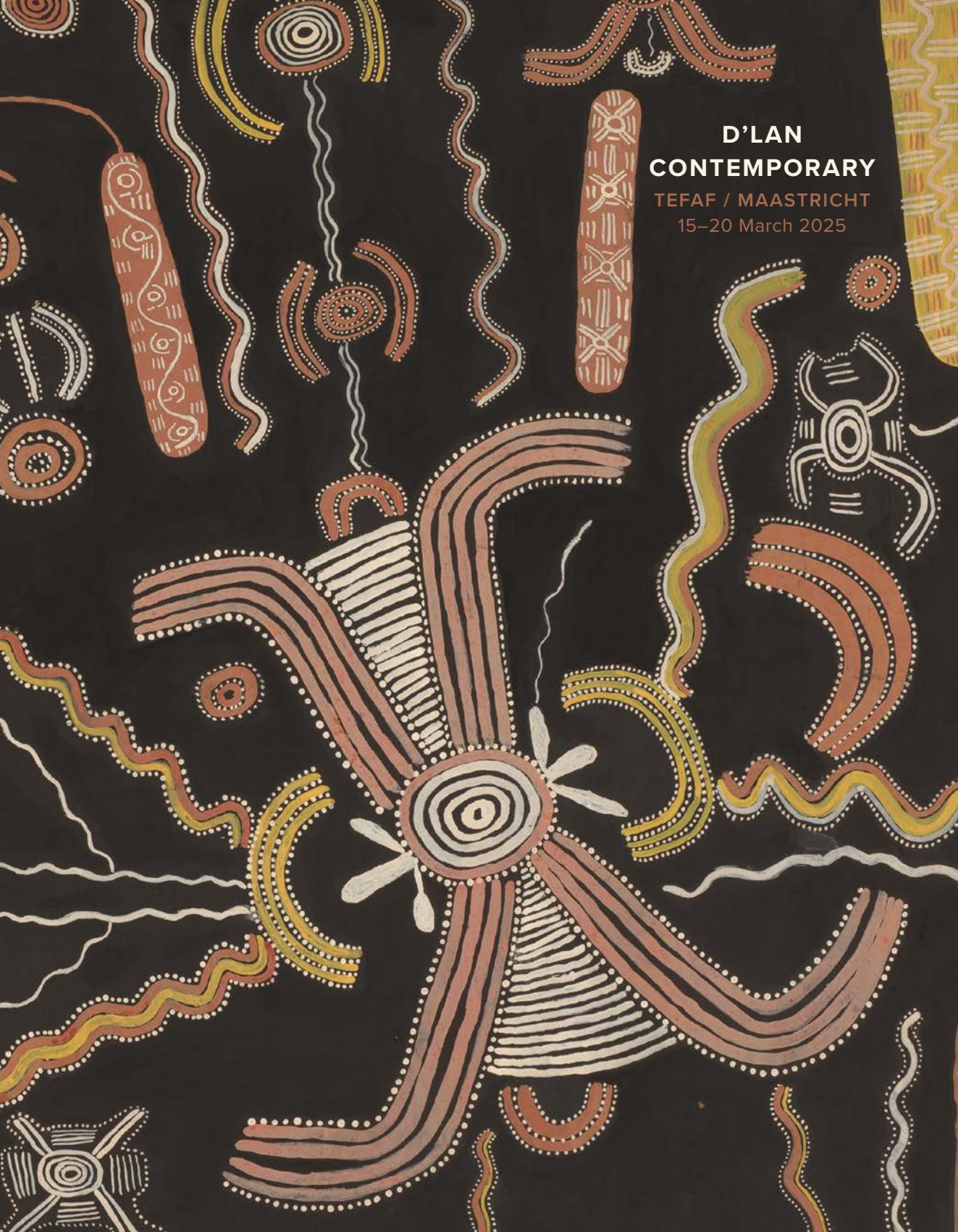

D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

TEFAF / MAASTRICHT

15–20 March 2025

D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

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TEFAF / MAASTRICHT
15–20 March 2025

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

D'Lan Contemporary is honoured to participate in TEFAF Maastricht 2025, the world's pre-eminent art, antiques and design fair. For our inaugural exhibition we proudly present a finely curated selection of modern and contemporary masterpieces by Australia's leading First Nations artists.

Although its origins span many thousands of years, Australian First Nations art has, over recent years, gained significant prominence in the international art world. In 2024–2025, several landmark events captured global attention. Archie Moore's exhibition *kith and kin* was awarded the prestigious Golden Lion for Best National Participation at La Biennale de Venezia 2024. A retrospective of Emily Kam Kngwarray, which launched at the National Gallery of Australia, in Canberra, will open at Tate Modern, London, in July 2025. One of the most exciting announcements of the year was the collaboration of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, with the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, for the exhibition *The Stars We Do Not See: Australian Indigenous Art*, which will be the largest international exhibition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art ever presented. This exhibition will tour throughout North America and Canada between 2025 and 2028.

D'Lan Contemporary's presentation at TEFAF features major paintings and sculptures from the 1960s through to the present day, with figurative sculptures by Tiwi master carvers and significant contemporary works by many of Australia's most revered artists including Rover Thomas, Emily Kam Kngwarray, Paddy Bedford, Nonɡirrŋa Marawili and Carlene West. Each work has been hand-selected for its impeccable provenance, exceptional quality and rarity.

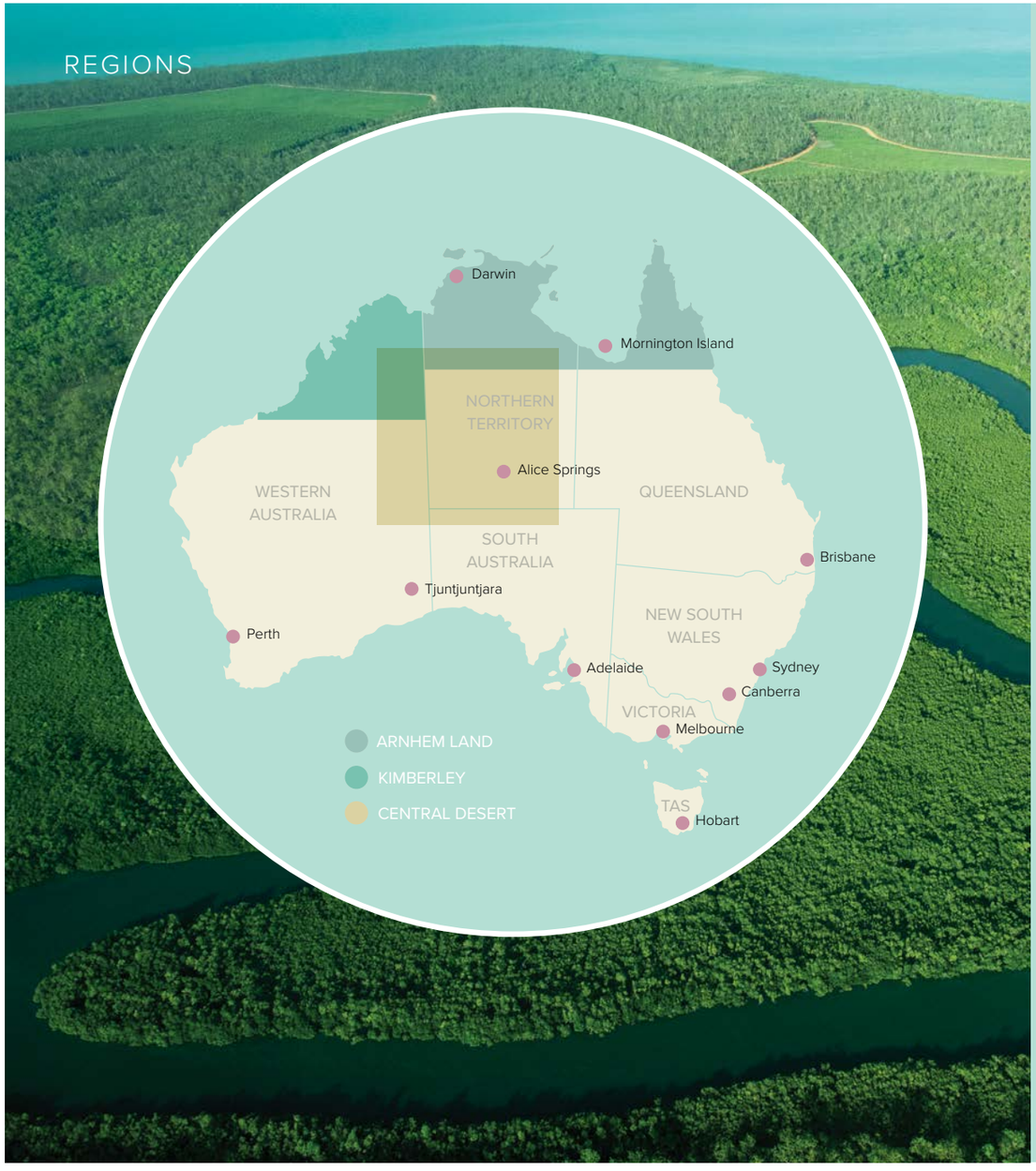
A highlight of our presentation is a significant collection of early bark paintings originally from the collection of Lance Bennett, one of the key early collectors of paintings and sculptures from Northern Australia. Later these works were acquired by the distinguished European collector Thomas Vroom. We are delighted to present these historic works to our new and existing clients in Maastricht.

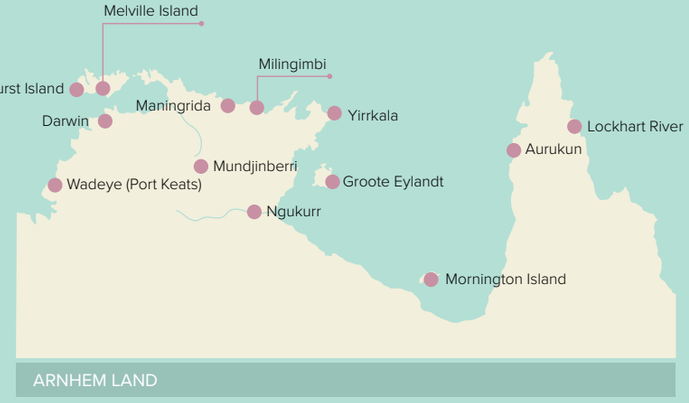
We are also featuring the critically important early Papunya painting on board *Wallaby Sign for Men and Women* by Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri. This transformative painting from 1972 is among the first contemporary paintings made by an Australian desert artist. We are honoured to offer this rare, museum-quality painting at TEFAF.

Luke Scholes, Nicole Kenning and I look forward to welcoming you to our Stand 431, and to introducing you to the rich art and culture of the first peoples of Australia, in what will be the first major presentation of Australian First Nations art by an Australian gallery at the fair.

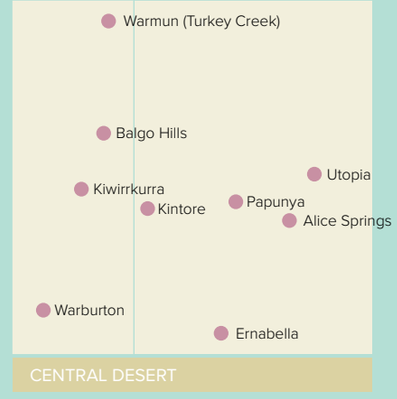
D'LAN DAVIDSON
DIRECTOR & FOUNDER, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

REGIONS


Darwin
Mornington Island
NORTHERN TERRITORY
Alice Springs
WESTERN AUSTRALIA
QUEENSLAND
SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Brisbane
Tjuntjuntjara
NEW SOUTH WALES
Perth
Adelaide
Sydney
Canberra
VICTORIA
Melbourne
ARNHEM LAND
KIMBERLEY
CENTRAL DESERT
TAS
Hobart


Melville Island
Milingimbi
Bathurst Island
Maningrida
Yirrkala
Darwin
Lockhart River
Aurukun
Mundjinberri
Wadeye (Port Keats)
Groote Eylandt
Ngukurr
Mornington Island
ARNHEM LAND


Wyndham
Kununurra
Wotjalum
Warmun (Turkey Creek)
Mowanjum
Broome
Fitzroy Crossing
Bidyadanga (La Grange)
Balgo Hills
KIMBERLEY


Warmun (Turkey Creek)
Balgo Hills
Utopia
Kiwirrkurra
Papunya
Kintore
Alice Springs
Warburton
Ernabella
CENTRAL DESERT

Tiwi Islands aerial view. Photographer: Steve Strike

SPIRIT FIGURES FROM THE TIWI ISLANDS

Aboriginal people in Australia have carved and decorated three-dimensional wooden forms for tens of thousands of years. Created primarily for use in ceremony, poles, ornaments, weapons and ritual objects relate to the religious lives of their makers. Carved representations of the human form were first observed in the early twentieth century by missionaries in north-east Arnhem Land. Since then, motivated by their contact with balanda (outsiders), various cultural groups across Northern Australia have sculpted figurative forms to trade and sell. Many of these figures are visual manifestations of spirit beings. Some depict specific creation ancestors central to the origins of each cultural group; others represent spirits of the deceased.

Relief-carved from solid hardwood, spirit figures are shaped and decorated in accordance with the ancient visual language specific to each cultural group. The evocative presence and human-like characteristics of these figures continues to capture the imagination of collectors, curators and scholars, resulting in the intense collecting focus of cultural institutions in Australia and overseas.

On the Tiwi Islands, the person credited with instigating the production of carved figures on the islands was Cardo Kerinauia. In the 1920s, Kerinauia and other Tiwi men gained employment on pearling luggers and other coastal vessels that had begun to frequent the islands. On one of his journeys to Darwin, Kerinauia encountered carved figures that had possibly been collected at Milingimbi Mission. Following this, Kerinauia pioneered the carving of human figures atop Pukumani (mourning) poles. Such figures were created to deceive mapurtiti (spirits of the recently deceased). Tiwi believe that the mapurtiti would be tricked into channelling their attention toward the carved figures and away from the human relatives of the deceased. In the 1940s, Kerinauia and others began carving human, bird and animal forms separately and on a smaller scale.

At Paru on the southern coast of Melville Island, an extended family group referred to as the Mandimbula continued to develop their innovative sculptural practice and quickly established a reputation as gifted sculptors. Tiwi carved figures typically represent the primary creation ancestors Purrukaparli, Wai-ai – or Bima – and Japara.

ENRAELD DJULABINYANNA MUNKARA
c. 1895 – 1965
Tiwi language

Purrukuparli circa 1955
earth pigments on ironwood
23.5 × 4.5 inches (59.6 × 11.4 cm)

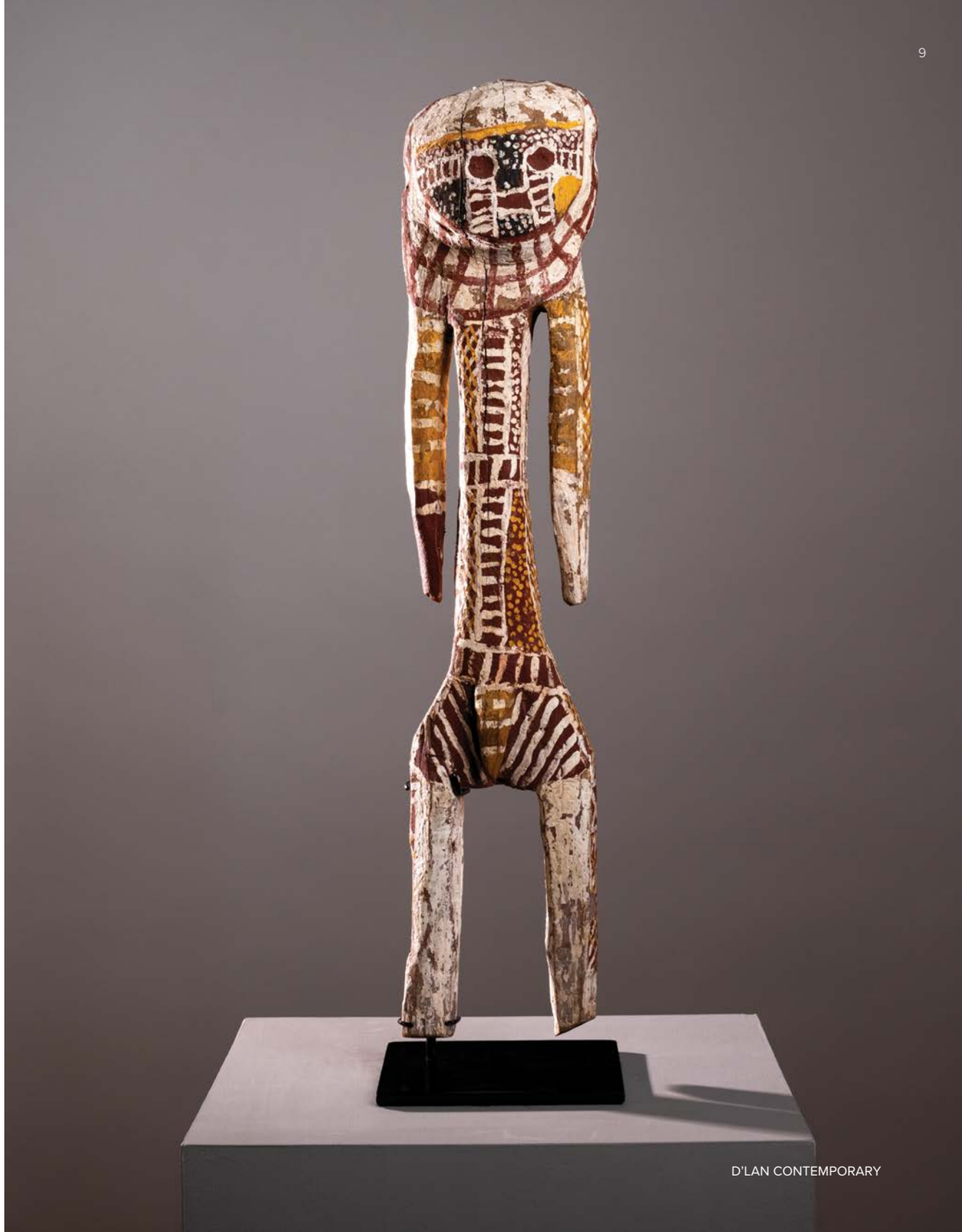
PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Bathurst or Melville Islands, Northern Territory
Private Collection, Western Australia, 1970s
Private Collection, Queensland, acquired from the above
Important Aboriginal & Oceanic Art, Deutscher and Hackett, Melbourne, 6 October 2010, lot 4
The Martin Rae Collection, New York, acquired from the above

USD 50,000

Enraeld Djulabinyanna Munkara was a master Tiwi sculptor, ceremonial leader and cultural custodian from Milikapiti on Melville Island. While living at the independent community of Paru, away from the influence of the Catholic mission, Enraeld developed a singular practice distinct from his Tiwi peers. His work evolved from the Pukumani mourning tradition, in which striking poles and mourning figures were placed as grave markers to symbolise the journey to the afterlife in Tiwi belief. His carvings resonated with collectors and institutions and were exhibited internationally, helping to introduce Tiwi art to the mainstream, and cementing his legacy as one of the most celebrated artists in Tiwi history.

Appearing hunched and off-kilter, his highly decorated Cubist-like forms capture the gesture and vigour of the Tiwi ancestors they represent. His roughly hewn figures are distinguished by their bulbous heads, deep-set eyes and lively decoration. Their stance suggests the posture of ritual dancers as they wait poised in anticipation of ceremony.

In this example, Enraeld has painted white circles around the eyes of Purrukaparli to convey his sorrow at the loss of his son. This mirrors the face paint worn by Tiwi performers during Pukumani (mourning) ceremonies.



MANI LUKI HARRY CARPENTER WOMMATAKIMMI
c. 1914 – 1980
Tiwi language

Untitled circa 1970
earth pigments on ironwood
24 × 8.75 inches (60.9 × 22.2 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Milikapiti,
Melville Island, Northern Territory
Melville Island Catholic
Mission, Northern Territory
Private Collection
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, Melbourne,
31 October 2006, lot 80
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 28,000

Mani Luki's expressive figures are distinct for their elongated heads, broad shoulders and splayed arms. Unlike most sculptors who relied upon a single piece of wood to fashion the entirety of their figures, Luki often attached separate lengths of wood to depict arms. Combined with large cat-like eyes and expressive faces, Luki's figures appear highly animated as if poised to break into dance.

Luki was widely travelled and encountered other artists and cultural groups, which may have influenced his artistic practice. Many of his figures wear belts, loin cloths or aprons similar to apparel worn by Macassans who made intermittent contact with Tiwi people while fishing for trepang.

DECLAN APUATIMI
c. 1930 – 1985
Tiwi language

Purrukuparli circa 1979
earth pigments on hardwood
with resin, softwood and feathers
20 × 5 inches (50.8 × 12.7 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Bathurst
Island, Northern Territory
Tiwi Pima Art, Northern Territory
Private Collection
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 20 July 2009, lot 37
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 15,000

Declan Apuatimi was a pioneering Tiwi artist and cultural custodian born at Iminulapi on Bathurst Island, later settling in Nguiu. He traced his heritage to Munupi, his father's Country on Melville Island. A saltwater person, Declan worked on Japanese, Malay and Filipino pearling boats until World War II, when he relocated to Darwin's RAAF base. He returned to Bathurst Island post-war and married Jeanne Baptiste, with whom he raised ten children, though only six survived, a profound loss commemorated in his performances at Pukumani ceremonies. A master woodcarver, Declan specialised in burial posts (tutini), integrating geometric patterns and innovative figurative designs. He first began carving works for sale in the 1950s, with the encouragement of missionaries, and gained recognition for his work in the 1970s.

Declan's haunting interpretation of Purrukuparli – mouth agape, with a vacant stare – captures his despair upon learning of the death of his son, Jinani. Purrukuparli stands decorated with jilamara (designs) that continue to be worn by Tiwi ceremonial performers. Replete with black cockatoo feathers and male sexual organs (which would occasionally be included on sculptures during this period), this figure's shapely chest, torso and face are divided into partitions of fine yellow and white dotting. The arms, legs and back of the head are decorated with parallel striated patterning against his black 'skin'.

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MUDJINBARDI BARKS

Nadjombolmi, Lance Bennett, Diidja and an interpreter documenting *Namarnde Frolicking* at Mudjinbardi in 1966
© Estate of Lance Bennett

These extraordinary paintings were assembled in 1966 by the famous collector and interlocutor Lance Bennett (1938–2013) at the Mudjinbardi community in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. During this time Bennett was making regular visits, sometimes with his mother, Dorothy, to remote areas of the Northern Territory to collect paintings, sculptures and objects from various Aboriginal groups. During the 1950s, Dorothy travelled widely in this region while she was medical secretary to the orthopaedic surgeon Dr Stuart Scougall. Scougall had a deep interest in Aboriginal art and advocated for the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) in Sydney to start collecting. Scougall and Bennett developed a relationship with the then deputy director of the AGNSW, Tony Tuckson, that resulted in joint collecting visits to north Australia and active collecting by the art gallery. Prior to this, bark paintings were considered ethnographic curiosities belonging in museums as opposed to galleries.

The Mudjinbardi community developed in response to the establishment of a pastoral lease between the East Alligator and South Alligator Rivers. Much of the population had arrived from across the extended region of central Arnhem Land and the Alligator Rivers, seeking employment. Many of the men, including all the artists who painted for Bennett, had extensive knowledge of the spectacular rock art galleries of the region. It's likely that a number of these artists had produced rock paintings in their own lands prior to relocating to Mudjinbardi.[1] Writing about these works previously, anthropologist Dr Luke Taylor explains how the lived experience of these men and the legacy of rock art in this region informed the unique aesthetic of the barks they created:

Baimunungbi ('Jacky')
© Estate of Lance Bennett

Diidja
© Estate of Lance Bennett

Lanyirrda ('Billy')
© Estate of Lance Bennett

Djurrubiga
© Estate of Lance Bennett

> This particular art heritage provides an explanation for the characteristic style of these works. Many of the paintings have a pronounced use of white paint roughly applied as the background of the imagery. This kind of painting is called rungkalno and it is common in the rock art of central Arnhem Land where images can be displayed as a simple white silhouette without any interior infill. Also in central Arnhem Land, contrasting coloured dotting was occasionally used to modify such images. A number of central Arnhem Land artists have stated that they were most familiar with these techniques and used them in their early bark paintings. The use of detailed x-ray infill and multicoloured crosshatched banding are later influences.

Of course, the subjects and ancestral themes the men painted are common in rock art in Arnhem Land as well. Namarnde, a ghost-like being of the human dead, features strongly in the rock art galleries of the sandstone escarpments of central and western Arnhem Land. So too in the bark paintings of Baimunungbi, Diidja and Lanyirrda from 1966.

Baimunungbi alluded to the sexual exploits of male and female Namarnde. Taylor asserts that 'some special rock paintings were produced as a form of "love magic"', suggesting that their depiction might conjure 'a desired outcome for the artist and his secret beau'.[2]

Baimunungbi's tall figures are painted in a style characteristic of southern Arnhem Land. Each figure is carefully decorated with gentle lines of yellow ochre. Some are shown naked as the male makes love to his wives; other figures have small pubic aprons, worn from the waist. Baimunungbi remained in Mudjinbardi for many years prior to returning to Maningrida in the 1980s, where he became well known for exquisite geometric works that drew upon his knowledge of body paintings of the Mardayin ceremony.

Diidja's Namarnde figures, with elongated arms and fingers, have talon-like forms trailing from the back of the head. His gestural dotting provides form and substance to their white silhouetted bodies. Diidja, too, emphasises the Namarnde's sexual activity, with exposed genitalia and descriptions provided to Bennett of them 'making love'. Bennett described Diidja as 'a good-natured friendly man with a boyish engaging grin and a keen enthusiasm for ritual life'.[3]

Lanyirrda's depictions of Namarnde share a similar appearance to those of both Baimunungbi and Diidja. Fine yellow ochre outlines his figures. According to Bennett's annotation of *Namarnde* circa 1965, 'The long feather which the male spirit is wearing as decoration is a typical feature of paintings of spirits in the rock and bark art of West Arnhem Land.'

LUKE SCHOLES

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1. Haskovec and H. Sullivan, 'Nadjombolmi: reflections and rejections of an Aboriginal artist', in H. Morphy (ed.), *Animals into Art*, pp. 57–74, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989.
2. L. Taylor, 'The Lance Bennett Collection of bark paintings', in *Aboriginal Art*, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015.
3. M. Appel (ed), *Inspired by Country: Bark Paintings from Northern Australia: the Gerd and Helga Plewig Collection*, Hirmer Publishers, Munich, Germany, 2022, p. 357.

1. JACKY BAIMUNUNGBI
c. 1925 – 1979
Rembarrnga language

Family of Namarnde Spirits Hunting for Flying Fox 1966
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
36.25 × 19.75 inches (92 × 50 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Mudjinberri (Mudjinbardi), Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, acquired from the artist in 1966
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 30
Private Collection, acquired from the above

USD 25,000

—
'The artist has here shown a family of namarnde spirits hunting for flying fox spirits. A flying fox is shown hanging upside down from a branch having not yet left its camp to fly about hunting for fruit on trees. Two of the female spirits are shown wearing pubic aprons: folded pieces of paperbark held in place with bush string (spun from the bark strips of the Banyan tree). The husband has removed the apron from the third wife and is making love to her while they keep eye on the prey.'

Drawn from documentation accompanying the artwork.

2. DIIDJA
c. 1900 – 1982
Kunwinjku language

Male and Female Namarnde Making Love 1966
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
37 × 21.3 inches (94 × 54 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Mudjinberri (Mudjinbardi), Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, acquired from the artist in 1966
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 37
Private Collection, acquired from the above

USD 25,000

3. LANYIRRDA (BILLY)
c. 1925 – 1975

A Namarnde Spirit Making Love with His Two Wives 1966
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
43 × 19.7 inches (107 × 49 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Mudjinberri (Mudjinbardi), Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, acquired from the artist in 1966
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 24
Private Collection, acquired from the above

USD 28,000

—
'The artist has shown a male namarnde spirit with his two wives. He is making love to the adult wife, while the younger wife, "promised" to him at birth and now living with him prior to her pubescence, waits.'

Drawn from documentation accompanying the artwork.

4. DIIDJA
c. 1900 – 1982
Kunwinjku language

Namarnde with Two Wives 1966
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
30.3 × 25.2 inches (77 × 64 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Mudjinberri (Mudjinbardi), Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, acquired from the artist in 1966
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 36
Private Collection, acquired from the above

USD 25,000

5. JACKY BAIMUNUNGBI
c. 1925 – 1979
Rembarrnga language

Male and Female Namarnde Spirits of the Rock Country circa 1966
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
36.3 × 14.6 inches (92.2 × 37 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Mudjinberri (Mudjinbardi), Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, acquired from the artist in 1966
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 14
Private Collection, acquired from the above

USD 22,000

6. LANYIRRDA (BILLY)
c. 1925 – 1975

Namarnde 1966
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
49.6 × 24.6 inches (126 × 63 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Mudjinberri (Mudjinbardi), Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, acquired from the artist in 1966
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 28
Private Collection, acquired from the above

EXHIBITED
Brook Andrew – Theme Park, Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art (AAMU), Utrecht, The Netherlands, 17 October 2008 – 1 April 2009

USD 28,000

—
'The artist has here shown a male namarnde with his two wives. He is making love to the younger wife while the older wife waits. The long feather which the male spirit is wearing as decoration is a typical feature of paintings of spirits in the rock and bark art of Western Arnhem Land.'

Drawn from documentation accompanying the artwork.

7. JACKY BAIMUNUNGBI
c. 1925 – 1979
Rembarrnga language

Namarnde Making Love with Two Wives circa 1966
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
38.2 × 28.7 inches (97 × 73 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Mudjinberri (Mudjinbardi), Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, acquired from the artist in 1966
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 23
Private Collection, acquired from the above

USD 25,000

—
'Namarnde is a general term for the various spirits which inhabit the vast rocky Arnhem Land plateau, a region which the Aborigines call "the stone country" … The artist has shown here a Namarnde spirit with his two wives. He is making love to his younger wife while the older wife waits.'

Drawn from documentation accompanying the artwork.

8. DJURRUBIGA
c. 1895 – 1972

Hunter Spearing Kangaroo 1966
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
46.5 × 25.6 inches (118 × 65 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Mudjinberri (Mudjinbardi), Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, acquired from the artist in 1966
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 31
Private Collection, acquired from the above

EXHIBITED
Australie: het land en de mensen, Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, The Netherlands, 6 October 2005 – 27 August 2006; Gyeonggi Provincial Museum, Yongin, South Korea, 18 October 2006 – 25 February 2007

USD 24,000

—
'The artist has depicted a hunter spearing a male plains kangaroo. The animal has been painted in the so-called X-ray style, with some of the internal details shown. The heart is shown, with a lung on either side, and the backbone and ribs are seen.'

Drawn from documentation accompanying the artwork.

Paperbark forest, West Arnhem Land. Photographer: Steve Strike

MICK NAMARARI TJAPALTJARRI
c. 1926 – 1998
Pintupi language

Wallaby Sign for Men and Women 1972
synthetic polymer paint on composition board
36 × 29.75 inches (91.5 × 76 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Papunya, Northern Territory
Stuart Art Centre, Alice Springs, Northern Territory
Audrey Best, United States of America, acquired from the above in 1972
Private Collection, acquired from the above

LITERATURE
Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2004, p. 405. (illus. sketch)

USD 350,000

MICK NAMARARI TJAPALTJARRI
Wallaby Sign for Men and Women 1972

Entrance to the Men's Painting Room, Papunya, 2024.
Photographer John Kean

MICK NAMARARI TJAPALTJARRI

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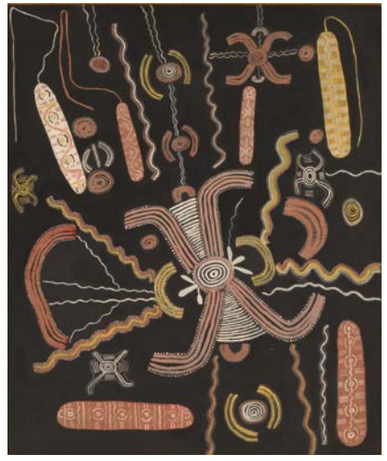
Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri (c. 1926 – 1998) is widely remembered as a founder of the contemporary Aboriginal art movement at Papunya in the early 1970s. His enduring brilliance was acknowledged on Namarari becoming the first recipient of the Australia Council's esteemed Red Ochre Award 'for his outstanding contribution to the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture at a national and international level'. Namarari was a remarkable and enigmatic artist, whose achievements, in large part, were based on lived experience in the decades before he 'sat down' at Papunya. While painting *Wallaby Sign for Men and Women* in Papunya, Namarari was musing on his ancestral Country far to the west.

Namarari's early childhood was spent in sandhill country, towards the border that now separates the Northern Territory from Western Australia. His birthplace, Marnpi, is nestled into a mythic landscape created by the actions of powerful ancestral heroes: 'This is the Red Kangaroo Dreaming place. This is the Hills Kangaroo place. This is the Owlet Nightjar [place].'[1] It wasn't until several decades after Namarari's birth that the Territory border was marked by non-Indigenous road-makers.

Far from his world being an Arcadian one, Namarari was born into a period of turmoil, when warrmala (revenge parties) provoked fear at every camp. Namarari describes the formative moment that would propel him and his family from the homelands into the contact zone of the mid twentieth century.



Eh? There is a crow and eagle flying up over there. We Anangu [Aboriginal people] know that something is dead there. He had finished [died]. I saw the tracks of my father's killer and thought, he was a warrmala man. Probably he speared my father and went.

My grandmother followed the tracks for a bit, crying as she walked. My grandmother was gashing her head in sorrow as she went. I cried and cried and cried, I was just a boy. My grandmother got a firestick and lit a big fire.

I grabbed her to pull her out but it was too late, she had already burned to death.[2]

Namarari, his mother, Maiyenu, and sisters, Ilkuka and Kurangki, buried their dead and, after a curtailed period of mourning, abandoned their Country to follow a chain of water places leading east. The bedraggled party eventually reached the spring site of Putati, where the Lutheran pastor F.W. Albrecht and Arrernte evangelist Titus Renkaraka had established a rudimentary ration depot for families migrating from the west.

It was at Putati that Maiyenu became the fourth wife of Kamatu, a powerful Pintupi leader and feared sorcerer. Under Kamatu's protection, the family followed Titus to Yamunturrngu (Mt Liebig). Here the group found themselves in the middle of an invasive anthropological research project, where scientists from the University of Adelaide were recording the intimate social relations and anthropometric measurements of a hundred Pintupi, Ngaliya and Kukatja people. The year was 1932 and the young Namarari's age was estimated as nine, though he looks younger, smiling innocently into the camera for a staged photograph intended for scientific study.[3]

Following the expedition, Renkaraka led Namarari's family to Alalpi Bore (near Haasts Bluff) and then on to Hermannsburg, where Namarari briefly attended the mission school. It is interesting to consider whether the process of copying the shape of words with chalk on a school slate, influenced Namarari's artistic vision.

Namarari's school experience was short-lived, however, for he was soon taken from his mother's camp by a group of men to be initiated into manhood. For the people of the Western Desert, initiation is a transformative event wherein the freedom of childhood is abruptly supplanted by isolation with fellow initiates, interspersed with exposure to the ceremonial reenactment of episodes from Tjukurrpa (Aboriginal Law) under the exacting discipline of senior men.

After an extended period of seclusion, Namarari returned to a traditionally oriented life, travelling with his countrymen in the Western MacDonnell Ranges. Eventually, Namarari and his age-mate Charlie Wartuma Tjungurrayi found work at Tempe Downs, a cattle station to the south of his ancestral Country.

> So he [Brian Bowman] gave us black trousers, black shirts and black hats. We looked really flash! After a while we learned to ride horses and be stockmen … Then old Brian said, 'Alright, you go out and muster bullocks now!' So we started work there.[4]

Namarari was still unfamiliar with European ways, and later told me that he threw his first pay cheque into the campfire, assuming it to be a worthless piece of paper. When he returned to Tempe Downs, Namarari was given a revolver and instructed to shoot any Aboriginal people he discovered spearing cattle. Eventually (and perhaps not surprisingly) Namarari and Wartuma abandoned their saddles and returned to their families, who had settled at Haasts Bluff station. It was at Haasts Bluff that Namarari married his first wife, Wingulya Nakamarra.

In 1948, Kamatu was accused of sorcery resulting in the death of two senior men. Despite his protestations of innocence, a warrmala party stole into the community under the cover of night and fatally speared Kamatu. Namarari lost his second father to ritual retribution.

For those of us who knew Mick Namarari as an artist, the dramatic events that shaped his youth are hard to reconcile with the warm but reserved person we encountered in his later years. While Namarari came into manhood during a period of violence, expressed on both sides of the pastoral frontier, his artistic output is characterised by the celebration of his ancestral Country.

Namarari was a consistent contributor to an intense period of artistic innovation that unfurled inside the darkened dome of the Men's Painting Room. From the beginning, Namarari's paintings possessed a lightness of touch and fullness of form, rendering his work easily distinguishable from that of his peers. The range of subjects that Namarari portrayed in these early works demonstrates that he had learned well during protracted periods of ceremonial performance and ritual isolation. As was the case with many of his fellow artists, the majority of Namarari's early paintings focus on the ceremonial celebration of a particular totemic ancestor.

The current work, *Wallaby Sign for Men and Women*, is a carefully encrypted realisation of a Wallaby Ceremony, most likely that of the Mala, (Rufus Hare-wallaby, *Lagorchestes hirsutus*).[5] *Wallaby Sign for Men and Women* is adorned with a range of icons that simultaneously signify the actions of the ancestral wallaby, and shows the configuration of ceremonial participants re-enacting an episode along the Mala songline. It should be remembered when viewing Papunya boards from this early period that the founding artists are realising complex choreographed ceremonies performed on a flat ground, under the dome of the sky, on a two-dimensional surface. This was an entirely new endeavour requiring a combination of individual innovation and active collaboration between senior men from various clans. It is the brilliance of their invention that makes the Men's Painting Room Australia's most influential atelier.

The semantics of desert iconography enabled artists to shift scale and pull focus on the most salient elements of a particular ceremony. It is the capacity to bring descriptions of ritual paraphernalia and the representation of time-based performance together into the same visual field that marks out the greatest of the Papunya artists. In this instance, with relaxed ease Namarari employs mirror-like reflection and the replication of various signs across a perfectly flat rectangular board, a form that did not exist in traditional desert culture. It should also be noted that *Wallaby Sign for Men and Women* was created before background dotting became a ubiquitous element of Papunya painting – resulting in a work where stark iconography is expressed boldly across the infinite darkness of the board on which it is painted.

Wallaby Sign for Men and Women can be located along a trajectory that reaches back to the first consignment of painted boards to leave Papunya in August 1971. That consignment consisted of seven works by a single artist, Kaapa Tjampitjinpa, and included *Mikantji* (formerly *Untitled*) 1971 (Collection of John and Barbara Wilkerson, New York) and *Mikantji and Tywerl* 1971 (National Gallery of Australia), paintings that, like *Wallaby Sign for Men and Women* 1972, show complex icons on a stark black background. According to Geoffrey Bardon (who at the time was a primary school art teacher, but who famously worked to encourage senior Papunya-based men to paint), Mick Namarari's first known representation of the Mala icon, *Wallaby Men's Emu Water Story*, was inscribed on the back of a school 'drawing slate'.[6] Significantly, Namarari's *Wallaby Men's Emu Water Story* was painted in July/August 1971, just as Kaapa was completing the batch of paintings that would comprise the first consignment. Although Kaapa's and Namarari's styles are distinctly different (Kaapa favouring more rigidly symmetrical compositions), it is clear that the artists were in dialogue during the first critical months of the painting project at Papunya.

Looking at the configuration of the individual signs and icons on *Wallaby Sign for Men and Women*, it is apparent that Mick Namarari is depicting several aspects of the Mala ceremony on the same plane. Each of these aspects requires further definition.

1. The central icon describes the key protagonist, performing in the guise of the Mala ancestor. Rather than showing the outline of the performer, Namarari replicates the body paint used by the ancestral Mala. Commencing at the outer circle of the central roundel, the body paint is conceived as being applied in parallel bands over the performer's stomach, then continuing in symmetrical arcs over both shoulders. The design signifies the lighter band of hair that forms a 'moustache' on either side of the Mala's nose. This Mala design is mirrored on both sides of the circle to create a dynamically balanced icon. This approach, of mirroring the key performer's body paint, was used to great effect by several artists during this period.[7]

2. The wide arc (on the left edge of the board) is a windbreak from which the performer emerges and commences to dance toward the central

roundel. The sinuous lines that converge on the central motif are likely to represent the approach/dance of the ancestor/performer to the epicentre of the ceremonial ground. The smaller 'U' shapes on either side of the central roundel are likely to represent the key performer at the penultimate moment of the ceremony. Although it is not depicted, an embellished pole is erected in the central circle of the roundel for the Mala ritual.[8] The adjoining organic elements are likely to represent symbolic objects fixed to the top of the pole.

3. The smaller sets of circles, each with four adjoining arcs, are the Mala women, presumably seated at a separate campfire at a distance from the men's ceremonial ground.

4. There are two classes of objects represented. Firstly, the three elongated oval objects are Turlku (sacred objects). These are believed to embody the essence of totemic ancestors. Namarari has depicted the Turlku associated with the Mala ancestors in considerable detail. These objects are manipulated in the course of the ritual. Secondly, the other similar oval objects with a string attached are bullroarers, whirled to create an uncanny sound that is used to warn all within earshot that restricted ceremony is set to commence.

Wallaby Sign for Men and Women was painted in the first few months of 1972, when the men's approach to the unfamiliar painting materials was still fluid and evolving quickly as new ways to represent ancient ceremony were invented and trialled. Geoffrey Bardon was at Papunya during this period, where he quickly sketched and documented the work before it was transported, in Bardon's Volkswagen Combi, on the long dusty 'beef road' to Alice Springs. The work was then consigned to Pat Hogan, director/owner of the Stuart Art Centre. Hogan had recently gained rights as the exclusive distributor of paintings by the 'Wailbri and Pintupi' painters of Papunya.[9] Nearly all Papunya paintings that were handled by Hogan were framed in the same manner – the painted board was directly adhered to hessian-laminated hardboard, which in turn was framed with a distinctive blonde moulding with fine black and white stripes at the inner edge. The care with which the boards were handled demonstrates that from the earliest days of the movement, Papunya paintings were treated with respect as contemporary 'ethnographic art' – the founding Papunya artists have shared some of their most precious ceremonies with the world, and in the process generated one of the last great art movements of the twentieth century.

JOHN KEAN

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1. Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, interview with John Kean, Yamunturrngu /Mt Liebig, April 1984, later translated by Ken Hansen.
2. Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, interview with Philip Batty, Walangurru/Kintore, 1992, later translated by Ken Hansen.
3. Philip Batty, 'When we first met white people: five biographies', in P. Batty (ed.), *Colliding Worlds: First Contact in the Western Desert 1932–1984*, Museum Victoria, Melbourne, 2006, p. 41.
4. Namarari, in Philip Batty, 'The extraordinary life and times of Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri: warrior, stockman, artist', in Vivien Johnson (ed.), *Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert*, National Museum of Australia Press, Canberra, 2007, pp. 17–28.
5. *Wallaby Sign for Men and Women* is named in accordance with Geoffrey Bardon's initial field notes, sketched quickly in the presence of the artist; see Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2004, p. 405.
6. Bardon and Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story*, p. 121.
7. See, Long Jack Tjakamarra, *Mala (Hare Wallaby) Dreaming* 1972, Old Walter Tjampitjinpa, *Wallaby Dreaming* 1972 and Johnny Warangula, *Rain Dreaming with Ceremonial Man* 1971, in Bardon and Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story*, pp. 404, 298 and 164 respectively.
8. Bardon, in his original notes for the painting, refers to the inner circle as a tree, in Bardon and Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story*, p. 405.
9. The Papunya artists were initially marketed under the banner 'Wailbri and Pintupi Art' in the months before the incorporation of Papunya Tula Artists, in December 1972.

ORAL HISTORY

Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, interview with John Kean, Yamunturrngu /Mt Liebig, April 1984, later translated by Ken Hansen.

Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, interview with Philip Batty, Walangurru/Kintore, 1992, later translated by Ken Hansen.

SOURCES

Philip Batty, 'The extraordinary life and times of Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri: warrior, stockman, artist', in Vivien Johnson (ed.), *Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert*, National Museum of Australia Press, Canberra, 2007, pp. 17–28.

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Philip Batty, 'When we first met white people: five biographies', in Philip Batty (ed.), *Colliding Worlds: First Contact in the Western Desert 1932–1984*, Museum Victoria, Melbourne, 2006, pp. 38–44.

Vivien Johnson, 'When Papunya paintings became art', in V. Johnson (ed.), *Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert*, pp. 29–41.

Richard G. Kimber, 'M.N. Tjapaltjarri', *Art & Australia*, vol. 36, 1999, p. 397.

John Kean, 'Papunya: place and time', in Vivien Johnson (ed.), *Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert*, pp. 5–15.

John Kean, 'Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, shimmer and shake', in Lynne Seear and Julie Ewington (eds), *Brought to Light II, Contemporary Australian Art 1966–2006*, Queensland Art Gallery Publishing, Brisbane, 2007, pp. 78–83.

John Kean, 'Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri', in *Tjukurrtjanu: Origins of Western Desert Art*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2011, pp. 104–260.

Lindums Art Gallery, *Wailpri and Pintupi Aboriginal Sand Stories*, exhibition catalogue, Lindums Art Gallery, Adelaide, 1972.

Alec B. O'Halloran, *The Master from Marnpi*, LifeDesign, Sydney, 2018.

GEORGE JOMERI
c. 1922 – 1990

Two Wanjina 1977
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
36.2 × 15.75 inches (92 × 40 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Mowanjum, Western Australia
Kim Akerman Collection
Mary Màcha, Perth
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 53
Private Collection, acquired from the above

FILMOGRAPHY
Michael Edols (dir.), *Floating ... like wind blow'em about*, Eastman colour 16mm, 72 mins, Ronin Films, Canberra, 1975

USD 30,000

Wanjina at Munurru near the
King Edward River in the Mitchell
Plateau region of the Kimberley.
Photographer: Steve Strike

GEORGE JOMERI
Two Wanjina 1977

The pair of haunting Wanjina heads that appear on this heraldic-shaped bark evoke their weathered depictions on many rock shelters on the north Kimberley plateau. The subtle use of red, black, yellow and white earth pigments gives the Wanjina a ghost-like appearance. The initial application of white pigment is likely to have been blown onto the surface of the bark from Jomeri's mouth. Floating around the cranium of each figure is a minimally decorated headdress in yellow ochre. The eyes of the top figure appear to have been intentionally positioned either side of a naturally formed crack in the bark which suggests the contour of the Wanjina's nose. A subtle red ochre outline surrounds the eyes and shapes the curved shoulders of each figure.

LUKE SCHOLES

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GEORGE JOMERI

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There are few more iconic images of Aboriginal Australia than the Wanjina figures of the remote Kimberley Regions of Western Australia. Wanjina is a generic term which refers to the spirit ancestors of the present north-west Kimberley peoples and their representation in anthropomorphic form. Wide-eyed and silent, they are characterised by halo-like headdresses and ovoid shapes upon their chest. Historically painted (and repainted) on rock shelters, these images eventually began to be portrayed upon small sheets of bark, board or slabs of sandstone.

Jomeri is first known to have painted Wanjina figures in 1970–1971; however, it wasn't until 1974 that the renowned anthropologist Kim Akerman commissioned Jomeri on behalf of Mary Màcha to produce a number of Wanjina paintings for her gallery in Perth.

In 1975, at the Mowanjum community, the filmmaker Michael Edols documented the concerns of a group of Elders who were anxious that their younger generation was 'not listening to ancestral Wanjina wisdom and the lore passed down to them …'[1] The resulting film, *Floating … like wind blow'em about*, was intended to 'hold up a mirror' to those who the Elders felt had 'left behind their Aboriginal traditions and culture'. In a scene in the film, Jomeri can be seen working on *Two Wanjina* 1975 and another bark. After the shoot was complete the paintings were abandoned in the bush area behind Mowanjum, until being later re-discovered by Akerman, who was at Mowanjum photographing an important ceremony.

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https://www.roninfilms.com.au/feature/6543/floating-like-wind-blow-em-about.html. Accessed on 20 December 2024.

JACOB
working 1954
Worrorra language

Wanjina Makes Yams Grow Up 1954
crayon on rice paper
19.7 × 14.2 inches (50 × 36 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Wotjalum, Western Australia
Collected by Joseph Birdsell, UCLA Physical Anthropologist, in the Kimberley Region at Wotjalum mission, July 1954
Thence by descent
The Thomas Vroom Collection, The Netherlands
Aboriginal Art – Thomas Vroom Collection, Sotheby's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 49
Private Collection, acquired from the above

EXHIBITED
Brook Andrew – Theme Park, Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art (AAMU), Utrecht, The Netherlands
17 October 2008 – 1 April 2009
Colours of the Kimberley, Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art (AAMU), Utrecht, 12 January 2014 – 5 October 2014

USD 18,000

JACOB
Wanjina Makes Yams Grow Up 1954

JACOB

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Wanjina Makes Yams Grow Up 1954 is a rare crayon drawing of a Wanjina spirit from the collection of the American anthropologist Joseph Birdsell.

It's creator, Jacob, was a Worrorra man living at the Wotjalum mission, Western Australia. Wotjalum was established on the Yampi Peninsula in 1951. When water supplies at the nearby mission of Kunmunya began to fail, Worrorra, Wunambal and Ngarinyin people from Kunmunya and the government-run station at Manja all relocated to Wotjalum. After a succession of other moves, the population finally settled at the present Mowanjum community, on the Gibb River Road.

Birdsell and his wife, Ester Birdsell, spent over six weeks at Wotjalum. He first encountered Jacob in late June 1954 and spent time recording his genealogy, which captured fifteen family members of the Arngognaji (possibly Arnngarrngoyu) clan. Little else is known about Jacob other than that he was related to Wattie Ngerdu, who, in the 1970s, was one of a small number of artists who begun painting Wanjina figures for the market.

Wanjina Makes Yams Grow Up 1954 and many other drawings were collected by Joseph Birdsell during the 1950s. Birdsell and his colleague Norman Tindale were part of the University of California at Los Angeles and University of Adelaide Anthropological Expedition that travelled into Western Australia between 1952 and 1954. Birdsell worked with north Kimberley people at several locations including Wotjalum. At the time, eliciting drawings from Aboriginal people was a well-established anthropological method. It was Tindale and C.P. Mountford who developed a refined approach for encouraging crayon drawings of art, iconography and maps of Country as part of their fieldwork. Their intention was to gather drawings that captured Indigenous forms of visual expression with as little outside influence as possible.

Throughout the three-year survey, more than 600 drawings were collected across the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. Almost all were deposited into the collection of the South Australian Museum. Birdsell is known to have put aside three drawings for his own private collection, of which *Wanjina Makes Yams Grow Up*, one of the final drawings collected, was one.

The title of this work, and the summary of the information it contains, was attributed by Kim Akerman, an esteemed anthropologist who spent his life's work travelling and researching the Kimberley Region. Akerman located a near-identical drawing by a member of the Worrorra people, and transcribed annotations from the South Australian Museum's example.

When writing about this work and the two other drawings from the Birdsell Collection, Akerman noted:

> This and the following two drawings are a very important part of our understanding of the changes in the art history of the region, and they do have an aesthetic appeal that is quite their own. This work is virtually identical to the one held in the South Australian Museum collections. The fact that, apart from other similar elements, the unusual construction of the asymmetrical feature (similar to a shoulder holster) occurs in both images reinforces the belief that not only were both drawings done by the same artist but that they represent a specific individual – for which the shoulder feature may be a defining element.

Jacob's figure is shown holding what is possibly the leaf of a yam that has been eaten. Other leaves from the yam plant are shown to the side of the figure. Historically, Worrorra people's diet consisted mainly of various kinds of tubers or yams (inja karnmangku), dug up by women; these seem to have provided the mainstay and bulk of what people ate. As creator beings, Wanjina are primarily associated with rain and seasonal regeneration. The ability of Wanjina to impact upon the latter relates to the title attributed to this work: *Wanjina Makes Yams Grow Up*. Yams are sometimes depicted in Wanjina rock art, and the body of a large Wanjina figure may be covered with smaller Wanjina heads that represent edible yam roots.

The bands around the neck of Jacob's figure identify the Wanjina's collarbone, beneath which an ovoid shape depicts its heart. Remarkably, Jacob displays his Wanjina figure with a mouth. Of the hundreds of painted iterations of the Wanjina and its associated spirit figures on rock shelters throughout the Kimberley, few, if any, have mouths. Different cultural groups offer varied reasons as to why. In some western Wanjina areas, the Rainbow Serpent is said to have sealed the lips of the Wanjina. Elsewhere it is said that if figures were repainted with mouths, it would rain incessantly. The reasons as to why Jacob included a mouth in his drawing are impossible to determine. Later, toward the end of his life, Charlie Numbulmoore, began to include the mouth and teeth in Wanjina paintings he made.

ROVER THOMAS JOOLAMA
c. 1926 – 1998
Kukatja and Wangkajunga languages

Kankamkankami 1990
earth pigment and bush gum on linen
35.4 × 70.9 inches (90 × 180 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Turkey Creek, Western Australia
Commissioned by Mary Màcha
Janet Holmes à Court, Perth
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, Melbourne, 25 July 2005, lot 132
Private Collection, Sydney, acquired from the above by private treaty sale

LITERATURE
Belinda Carrigan (ed.), *Rover Thomas: I Want to Paint*, Holmes à Court Gallery, Perth, 2003, pp. 37, 74 (illus.)

EXHIBITED
Rover Thomas: I Want to Paint, National Gallery of Victoria, 3 June – 17 August 2003; Bendigo Art Gallery, 13 December 2003 – 26 January 2004; Art Gallery of New South Wales, 21 February – 9 May 2004; Art Gallery of South Australia, 24 September – 28 November 2004; Art Gallery of Western Australia, 18 December 2004 – 6 March 2005

USD 600,000

ROVER THOMAS JOOLAMA
Kankamkankami 1990

ROVER THOMAS JOOLAMA

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The work of Rover Thomas has come to define the broad aesthetic of the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. Rover's origins, however, lie south in the Great Sandy Desert, where he was born at Gunawaggi near Well 33 on the Canning Stock Route. His father was a Wangkajunga man, and his mother was Kukatja. Together they travelled around Western Australia and the Northern Territory working on cattle stations, until they settled on Gija Country at Warmun near Turkey Creek when Rover was about ten. Sometime in the 1940s, while living at Billiluna Station in the south Kimberley, Rover was initiated into men's lore.

Later he returned to live and work as a travelling stockman in the Kimberley, where, as with many contemporary Aboriginal artists, he began painting late in life. The catalyst was a sequence of dreams Rover experienced in 1975, in which he was visited by a recently deceased female relative. She warned of the decline of Aboriginal cultural practices, suggesting that a destructive cyclone that had recently levelled the city of Darwin was retribution from an ancestral Rainbow Serpent. Initially Rover implored his classificatory uncle Paddy Jaminji to paint related imagery onto a series of wooden boards for use in the Gurirr-Gurirr (Kurrir-Kurrir) ceremony that he hoped would quell the serpent. Soon after, Rover and Jaminji collaborated on paintings on board, before Rover commenced his own practice. Pivotal to his development was his relationship with Mary Màcha, who was based in the Kimberley as a field officer for the Department of Employment. This marked the beginning of an intense creative period that would establish him as one of Australia's most distinguished and recognised painters.

Bungle Bungles, Kimberely Region.
Photographer: Steve Strike

The following text on the subject of this painting, Kankamkankami, is based upon information provided to Mary Màcha by the anthropologist Dr Patricia Vinnicombe.

Kankamkankami is an ancestral Mirriwung woman responsible for the creation of the landscape around Texas Downs Station in Western Australia. Kankamkankami created a range of mountains and associated springs flanking the southern edge of the valley in which the homestead at Texas Downs is located. The sites associated with men (Snake Dreaming) are on the northern side of the valley. The sites associated with women (Kankamkankami Dreaming) are on the southern side.

Kankamkankami is strongly associated with the origins of male initiation. During the Ngarranggarni (The Dreaming in Gija language), Kankamkankami abducted two boys who were preparing to be circumcised in accordance with male initiatory practice. Jealous because she wanted to perform the ceremony, and possibly initiate the boys herself, Kankamkankami pushed the boys down a deep hole she had created with her digging stick, hiding them from their family.

The boys were eventually located by their distressed family, who pursued Kankamkankami east over the Ord River and onto what is now Newry Station in the Northern Territory. Here the family speared Kankamkankami to death.

Whenever Kankamkankami's story is retold, it is always accompanied with a repetitive ditty which is sung over and over again, much to the enjoyment of children.

'Kankamkankami, Kankamkankami ngaya yayi yayi' or *'Kankamkankami, Kankamkankami, Ya bo bo'*.

The vertical line that bisects Rover's austere depiction of the Kankamkankami narrative may represent the range of mountains Kankamkankami created. The dotted circle may be the hole she trapped the boys within or one of the springs she formed with her digging stick.

LUKE SCHOLES

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY
c. 1914 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Untitled – Summer Transition 1991
synthetic polymer paint on linen
51.2 × 90.6 inches (130 × 230 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Delmore Downs, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 1T16
Hogarth Galleries, Sydney
Private Collection, Sydney
Tim Klingender Fine Art, Sydney
Private Collection, Sydney, acquired from the above in 2023

LITERATURE
Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Tim Klingender Fine Art, Sydney, New South Wales, pp. 2, 11, 12 (illus.)

EXHIBITED
Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Tim Klingender Fine Art, Sydney, New South Wales, 7 – 10 September 2023

USD 850,000

Emily Kam Kngwarray being painted by Alice Kngwarray with Alhalker awely designs, 1982. Photographer: Penny Tweedie © Penny Tweedie/Alamy Stock Photo, 2025

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY
Untitled – Summer Transition 1991

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

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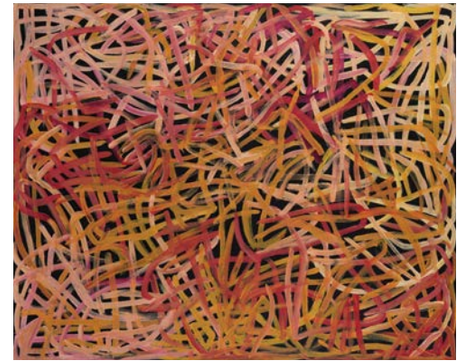
Emily Kam Kngwarray was born around 1914 at Alhalker on the edge of Utopia cattle station in Anmatyerr Country, approximately 250 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. Her phenomenal rise to prominence in the global contemporary art landscape continues to gain momentum, with a major retrospective to be presented at the Tate Modern, London, in July this year, 2025. From the late 1980s, and in her late years, Kngwarray, a revered Anmatyerr Elder who was born and raised in country devoid of impinging settler influence, activated her cultural obligations through painting, producing a powerful body of work. Kngwarray grew up acutely attuned to the riches of her central desert home, its seasonality and her place within its cycles. By the time she started painting in her late seventies, Kngwarray was a keeper of significant ancestral knowledge and the co-caretaker of sacred sites in the boundaries of her Country, all aspects of which informed her life and her painting.

The two works *Untitled – Summer Transition* 1991 and *Awelye II* 1995 were painted at Delmore Downs, a large property and cattle station to the south-east of Kngwarray's traditional Country Alhalker. Accompanied by her family, Kngwarray would paint on the grounds of the homestead

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY
Awelye II 1995



with materials supplied by the Delmore Downs station managers Donald and Janet Holt. The vast body of work that Kngwarray produced between 1989 and 1996 was a homage to her physical and spiritual home, a constant source of inspiration – and, reciprocally, she protected and nurtured her Country through the act of painting. The number of stylistic transitions that emerged and evolved over this eight-year period reflected Kngwarray's vast knowledge of Alhalker's biological and botanical diversity paired with the constant modification of her art practice by her aging hand. From her early stippled fields of colour to the concluding brushstrokes in her last series, a remarkable physical and spiritual strength flowed into her paintings.

Although Kngwarray was in her eighties, through the power of her hands, arms, shoulders and upper torso from engaging in many years of ceremonial dancing and body painting, and from manual labour such as driving camels as a young woman, her paintbrush was an active extension of her body. The technical roots of Kngwarray's painting practice are also founded in the laborious method of batik, a medium introduced to the women of the Central Australian region of Utopia in 1977. With no local batik tradition in Australia, the artists could improvise on this new technique, adapting the practice to suit the sociable, transient and informal domesticity of camp life. For Kngwarray, then already close to seventy, the process of batik – building up layers of hot wax and boiling silks in drums – was both time-consuming and arduous. The physical strain and the lack of spontaneity of this medium were the catalysts for her move to canvas over the summer of 1988–1989. Her early paintings reflect the loose and layered processes of her batik designs, where the hot wax would call for a hastened pace to represent the above-ground and below-ground life of her totem – the anwerlarr – pencil yam.

Kngwarray painted *Untitled – Summer Transition* in March 1991 at the beginning of the southern autumn. During this seasonal change, the late summer rains have ceased, and the land is teeming with abundant fruits, flowers and plants before settling into a long, dry, cold winter. In this work, the sharp, tight clusters of dots that appeared in earlier works begin to enlarge and soften in a new technique that captures the scale and breadth of the anwerlarr tubers as well as the emu's activity above ground, which is connected to the yam's increase and propagation. Fluctuating points of colour, such as yellow ochre, viridian, ultramarine and indigo, invoke a vision of a lush landscape and the profusion of seeds and their blossoming. The gestural application and texture of the paint evoke the process of hand painting ochre onto women's bodies for ceremony and the repeated rhythm of the accompanying song verses.

By 1995, Kngwarray had moved swiftly through several stylistic transitions. Her various styles of dotting evolved from the measured, precise and intense built-up layers, softening, flattening and merging as they morphed and changed, until, eventually, the dots disappeared altogether. Kngwarray painted *Awelye II* in September 1995 during her last stylistic period of tangled painterly strokes, where she replaced the practice of repetitive dotting with the more economic qualities of the line. The under-tracking of the yam roots characteristic of her early paintings had returned as the singular focus, the pared-back paintings produced during this late period being associated with the body paint designs that were applied to the breasts and arms of women during their participation in increase ceremonies, rather than the observation of the changing seasons in the landscape. The anwerlarr yam that grows on the side of the creek banks of her Country would maintain its prominence throughout her paintings, though, for the seeds and seed pods of the yam – kam – are part of Kngwarray's identity and never left her focus.

No other First Nations Australian artist has captivated the local and international imagination like Emily Kam Kngwarray. In her short yet prolific late-stage career, she pushed the possibilities of dot and line to chart an evolution in individual mark-making and painting practice. Since her passing in 1996, Kngwarray's work has been included in numerous significant exhibitions in Australia and abroad, including *fluent* at the Australian Pavillion at the 47th Venice Biennale in 1997, her first retrospective, *Alhalkere – Paintings from Utopia*, at the Queensland Art Gallery in 1998, *Utopia: the Genius of Emily Kam Kngwarreye* in Canberra, Osaka and Tokyo in 2008, and the most recent, *Emily Kam Kngwarray*, presented by the National Gallery of Australia in 2023–2024.

Kngwarray's fame was immediate. From the first solo exhibition presented at Utopia Art, Sydney, in 1990, her work has been included in exhibitions annually. Kngwarray, though, understood the extraordinary impact of her paintings and the enthusiasm of her increasingly broad audiences to be an appreciation of none other than the riches and beauty of her Country, Alhalker, itself.

VANESSA MERLINO

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Jennifer Isaacs et al., *Emily Kam Kngwarreye: Paintings*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1998.
Kelli Cole et al., *Emily Kam Kngwarray*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2023.

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY
c. 1914 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Awelye II 1995
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
48 × 60 inches (121.9 × 152.4 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Delmore Downs, Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 95I034
Barry Stern Gallery, Sydney
Private Collection, New York, acquired from the above
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, New York, 25 May 2022, lot 52
Private Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above

USD 600,000

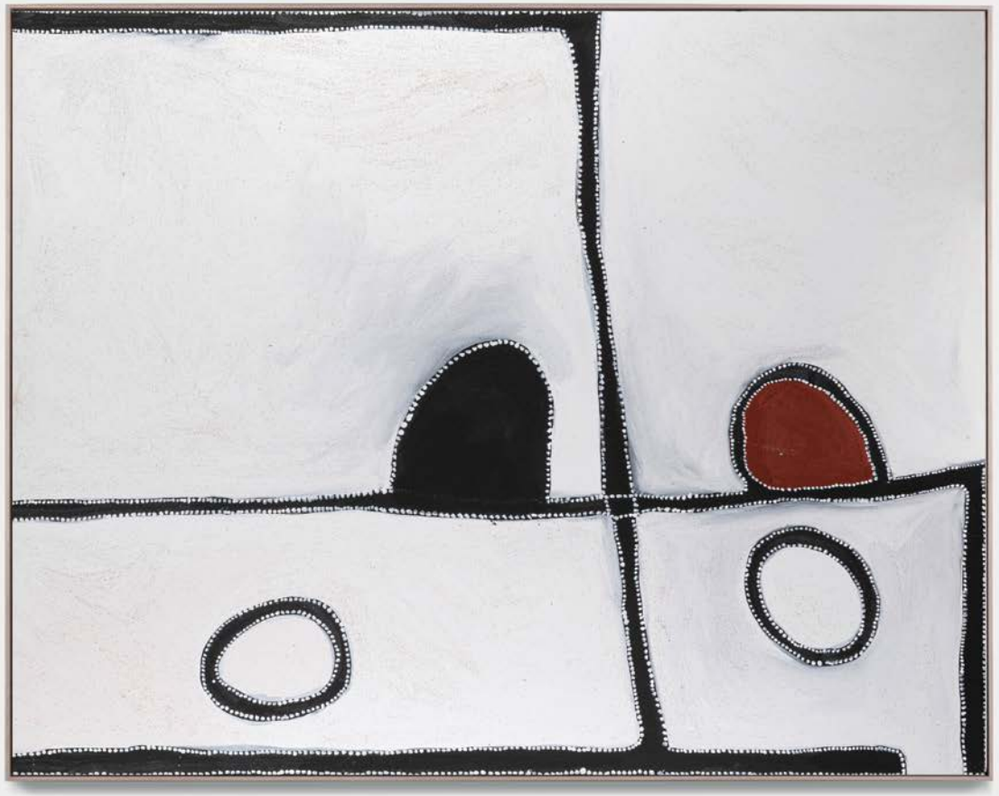
PADDY BEDFORD
c. 1922 – 2007
Gija language

Jamelayigoon – Fig Tree Hole 2003
earth pigment, synthetic polymer paint and synthetic binder on linen
59 × 70.8 inches (150 × 180 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia
Jirrawun Arts, Western Australia, cat. no. PB 7 2003.153 – as inscribed verso
Raft Art Space, Darwin
Private Collection, Adelaide, acquired from the above in 2003

LITERATURE
Linda Michael (ed.), *Paddy Bedford*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006, p. 153 (illus.)

USD 280,000



Paddy Bedford painting on the verandah in Kununurra, 2004. Photographer: Georges Petitjean

PADDY BEDFORD

—

As with many senior First Nations culture keepers who turn to painting, Goowoomji Nyunkuny Paddy Bedford's deep cultural knowledge was a strong impetus for his late-life painting practice. He started painting for traditional ceremony at an early age and gained a deep respect for customary law through this practice. He conservatively observed its restrictions throughout his painting career, creating a visual language that brought East Kimberley painting to the world, without compromising traditional Gija conventions.

Paddy Bedford bestrode the gulf between black and white nations by applying his laws. Goowoomji asserted Gija terrain with dignity and authority, set a precedent for financial liberation and was an arbiter for brutal truths. In the 1970s, he took part in new forms of cultural assertion, playing an active role in ceremony during a period of creative and cultural turbulence in the Kimberley. Joining Jirrawun Arts in 1998, he was a catalyst for the formation of a vision by a small group of Gija Elders to control their identity and create unique visual art forms without compromising cultural law and tradition.

In 2004, at the Victorian Registry at the Federal Court of Australia, Paddy Bedford addressed the senior judges present with an introduction as poignant as it was formidable:

> *Hello ladies and gentlemen. My name is Paddy Bedford. I know black fella law. I know white fella law. I am the Law.*[1]

To those who witnessed this event, it was a compelling assertion of his personification of Law in the presence of white law personified. Unintimidated but not irreverent, Paddy Bedford, the artist and lawman, extended his hand to those he saw as equals in their obligation to the legal systems and practices that steer the destinies of people. Like the men and women before him, Paddy Bedford was an embodiment of Law – traditional, cultural and spiritual, which was lived rather than written. His mandate, however, set him apart from the senior judges in his presence, for his life, like his paintings, involved seeking to rebalance cultural obligation and agency against the violent and disruptive history of settler encroachments on his land.

Paddy Bedford, known to family and kin as Nyunkuny or Goowoomji in his own Gija language, was born around 1922 at Old Bedford Downs Station, south-east of Warmun (Turkey Creek) in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. The pastoralists who colonised this area of Gija Country gave it the name 'Bedford' in the late nineteenth century. Some years before Nyunkuny's birth, Bedford Downs had been the site of a massacre of Gija people ordered by the station manager. A number of the artist's relatives were poisoned with strychnine in retaliation for killing a cow, and their bodies were subsequently burned.

The station manager, Paddy Quilty, who was responsible for giving the order for the massacre,

gave Nyunkuny's Western name, 'Paddy', to him at his time of birth. This act reflects the disaffecting conditions in which Bedford's family lived, which is how most First Nations Australian people experienced life in the region, known to white settlers at this time as the 'last frontier'. Although not the only massacre to have occurred in the region, this particular event has had its memory kept alive by the Gija people and was a significant subject in Paddy Bedford's art.

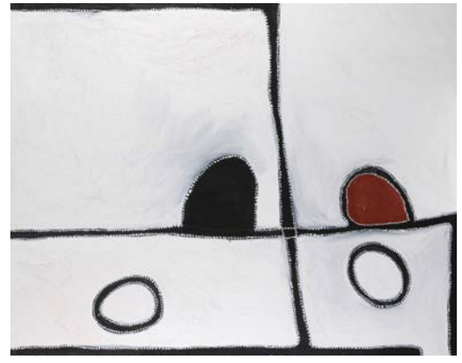
In 2000, Paddy Bedford, together with fellow artist Timmy Timms, revealed the existence of a Joonba, a traditional song and dance cycle, that told the story of the Bedford Downs massacre to outsiders for the first time. More explicit than his paintings, though equally commanding, the public performance of the Joonba demanded reconciliation on occupied lands, a demand that, to this day, resonates within Bedford's painted canvases.

Bedford's perfectly balanced paintings are rich with multifaceted and intricate layers that also transcend the brutalities of colonial history. He paints places from his mother and father's traditional lands that are of great significance in Gija Country through their connection to the Ngarranggarni – in the Gija language of the East Kimberley – the Dreaming and its narratives. They encapture landscape features, the deeds of the ancestral beings during the ever-present dimension of the Ngarranggarni – and the superimposed and overlapping histories of the mortal and recent past.

Jamelayigoon – Fig Tree Hole 2003 depicts one of the most important ancestral sites Paddy Bedford painted. It is a large cave high on the rock face on his father's Country, which lies north of Lerndijwaneman – Lighting Creek – and is the home of Woonyioorroony, the ancestral Rock Wallaby. Bedford has described people climbing up the rock face to the cave with the help of a forked stick to hunt for wallabies and to take refuge in times of inter-group fighting.[2] Although drawing on the ancestral past, Paddy Bedford's paintings were not direct invocations of the Ngarranggarni. Instead, the Ngarranggarni was the living narrative that guided his hand to paint without hesitation, powering his abstract forms and, in turn, renewing its present.

In the painting *Mendoowoorrji – Medicine Pocket* 2004, Bedford evokes the narrative that embodies a hillscape that stretches between the sites of Thoonbi and Thoowoonggoonarrin on his mother's Country and an important camping place for Gija families before the arrival of Europeans. Here, two men in ancestral times fought violently with sticks and became the landscape. The 'living water' found along these hills is suggested by the luminosity or transparency of his paint, achieved though his wet-on-wet technique, which requires a fast method of application. This became a characteristic of his paintings made after 2004, most likely as a result of Bedford working consistently in gouache as a fluid and spontaneous practice alongside his larger paintings on canvas.[3]

PADDY BEDFORD
Jamelayigoon – Fig Tree Hole 2003



PADDY BEDFORD
Mendoowoorrji – Medicine Pocket 2004

Not only did Paddy Bedford embody the eternal presence of the Ngarranggarni, but also the changes and developments necessary to help his people live alongside white man's law. His faith and hope in 'two way', the Gija expression for reconciliation, was a magnetic force that engaged those around him in helping create the support structures that would protect and preserve his legacy. What he stood for – his people, history and culture – he attested in his exquisite abstract paintings. The impeccably balanced compositions of his mother's and father's Country, felt far beyond his homeland, became the most potent vehicle for advocating reconciliation. The innovation and experimentation that was fundamental to his practice as a contemporary artist and the meticulous way in which his estate was designed would assure the efficacy of his advocacy. For Goowoomji was 'the Law', and in considering the faceted meanings he conveyed, one can better understand his life and work. His sense of innovation and experimentation, applied within the obligations of Gija law and tradition, sets Paddy Bedford among the greatest Australian First Nations artists.

VANESSA MERLINO

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1. As witnessed and related by Peter Seidel, Co-executor, Estate of Paddy Bedford, and Partner, Public Interest Law, Arnold Bloch Leibler.
2. Frances Kofod, in Linda Michael (ed.). *Paddy Bedford*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006, p. 133.
3. Georges Petitjean, 'In his Dreams', in *Bonhams Magazine*, issue 29, Winter 2011, p. 14.

PADDY BEDFORD
c. 1922 – 2007
Gija language

Mendoowoorrji – Medicine Pocket 2004
earth pigment, synthetic polymer paint and synthetic binder on linen
59 × 70.8 inches (150 × 180 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia
Jirrawun Arts, Western Australia, cat. no. PB 6 2004.173 – as inscribed verso
Private Collection, Adelaide, acquired from the above in 2004

LITERATURE
Linda Michael (ed.), *Paddy Bedford*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006, p. 154 (illus.)

USD 280,000

CARLENE WEST
c. 1944 – 2021
Pitjantjatjara language

Tjitjiti 2015
synthetic polymer paint on linen
78.75 × 54 inches (200 × 137.2 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted in Tjuntjuntjara, Western Australia
Spinifex Arts Project, Western Australia, cat. no. 15-28
Japingka Gallery, Western Australia
Sims Dickson Collection, New South Wales, acquired from the above

EXHIBITED
Truth: Then Now Everywhen, University of Newcastle Galleries, 1 July – 3 September 2022
Ancient Stories New Narratives, Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, 12 May – 1 July 2018

USD 120,000

Carlene West, Tjuntjuntjara,
Western Australia.
Photographer: Stephen Oxenbury

CARLENE WEST

—

The Spinifex Artists are a singular proposition in the pantheon of Aboriginal art, yet one that sheds light on the wider creative currents of desert painting. The art project having been founded in the deeply political processes of land rights, of making visible those rights, Spinifex paintings express – in their iconographic reverie and more recent arcs of abstraction – the artistic foundations of a fiercely held belonging.

Carlene West was a torch bearer in this incandescent art history. Her outsized life and paintings came to embody both her powerful character and the equally unique Country from which she was born and to which she returned.

She was born under a tree, under another name, in the sandhills on the western edge of Tjitjiti, a salt lake rimmed by high red dunes that rise like rusted bleachers around a stage. One of those dunes, the softest and the highest, juts out into the middle of a dry white sea: a desert island as improbable as it is beautiful. From here the lake gives off its own light. Tjitjiti is majestically strange Country.

Desert salt lakes tend to have big stories. They attract them. These stark white disks shimmering unexplained in the landscape are magnetic and unsettling places, often inflected with power and danger in desert religion and law. Tjitjiti is no different. It is fretted by story: several Tjukurpa (Dreamings, ancestral narratives) such as the Crow or the Moon waltz around each other in time and space. A favourite theme in Carlene's paintings, as in *Tjitjiti* 2015, is the interaction of the Quoll Man (Native Cat) and the Two Women.

Carlene was born into these ancient stories in the mid 1940s and spent her early years travelling the desert on foot with her family. In the late 1950s, with the fear of atomic testing at Maralinga spreading from the east, and missionaries setting up base in the south, Spinifex people began to feel and see the imminent incursions of another world. For Carlene, her family encountered missionary Bob Stewart in 1959 and was taken to the relative safety of Cundeelee Mission.

> We were some of the last people to come in. Others went earlier. Stewart came and picked us up [in the jeep]. We thought it was a big wind carrying us. We were holding on and were frightened. We were frightened about the bomb and didn't go back.[1]

From that fearful first car ride, the borders of her childhood world were forever breached. By the end of that year, Carlene was a teenage girl, wearing clothes, learning English and going to school on a Christian mission, far to the south of the only life she knew. It would be thirty years before she returned to Spinifex Country, forty years before the Australian state recognised her people as the owners of that land, and even longer before she saw her childhood home again.

It was around 2009 when the Spinifex people were finally able to relocate and carve a road through the bush back to Tjitjiti. Having last seen

CARLENE WEST
Tjitjiti 2015

her homeland as a girl, Carlene returned some fifty years later, to leave her adult footprints here for the first time. With a new road home, the artist and her family spent more and more time here in the shade of giant sandhills, on the horizonless lake, in the thick of her story again.

These movements of departure and determined return, of a life flanked by the embrace of a salt lake, are key to understanding Carlene's career as an artist. Her first painting in 1997 was of Tjitjiti: a central circle, enclosed by a square of four circles and the lines connecting them. The painting was unremarkable, formulaic, as were most of her early works. Perhaps they were an ideal, rather than a creative conviction, of what painting Tjitjiti should be. We see this, in retrospect, because everything changed in those pictures of the lake after Carlene came back to it.

From 2010, her works become less dependent upon the formal conventions of desert painting, unlocked by the aesthetics and poetics of the place. The spatial and narrative relationship between the lake, the sandhills and other landforms is examined and explored through an increasingly rich narrative iconography. The footprints of the old women, the footprints of the child, return.

The key transformation in Carlene's painting in this period is the introduction of white fields. The blinding expanse of the lake that dominates the physical experience at Tjitjiti becomes an increasingly prominent and resonant part of her compositions. More than that, the shape of the lake becomes a pivotal part of the artist's personal iconography. Tjitjiti, like an astral and trajectory of everything around it. It fills and empties, expands and contracts in concert with the forms that constellate these canvases.

In this dance of abstraction, narrative decouples from form. Dots wander away from the forms they traditionally outlined, becoming trails, footprints, tracks across the lake. The iconographic and narrative forms tend to recede from the surface of the lake. It is not insignificant that this late period in Carlene's career, when her painting was at its most vivid, coincided with the onset of Alzheimer's. Tjitjiti becomes as it was in the Tjukurpa, the arena for struggles with memory and meaning.

Abstraction takes many forms. The arc of life in the desert is not of progress toward an end, but of return. It is a process of returning to the place where you began – not of going up, or down, but of going back in – and becoming one with your Country again when your skin and bones are done. That is why the lake is everything in these late paintings. Carlene paints the lake, but the lake gives her form. Tjitjiti. Her dots go for walks there, following trails, thoughts, diversions, confusions, memories; she steps through her Country in the act of painting it. She paints herself back in, in the footsteps of the ancestral women and child from her earlier paintings (*Tjitjiti* 2015). She is all of it. Carlene's marks are the traces of meaningful action; of the actions that made the world, and that continue to make the world meaningful; of the artist becoming an ancestor. We stand witness, without the words for this, blinking on the bright shore of a dry lake.

JOHN CARTY

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1. Quoted in Scott Cane, *Pila Nguru: The Spinifex People*, Fremantle Art Centre Press, Fremantle, WA, 2002.

This writing is adapted from the essay 'Carlene West', in John Carty and Luke Scholes (eds), *Sun and Shadow: Art of the Spinifex People*, Upswell Press, Perth, 2023.

NOŊGIRRŊA MARAWILI
c. 1939 – 2023
Yolŋu language

Baratjala 2019
earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
79.1 × 33.1 inches (201 × 84 cm)

PROVENANCE
The Artist, created at Yirrkala, Northern Territory
Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, Northern Territory, cat. no. 1949-19
Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, cat. no. AK21967
Private Collection, Switzerland

LITERATURE
Nonggirrnga Marawili Pink Lightning, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, 2019, p. 4 (illus.)

EXHIBITED
Nonggirrnga Marawili Pink Lightning, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, 20 November – 20 December 2019
22nd Biennale of Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2020

USD 150,000

Noŋgirrŋa Marawili, image courtesy
of Buku Larrŋgay Mulka Centre

NOŊGIRRŊA MARAWILI

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Noŋgirrŋa Marawili was a widely celebrated senior Yolŋu artist with connections to the Djapu and Gälpu clans of north-east Arnhem Land in Australia's Northern Territory. She is known for her courageous attitude toward form, medium and storytelling in her depictions of her ancestral Country. Evolving and strengthening over the course of her career, Marawili's practice maintained a clear focus on thematic expression that connected her personal experience, history and culture.

The great legacy of north-east Arnhem Land art and visual culture of which Marawili is part starts with a long tradition of bark painting focused on specific designs that relate to constituent clans of the area. Marawili's father, Mundukuḻ, the Maḏarrpa warrior (c. 1890 – c. 1950), was a famed Yolŋu leader with wives of the Marrakulu, Dhuḏi Djapu and Gälpu clans. Mundukuḻ is also noted as being one of the first generation of artists from the region to share their bark painting with anthropologists such as Donald Thomson and to have their art held in institutional collections.

Marawili was highly respected in her community, and was knowledgeable in two educational systems – a practitioner in the bush as well as in educational institutions. She was a prolific producer of art; her work includes bark paintings, larrakitj (memorial pole), carvings and limited-edition prints. She began painting in the 1990s, assisting her husband, Djutjadjutja Munuŋgurr, who was a Djapu statesman and celebrated bark painter. Noŋgirrŋa was responsible for in-filling her husband's miny'tji (designs) with meticulous diamond cross-hatching, a knowledge and skill she would later pass on to her two daughters, Marrnyula and Rerrkirrwaŋa, who both became celebrated artists in their own right. Djutjadjutja won best bark painting at the prestigious National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards 1997 with a monumental bark to which Marawili contributed.[1]

Later in her solo career, Marawili began painting the story of Baratjala, a bay off the Gulf of Carpentaria along Australia's northern coastline that belongs to her people, the Maḏarrpa clan. Painting Baratjala bay signalled a subtle cultural shift and a significant aesthetic turn in Marawili's painting; the looser compositions and iconography in these works were a departure from painting strictly within the bounds of her clan designs, with a shift toward depicting personal experiences. Marawili won the bark painting prize at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards in 2015, the same year the artist began painting this site. In the paintings that depict Baratjala, Marawili draws from childhood memories when she went camping on the beach with her father, Mundukuḻ. Her father's name means 'Lighting Snake', which is also the name of the serpent or Water Python – Burrut'tji – which lives deep within the sea at this place. These designs show the rock submerged in the cyclonic, crocodile-infested water between the electric 'curse' that the snake spits into the sky in the form of lightning, and the spray of the sea trying to shift the immovable

OPPOSITE:
NOŊGIRRŊA MARAWILI
Baratjala 2019 (detail)

rock foundation of the Maḏarrpa. Yurr'yunna is the word used to describe the rough waves overtopping the rock and the spray flying into the sky. The serpent is said to 'spit' lightning – guykthun, which has the extended meaning 'to make something sacred or taboo through saying magic words'.[2]

The move toward her own personal style of art making continued for the artist in early 2018, when Marawili became the first Yolŋu artist to incorporate toner ink in her work.[3] She mixed the toner from discarded magenta print cartridges with earth pigments to create a signature shade of pink that has now become synonymous with the late period of her oeuvre, which aligned with a new local art movement. The Found movement, sparked by Marawili and her contemporaries at the Buku Larrŋgay Mulka Centre at Yirrkala, established an innovative attitude toward art making where non-traditional materials found in the landscape are embraced and used to continue the stories and clan miny'tji (designs) of Yolŋu ancestors. This genre led to massive popular and critical acclaim in a major retrospective of her work, *Noŋgirrŋa Marawili: From My Heart and Mind*, curated by Cara Pinchbeck, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2018, followed by successive shows at Alcaston Gallery in Melbourne.[4]

The spectacular *Baratjala* 2019 was included in *NIRIN*, the 22nd Biennale of Sydney, in 2020, alongside a tightly curated selection of works which focused on Marawili's descriptive rather than sacred depictions of this part of Cape Shield. Adhering to the exclusive use of earth pigments, this bark painting captures all the ferocity of huge tides and ripping currents and the sacred power of lightning strikes that fill the sky in the Top End with light and energy during the wet season, which is unmatched anywhere else in Australia. Marawili's creative spirit continues to reverberate in the work of established and emerging artists working at the Buku Larrŋgay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala and shapes the regional aesthetic of contemporary north-east Arnhem Land art.

ISABELLA WADLEY

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1. Drawn from the Buku Larrŋgay Mulka Centre documentation.
2. Drawn from the Buku Larrŋgay Mulka Centre documentation.
3. Myles Russell-Cook, *Bark Ladies: Eleven Artists from Yirrkala*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2022.
4. Noŋgirrŋa Marawili, *Noŋgirrŋa Marawili: From My Heart and Mind*, edited by Cara Pinchbeck et al., Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2018, p. 11.

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ABOUT
Established in 2016, D'Lan Contemporary presents exceptional modern and contemporary art by leading and emerging First Nations artists at its galleries in Melbourne, Sydney and New York alongside an international program of exhibitions, educational talks and events that celebrate and promote the rich art and culture of Australian First Nations peoples.

ETHICS
D'Lan Contemporary maintains strict ethical practices and is committed to creating a sustainable marketplace for this important segment of Australian art and culture. The gallery contributes 30% of its annual net profits to artists, artist projects and their 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 ART (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 Scougall – 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.

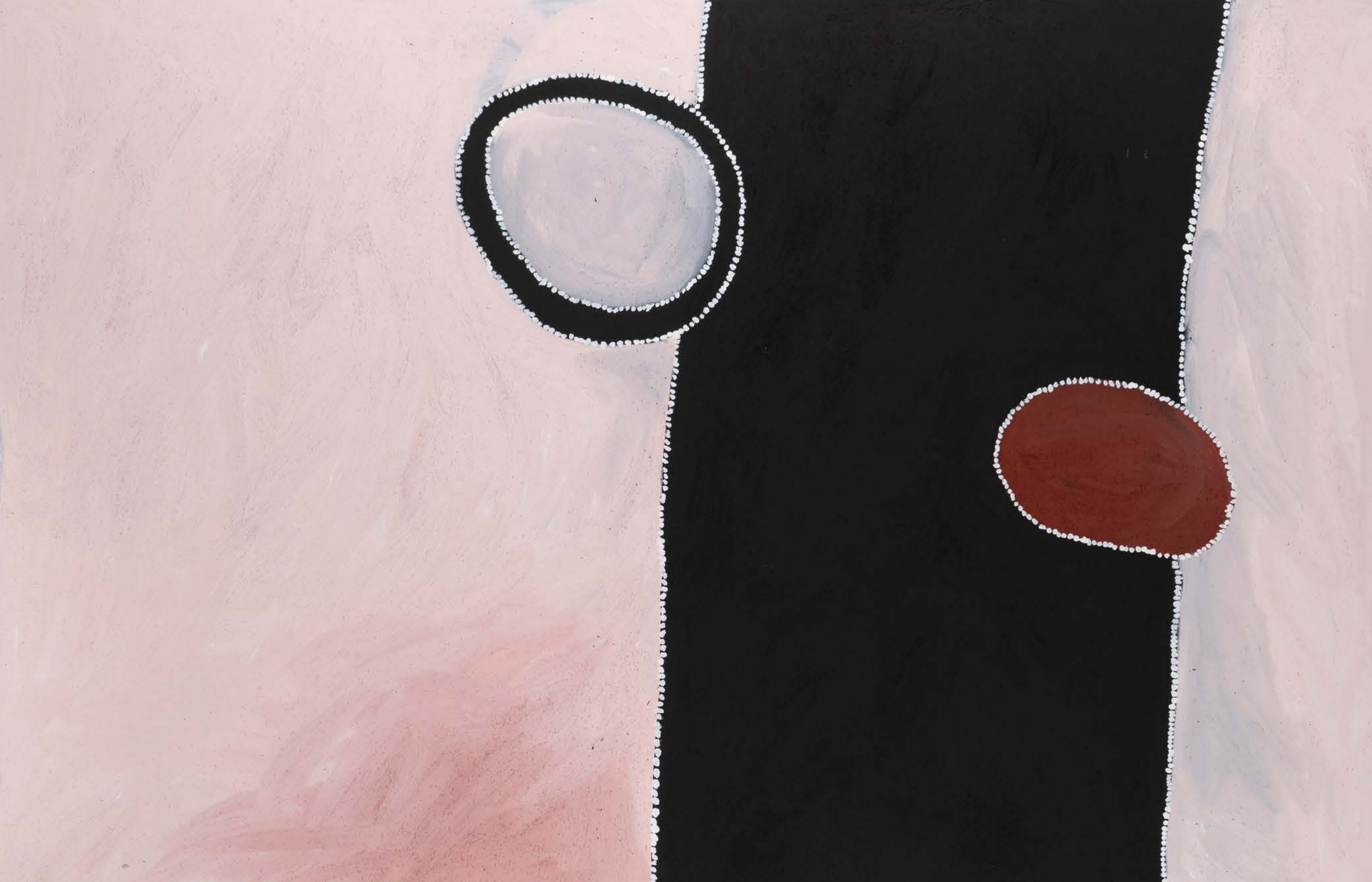
Best practice in this segment is to obtain advice from a trusted industry expert before buying or selling.

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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