric circles). The background dotting is more irregular than is usual in Etamintja's later works, and is likely to represent the bush fruits eaten by the Emus on their travels.

JOHN KEAN

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1. Vivien Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2008, p. 131.
 2. Etamintja told me this story on numerous occasions from 1977 to 1985; he remembered Lasseter as being suspicious of Anangu/local people, hence he would not accept the bush food he was offered.
 3. Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, p. 131.



UTA UTA TJANGALA

circa 1926 – 1990
Pintupi

*Old Man's Dreaming at
Malkunja* 1973
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
79 × 61 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Papunya,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. U731177
Private Collection, New South
Wales, acquired from the above
AUD 120,000

Uta Uta Tjangala came to prominence among a cohort of Pintupi who were born on Country, and grew into adulthood there, only making their first contact with non-Indigenous culture as young men. Driven by hunger, and the urge to be reunited with relatives, most of Uta Uta's generation left the Gibson Desert in the mid twentieth century, walking east to the government outpost at Haasts Bluff. Uta Uta and his family made a three hundred kilometre trek, during prolonged drought, before they reached the tiny settlement in December 1956.

While food and water were available at Haasts Bluff, Uta Uta worried for those members of his family who remained in an increasingly lonely desert. In July 1958, he joined a party led by patrol officer Jeremy Long, with the aim of finding them.¹ Leaving the patrol, Uta Uta chose to stay on his Country, where he visited various water-places until he located his family. After several months, and with his brother-in-law Timmy Payunka Tjapangati, he led a group of the closest relatives back to Haasts Bluff. Three decades later, and from the comfort of his outstation (then just a tin shed

with water drawn from a windmill, at Muyin, near the Northern Territory/Western Australia border), Uta Uta recalled his epic journeys. On finishing his account, Uta Uta caught my eye, proclaiming, 'I am the winner'.²

Fred Myers got to know Uta Uta in the early 1970s while undertaking PhD research with the Pintupi. On 2 November 1973, Myers and Uta Uta sat together at Yai Yai to document *Old Man's Dreaming at Malkunja* 1973. The following notes are based on Uta Uta's account of the painting.

Old Man's Dreaming at Malkunja concerns the westward journey of Yina, the same lustful old man that Uta Uta depicted in *The Kungka Kutjarra and Yina at Kampurarrpa* 1974. The current painting describes two episodes from Yina's westward passage. The first episode depicts Yina dancing alone through a pawala (a swampy area in which many plants grow). The second episode occurs as Yina is assisted by other men, who were 'holding the old man' as he struggled in sodden earth. Despite these difficulties, Yina continues ever westward, drawn by the allure of yukurrukuru (female spirits who wait for men with sexual intent).



Yina's ceaseless journey is mirrored by the course of the artist's life. After numerous desert crossings, Uta Uta lived in exile at Papunya for more than a decade. His return to the Country of his birth commenced haltingly in 1973, just months before completing this painting, when Uta Uta was among a large group of Pintupi who escaped the oppressive conditions at Papunya to make a new home at Yai Yai, sixty kilometres west of the dangerously overcrowded settlement. During the late 1970s, Uta Uta and his peers continued to push towards their homelands, living for a time at Waruwiya and Inyalingi, at the foot of Mt Liebig. The westward movement of the Pintupi accelerated suddenly in the early 1980s when several hundred people returned to Walangurru/Kintore. For Uta Uta, however, Walangurru was merely a staging point. In 1985, he established his own tiny outstation, even further west, at Muyin, where he sat on Country and painted the stories for which he held authority. On a hot afternoon in 1989, and towards the end of his life, this is where Uta Uta told me of his travels as a young man. This painting, *Old Man's Dreaming at Malkunja*, captures the commanding intensity of Uta Uta's life's journey.³

JOHN KEAN

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1. Vivien Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2008, p. 25.
2. Personal communication with the artist, 1989.
3. John Kean, 'A big canvas: mobilising Pintupi painting', in Philip Batty (ed.), *Colliding Worlds: First Contact in the Western Desert 1932–1984*, Museum Victoria Publishing, Melbourne, 2006, pp. 46–52.



THANCOUPIE GLORIA FLETCHER

1937–2011
Thaynakwith

Boys Fishing 1972

stoneware tiles with slip and oxide
decoration on incised design

72 × 36 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created in Sydney,
New South Wales
Private Collection, New South
Wales, acquired from the above

LITERATURE

Kirsten Fitzpatrick, *Thancoupie*,
Brisbane City Gallery, Brisbane,
2001, p. 15, cat. no. 007 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

Thancoupie, Brisbane City Gallery,
Brisbane, 4 May – 24 June 2001;
Cairns Regional Gallery
14 July – 19 August 2001

AUD 18,000

Around 1972, Gloria Fletcher, born in 1932 in Weipa on the Gulf of Carpentaria in Far North Queensland, started publicly using her totemic name of Thancoupie, or Thanakupi, meaning flower of the wattle, and given to her at birth according to the ancient name-calling ceremony of her people. The reclamation of her name coincided with her emergence as North Queensland's first recognised Australian First Nations woman artist, solo ceramic artist and premier contemporary artist. Initially a school teacher, Thancoupie first began her art practice painting on bark. Her first exhibition of paintings was held in Cairns in 1968 with her then mentor Dick Roughsey (1920–1985). In 1970, when she was in her mid thirties, she left her remote hometown to attend East Sydney Technical College (National Art School), seeking the formal training of a Western art school. It was the lure of the clay and the pottery studio, not painting, that drew Thancoupie, leading to ceramics becoming her calling, and the means by which she was able to strengthen and share her Thaynakwith culture and awaken its narratives, through her innovative visual language.

However, her earliest exhibition of ceramic works in 1972 was held at a time when the practice was seen only as a form of craft as opposed to art. At art school, Thancoupie was being taught styles heavily influenced by Anglo/Oriental schools. She belonged to a new generation of students producing ceramics based on Asian traditions as well as folk

art, creating refined functional, wheel-thrown forms with minimum Asian-style brushwork or natural glazes as decoration. Although clay had a long history of ceremonial use by First Nation Australians, Thancoupie drew what she needed from her creative support network and technical mentors to master the material that would be an enduring record of her Elders' eternal narratives and traditions.

Drawn to clay because it was sacred in her culture, Thancoupie had a number of mentors, including the Japanese potter Shiga Shigeo (1928–2011), the head of ceramics at the National Art School, Peter Rushforth (1920–2015), and ceramic artist, designer and teacher Peter Travis (1929–2016), who inspired her to develop a universal aesthetic that combined Japanese, Western and First Nations elements. Jennifer Isaacs AM, with whom Thancoupie had a friendship – living with her in Sydney, and working in her studio during the early years of her art practice – was instrumental in supporting her work and helped drive her career. One of Thancoupie's first shows was held at Isaac's gallery Voltar, where she resolved only to exhibit in a contemporary context and to avoid the label of 'Aboriginal' that she feared would contextualise her work as ethnographic or folk. Thancoupie went on to gain an international reputation.

The small tiled murals *Boys Fishing* 1972 and *Untitled* 1972 are pieces from this formative period in Thancoupie's career. Although Thancoupie



THANCOUPIE GLORIA FLETCHER

1937–2011

Thaynakwith

Untitled 1972stoneware tiles with slip and oxide
decoration on incised design

34 × 45 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created in Sydney,

New South Wales

Private Collection, New South

Wales, acquired from the above

AUD 8,800

continued with bark painting for a short while in Sydney in the early 1970s, a shift in her practice occurred. Both technically and conceptually, Thancoupie embraced ceramics as the medium in which to document the epic events and supernatural deeds of ancestral beings. Clay became the vehicle for documenting the history of her people, a medium that could last hundreds of years. In the first year, she embarked on small murals of no more than twenty tiles, decorated with simple motifs. Here, her subjects are depicted as raised figures rather than the incised symbols that graced her later iconic hand-built pots. Thancoupie further developed her tile technique by first creating the tiles in a plaster mould; they would be removed while still flexible, becoming 'leather hard', and then laid out from edge to edge, forming a surface to be decorated. Describing the process Thancoupie adopted for creating her later large Creation murals, Jennifer Isaacs writes:

Thancoupie works to a scale drawing and begins to trace the overall design across the surface. She builds a further clay surface on top of the tiles until they are obliterated. Then she begins the process she enjoys most, forming the shapes, designs and animals: gouging, incising, building ridges, and pushing until it pleases her.¹

The tiles are allowed to dry slowly until small cracks appear between them; they are then separated by cutting them cleanly so they fit together tightly

when mounted. Thancoupie would avoid the traditional method of dipping and pouring the glaze to achieve a smooth surface; rather, she would build up the layers of colour with a brush – occasionally, in early trials, these colours would transform unexpectedly in the kiln once fired. Although in her later work she mastered the art of developing stoneware glazes to resemble natural earth colours, early on she used the traditional Japanese-style glazes that she was familiar with from her college training – although doing so in her own exuberant, non-conformist way.

Thancoupie's legacy extends beyond her recognition as Australia's foremost First Nations potter. Her dedication to teaching and sharing her culture and language through her art was critical in strengthening the intergenerational knowledge of her people in the Weipa region, and the beauty of her objects invited others to share in the narratives of her cultural and social world.

VANESSA MERLINO

1. Jennifer Isaacs, *Thancoupie the Potter*, p. 46, The Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney, 1982

References: Jennifer Isaacs, *Thancoupie the Potter*, The Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney, 1982; Thanakupi: Ceramic Exhibition, KickArts Contemporary Arts, Cairns, Qld, 2008.



BARDAYAL 'LOFTY' NADJAMERREK

circa 1926 – 2009
Kuninjku

Untitled – Goanna circa 1970
natural earth pigments
on eucalyptus bark
72 × 38 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Gunbalanya
– Oenpelli, Northern Territory
Church Missionary Society,
Gunbalanya, cat. no. 831/MA11/MA02
Private Collection, New South
Wales, acquired from the above

AUD 12,000

Bardayal 'Lofty' Nadjamerrek AO was born at Kukkurlumul, deep in the escarpment country of West Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. The rocky outcrops that characterise this region are theatres to rich and extensive rock art murals; it is here that Lofty learned to paint by watching his father, Yanjorluk, meticulously carve out the figures of native animals and ancestral spirits with ochres.¹

For Lofty, rock painting served a dual purpose as both an artistic expression and a means of educating the younger generation about Kuninjku culture and life on Country. The paintings that the Kuninjku artists produced acted as sophisticated guides, conveying intricate knowledge and traditions to the next generation who would inherit these stories.

Returning to painting in the 1960s at Gunbalanya mission after years spent in the mining and pastoral industries, Lofty became a leading figure in garnering Western appreciation for Kuninjku art and Australian First Nations cultures more broadly. Lofty was part of a generation of artists to follow Yirawala's initiative and practice of transferring the designs of their ancestors, which had previously been etched onto the rock escarpments, onto bark. The vision was to transport the painted barks and share their stories across Country. Over the course of his career, Lofty became an extraordinary leader, educator and

advocate for his culture and Country, and in 2004, he received the Order of Australia in recognition of his service and commitment to the preservation of Kuninjku culture and art practices.

The regional aesthetic that would come to be known as 'x-ray' style characterised the artistic output of the West Arnhem Land artists.² This style, marked by fine cross-hatching lines known as rarrk, intricately maps out the anatomy of depicted beings. Lofty's innovative approach to rarrk design, employing consecutive parallel lines with alternating horizontal directions, contributed to the development of his distinctive visual language.

Lofty was awarded best Work on Paper Award at the 1999 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards and in 2010 the Museum of Contemporary Art worked closely with Lofty's family to bring together a major retrospective of his works on bark and paper, celebrating his significant contribution to the rich art history of West Arnhem Land.

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1. Hetti Perkins (cultural ed.), *Crossing Country: The Alchemy of Western Arnhem Land Art*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2004, p. 219.
2. Luke Taylor, 'Expressiveness (in Western Arnhem Land bark painting)' in Julie Simpkin and Justine Molony (eds), *Old Masters: Australia's Great Bark Artists*, National Museum of Australia Press, Canberra, 2013, pp. 21–23.



CURLY BARDAGADAPU

circa 1924 – 1987
Kuninjku

Untitled – Flying Fox circa 1980
natural earth pigments
on eucalyptus bark
98 × 46 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Gunbalanya –
Oenpelli, Northern Territory
Maningrida Arts and Culture,
cat. no. OE-02 MUII
Private Collection, New South
Wales, acquired from the above

AUD 9,600



ALEC MINGELMANGANU

circa 1905 – 1981
Woonambal

Wanjina circa 1980
natural earth pigments
and binders on linen
118 × 90 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Kalumburu,
Western Australia
Aboriginal and Traditional Arts,
Perth, cat. no. KA/21/01111
Private Collection, Sydney,
acquired from the above
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, 24 June
2002, Melbourne, lot 29
Clemenger Art Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above
Sotheby's, Melbourne
Private Collection, Victoria, acquired
from the above by private sale in 2010

AUD 650,000

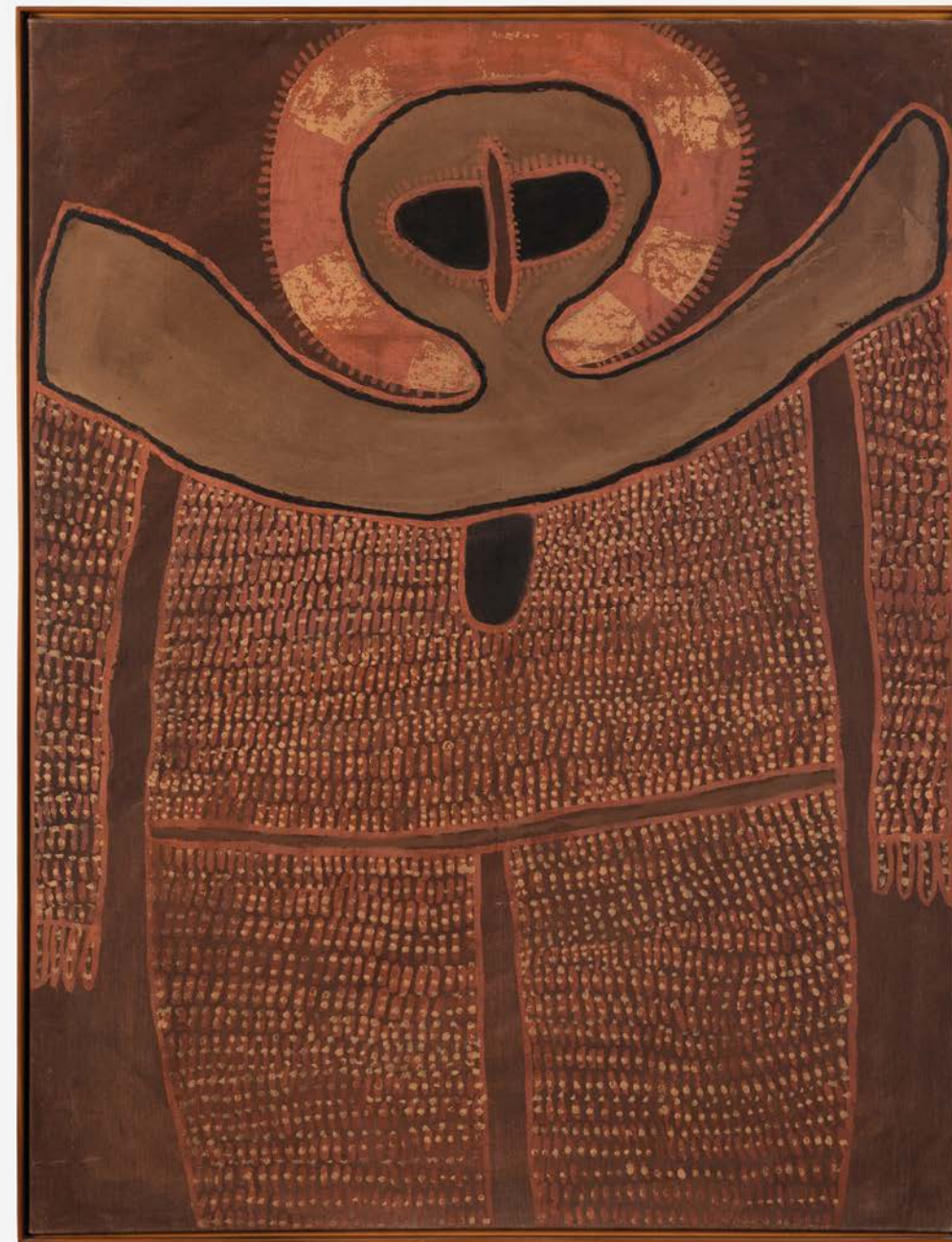
In the last years of his life, Mingelmanganu set out to continue the custom of preserving and safeguarding the traditions of the Wanjina through a small series of breathtaking canvases that depict these ancestral beings at approximately human scale, much as many appear in the rock art of the Kimberley.

Wanjina beings, along with the Rainbow Serpent, were among the more important supreme beings who inhabited the cosmological world of the Aboriginal peoples of the north and central Kimberley. Their activities in the Creation period were responsible for the shape of the topography today, and their activities established the laws of social behaviour and outlined many of the customs by which humans were meant to live.

They are associated with the life-giving properties of water, the monsoonal rains of the tropical 'Wet Season', and the distribution of the spirits of the unborn to their eventual parents. Wanjinas are intimately linked with the eternal cycle of birth, death and rebirth, and the painted

sites with which they are associated are retouched annually to reaffirm and ensure the continuation of the cycles of nature. It is the duty of the Wanjinas' human descendants, the custodians of their rock shelters and caves, to conserve the images of Wanjinas. The association with rain-lightning-seasonal rebirth can be seen in some elements associated with Wanjina art. The arc enclosing the head may bear lightning, rain or, in this case, 'mist' or 'fog' icons, while the dots that stipple the body may represent falling rain. The stippling adds a dimension of 'shimmer' – the aura of power associated with such significant creator beings.

Recognised as an outstanding painter of Wanjina figures since 1975, Alec Mingelmanganu was among the first artists of the Kimberley to continue the tradition on canvas after he was introduced to the medium in 1979. At this time, having seen monumental works executed by non-Indigenous artists during a visit to Perth, Western Australia, Mingelmanganu expressed a desire to work on a similar scale. He used the possibilities presented



by the size of the canvas, as opposed to the more miniature sheets of eucalyptus bark which artists in the area habitually used to paint upon, to convey the magnificent scale presented by the Wanjina figures in rock paintings.

While all of Mingelmanganu's images of Wanjina beings evoke a sense of monumentality, regardless of their actual dimensions, his few works on canvas all project cyclopean grandeur. A grandeur that permits the viewer a glimpse of the tremendous power that the Kimberley Aboriginal people associated with Wanjina say they possess. Indeed, more than most Wanjina images produced by other Kimberley artists, those painted by Mingelmanganu provide a sense of place – as if the paintings had originated on the rock walls of north Kimberley caves and shelters.

Mingelmanganu's Wanjinans confront the viewer. The close-set eyes appear to be hollow, tunnels to another dimension, gates to another world. In some images, including this particular example, there is an almost quizzical air that asks the viewer,

'Who are you?' The raised, sometimes excurvate shoulders project an air of determination that is balanced by the relaxed arms, which in turn suggest a relaxed confidence, a surety of the power and strength inherent in each Wanjina.

Mingelmanganu's paintings of Wanjinans on canvas are rare but may be found in the following public collections: National Gallery of Australia (see Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1993, illus. 137); National Gallery of Victoria (see Judith Ryan and Kim Akerman, *Images of Power: Aboriginal Art of the Kimberley*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1993); The Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth, WA (see Ryan and Akerman, *Images of Power*, p. 27 and John Stanton, *Painting the Country*, University of Western Australia, Perth, 1989, front cover and p. 15 (illus)); the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Art Gallery of South Australia also hold fine examples of these paintings.

KIM AKERMAN



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1915 – 1996
Anmatyerr

Emu 1990
synthetic polymer paint on
linen on oval board
55 × 85 cm – oval

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Utopia,
Northern Territory
Central Australian Aboriginal
Media Association – CAAMA,
Northern Territory, cat. no. 1
The Collection of Ladue Investment
Partnership, United States of
America, acquired from the above
Modern + Contemporary Art,
Shapiro Auctioneers, Melbourne,
10 December 2003, lot 159
Private Collection, Sydney,
acquired from the above

This is one of a few early artworks that, although small, comprehensively and critically foreshadow the artistic genius of Emily Kam Kngwarray, widely acclaimed for her masterful abstract style and epic canvases. Alongside the batik silks from 1977 to 1988 that helped form her signature dotting and linear style, and the ground-breaking *Emu Woman* 1988–1989, Emily's first acrylic painting on canvas – the oval-shaped *Emu* 1990 – can be read as a visual key from which the trajectory of her future stylistic shifts emerged. Immediately set apart from the work of all other Utopia artists engaging in group craft and artistic projects at the time, Emily's transmission and innovative portrayal of women's ceremonial obligation and body painting within her characteristic painting practice was unprecedented.

LITERATURE

Patrick McCaughey, *Utopia Body Paint: A Collection of 77 Paintings by Australian Aboriginal Artists at Utopia, Central Australia, A North American Tour*, LIPS Inc., St Louis, 1993, front cover (illus.)
Jennifer Loureide Biddle, *Breasts, Bodies, Canvas: Central Desert Art as Experience*, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2007, front cover, title page and p. 40 (illus.)
Margo Neale, *Utopia: The Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye*, National Museum of Australia Press, Canberra, 2008, p. 59 (illus.) and p. 217 (illus. catalogue Japan)

EXHIBITED

Utopia Body Paint, Bishop Museum, Honolulu, 31 December 1993 – 28 February 1994; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, 26 March – 5 June 1994; Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, 22 June – 9 August 1994;

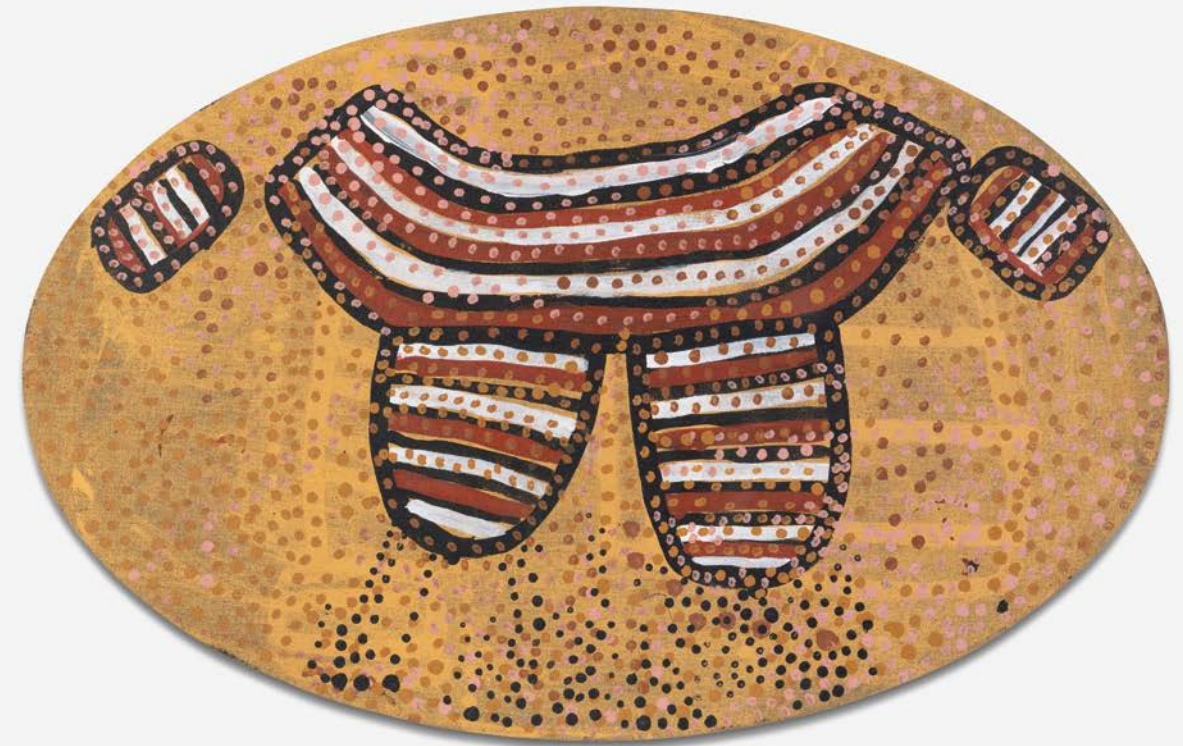
Pritchard Art Gallery, University of Idaho, Moscow, 14 September – 23 October 1994; Everhart Museum, Scranton, 6 November 1994 – 5 February 1995; Art Gallery, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 6 March – 15 May 1995; Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, 3 June – 15 August 1995; Art Gallery, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, 15 September – 27 October 1995; Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, 13 June – 1 December 1996; Museum of Contemporary Religious Art, St Louis University, St Louis, 4 April – 31 July 1997

Utopia: The Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye, The National Museum of Art, Osaka, 26 February – 13 April 2008; The National Art Centre, Tokyo, 28 May – 28 July 2008, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 22 August – 12 October 2008

AUD 380,000

The vast body of work Emily created between 1989 and 1996 can be understood as an extension of women's social and cultural practice in Alhalker. In her senior years, Emily was at the height of cultural knowledge and authority, and her performance, in ceremony and painting, was to ensure the increase and fecundity of her Country.

Apart from the intrinsic ceremonial and ancestral foundation of Emily's mark-making, the modern drivers that contributed to her formation as one of Australia's most well-known and celebrated artists stem from the ambitious community survey projects conceived by Rodney Gooch. Employed by CAAMA (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association) in Alice Springs, Gooch took over the guidance of the





Emily Kam Ngwarray
being painted by Alice
Kngwarrey with Alhalker
awely designs, 1982.
Photo: Penny Tweedie

© Penny Tweedie/Alamy
Stock Photo, 2024

Utopia Women's Batik Group in 1987 and, over the three consecutive summers between 1988 and 1990, undertook projects that would put Utopia on the newly formed map of contemporary fine art production that was spreading rapidly across the First Nations communities of the desert interior. The first of these, *A Picture Story*, was a collection of eighty-eight silk batiks that was subsequently acquired, published and exhibited by the Robert Holmes à Court Collection. By the time the project was underway, Emily had finely tuned her skill as a batik artist over ten years. The method was first introduced to the women of Utopia in 1977 by Suzanne Bryce and Kunytjitja Brown, a Pitjantjatjara woman from Fregon, through the women's literacy program run by Jenny Green since 1976. In 1978 Julia Murray came to help with the program and formally established the Utopia Women's Batik Group that year.¹ Although batik was 'too much hard work', as Emily has been known to say about the laborious process, the silks that Emily produced for this exhibition stood out from the others, revealing her mastery of line and colour,

her intuition with form and frame and also her individualist technique when controlling the unruly medium of hot wax.

The following year, the women of Utopia had the opportunity to work with acrylic paint on canvas, a project led by Gooch that also directly involved the Robert Holmes à Court Collection. Famously, *A Summer Project 1988–1989*, comprised of eighty uniform canvases, included Emily's breakthrough canvas *Emu Women*, which incited Emily to abandon batik and embrace the spontaneity and freedom of the new medium from then on. Although Gooch facilitated many more projects, introducing both men and women of Utopia to a wide range of media, including watercolour, etching and illustration, the freedom and spontaneity of painting ultimately appealed to Emily.² The first two summer projects are the most well-known, and the work Emily produced through them indicates her artistic resolve and exceptional talent. However, for the third project, *Utopia Body Paint*, a collection of seventy-seven oval-shaped canvases, Emily produced *Emu 1990*, one of the most iconic women's paintings from the central desert.

The uniform oval canvases were handed out community-wide, much in the same collective spirit as the previous projects. They were painted primarily by women, but not exclusively, and, unlike with *A Picture Story* and *A Summer Project*, the participating artists were directed by a common theme encouraged by the familiarity of the oval shape. In suggesting the oval canvas boards, Gooch hoped to inspire the artists to document the symbolic markings of their ancestral heritage.³ Unlike the square or rectangle, the oval is imbued with spiritual and cultural connotations, its shape recalling shields or sacred tywerrenge belonging to the realm of men. The shape is also familiar to women, in the form of the coolamon, which can carry food or infants, and the yukurrukuru dancing boards used in neighbouring Warlpiri women's yawulyu ceremonies.⁴

Once again, surpassing the intended collective identity of the project, Emily harnessed the parameters of her medium and produced one of her most resolved figurative works. *Emu 1990* explicitly reveals the colours, lines and dots of the painted body engaged in awely – women's ceremony. The chest, breasts and upper arms are painted in segments, much as they are painted on the body, a method that Emily also applied to her work in batik – the silk stretched across her knees as she completed one section before moving on to another. The barely visible yam tracks underneath the canvas wash reveal the subject, which stems from her ceremonial obligation and is directly connected to her totem, the anwerlarr (pencil yam). Kam (pencil yam seeds) – Emily's identity and *Dreaming* – is associated with growth and fertility, and the performance of awely is critical to the continuing health of the kam and, therefore, the well-being of Anmatyerr women. The meandering yet connected lines of the yam tracks are signature linear forms that were initially developed in hot wax and carried over onto canvas. Here, the yam tracks are shadowed by the prominent painted breasts floating in the horizontal frame, emphasising their critical role in ceremony.

Emily was to move away from the iconic form of the 'original' body paint design of *Emu 1990*

and began a process of blurring and melding – lines on dots, dots on lines, until the dots disappeared altogether. At the end of her career, the lines remerged as an abstract manifestation of body designs, referred to specifically as the *Body Marks* series.⁵ The black and white *Utopia Panels 1996* (Queensland Art Gallery) or *Untitled* (body painting series) 1996 (Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney) are at the end point of this evolution, a minimalist 'shorthand' that had developed through the prolific repetition and refinement of her mark-making. In the current work, *Emu 1990*, the human form is emphasised, the breasts outlined by the ceremonial designs that are painted directly onto the body. Over the following six years, during which Emily created a wealth of work, Emily lifted the black lines from the body and refined them as assertive linear statements that retain all the viscosity of ceremonial paint and its application through touch. In these minimalist, late period paintings, the resonance of awely is carried across the surface of the canvas, freed from both its bodily parameters and the limits of its frame.

The iconic work *Emu 1990* contains the raw, stylistic characteristics that would eventually evolve, abstract and disappear. The directness and clarity of its subject and its connected symbolism reveal the innovations that Emily would harness and push through over the next six years, making her one of the most important Australian artists of the late twentieth century.

VANESSA MERLINO

1. Jenny Green, 'The life and legacy of Emily Kam Ngwarray', in Kellie Cole and Hetti Perkins (eds), *Emily Kam Ngwarray*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2023, p. 146.
2. Chrischona Schmidt, 'Rodney Gooch's role and influence in the development of the Utopia art movement: a history of the art movement and Rodney Gooch's role within it', in *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*, vol. 5, no. 6, 2011.
3. Patrick McCaughey, *Utopia Body Paint: A Collection of 77 Paintings by Australian Aboriginal Artists at Utopia, Central Australia. A North American Tour*, LIPS Inc., St Louis, 1993.
4. Jennifer Louriede Biddle, *Breasts, Bodies, Canvas: Central Desert Art as Experience*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007.



WIMMITJI TJAPANGATI

circa 1924 –1997
Kukatja

Untitled – Kurra 1991
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
91 × 61 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Balgo,
Western Australia
Warlayirti Artists, Western
Australia, cat. no. 452/91
Dick Bett Gallery, Hobart
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 1991

EXHIBITED

Warlayirti Art and Dreaming
from *Balgo Hills, WA*, Dick Bett
Gallery, Hobart, 31 October –
19 November 1991, cat. no. 19

AUD 45,000

In 1978, Wimmitji Tjapangati created *Untitled* (Art Gallery of New South Wales), the first painting known to have emerged from Balgo. *Untitled* 1978 is an austere work, painted with natural pigments on hardboard. It is of particular interest, for it looks and feels very different to the work for which Wimmitji has since become famous. Significantly, the date of the painting's creation corresponds with a period when the artist's close relative Timmy Payunka Tjapangati lived at Balgo. Timmy Payunka is a founding Papunya Tula artist who was critical for the transfer of ideas about contemporary painting to his countrymen at Balgo. Hence, it is no coincidence that Wimmitji's first painting, created to explain the artist's Country to a local missionary, shares thematic and formal attributes with Papunya Tula art of the 1970s.¹

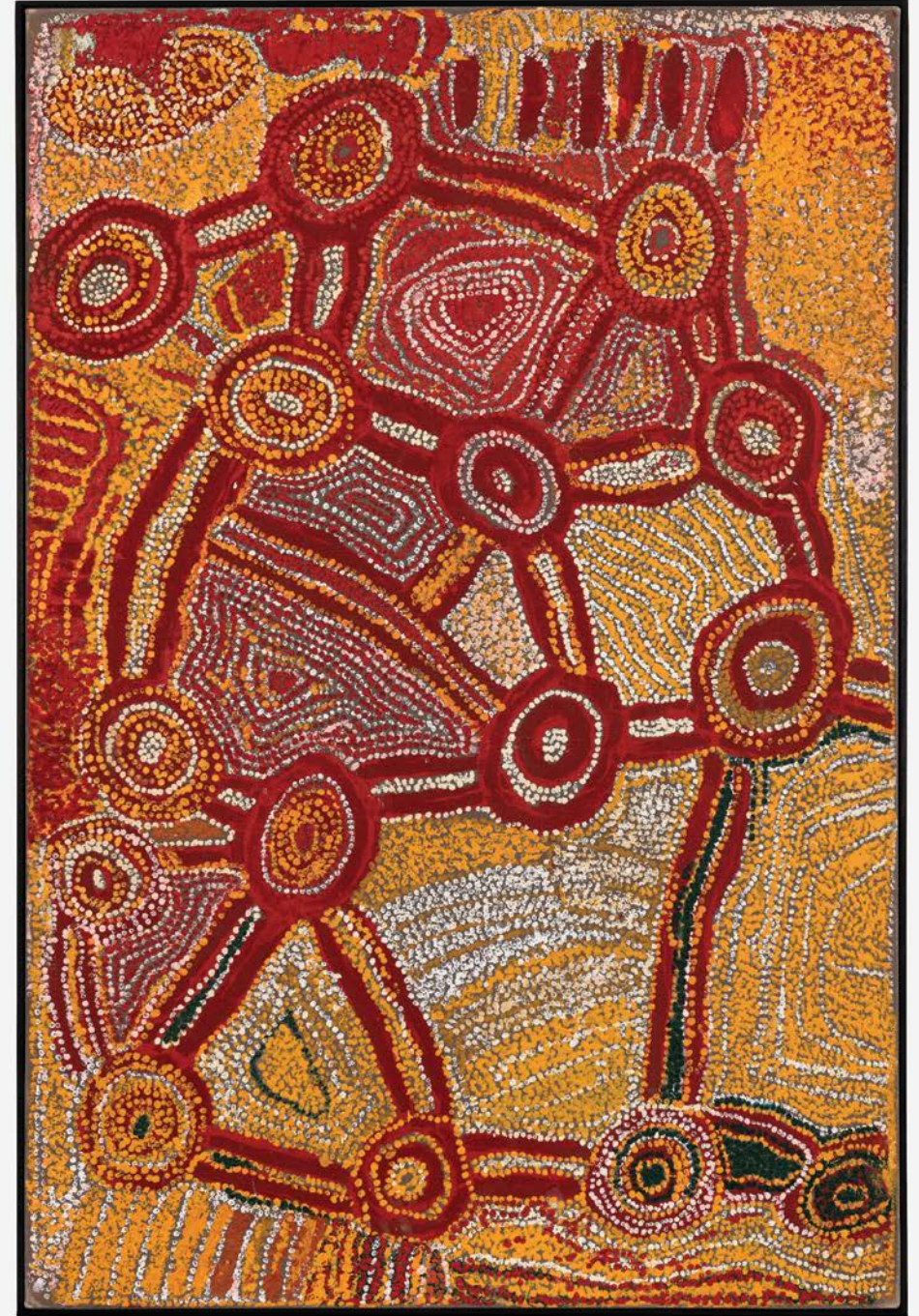
Fast forward to the early 1990s, by which time Wimmitji, his wife Eubena Nampitjin and their Balgo peers were painting professionally, under the banner of the Warlayirti Artists. An examination of the subtly modulated surface of Wimmitji Tjapangati's *Untitled – Kurra* 1991 reveals that by this stage in his career, Wimmitji had explored the potential of acrylic paint for the chromatic intensity that can be achieved (in this instance, using brilliant red and chrome yellow), and its capacity to be manipulated to express emotional and sensual

associations with Country. Whereas the 1978 painting provides a schematic overview of the artist's Country, by 1991 Wimmitji appears to project himself, via paint, into the body of his Country, thereby animating a rich cache of associations. Painting and memory seem to merge as one as the artist feels his way across the land, dwelling near its waters, visiting the Wangkirri ochre mine (red stripes on the centre left) and sensing the shade provided by a stand of trees near the waterhole (centre top of the canvas).

Wimmitji and Eubena collaborated intensely from the late 1980s until the late 1990s, when Wimmitji's deteriorating eyesight made it impossible for him to continue painting. The attention both artists gave to the surface texture of their painting was, at that time, exceptional. As the Western Desert painting movement spread to further communities, a sensory approach to composition and surface treatment gradually become a feature of other artists' works; nevertheless, the haptic sensibility evident in paintings by Wimmitji and Eubena has rarely been matched.

JOHN KEAN

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1. John Carty, *Balgo: Creating Country*, UWA Publishing, Crawley, WA, 2021, pp. 93–94.



GORDON BENNETT

1955–2014

*Portrait and a Wet Dream**(Historicism)* 1993–1996synthetic polymer paint on canvas
175 × 308 cm**PROVENANCE**

The Artist

Bellas Gallery, Brisbane

Private Collection, Brisbane,

acquired from the above in 1998

EXHIBITED*Gordon Bennett – A Black History*,

Sutton Gallery, Melbourne,

13 February – 10 March 1993

Gordon Bennett, Contemporary

Art Centre of South Australia,

Adelaide, 28 May – 27 June 1993

University Drill Hall Gallery,

12 August – 5 September 1993

*The Jeffery Humphreys Collection:**Selected Works*, The Brisbane Club,

Brisbane, from 22 February 2019

LITERATURE*Gordon Bennett* exhibition catalogue,

Contemporary Art Centre of

South Australia, Adelaide, 1993

*The Jeffery Humphreys Collection:**Selected Works* exhibition catalogue,

Jeffery Humphreys, 2019

FILM*Gordon Bennett*, Artists Up Front

Series, VEA Australia, 28 mins, 1994

AUD 550,000

At the centre of the canvas lies a man asleep in a bed, his head resting on his hands. Above him hovers a tormented sea captain-like figure holding onto a mast as though in the middle of a storm. Around the canvas, if one looks carefully, are several small-scale figures painted in black, either flying around as though blowing in the wind or hanging from trees, hands tied behind their backs. Across the surface of the canvas are strings of red, yellow and black paint splashed across a background of white dots. To the left and right of the canvas there are imposing walls of black, behind which, if one looks closely, one can see the outlines of the same dripped paint that marks the rest of the canvas and into which a series of letters has been carved, each revealing a red, flesh-like interior.

This is Gordon Bennett's *Portrait and a Wet Dream (Historicism)* 1993–1996, painted after his Moët and Chandon Prize-winning *The Nine Ricochets – Fall Down Black Fella Jump Up White Fella* 1990, and in many ways the double of Bennett's well-known *Myth of the Western Man – White Man's Burden* 1992. All kinds of narratives immediately suggest themselves. The first and most

obvious is that that the bearded Captain Ahab-like figure is a stand-in for those European explorers who 'discovered' and 'colonised' Australia. And this figure, acting like an unconscious dream or desire, licenses our sleeper to disregard or close his eyes to those Aboriginal figures alternately hanged or scattered around the canvas. And it is notable that the source for Bennett's painting is American Robert Gober's *Hanging Man/Sleeping Man* 1989, whose subject matter Bennett-commentator Simon Wright summarises as the 'nonchalant attitude of people to issues which become out of sight, out of mind – a kind of close your eyes and everything will be okay indifference'. But in another way can we not understand that explorer figure as a vengeful prophet driving his spear-like sword into the back of our sleeper, incising his skin with his unacknowledged sins, much as generations of slaves and the colonised have been branded, chained, shot, wounded and ultimately killed? Indeed, is that ghostly figure who is clutching the mast not even something like our sleeper's unconscious, what they call upon themselves as the secret admission of the punishment they know they deserve?



This is at least one meaning of the word historicism: the notionally incorrect seeing of the past not in its own terms but through the eyes of the present, or even attributing some presentiment of what would become the present to those in the past. Thus we have, for example, the post-1990s so-called 'black armband' rewriting of Australian history by the likes of Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan, who argue that we can already find a sense of the injustices inflicted upon the original inhabitants of Australia in the first generations of British colonists. And this is undoubtedly the meaning of those large expanses of black paint to the right and left with which Bennett covers over considerable sections of the original canvas. (In fact, the original version of the painting without those two black sections sat in Bennett's studio for some two years before Bennett realised that paradoxically he needed to paint over some of it in order to complete it.) For through that black paint we see not only an imprint of those acts of brutality against First Nations Australians that are also to be seen in the rest of the canvas, but also a series of letters that open up like cicatrices, spelling out a contemporary moral judgement that can no longer be

denied. (And in this perhaps is an allusion to all of the painterly depictions of that famous Biblical incident of Doubting Thomas, in which it is also a matter of the spectator having to believe in the miraculous appearance of a higher authority. Do we believe in that verdict from nowhere that appears to be in the process of being spelled out in Bennett's painting?)

This is the 'dream-like' aspect of Bennett's practice. Like any good analyst, he doesn't directly tell us the truth – that exists only in the relationship between the patient and the analyst – but lets us find it ourselves. He does not lecture or cajole us, as though he knows the answer, but makes us realise that we already know the answer and have hitherto been denying it. We would prefer to go on sleeping rather than wake up, but as Bennett shows us in *Portrait and a Wet Dream*, even our most fanciful dreams will not let us go, secretly recording an image of who we are. And as much as anything, in our dreams the artist's brush prods us, telling us to wake up, to stop pretending we are asleep and to begin to look around the dark corners of our Australian bedroom.

REX BUTLER



JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952
Kuninjku

Buluwana and Death Adder 1993

natural earth pigments
on stringybark
205 × 58 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Milmilngkan,
Northern Territory
Maningrida Arts and Culture,
Northern Territory, cat. no. MAW236
Hogarth Gallery, Sydney
Private Collection, United
States of America, acquired
from the above in 1994

AUD 120,000

John Mawurndjul is the most respected bark painter of West Arnhem Land alive today. He belongs to the Kurulk clan and speaks the Kuninjku language. Through the force of his personality and his inventiveness, he has taken this medium, painted in very remote northern Australia, to a world audience. In the 1980s, he was noticed by arts advisors at Maningrida Arts and Culture for the particularly fine quality of his linework and the variety of his subject matter, learned from other artists including Yirawala, Marralwanga and his older brother Njiminjuma. During the 1990s, and as he travelled to world art galleries, Mawurndjul became known for larger works featuring highly elaborate figure compositions that interlace multiple beings. The energy of the encounters he depicts is appropriate to the creative importance of these ancestral events. Mawurndjul also experimented with the potential of rarrk cross-hatching to further animate these paintings with dazzling zigzag patterning or tight rhythms of banding that flow across the work. Later in his career, he moved toward geometric compositions derived from body paintings called Mardayin.

The two works in this exhibition are excellent examples of themes he has addressed throughout his life. Similar works featured in both major retrospectives of his work, including <<rarrk>>: *John Mawurndjul: Journey Through Time in Northern Australia*, at the Museum Tinguely, Basel, and the Sprengel Museum, Hannover, in 2005; and *John Mawurndjul: I Am the Old and the New*, shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, in 2018

and subsequently in many other Australian venues.

Mawurndjul is the senior custodian of a very sacred site called Ngandarrayo close to Kawidjji in the rocky cliffs between the Mann River and Mawurndjul's outstation at Milmilngkan further east. At this place, the ancestral woman Buluwana was killed by the Death Adder snake and her body transformed into a towering rock. Buluwana belongs to the Wamuddjan subsection, a social group of women in West Arnhem Land. Sometimes she is just referred to as a Mimih. Visiting this site, Mawurndjul points out the bones of other ancestors that died of thirst and are buried in this rock. The bones must not be touched. Sometimes Kurulk clan artists show Buluwana surrounded by these bones of other ancestors. Buluwana's head was struck off in the fight with Death Adder and it can now be seen as a prism of rock jutting from the earth not far from her body. Death Adder itself is an important transformation of Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent that is said to protect this place and other important sites. As this is a major subject of his Kurulk clan land creation, Mawurndjul and his wife, Kay Lindjuwanga, his brothers and children all paint this image. One of Mawurndjul's paintings of this subject was shown in 2022–2023 at *A Year in Art: Australia 1992* at the Tate Modern, London.

Buluwana and Death Adder Snake 1994 is painted as an elongated form much like the rock tower. Buluwana's body is overlain by the Death Adder as it devours her. Mawurndjul enjoys the visual play of merging the two beings into the



JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952
Kuninjku

Untitled – Wayarra Spirit 1993

natural earth pigments on stringybark
190 × 71 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Milmilngkan,
Northern Territory
Maningrida Arts and Culture, Northern
Territory, cat. no. MAW-229
Hogarth Gallery, Sydney
Private Collection, United
States of America, acquired
from the above in 1994

AUD 140,000

ambiguous composition. Buluwana's long hair forms an aura of power around her head. Mawurndjul uses the sacred white paint from the Kudjarnngal site to create this radiance. The interplay of waves of rarrk obscures the figures yet draws attention to their powers. Sometimes Mawurndjul layers rarrk to create flows across sections or he may disrupt the arrangement with counterpoint and surprising patterning. The unpainted head, hair, breasts and thin arms of Buluwana contrast with the cross-hatching of the snake about to consume her. Such figurative work from Mawurndjul incorporates the same energy of his later geometric compositions that consist entirely of grids of rarrk.

The painting *Wayarra Spirit* 1993 is another example of a figurative painting that enlists the power of rarrk. The subject relates to the site of Milmilngkan, the sacred billabong on a tributary of the Tomkinson River where Mawurndjul built his outstation home. Wayarra are the spirits of deceased people, and they are considered harmless once the full set of mortuary ceremonies are performed. Indeed, Kuninjku language speakers also perform a ceremony called Mamurrng where they paint up with white bones and perform hilarious antics that emulate these skeletal ghosts. These spirits eventually go to live in dark forested areas or waterholes with the spirits of ancestral beings, called Djang, from which they descend. Paintings of this theme can refer to the spirits of people as well as Djang. Some Wayarra in Kurulk Country are said to have died of thirst in early ancestral events and

their bones cannot be touched. It is common to see Kuninjku people call out to these spirits for help when they are hunting or when they visit important sites, introducing visitors to the Country.

Wayarra Spirit 1993 shows Mawurndjul's typically involved figure composition and swirling rarrk. Wayarra is shown with skeletal limbs, bared teeth, and elements of sinew. There is a plant motif that suggests this spirit's dark and forested home. Baby spirits surround their mother in the arrangement. Bands of rarrk rove across the surface of the work, developing its intensity. Circular elements representing waterholes are focal points in the design. The spiral arrangement of patterning at the base of the work enhances this focus. These are the sacred sites at Milmilngkan that are now portals to the ancestral realm. The inclusion of landscape features within the figures draws attention to Kuninjku ways of thinking about Country: that the events of ancestral creation and resulting lands are thought to be consubstantial. Kuninjku often combine landscape elements in their figures in a format that also refers to other kinds of x-ray art and to Mardayin body designs that map dancers with their ancestral Country. Ancestral beings also made features of Country with parts of their bodies and the powers of creation still emanate from these places. Mawurndjul built his home at this locale to protect it, and his stream of paintings revivifies its stories for others to learn.

LUKE TAYLOR



MAKINTI NAPANANGKA

circa 1920 – 2011
Pintupi/Ngaanyatjarra

Women's Ceremonies at the Site of Tutjuraranga 1997
synthetic polymer paint on linen
122 × 122 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Kintore,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. MN9701107
Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
Private Collection, Adelaide,
acquired from the above in 1997

AUD 60,000

The history of Papunya Tula Artists can be read in two parts: the men's story and then, later, the women's. It was known as a men's company for the first twenty years. Its well-documented beginnings that sprung from the settlement of Papunya in the early 1970s paved the way for Western Desert formalism and iconography to belong to the realm of contemporary art. Where the men's painting origins were founded in their individualism, the women's – the work of their wives, daughters and other family members – originated in the collaborative canvases launched by the Minyma Tjukurrpa Kintore/Haasts Bluff Canvas Project in 1994/1995.

Even from this collective beginning, Makinti Napanangka, approaching her senior years and suffering from debilitating cataracts, stood out from the rest. Clutching her paintbrush, she proceeded to paint in her own way, unfazed by the others who were taking up the stick and using dotting techniques they had observed and learned from the company's founding men. Makinti's unique relationship with paint was established immediately, and she was determined to find a way to depict her Country and its potent sites such as her birthplace of Magarri – south-west of the Kintore community – the salt lake of Kaakuratintja, Lampintja, Tutjuraranga, and the ancestral Women dancing across her beloved Lupul. Once Makinti began to paint for the company in her own right, her fluid and instinctual style began to emerge.

From 1996 until 2000, Makinti painted almost daily despite the limits of her vision. Led by the

hand to the Kintore art centre by her daughters, she would complete modest-sized canvases using her brush, fingers and hands.² Through her unwavering focus on her subjects during this period, Makinti established a deep relationship with her medium. In the painting *Women's Ceremonies at the Site of Tutjuraranga* 1997, her depiction of the event is layered with colour and the distinctive textures of her earnest and varied applications of paint. Even after her eyesight was restored in 2000, and her glorious, light-filled canvases elevated her as one of the region's most influential artists, Makinti maintained a delicate balance of control and freedom in her mark-making.

Makinti would be at the forefront of the Papunya Tula women's movement until she died in 2011. Included in multiple solo shows and almost every group show presented by Papunya Tula Artists, her work signalled the authority of women as the 'changing of the guard' in the company from the mid-1990s. Along with Walangkura Napanangka, Inyuwa Nampitjinpa, Tatali Nangala and later Naata Nungurrayi, Yukultji Napangati and Doreen Nakamarra, to name a few, the women dominated exhibitions with their exuberant yet sophisticated canvases in their varied painterly styles.

VANESSA MERLINO

1. Marina Strocchi, 'Starting the unstoppable: women's painting at Haasts Bluff and Kintore', in *Australian Aboriginal Art*, issue 1, March/April/May 2009, pp. 136–143.
2. Vivien Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2008, p.153.



RONNIE TJAMPITJINPA

circa 1943 – 2023
Pintupi

*Tingari Ceremonies at the
Waterhole Site of Pinari* 1997
synthetic polymer paint on linen
183 × 153 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Kintore,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. RT970178
Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
Private Collection, United States of
America, acquired from the above
*Important Aboriginal and Oceanic
Art*, Deutscher and Hackett,
Melbourne, 24 March 2010, lot 96
Private Collection, Brisbane,
acquired from the above

AUD 180,000

Ronnie Tjampitjinpa, one of the last surviving founding members of Papunya Tula Artists, is a highly respected man of Law, a leader to his people and innovator within the traditions of Pintupi visual language. Born at Muyingga within the Pintupi lands, 100 kilometres west of the Kintore Range, Ronnie spent his early years travelling stretches of the Western Desert before arriving at Papunya and becoming one of the youngest men to begin painting there in 1971. Under the guidance of his uncle and seminal artist Uta Uta Tjangala, his initial paintings faithfully shared stories of his distant homelands. However, for Ronnie, the ensuing years were consumed by the push for the return home. It was not until after the establishment of Kintore (Walungurru) in 1981 that Ronnie returned to his artistic practice, where his vigour as champion for his Country was reflected in his highly charged paintings.

With a career spanning more than forty years, Ronnie Tjampitjinpa has produced a body of work that constantly revised the interpretation of

the events of the Tingari Cycle while staying true to their strict codes of reference. The details and stories associated with the Tingari Cycle remain secret but continue to play an integral role in the ceremonial initiations of adolescent men, who are instructed separately to the women and younger children in the community. Depicting his authority over Tingari sites and stories, Ronnie magnifies the ceremonial motifs, obscuring any highly restricted details. His abstracted forms materialise with arresting bold and graphic qualities, striking a balance between essential ambiguity and the ancestral terrain. Ronnie Tjampitjinpa has received a number of awards, including the Alice Prize in 1988. He was included in *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, Asia Society Gallery, New York, 1988 and *Australian Perspectives*, 1993, and had his first solo exhibition at Gallery Gabriella Pizzi, Melbourne, in 1989. More recently, Ronnie's longstanding career was celebrated with a solo exhibition of his work at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2015.



MIDPUL PRINCE OF WALES

circa 1935 – 2002
Larrakia

Body Marks 2000
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
120 × 91 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Darwin,
Northern Territory
Karen Brown Gallery, Northern
Territory, cat. no. KB0349
The Collection of Colin and
Elizabeth Laverty, Sydney, acquired
from the above in 2001
*Important Aboriginal Art from the
Laverty Collection*, Deutscher and
Hackett, Sydney, 3 August 2015, lot 121
The Le Pley Collection, Western
Australia, acquired from the above

Midpul, known as the Prince of Wales, was born in 1935. He served as a traditional landowner, ceremonial leader and a respected Elder of the Larrakia people. The Larrakia are ‘saltwater people’, sharing a vibrant culture based on their proximity to the sea. Their Country extends from the Cox Peninsula in the west to Gunn Point in the north, and from Adelaide River in the east southward down to the Manton Dam; much of this region is now known as Darwin.

Custodianship of Larrakia ceremonial dances and songs were inherited by Midpul at a young age when his father, Imabul (Old King George), died. Midpul’s cultural responsibilities in leading song and dance in Larrakia ceremonies have had a strong influence on his practice as a visual artist. Hetti Perkins remarks that his compositional style can be ‘read like the sheet music for an improvised symphony’; the dots are intuitively arranged in contrasting colours and are layered with a sense of musicality, rhythm and sequence.

For the Larrakia people, practising culture is tied to ceremonial dance, song and body decorating.

LITERATURE

Colin Laverty and Elizabeth Laverty,
*Beyond Sacred: Recent Painting
from Australia’s Remote Aboriginal
Communities: The Collection of Colin
and Elizabeth Laverty*, Hardie Grant
Books, Melbourne, 2008, p. 255 (illus.)
Colin Laverty and Elizabeth Laverty,
*Beyond Sacred: Australian
Aboriginal Art: The Collection
of Colin and Elizabeth Laverty*,
edition II, Kleimeyer Industries Pty
Ltd, Melbourne, 2011, p. 284 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

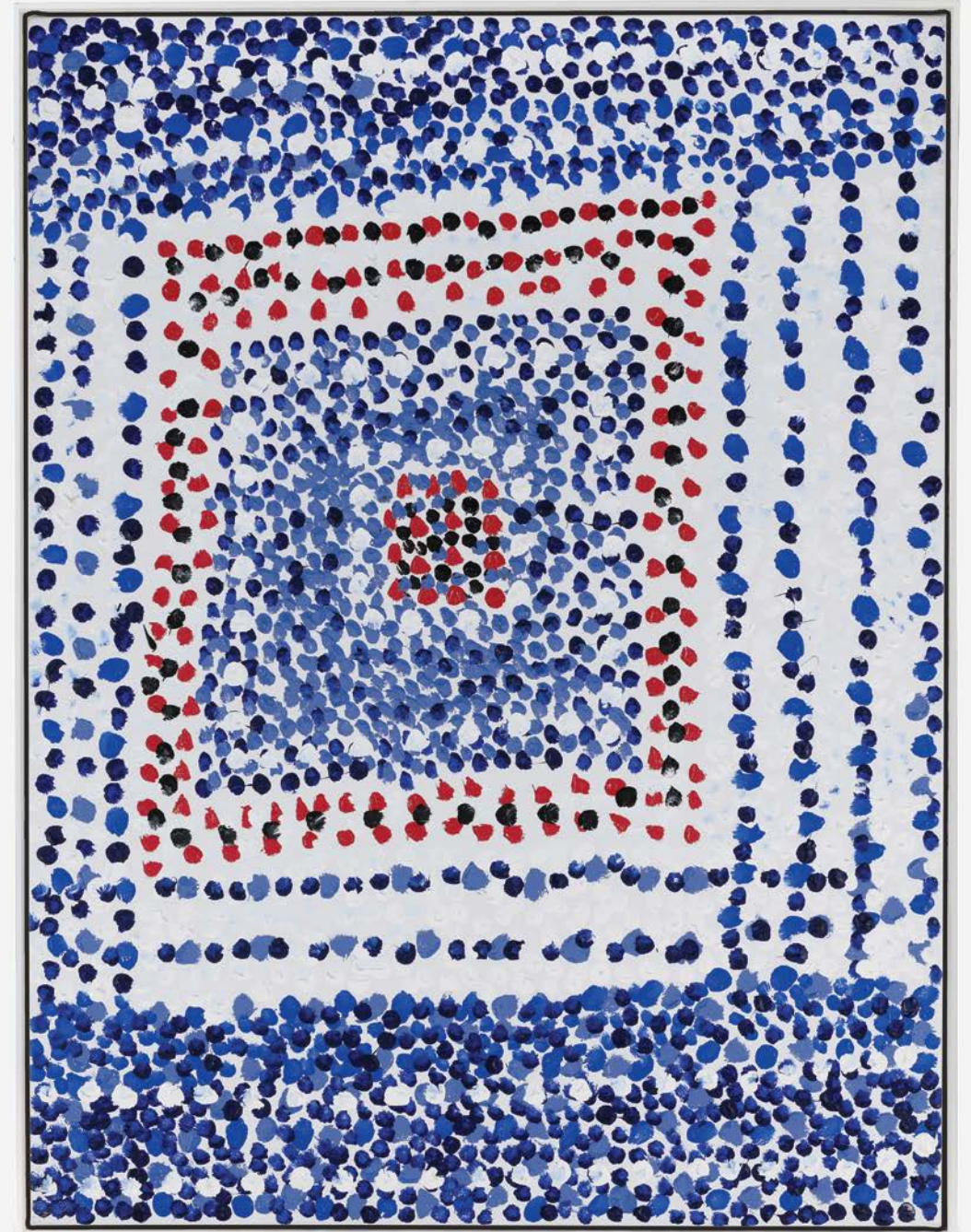
*Paintings from Remote Communities:
Indigenous Australian Art from
the Laverty Collection*, Sydney,
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New
Plymouth, New Zealand, 15 December
2007 – 24 February 2008
Newcastle Art Gallery, New South
Wales, 5 July – 31 August 2008

AUD 35,000

Midpul’s artistic output maintained a sole focus on these three pillars of culture, translating the body paint designs of his Larrakia clan onto canvas. It wasn’t until 1995, when Midpul was sixty years old, that he began painting his celebrated ‘Body Marks’ compositions. He would translate these ceremonial designs onto a range of different supports, including cardboard and bark, before arriving at the canvas, which he continued to paint up until the early 2000s, when he suffered from a stroke, prohibiting his ability to paint.

Midpul was the first artist from the Larrakia region to gain prominence, and in 2001 he was awarded the General Painting Award at the 18th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. His work is now held in important public and private collections, including the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of New South Wales and the National Gallery of Victoria.

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Reference: Hetti Perkins, *Tradition Today: Indigenous Art in
Australia*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2014, p. 66.



BILLY THOMAS

circa 1920 – 2012
Wangkajunga

Waarlla 2001

natural earth pigments and
synthetic binder on canvas
70 × 45 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Kununurra,
Western Australia
Red Rock Art, Kununurra, Western
Australia, cat. no. KP1309
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2001

AUD 12,000

Billy Joongoora Thomas was a stockman and tracker in Mirriwong Country, which lies in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia and stretches across to the Keep River National Park in the Northern Territory. When he came to Waringarri Aboriginal Arts in Kununurra in 1994 to take up painting, he entered the epicentre of the ochre painting movement, which had begun in the Kimberley almost two decades prior. The style and form that Billy Thomas developed would place him outside the recognisable company of his predecessors Rover Thomas, Rusty Peters, George Mung Mung and Queenie McKenzie, whose fields of colour would map and reflect the vast surrounding Country. The rare white ochre that Billy would dig from beneath the dry Kimberley rivers was applied to his canvases not in the balanced and resolved compositions of his peers, but as a means of depicting the dissipating familiar motifs of the Australian desert.

Waarlla 2001 represents the final stylistic shift that Billy Joongoora Thomas work entered around

this time. The white ochre has become the defining impression of his paintings. It is the working material employed to shape, erase and rework the activities of the Dreaming. If there is red ochre or black underneath, it is only made visible where Thomas wishes to scrape the thick white ochre back to reveal its existence. At other times, the only hint that remains is in those instances where a hue of pink or brown comes in and out of focus beneath the surface. The rockholes, snakes, sandhills or windbreaks that Billy Joongoora Thomas depicts are drawn, materially and experientially, from a vast swath of the Country. From the dry plains of his Wangkajunga home at the edge of the Great Sandy Desert to the lush freshwater of Mirriwong Country.

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Darren Jorgenson, 'Billy Joongoora Thomas: nature, time and painting', in Henry Skerritt (ed.), *No Boundaries: Aboriginal Australian Contemporary Abstract Painting*, Nevada Museum of Art, DelMonaco Books-Prestel, New York, 2014, pp. 104–117.



KATHLEEN PETYARRE

1940–2018
 Alyawarr and Eastern Anmatyerr

*Mountain Devil Lizard Dreaming –
 After Sandstorm* 2000
 synthetic polymer paint on linen
 152 × 152 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Utopia,
 Northern Territory
 Gallerie Australis, Adelaide,
 cat. no. GAKP0500250
 Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne
 Private Collection, Melbourne,
 acquired from the above in 2000

EXHIBITED

*Landscape, Truth & Beauty: Recent
 Paintings by Kathleen Petyarre,*
 Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne
 16 November – 7 December 2001
*The Work of Kathleen Petyarre –
 Genius of Place,* Museum of
 Contemporary Art, Sydney,
 9 May – 22 July 2001

AUD 25,000

Kathleen Petyarre began her rise to the world stage with a groundbreaking exhibition at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi in 1989; *Aboriginal Art from Utopia* put Kathleen Petyarre on the map with her early, powerful paintings on linen.

Born in 1944 at Atnangkere, to the north-west of Utopia station, 275 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs, Kathleen Petyarre belongs to the Eastern Anmatyerr language group. Kathleen began making artwork in 1977, producing batiks along with a number of the other women at Utopia. In April 1989, Kathleen participated in the exhibition at the S. H. Ervin Gallery in Sydney, painting on a small masonite board supplied by Rodney Gooch of the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA). Also in April 1989, Kathleen asked the Holt family at Delmore to provide her with materials and began painting with acrylic on canvas. She then gradually developed her signature styles, refining her technique of layering fine dots in thin acrylic paint. This pristine, even surface is carefully prepared by the artist, resulting in works of remarkable depth and complexity.

Kathleen's art transcends borders and cultures, resonating with art enthusiasts and collectors worldwide. Her work was quickly recognised in Europe, with the Louvre (later located in the Musée du quai Branly in Paris) being one of the first to collect her pieces. The Musée des Confluences, Lyon, France, the Aboriginal

Art Museum in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and Sammlung Essl Gallery, Austria, also added her paintings to their collections, further cementing her global recognition.

In the US, collectors were impressed by her work's beauty, authority and originality. Early collectors were the Kelton Foundation, the Seattle Art Museum, the Levi & Kaplan Collection, Harvard University and the Kluge-Ruhe Collection at the University of Virginia.

Kathleen's talent and originality have been acknowledged with numerous prestigious awards and accolades. In 1996, she was honoured with the 13th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award. In 1997, Kathleen won the Visy Board Art Prize. In 1998, she won the People's Choice Award for the Seppelts Contemporary Art Award at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, a testament to her growing reputation as an important Australian First Nations artist. Her achievements were further celebrated in 2001, when *Genius of Place* was published with a solo exhibition of her works at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, solidifying her status as a revered artist.

Sadly Kathleen Petyarre passed away in Alice Springs on the 24 November 2018.

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Reference: Drawn from Delmore Gallery.



WILLY TJUNGURRAYI

circa 1936 – 2018
Pintupi

Untitled – Kaakuratintja 2001
synthetic polymer paint on linen
122 × 153 cm

PROVENANCE

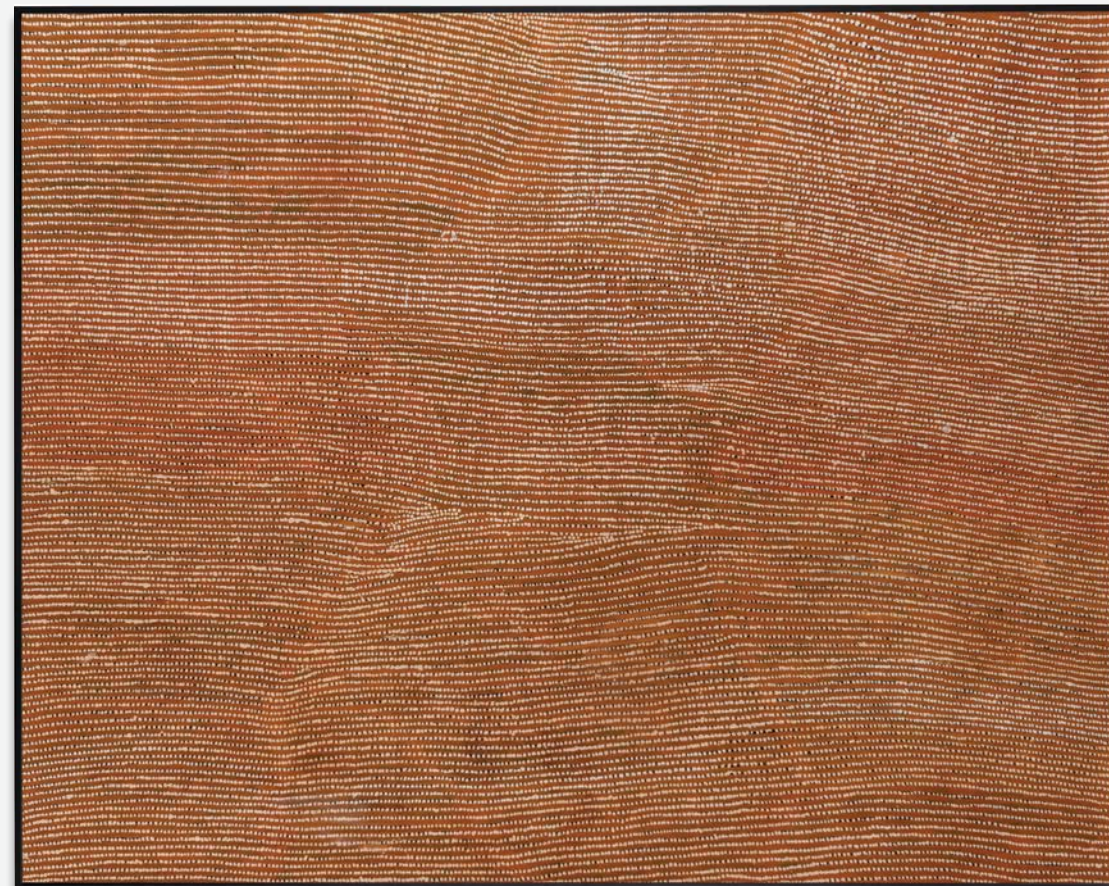
The Artist, painted at Kintore,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. WT011238
Private Collection, Northern
Territory, acquired from the above

AUD 60,000

Willy Tjungurrayi was born at Patjantja, south-west of Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay), and was raised in the desert with his two brothers. His elder brother, Yala Yala Gibbs, was one of the founders of Papunya Tula, and his younger brother is George Ward Tjungurrayi. In 1956, Charlie Tarawa (Wartuma) Tjungurrayi and his camels led a large group of Pintupi into the settlement of Haast Bluff, including Willy, who was then a young man. He and his family lived there until 1959, when the community was disbanded due to a problem with the water supply and the group was relocated to Papunya. In June 1974, Willy along with his brother Yala Yala Gibbs, John Tjakamarra and George Yapa Tjangala made a journey west to visit the sites of Yai Yai Kulkuta and Yawalyurru on a visit sponsored by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. Throughout the 1970s, Willy lived at a number of outstations including Yai Yai, Waruwiya and Inyilingi with most of the other Pintupi painters. In the early 1980s, Willy joined the move back to his homelands and to the newly established community of Kintore, where he raised Papunya Tula artist Joseph Jurra Tjapaltjarri and lived with his family there until 2003.¹

Willy started painting for Papunya Tula Artists in 1976 while at Papunya. His initial painting style emerged with typical Western Desert iconography, finely dotted interconnecting grids of roundels which masterfully tracked the vast Tingari travels across Country. However, in 2000 Willy made a shift towards the minimalistic forms that were collectively transforming the men's painting of the time. Reduced linework, loose dotting and subtle shifts in colour emerged as a distinct visual language and a dramatic departure from his previously celebrated style. The new linear depictions created a subtle and palpable imprint of ancestral travels which elevated his authority to one of the most senior Pintupi painters of the time. Later that year, Willy had his first solo exhibition at William Mora Galleries in Melbourne, followed by his second at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, also in Melbourne, in 2002. His work is included in numerous public and private collections, including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the National Gallery of Victoria and the Aboriginal Art Museum in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

1. Vivien Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2008.



PINCHER TALUNGA

circa 1937 – dec
Ngangikurungurr

Yuwal 2002
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
120 × 80 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Peppimenarti,
Northern Territory
Peppimenarti, Northern
Territory, cat. no. PO403
Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin,
cat. no. KB 1354
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2003

EXHIBITED

*Pincher Talunga – Paintings from
Peppimenarti*, William Mora Galleries,
Melbourne, 8 – 31 May 2003

AUD 22,000

When the delicate paintings of senior Ngangikurungurr man Pincher Talunga first appeared in the early 2000s, they were met with a mixture of excitement and curiosity. In a market that was – and remains – obsessed with ‘the new’, his scarce works were eagerly procured by curators and collectors. However, Talunga’s understated paintings have stood the test of time, due largely to their enduring intensity. Now they infrequently – and with increasing relevance – circulate in a progressively sophisticated Aboriginal art market.

As an Aboriginal artist from a remote part of Australia, Talunga was a characteristically late starter. His brief career began while he was in his late sixties and lasted a few brief years until he

disappeared as enigmatically as he arrived. Over the past decades senior male painters from Peppimenarti have remained a rarity. In fact, until Talunga’s unexpected arrival, the entire Daly River region had been without a major male artistic figure since the great Port Keats painters of the 1960s.

The primary source of inspiration for his practice was his memories of collecting, fashioning and decorating yuwal (spears) with his father. Talunga’s austere pictures reciprocate the decoration that continues to be applied to yuwal. His loose configurations of dots echo a yuwal thrust through the air – seemingly leaving its energy and force upon the picture frame.

LUKE SHOLES



WUKUN WANAMBI

1962–2022
Marrakulu

Gudultja 2004
earth pigments on
hollowed trunk
266 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Yirrkala,
Northern Territory
Buku-Larrngay Mulka, Yirrkala
Art Centre, cat. no. 25761
Raft Artspace, Northern Territory
Private Collection, Western Australia,
acquired from the above in 2004

EXHIBITED

Wukun Wanambi, Raft Artspace,
Northern Territory, 14 August –
4 September 2004

AUD 35,000



JAN BILLYCAN
1930–2016
Yulparija

Kirriwirri 2006
synthetic polymer
paint on canvas
111 × 61 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Bidyadanga,
Western Australia
Short St Gallery, Broome, Western
Australia, cat. no. 10944
Private Collection, New South Wales,
acquired from the above

AUD 14,000

“This place is the birth place of my father’s clan. Our clan is also named Kirriwirri, and call each individual members of this clan Kirriwirri. There is a big warla (mud flat) at this place. This is what this painting is about.” Kirriwirri is in the Great Sandy Desert close to and west of Well 33 on the Canning Stock Route. It is the birth place of Jan and her family. This works shows tali (sand dunes) and jila (living water).

—
As appears on the Short St Gallery documentation.



BILL WHISKEY TJPALTJARRI

circa 1920 – 2008
Pitjantjatjara

Rockholes near the Olgas 2007
synthetic polymer paint on linen
200 × 494 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Amunturrungu –
Mt Liebig, Northern Territory
Watiyawanu Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. 77-084378
Private Collection
Nanda Hobbs, Sydney
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2019

EXHIBITED

Landscape Obscura, Nanda Hobbs,
Sydney, 21 February – 9 March 2019

AUD 650,000





BILL WHISKEY TJAPALTJARRI

circa 1920 – 2008
Pitjantjatjara

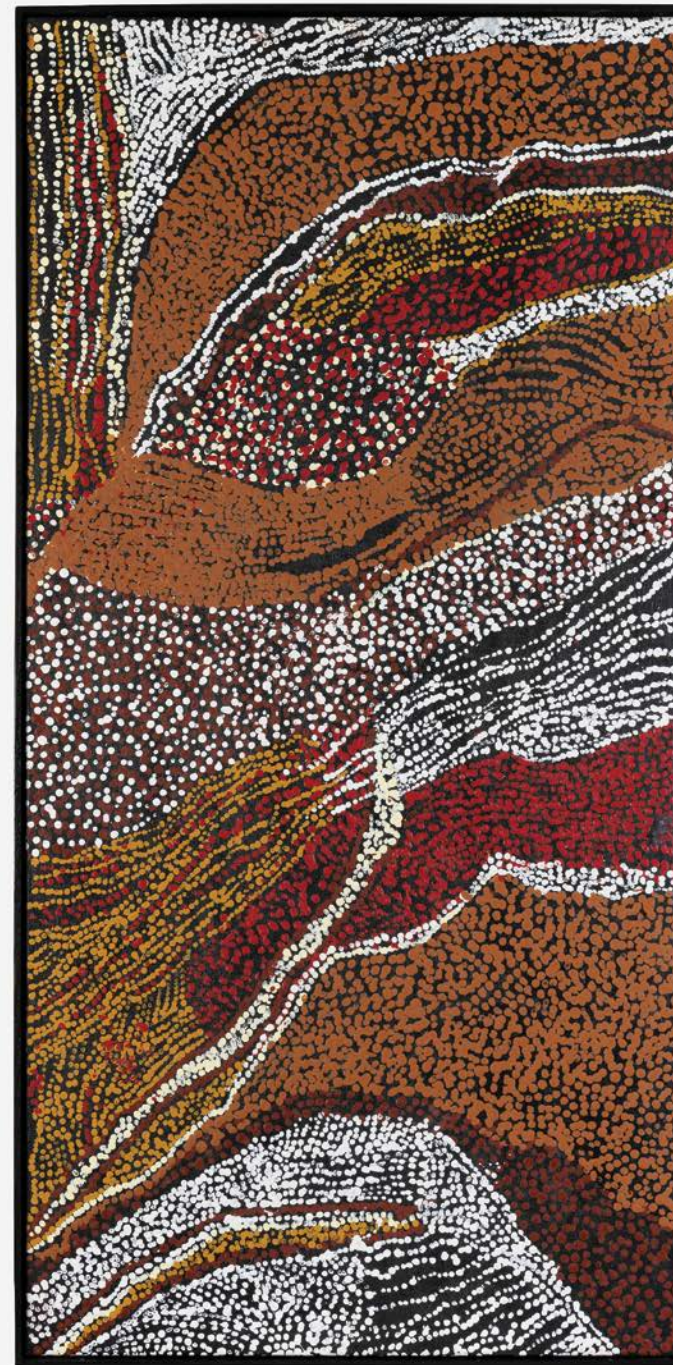
*Country and Rockholes
around the Olgas 2006*
synthetic polymer paint on linen
122 × 60 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Amunturrungu –
Mt Liebig, Northern Territory
Watiyawanu Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. 77-06143
Private Collection, Alice Springs,
acquired from the above

AUD 35,000

Bill Whiskey's art is focused almost exclusively on the ancestral white cockatoo story from his birthplace of Pirupa Alka, 80 miles south of Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) in Central Australia. The story focuses on three birds – the white cockatoo and his friend the eagle and their adversary, the crow. The floating roundels, one of the most striking compositional elements of the design, symbolise the rockpools formed in the vast desert landscape in the battle between the ancestral birds. Bill Whiskey was the first to conceptualise and innovate stylistic depictions of his birthplace, developing specific iconography for this story within the general conventions of Western Desert painting. These distinguishing features of his work are products of his mind's eye, that views Country as a continuum.



JOHN MAWURNDJUL

born 1952
Kuninjku

Untitled – Dilebang site 2007

natural earth pigments
on eucalyptus bark
131 × 62 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Milmilngkan,
Northern Territory
Maningrida Arts & Culture, Northern
Territory, cat. no. 755-07
William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2007

LITERATURE

Apolline Kohen, *John Mawurndjul:
Barks and Lorrkon*, Maningrida
Arts & Culture and William
Mora Galleries, Cornice Venice
International Art Fair, William Mora
Galleries, Melbourne, 2007 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

John Mawurndjul: Barks and Lorrkon,
Courtesy of Maningrida Arts &
Culture and William Mora Galleries,
Cornice Venice International Art
Fair, Venice, 6–10 June 2007

AUD 85,000

The painting refers to a site, Dilebang, which is an important ceremonial place for Kuninjku people. This place is also related to Buluwana and her family. In the ancestral time of creation 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 malevolent gigantic form of the Death Adder snake confronted the group. Buluwana attempted to run away with the rest of her family but was crushed and turned to stone.

Today, at Dilebang, an arrangement of rocks standing in the ground remains as Buluwana's present-day form. Only her head protrudes as a prismic standing stone; the rest of her body is under the ground. Other human remains lying on rock ledges are said to be the remains of other early ancestors.

—
Drawn from the Maningrida Arts & Culture documentation.



WAKARTU CORY SURPRISE

circa 1929 – 2011
Walmajarri

Wayamparjarti 2007
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
117.5 × 90 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia
Mangkaja Arts, Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia, cat. no. 732/07
Suzanne O'Connell Gallery, Brisbane
Private Collection, Canberra, acquired from the above in 2008

EXHIBITED

Women On Country, Suzanne O'Connell Gallery, Brisbane, 5 May – 12 April 2008

AUD 14,000

The exhibition history and award accolades of Walmajarri artist Wakartu Cory Surprise make for a fair argument to see her among the reigning Queens of the Desert. Her expressive painting style that embraces bold colour and gesture was celebrated in numerous solo exhibitions in the mid-2000s and many group exhibitions from 1991. Surprise won the Work on Paper Prize at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards in 1997 and claimed the top prize at the Western Australian Art Award in 2010.

Born at Tapu in the Great Sandy Desert in 1929, Surprise spent her early life travelling around with her husband, living and working on different stations after her parents both died when she was a baby living in the desert. She came to Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia in the 1950s. Still, she only began painting at Karrayili Adult Education Centre in the early 1980s when the art movement in the area was burgeoning. When Mangkaja Arts was established in 1984, Cory Surprise was one of the first twenty painters of the inaugural art centre.

Before passing away in 2012, Surprise told her story in her own words:

When I paint, I think about my country, and where I have been travelling across that country. I paint from here (points to head – thinking about country) and here (points to breasts, collarbone and shoulder blades – which is a reference to body painting). I think about my people, the old people and what they told me, and jumangkarni [Dreamtime]. When I paint I am thinking about law from a long time ago.

Nobody taught me how to paint. I put down my own ideas. I saw these places for myself when I went there with the old people. I paint jilji [sand hills], jumu [soak water], jila [permanent waterhole], jiwari [rock hole], pamarr [hills and rock country], I think about mangarri [vegetable food] and kuyu [game] from my country when I was there.

—
Reference: Wakartu Cory Surprise artist's biography, Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency.



BOXER MILNER TJAMPITJIN

circa 1934 – 2009
Walmajarri

Purkitji 2007
synthetic polymer paint on linen
89 × 30.5 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Balgo,
Western Australia
Warlayirti Artists, Western
Australia, cat. no. 535/07
Scott Livesey Gallery, Melbourne
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2007

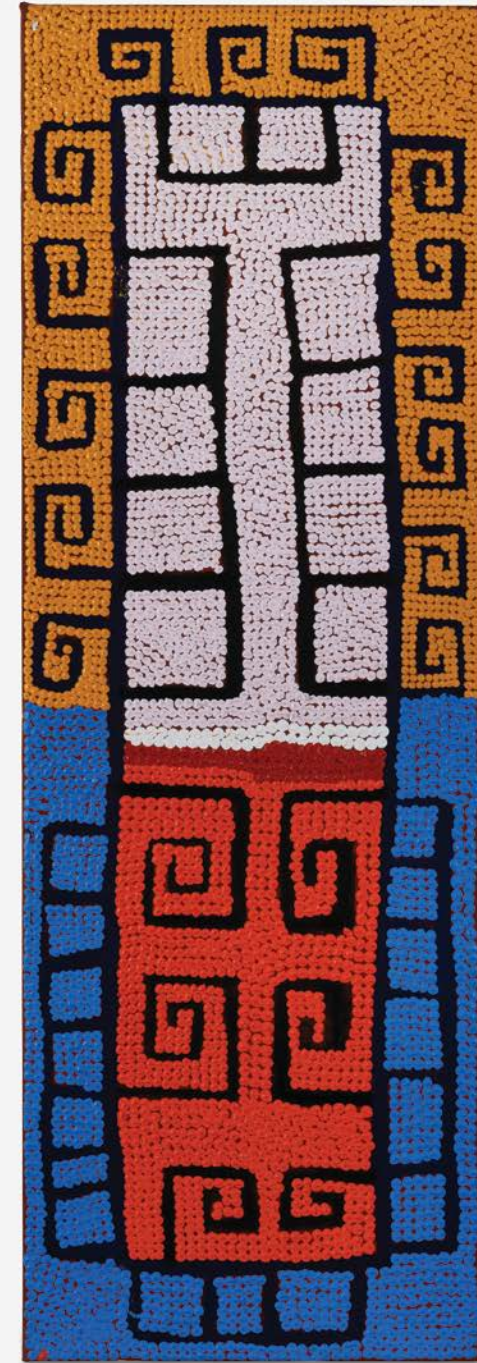
EXHIBITED

Eight by Three, Scott Livesey
Galleries, Melbourne, September 2007

AUD 9,600

Boxer has painted some of his Country, found along the middle stretches of Purkitji (Sturt Creek) north of Balgo. Boxer knows all facets of this Country and the seasonal changes that occur to the river each year. Purkitji and its many interconnecting smaller tributaries are depicted as well as the surrounding Country.

—
Drawn from the Warlayirti Artists documentation.



MAKINTI NAPANANGKA

circa 1922 – 2011
Pintupi/Ngaanyatjarra

Untitled – Lupulnga 2009
synthetic polymer paint on linen
107 × 91 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Kintore,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. MN0901067
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2009

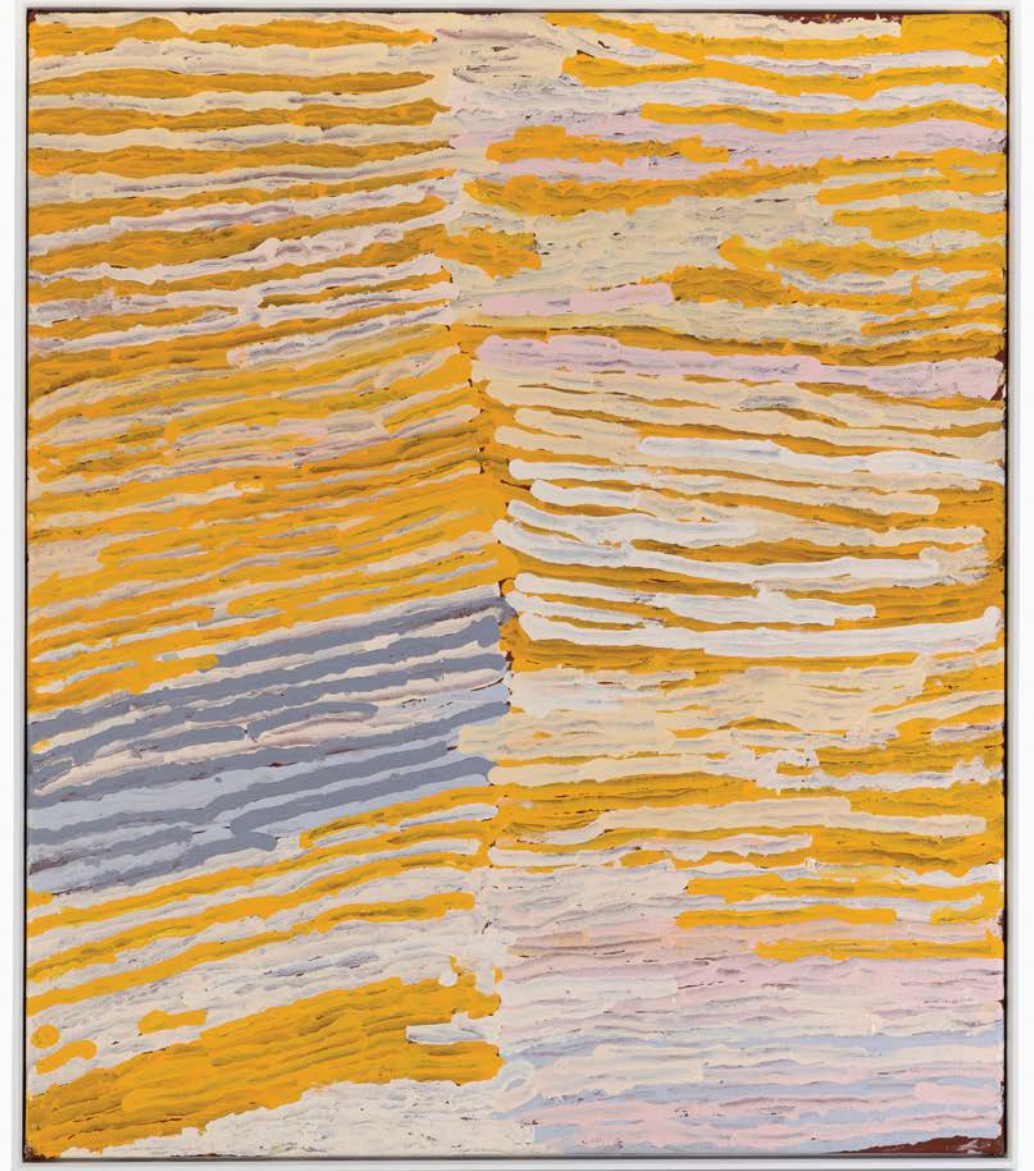
AUD 33,000

Makinti Napanangka shifted the benchmark of Western Desert Art. Makinti's painterly style, although distinguishing her from her female contemporaries, was characteristic of their fervour, which opposed the former minimalism of the male painters. From her first painting at Haasts Bluff in 1994, and then joining Papunya Tula Artists two years later, her style transformed from the small brightly coloured roundels in her early work to the long, quivering arcs in a refined palette of mostly yellow and white by the early 2000s.

Between 2000 and 2007, Makinti's work was featured in six solo exhibitions, and was selected to exhibit in the monumental survey *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*, held at the Art Gallery

of New South Wales in 2000. She was awarded the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2008 and, the year after her passing, was selected for the 18th Biennale of Sydney, *All Our Relations*, in 2012. The effect of Makinti's devotional opus upon those who encounter her work was recognised in 2011 when Makinti was posthumously awarded the Member of the Order of Australia, for 'service to the arts as a contemporary Indigenous Artist, to women painters of the Western Desert Art movement, and to the community of the Northern Territory'.¹

1. Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Kumantjayi Napanangka, It's an Honour*, 2011
<https://honours.pmc.gov.au/honours/awards/1144297>



TOMMY MITCHELL

circa 1943 – 2013
 Ngaanyatjarra
Wakapulka 2009
 synthetic polymer paint on canvas
 101.6 × 101.6 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Warakurna,
 Western Australia
 Warakurna Artists, Western
 Australia, cat. no. 235-09
 Private Collection, Northern
 Territory, acquired from the above
 D'LAN Contemporary, Melbourne
 Private Collection, Melbourne,
 acquired from the above in 2017
 AUD 30,000

Though he began painting late, Tommy Mitchell was one of the most accomplished painters from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands of Western Australia. He was born in the desert in the region known as Ngaturn and Walu, midway between the communities of Warakurna and Papulankutja. Tommy and his family lived a nomadic life, walking and hunting between the tali (sand dunes) and rockholes, and avoiding the newly established Warburton Mission to the east. The knowledge earned by Tommy in these formative years gave him authority as a senior lawman in later life and enabled him to become a gifted carver, and to take on his custodianship of critical stories and important customary law.

Tommy Mitchell joined the newly opened Warakurna Artists in early 2005, following a stint as an assistant for the local building crew. Despite his relatively short painting career, of less than a decade, he left behind an exceptional body of work deeply rooted in his understanding of the physical, mythical and ancestral stories of Walu and Warlpapuka. These places, though distinct –

one a rockhole and food source, the other a prominent mountain – intersected with potent ancestral stories and were sites upon which epic, world-forming acts by ancestral characters were enacted. His profound cultural knowledge was matched by his unwavering dedication to his craft and his almost obsessive work ethic.

His work has found a place in over a dozen major public and private collections, including the National Gallery of Victoria and the Seattle Art Museum. He was a finalist in the 2006, 2009 and 2013 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards and participated in more than thirty group exhibitions in Australia and internationally, as well as significant cultural projects such as Turlku, a Ngaanyatjarra dance and song performance at the 2007 Perth International Arts Festival.

—
 Reference: Edwina Circuit, 'Mr. Tommy Mitchell: pirriya purlkanya, big wind, Henry Skerritt (ed.), in *No Boundaries: Aboriginal Australian Contemporary Abstract Painting*, Nevada Museum of Art, DelMonico Books-Prestel, New York, 2014.



TOMMY MITCHELL

circa 1943 – 2013
Ngaanyatjarra

Wakapulka 2011
synthetic polymer
paint on canvas
101 × 76 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Warakurna,
Western Australia
Warakurna Artists, Western
Australia, cat. no. 730-11
Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney
Private Collection, Sydney,
acquired from the above
*Australian, Indigenous & Oceanic
Art*, Mossgreen Auctions,
Melbourne, 21 July 2015, lot 1
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above

EXHIBITED

*Paintings from Warakurna and
Wanarn*, Aboriginal and Pacific
Art, Sydney, 22 November –
10 December 2011

AUD 25,000



WHISKEY TJUKANGKU

1939–2015

Yankunytjatjara

Punu – Trees 2011

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

150 × 150 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Indulkana,

Northern Territory

Iwantja Arts and Crafts, Northern

Territory, cat. no. 162-11

Private Collection, New South

Wales, acquired from the above

AUD 16,000

Whiskey Tjukangku was born in the bush near Umuwa and grew up at the Ernabella Mission between Ernabella and the cattle station of De Rose Hill. He soon worked as a stockman, driving cattle alongside his friends and future Iwantja Arts painting colleagues Alec Baker and Peter Mungkuri.

Tjukangku's work took him to various cattle stations, but his heart always yearned for his ancestral land. He returned to his family and played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Indulkana community. His leadership was not limited to community building – he was a pioneer in the art world, one of the first male painters at Iwantja Arts, and the first of the Iwantja's artists to receive widespread recognition and acclaim, holding multiple solo exhibitions. Beyond his artistic pursuits, Tjukangku was also a highly respected Ngangkari – Anangu traditional healer.

Tjukangku's artistic practice was an extension of his immense knowledge of Country. His paintings were celebrated for their rawness and integrity, and his works were acquired into the collections of significant cultural institutions in Australia.

—
Drawn from the Iwantja Arts documentation.



ANGELINA PWERLE

born 1946
Alyawarr

Anwekety – Bush Plum 2022
synthetic polymer paint on linen
151.5 × 119.5 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Utopia,
Northern Territory
Artlore, South Australia, cat. no. 1-1022
Marc Gooch, South Australia

AUD 65,000

Angelina Pwerle's paintings so effectively create the impression of a mysterious and distant place that they are often thought to represent galaxies in the night sky rather than the terrestrial world that is their subject.

— Anne Marie Brody

Angelina Pwerle worked alongside the now illustrious names of those first women artists at Utopia in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the late Emily Kam Ngwarray. Her work was exhibited in the important Utopia Batik exhibition at the Araluen Centre for Arts and Entertainment at Alice Springs in 1989. Today, she still lives and works at Ngkawenyerr, Utopia, which is close to her ancestral homeland.

The anwekety, or bush plum, pronounced 'nookaja', is part of Ahalpere Country, and its Dreaming is the subject of Angelina Pwerle's meticulously executed and beautifully detailed paintings. The plant's physical characteristics are a tangled, spiny shrub with white fragrant flowers. The sweet black berries contain two tiny knobbly seeds and are a sought-after food source that is available for only a few weeks.

A bush plum painting was included in the 2010 exhibition *Desert Country* at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Angelina shares insights about the work:

There are seeds there in that painting as well, little ones. Not big ones, all little ones. This painting is about my father's country and about [the bush plum] ... The flowers are there ... the little [bush plum] flowers. That bush plum is my father's Dreaming. That [bush plum] comes from Ahalpere country ... [it] has little white

flowers, then after that there is the fruit. If it doesn't rain, the plants are dry; if it rains there is an abundance of [bush plums]. The flower is small when they have just come out ... well, after that the fruit comes. The fruits are really nice when they are ripe.

Angelina's work, however, is not only associated with the plant's edible properties but also with its life within the ancestral realm and its cyclic, seasonal and spiritual connections. Her style has become increasingly pared back over time. She uses a wooden skewer to make minuscule marks on the surface of her canvases. As the process is incredibly time-consuming, she may only complete one or two major works in one year.

Despite the community's rich artistic history, until recently there was not a consistent art centre based in Utopia to provide service and stability. In the early years, it was largely Rodney Gooch, initially through CAAMA and then privately, who facilitated professional career opportunities between the artists and city-based gallerists and collectors. When Rodney Gooch passed away in 2002, his nephew Marc Gooch continued working with the artists. Gooch facilitated Angelina's professional relationship with William Nuttall of Niagara Galleries, who continues to represent the artist.

—
References: Peter Latz, *Bushfires and Bushtucker*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1995; Anne Marie Brody, 'Bush plum odysseys', in Henry Skerritt (ed.), *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia*, Nevada Museum of Art, DelMonico Books-Prestel, New York, 2016, p. 76.



WUKUN WANAMBI

1962–2022
Marrakulu

Wawurritjpal 2022
natural earth pigments and
synthetic binder on board
71 × 47 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Yirrkala,
Northern Territory
Buku-Larrngay Mulka, Yirrkala
Art Centre, cat. no. 225-22
Michael Reid Galleries, Sydney
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above
Catherine Asquith Art
Advisory, Melbourne
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2022

EXHIBITED

Destiny, Michael Reid Galleries in
conjunction with Buku-Larrngay
Mulka Centre, Sydney, 24 June –
23 July 2022; Michael Reid
Art Bar, Sydney, 2022; Michael
Reid Galleries, Berlin, 2022
AUD 18,000

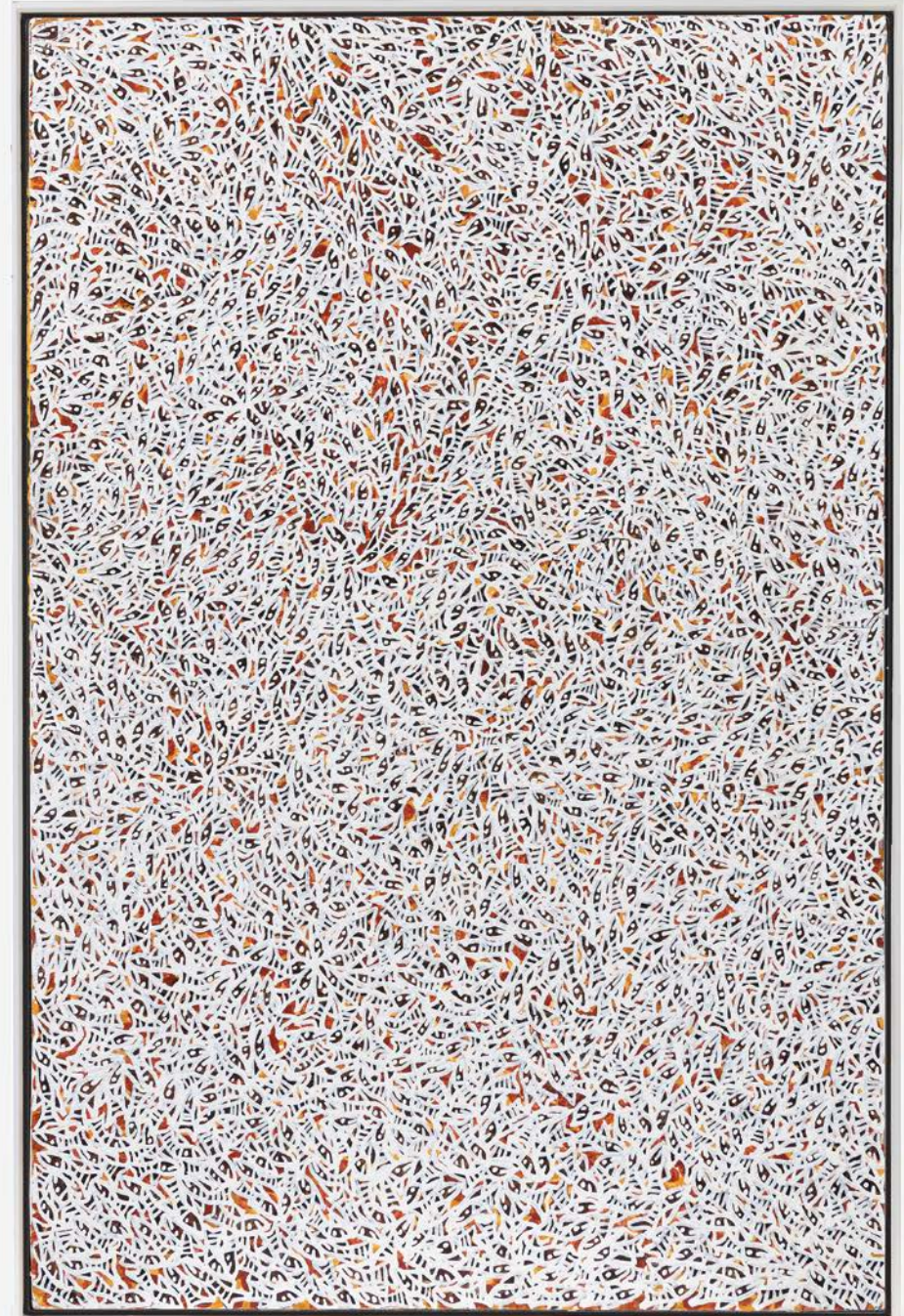
Wukun Wanambi was born in East Arnhem Land into the Marrakulu clan of the Yolŋu people, inheriting Saltwater imagery, culture and designs. His father, Mithili Wanambi, prolifically painted Saltwater designs but passed away before teaching his son these stories and designs.

In 1997, Wukun became a contributing artist on the Saltwater Project, which formed a collective of Yolŋu bark painters to create a body of work telling the story of the Yolŋu people of North-East Arnhem Land and defending their claim to sea rights. It was during this time that Wukun connected with Yangarriny Wunungmurra and other djungayi – men who teach younger men their clan lore and introduce them to the ways of painting their cultural designs.¹ These connections gave Wukun the authority to paint Saltwater designs, which had not been consistently painted since his father's passing sixteen years earlier.

The first bark painting Wukun completed for the Saltwater Project would go on to win the award for the bark painting category at the 1998 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. This accolade began a successful career defined by innovation and cultural leadership.

Expanding his artistic practice, Wukun began painting larrakitj – hollow logs decorated with clan designs in natural earth pigments traditionally used to hold the remains of those who have passed away. He was also an accomplished filmmaker and founding director of Buku-Larrngay's media centre and Mulka Project, in 2007. Sadly, Wukun passed away in 2022 in the lead-up to a major retrospective exhibition of his work at Michael Reid Galleries in Melbourne; the exhibition brought together a vast body of work that represented the depth of talent, innovation and cultural knowledge he contributed to Australian contemporary art. Throughout his twenty-five-year career, Wukun's works have been widely celebrated and acquired in private and public collections across Australia and abroad. His artistic innovation and dedication to Yolŋu culture remain his legacy through significant commissions and community projects at the Sydney Opera House, Darwin waterfront and Buku-Larrngay Art Centre.

1. National Museum Australia, 'Mr Wanambi', *Unsettled: Stories Within*.





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Vanessa Merlino and Isabella Wadley

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ABOUT

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

ETHICS

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

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

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

PROVENANCE

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

Documentation we draw upon to establish provenance includes:

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

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

CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS (1980–PRESENT)

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

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

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

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

MODERN AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS ART (1950S–1980)

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

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

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

ARTEFACTS AND OBJECTS (1880S–1950)

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

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

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

PROTECTION OF MOVEABLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT

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

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

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

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



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