D LAN

GALLERIES

TEFAF Maastricht 2026

Angelina Pwerle
Emily Kam Kngwarray
Gordon Bennett
Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula
Kitty Kantilla
Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra
Makinti Napanangka AM
Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri
Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori
Paddy Bedford

THE PULSE OF COUNTRY: CULTURAL NARRATIVES AT THE HEART OF INDIGENOUS ART

Myles Russell-Cook

Long before the arrival of the British, Australia was home to many diverse Indigenous nations, each with its own language and artistic practices. With over 250 language groups, Indigenous peoples used art as a means of conveying cultural narratives. Through artistic expression, such as painting, sculpture and weaving, they transmitted knowledge, preserved stories and established connections to the environment, known today as 'Country'.

The word 'Country' is a complex and ultimately untranslatable concept. It might best be understood as the nexus of land, water, sky, animals, bodies and Law. Capitalised, 'Country' signifies a living, sentient entity that requires both physical and spiritual care, and is intricately tied to a person's identity and ancestral links to place.

Indigenous histories and art-making traditions have been marked by significant milestones. At least 65,000 years ago, the first Aboriginal peoples walked onto the continent, establishing diverse cultures and traditions. For millennia, they lived within the changing landscape, bearing witness to ice ages and continental shifts. Indigenous people thrived in all parts of Australia, from the hinterland to the desert, the rainforest to the coast. They travelled vast inland distances and crossed oceans, trading objects and ideas with various nations.

Before British colonisation, both the Dutch and French visited Australia, and Aboriginal peoples in northern Australia regularly travelled back and forth with Macassan fishers from modern-day Indonesia. Torres Strait Islanders had strong connections with both Papua New Guinea and Far North Queensland, using their huge sea-voyaging canoes to cross oceans. The arrival of the British in 1788 led to widespread dispossession and violence. In the late nineteenth century, 'Protection Acts' were introduced, with the aim of controlling Indigenous populations; these acts often erased their artistic practices.

A resurgence of Indigenous culture and art was evident by the 1970s, the establishment of Papunya Tula Artists in 1971 being one such moment; this pioneering Indigenous art centre in the Central Desert of Australia's Northern Territory played a crucial role in what today might be called the 'contemporary Indigenous art' movement. This movement gained momentum through the work of senior male artists such as Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra (Ngalia/Warlpiri) and Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula (Pintupi/Luritja) at Papunya. They transformed previously ephemeral ritual designs into permanent artworks on scraps of composition board. This is often regarded as the first time these designs were recognised as art rather than artefacts. The paintings channelled modernist principles that existed millennia before modernism and were quickly acknowledged by the art world as contemporary paintings of great consequence, with the long history of interaction and exchange among Indigenous people laying the groundwork for evolving art-making traditions. Positioning the birth of contemporary Indigenous art at Papunya can overshadow earlier influential artists such as Tommy McRae, William Barak, Paddy Compass, Yirawala, Albert Namatjira, and so on. Nonetheless, this moment formalised the establishment of the first Indigenous-run art centre, Papunya Tula Artists.

In 1972, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was founded in Canberra, becoming a significant protest site advocating for Indigenous rights and sovereignty. During this time, Australia experienced tumultuous relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples. In 1988, the country celebrated the 'Bicentennial,' marking 200 years of British occupation. Many Indigenous people still view the arrival of the British as an act of invasion, believing that their sovereignty was never ceded. This perspective made the Bicentennial a divisive period in Australian history. Despite the political controversies surrounding the celebration, the Bicentennial also sparked increased interest in Indigenous art, both locally and globally. This newfound attention led to greater recognition and support for Indigenous artists.

In 1990, Rover Thomas (Gija) and Trevor Nickolls (Ngarrindjeri) became the first Indigenous artists to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale, making a significant impression on the international art scene. Thomas was known for landscapes reflecting his connection to Country, while Nickolls produced vibrant works addressing contemporary Indigenous issues. Their participation elevated the visibility of Indigenous art globally and challenged stereotypes about what Indigenous art 'looks' like.

Seven years later, in 1997, Emily Kam Kngwarray (Anmatyerr), Judy Watson (Waanyi) and Yvonne Koolmatrie (Ngarrindjeri) became the first Indigenous women to showcase their work at the Venice Biennale. Kngwarray's innovative use of colour and form aligned so seamlessly with the principles of modernism that it is still celebrated today, with the Tate Modern recently hosting a major retrospective of her work.

Urban and new media artists continue to challenge preconceptions about Indigenous art, with figures such as Gordon Bennett, Destiny Deacon (Kuku/Erub/Mer) and Tracey Moffatt AO emerging as significant international figures during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Moffatt, who famously resists being categorised as an 'Indigenous artist', went on to showcase her work at the Venice Biennale as the first Indigenous artist to represent Australia in a solo capacity. Moffatt's participation in the Biennale not only solidified her status as a leading contemporary artist but also highlighted the evolution of Indigenous narratives within the global art landscape. Her unique narrative style and visual storytelling both challenge and build on the dialogues established by earlier Indigenous artists, ensuring that the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous cultures remain prominent in contemporary art, irrespective of medium.

Over the years, Indigenous artists have increasingly emerged as a major force within the international art scene. Most recently, in 2024, Archie Moore (Kamilaroi/Bigambul) won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for his major and immersive installation Kith and Kin. Several Indigenous artists have gone on to become household names within the international contemporary art market. Figures such as the great Paddy Bedford (Gija), known to family, close friends and kin by his traditional name Nyunkuny or his nickname Goowoomji/Kuwumji, and the Kaiadilt master of colour, Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori, who also was recently honoured with a solo exhibition at Fondation Cartier in Paris."

Indigenous art is the heartbeat of Australia. It echoes ancestral times, narrating stories of the present. It functions as a language, a history book, an encyclopedia and a form of visual music. It charts the formations of our lands and waterways, the creation of life itself, and the ongoing histories of Indigenous resistance and sovereignty. It also acts as a record of political challenges to settler norms, telling stories of strength and truth telling against the backdrop of colonisation.

For many Indigenous communities, art exists as a continuum where ancestral knowledge converges with contemporary perspectives. Indigenous art reflects the complex narratives of one's identity and history and holds a mirror to the lived experiences of marginalised communities globally. As a collective movement, it embodies the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples in their quest for sovereign recognition and rights. Through various creative expressions, artists continually challenge colonial narratives, confronting systemic injustices and advocating for the reclamation of cultures and Country.

Resistance highlights resilience. Indigenous peoples maintain an enduring connection to place despite widespread colonial dispossession. For many, art serves as a living archive, preserving the cultural wealth of ancestral knowledge accumulated over millennia. The arrival of European settlers changed everything, marking a significant disruption to artistic practices through colonisation. It's important to understand colonisation as an ongoing process rather than a singular event. This ongoing struggle continues each year, with treaty, reconciliation and truth telling representing persistent battles for Indigenous rights. The history of Indigenous art is characterised by resilience and adaptation, with Indigenous artists, following British arrival, blending traditional techniques with contemporary mediums.

As Indigenous art continues to evolve, it challenges preconceived notions and invites viewers to engage with the stories and histories embedded within it. Contemporary Indigenous artists employ various mediums – ranging from traditional ochre paintings to digital installations, weavings and neon art – reflecting the rich diversity of practices that represent our people.

It is important to recognise the significance of these works and the cultural narratives they embody, ensuring they remain connected to the communities from which they originate. Ultimately, Indigenous art is a vibrant and evolving expression of culture and identity. By engaging with and supporting Indigenous art, we acknowledge its significance and contribute to a broader understanding of the rich cultural heritage it represents.

This focused presentation of recent historical masterpieces is an opportunity for audiences to appreciate Indigenous art and its evolution as a living cultural expression. The works in this presentation not only reflect the rich histories and experiences of Indigenous peoples but also highlight ongoing dialogues around identity, sovereignty and resilience. Engaging with these significant pieces emphasises the importance of looking both back and forward, recognising how the past shapes contemporary life and how art has fostered appreciation of Indigenous culture.

Each work in this display provides insight into the masterful creativity of Indigenous art, allowing us to appreciate the diverse ways of being that constitute culture. They also offer an opportunity to reflect on the historical contexts that have influenced art and scholarship over time, connecting the past with the present, and serving as important reflections on the artistic legacies of such influential figures.

Indigenous art continues to emerge as one of the most significant art movements of the twenty-first century. In viewing this snapshot of masterpieces, we can better support Indigenous communities' relationship to time and place, and we are able to consider more deeply the cultural heritage that is represented in 65,000 years of continuing custodianship on Country.

Myles Russell-Cook is Artistic Director and CEO of ACCA, The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. Prior to this position, Myles was the Senior Curator of Australian and First Nations Art at the NGV, National Gallery of Victoria.

D Lan Galleries is honoured to present thirteen exceptional masterpieces by some of Australia's most celebrated First Nations artists at TEFAF Maastricht 2026.

This curated selection, spanning from foundational works of the early 1970s to more recent works of the present day, has been assembled to appeal to discerning collectors and highlights the remarkable breadth, diversity and quality of Australian First Nations art.

The presentation encompasses works by artists whose practices have shaped the trajectory of this dynamic art movement, from the Western Desert painting revolution to the distinctive traditions of the Tiwi Islands and Country of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Many of these works represent the finest examples from key periods in the careers of their creators and have previously featured in prominent museum exhibitions across Australia, Europe and the United States.

Together, this collection provides a unique opportunity to acquire museum-quality work by artists whose roles in art history are now well established internationally.

Please ensure that you read Myles Russell-Cook's insightful feature essay. Myles was formerly the Senior Curator of Australian and First Nations Art at the National Gallery of Victoria and has recently been appointed Artistic Director & CEO of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

The team and I look forward to warmly welcoming you at booth 458 at TEFAF, Maastricht.

D'Lan Davidson
D Lan Galleries, Founder and Director

JOHNNY WARANGULA TJUPURRULA
c. 1925 – 2001
Pintupi & Luritja languages

Water Dreaming and Lightning 1971
synthetic polymer paint and
bondcrete on composition board
67.5 × 20.5 cm
26.6 × 8 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Papunya, Northern Territory
The Collection of Geoffrey Bardon, Sydney, New South Wales.
The Collection of Mrs Margaret Carnegie AO and Sir Roderick Carnegie AC, Melbourne, Victoria.
The Anthony Knight OAM & Beverly Knight Collection, Melbourne, Victoria.
The Anthony & Beverly Knight Collection of Early Papunya Art, Sotheby's, Melbourne, Victoria, 28 May 2013, lot 3.
Carey Lyon and Joanne Crosby Collection, Melbourne, Victoria, acquired from the above

LITERATURE
Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya – A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Movement*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2004, p. 160 (illus.).

This iconic painting by Pintupi/Luritja man Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula is associated with the soakage water site of Kalipinypa, approximately 400 kilometres west of Alice Springs.

An ancestral man, Winpa, often referred to as the 'Lightning Man', clapped his boomerangs and 'sang up' a massive storm at Kalipinypa. Dark clouds formed, thunder cracked, hail pelted down and torrential rain scoured the earth. Winpa propelled the storm eastward to Karrku, to Watlypunya, creating a series of landforms, which now mark the path of his songline.[1] The sinuous lines in this painting appear to depict water and lightning associated with a catastrophic storm conjured by Winpa.

Painted with house paint on a salvaged piece of composition board, this early work by Warangula was initially collected by an interested schoolteacher, Geoffrey Bardon. Bardon had become aware of a small group of men who had repurposed an abandoned settlement building as a studio. Warangula was an active painter at this time and would often paint on whatever surface he could find. Bardon remembered:

> Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula kept coming to me with more paintings on the strangest of surfaces, such as thin or thick strips of particle boards and miscellaneous salvaged off-cuts from Alice Springs Timber & Joinery[2]

This painting remained in the collection of Geoffrey Bardon for many years until it was purchased by Mrs Margaret Carnegie AO, one of very few serious collectors of early Papunya paintings in the 1980s. In May 1986, Carnegie and her son Sir Roderick Carnegie AC purchased sixty-five early boards from Bardon, who had sourced the paintings during his time working with the painting men at Papunya in 1971 – 1972.

1 John Kean, 'Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula: Painting in a Changing Landscape', Art Bulletin of Victoria, 41, 2001, pp. 47–54.
2 Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, Papunya – A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2004, pp. 36–37.

$96,000 USD €83,000 EUR $144,000 AUD

LONG JACK PHILLIPUS TJAKAMARRA
1932 – 2020
Luritja & Warlpiri languages

Water Dreaming 1971
synthetic polymer powder paint
on composition board
44.5 × 22.5 cm
17.5 × 8.9 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Papunya, Northern Territory, in November/December 1971.
Stuart Art Centre, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, cat. no. SAC 4 1 (consignment 4, painting 1).
Private Collection, New South Wales.
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, Melbourne, Victoria, June 2002, lot 166.
Private Collection, Western Australia.
Thence by descent.
The Jory Family Collection, Queensland
First Nations Fine Art Auction II, Art Leven, Sydney, 17 June 2025, lot 16.
Private Collection, Melbourne, Victoria, acquired from the above.

LITERATURE
Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya – A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Movement*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2004, p. 171.

Painted in the late months of 1971, Long Jack Phillipus's Water Dreaming is most likely a representation of his birth site, Kalipinypa, approximately 135 kilometres west of Papunya. During the early period of painting activity at Papunya, Kalipinypa was a constant source of inspiration for several of the painting men. This painting appears to have been created using the red enamel paint that distinguished numerous seminal works from this period. Beneath the thick red pigment is an initial layer of pastel pink, which the artist created by mixing white paint with red enamel, possibly to overcome a lack of available pigments. The paint, as well as other materials, was salvaged by the artists from building sites around the community.

This painting was the first work from the fourth consignment of paintings to be transported from Papunya to Alice Springs. This consignment, one of the most fabled collections of paintings from this period, was for many years thought not to exist. Patrica Hogan, the owner of the Stuart Art Centre in Alice Springs, claimed the fourth consignment was never delivered, suggesting that rain and the subsequent floods had played a part in them never arriving.[1] Later research revealed, however, that Hogan had collected the fourth consignment of paintings at Papunya while Bardon was on leave.[2] Hogan's visit to Papunya, and her direct contact with the artists, was a point of contention between the two, hence the secrecy surrounding the existence of the paintings that Hogan collected during her stay.

In documentation prepared more than twenty-five years after its production, Geoffrey Bardon provided the following analysis of this painting:

> The work uses elemental forms – lines, dots, circles – to embody Water Dreaming stories: lines as running water, dots as rain, circles as waterholes. The traditional 'U' shape represents the ceremonial Water Man, whose songs invoke rainstorms to nourish the desert and all its life. This simplicity in design recalls early sand mosaics and body painting traditions.

1 Maughan and Zimmer, Dot and Circle: A Retrospective Survey of the Aboriginal Acrylic Paintings of Central Australia, RMIT, Melbourne, 1985, p. 55.
2 In 2015, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) completed conservation of their collection of early Papunya paintings, which confirmed that 26 paintings in its collection are part of the mysterious Consignment 4, which was part of a large sale of more than 100 paintings that Hogan sold to MAGNT in late 1972.

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY
c. 1914 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Alalgura – My Country 1990
synthetic polymer paint on linen
121 × 90 cm
47.6 × 35.4 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Delmore Downs, Northern Territory, May 1990.
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. OJ19.
Chapman Gallery, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.
Private Collection, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, acquired from the above.
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, Melbourne, Victoria, 26 July 2004, lot 248.
Private Collection, Brisbane, Queensland, acquired from the above.
Important Australian & International Art, Menzies Auctions, Melbourne, Victoria, 20 August 2025, lot 22.
Private Collection, Melbourne, Victoria, acquired from the above.

Emily Kam Kngwarray stands as one of the most significant artists to emerge from Australia in the twentieth century. Born around 1914 in Alhalker on the edge of the former Utopia cattle station in Anmatyerr Country, approximately 250 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs in Australia's Northern Territory, Kngwarray was raised on Country before settler influence impacted the local Anmatyerr people's land management and cultural and artistic practices. She grew up acutely attuned to the land's riches, its seasonality, and her place within its cycles. By the time she commenced painting on canvas in 1988, when she was in her late seventies, Emily was a respected senior Anmatyerr Elder, a keeper of significant ancestral knowledge and a co-caretaker of several sacred sites on her Country.

Kngwarray's brief yet prolific career bypassed any immature or 'emerging' phase. Her masterful abstract visual language derived from a lifetime of reverential ceremonial bodily mark-making associated with awely – women's Dreaming ceremony. Her work on canvas moved through frequent stylistic shifts, each expressing the profound depth of her knowledge and her continuing experience of ceremony, land and culture.

Alalgura – My Country 1990 was painted at Delmore Downs in May of that year, during the formative period between 1989 and 1992 when Kngwarray transformed her earlier foundational work in batik by harnessing the power and presence of the dot. Early paintings from this period are specific in their explorations of the path of the anwerlarr yam from Alhalker, the principal form of Kngwarray's ceremonial designs and a central, recurring theme across her entire body of work. The skeletal structure of sinuous lines forms the painting's foundation, recalling the yam's underground growth paths, while the rhythmic propulsion of Emily's precise dotting communicates the vitality of its Altyerr, the Anmatyerr ancestral law and creation system that governs Country, kinship and ceremony.

Emily Kam Kngwarray's global significance has been affirmed through major retrospectives at the National Gallery of Australia and, most recently, Tate Modern, London (2025) – a landmark moment as international institutions broaden their perspectives to embrace one of the most significant movements in contemporary art.

MICK NAMARARI TJAPALTJARRI
c. 1926 – 1998
Pintupi language

Untitled – Watukarrinya 1992
synthetic polymer paint on linen
152 × 122 cm
59.8 × 48 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Kintore, Northern Territory.
Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, cat. no. MN920934.
Private Collection, Tasmania, acquired from the above.

This painting of the rockhole site of Watukarrinya depicts Namarari's mother's Country, south of Walungurru (Kintore), where Namarari lived when this work was created. This site forms part of a series of places associated with the Malu Kutjarra Tjukurrpa (Two Kangaroo Dreaming). Given the restricted nature of many kangaroo narratives, Namarari provided very little information about this site. The large black arc shapes are said to represent a rocky range at this place. East of Watukarrinya is Namarari's birth site of Marnpi, which is also associated with the Malu Kutjarra Tjukurrpa. In various depictions of Marnpi, similar arc shapes represent either the presence of significant ancestors or the impressions left by resting kangaroos in the desert sand.

Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri was born c.1926, and his first years were spent living in the bush. Due to drought and the infringement of pastoral activity on his homelands, when he was a young boy Namarari and his extended family group journeyed to the ration station at Haasts Bluff. As a teenager he was persuaded to work with his relative Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi in the cattle industry in the Areyonga region. Namarari settled at Papunya in the late 1950s, where he served as one of several councillors. In 1971, Namarari emerged as an early artist among Papunya's painting men. He was one of the significant contributors to the first consignments of paintings to leave Papunya for sale In Alice Springs. His early works display a confident mingling of figuration and abstraction, portraying flora and fauna and their metaphysical relationships to the Tjukurrpa (Dreaming) and himself. As time passed, he revealed himself to be an incessant innovator, unbound by artistic or market expectations. *Untitled – Watukarrinya* is a fine expression of the role Namarari played in expanding the boundaries of Western Desert art.

$100,000 USD €86,000 EUR $150,000 AUD

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY
c. 1914 – 1996
Anmatyerr language

Untitled – Winter Awelye 1995
synthetic polymer paint on linen
122 × 91 cm
48 × 35.8 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Delmore Downs, Northern Territory.
Delmore Gallery, Northern Territory, cat. no. 95F062.
Private Collection, acquired from the above.

EXHIBITED
My Mother Country – Malerei der Aborigines, Sammlung Pierre and Joëlle Clément, Kunsthaus Zug, Switzerland, 29 September 2019 – 2 February 2020.

Untitled – Winter Awelye 1995 is one of the few canvases commissioned by Delmore Gallery during the pivotal moment when Emily Kam Kngwarray was transitioning into her lineal expressions of the custodial atnular yam plant. This extraordinary canvas was painted in June 1995, just a month before the famous *Big Yam* was created at Delmore – a monumental work now held by the National Gallery of Victoria. The consequence of working in both styles simultaneously allowed Kngwarray a rich, robust and confident indulgence of vibrant colour and light, bringing this work an ecstatic radiance.

The title references awely – women's ceremony – the sacred practice from which Kngwarray's entire artistic vocabulary derived. The seasonal, warm-coloured vibrancy characteristic of Kngwarray's works was always heightened as summer approached, with hope of widespread rains feeding into water catchments and bringing the abundance that allowed people to gather and maintain their knowledge and social obligations through ceremonial dance, song and body painting. In the quiet of Delmore in the winter of 1995, the fresh, exciting lineal canvases led Kngwarray to meditate on future ceremonial activity on her Country, her loyalties and loves, and her family connections past and future.

Within Kngwarray's oeuvre, 1995 represents a year of swift stylistic transitions. The early measured, precise build-up of layers of intense dotting had morphed, softening, flattening and merging until the dots began to give way to bold linear gestures. She was energised during this period, which gave rise to an exceptional group of dotted canvases – full emotional and expansive expressions of Kngwarray herself and of her birthplace, Alhalker. The under-tracking of the yam roots, characteristic of her early paintings, was returning as the singular focus, now rendered with an urgency born of the artist's advancing years.

This painting's inclusion in the prestigious exhibition *My Mother Country – Malerei der Aborigines* at Kunsthaus Zug, Switzerland (2019–2020), from the distinguished collection of Pierre and Joëlle Clément, attests to the work's significance within international collections dedicated to Australian First Nations art.

GORDON BENNETT
1955 – 2014

Notes to Basquiat (911) 2001
synthetic polymer paint on linen
182.5 × 304 cm
71.9 × 119.7 inches
(diptych)

PROVENANCE
The Artist
Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, South Australia.
Private Collection, Adelaide, South Australia,
acquired from the above in 2002.

LITERATURE
Gordon Bennett Notes to Basquiat: 911 exhibition catalogue, 2002, Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, p. 5-6 (illus.) .
Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Global Interconnections, Stanford University Press, California, 2005, p. 125 (illus.).
Conflict: Contemporary Responses to War exhibition catalogue, The University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, 2014, inside cover (illus.).
Unfinished Business: The Art of Gordon Bennett exhibition catalogue, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, 2020, p. 116-117 (illus.).

EXHIBITED
Gordon Bennett Notes to Basquiat (911), Greenaway Art Gallery (GAG Projects), Adelaide Festival, Adelaide, 1 - 30 March 2002.
Conflict: Contemporary Responses to War, University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, 10 May 2014 - 7 September 2014.
Unfinished Business: The Art of Gordon Bennett, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, 7 November 2020 – 21 March 2021.

Gordon Bennett is internationally regarded as one of Australia's most significant and influential contemporary artists. His research-led practice employed postmodern strategies of appropriation, pastiche, and conceptualism to critically interrogate histories of representation, power, and identity. Across both his oeuvre and extensive writing, Bennett offers incisive cultural critique, articulating a complex, personal, and globally resonant discourse shaped by his Indigenous Australian and Anglo-Celtic heritage. In doing so, he disrupts and complicates binary narratives within Australian art history.

Notes to Basquiat (911) is one in a series of works in which Bennett engaged in a personal and visual dialogue with neo-expressionist Jean–Michel Basquiat. The Notes to Basquiat series, which commenced in 1998, expanded upon Bennett's practice of borrowing images from artists who inspired him, to bring new meaning and context to global events, historical milestones and Western and non-Western art.

Bennett felt a deep affinity with Basquiat and the experience they shared as artists confronting themes of racial identity and stereotyping, colonialism, historical erasure and trauma. Throughout the Notes to Basquiat series, he not only sampled Basquiat's imagery, but he also embraced his signature graffiti-like style. Bennett described the series as a pictorial communication with Basquiat driven by his empathic connection with his artistic practice and life experiences.

To coincide with the appearance of these paintings, Bennett released an open posthumous letter to Basquiat, celebrating the artist while laying out the conceptual foundations of his methodology based upon their dual heritage backgrounds. Basquiat had Haitian and Puerto Rican heritage; Bennett had Indigenous Australian and Anglo-Celtic ancestry:

> 'I am of a mixed heritage, being Scottish, English and Indigenous Australian. Brought up, educated and socialised as a 'white' Australian I became acutely aware of racist stereotypes and the power/knowledge relationship that governed the historical representation of Aborigines within contemporary Australian culture. I wanted to explore my indigenous heritage and how it was inherently intertwined with the history and reality of colonialism. I found the avenue of 'appropriation' art within the conceptual framework of postmodernism to be the most suitable way of pursuing my interests.'

Painted in the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, in Manhattan. *Notes to Basquiat (911)* served as the central work in the exhibition of the same title. The painting situates itself within New York, specifically Basquiat's New York, while invoking the visceral imagery that has come to define that harrowing day: aircraft, imploding towers, burning debris, contorted metal, and human remains. This disquieting iconography is encased within a broader field of symbolic references to both the United States and to those cast as its perpetrators. Along the left margin, an abstracted sampled Shamsa pattern recalls Islamic geometric or arabesque ornamentation that often adorns the inside cover of the Holy Koran and the inside walls of mosques. Gestural inscriptions resembling Arabic calligraphy erupt from the central towering infernos and encircle the Statue of Liberty, complicating its emblematic status. Dominating the centre of the composition, a giant bleeding disembodied hand, evoking the hand of God, encapsulates death and life, devastation and creation, closure and emergence.

Bennett developed a strategy of mixing and borrowing motifs and styles from other artists and art movements throughout his career. In his earlier works, he challenged Western modes of perception and representation by overlaying scenes of Australian colonial settlement with diagrams that map the central vantage point and horizon lines of the painting. These devices, traditionally associated with European Romantic painting, create the illusion of depth and visual truth. By exposing and disrupting these conventions, Bennett critiques the authority of Western art histories and reveals how First Nations histories and perspectives have been marginalised, while Western narratives are positioned as objective and real.

In other artworks, Bennett appropriates the gestural paint-splattering techniques of Abstract Expressionist artist Jackson Pollock and the fine-dotting methods associated with artists from the Western Desert. This deliberate collage of references is ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations, compelling viewers to interrogate the collision of ideas, values, and power structures represented by these artists and cultural movements.

Following the critical success of the early Notes to Basquiat series and growing recognition of the conceptual breadth of his practice, Bennett was the subject of a series of major survey exhibitions that toured internationally. These exhibitions were presented at the Icon and Arnolfini galleries and the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Europe between 1999 and 2000, followed by extensive presentations across Australian state galleries from 2007 to 2009, and subsequently in the Netherlands in 2012. Most recently, the *Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA),* presented the posthumous retrospective *Unfinished Business: The Art of Gordon Bennett*, which positioned *Notes to Basquiat (911)* 2001 as a key work. The exhibition foregrounded the depth and complexity of Bennett's visual language, articulating the sustained theoretical inquiry that underpinned his practice and shaped his ongoing interrogation of Australia's colonial past and postcolonial moment.

Gordon Bennett in his Samford studio, 1999 / Image courtesy. The Estate of Gordon Bennett / Photograph: Leanne Bennett


future
after
eventual
to be
unborn
forward
long range...
prospective
futuristic
Space age
twenty-first
century
Sign
emblem
icon
image
logo
logotype
symbol
token totem
written symbol
figure
hieroglyph
ideography
letter
logogram
number
pictograph
rebus
Code
alphabet, cuneiform, Kana
orthography, syllabary
Symbolism
writing
LIBERTY
MORTE

KITTY KANTILLA
c. 1928 – 2003
Tiwi language

Pumpuni Jilamara 2003
earth pigments on linen
57.5 × 74 cm
22.6 × 29.1 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Melville Island, Northern Territory.
Jilamara Arts, Milikapiti, Melville Island, Northern Territory, cat. no. 285-03.
Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney, New South Wales.
Private Collection, New South Wales, acquired from the above.

LITERATURE
Judith Ryan & National Gallery of Victoria, *Kitty Kantilla*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2007, p. 65 (illus.).

EXHIBITED
Kitty Kantilla, The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Melbourne, Victoria, 27 April – 19 August 2007; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales, 7 December 2007 – 21 January 2008.

Kitty Kantilla (Kutuwulumi Purawarrumpatu), born around 1928 at Piripumawu on Melville Island, grew up at Yimpinari on the island's eastern side. After a traditional Tiwi childhood, she moved to a mission on Bathurst Island, where rations such as beef, flour, honey and tea were exchanged for agricultural labour. In 1970, Kantilla and several countrywomen established a small outstation at Paru, her mother's Country on Melville Island, directly across the Apsley Strait from Nguiu. It was in Paru that Kantilla began her artistic practice, working among a group of widowed women who became well known in the early 1980s for their ironwood sculptures depicting ancestoral figures associated with the Purrukuparli legend.

Kantilla began painting on canvas and paper in 1992 with the support of the Jilamara Arts & Crafts Association. She later became celebrated as the 'first old lady of Jilamara' and was recognised as one of the most significant Tiwi artists of her generation. Her work, like all Tiwi art, draws upon the elaborate body painting associated with the Pukumani (mourning) ceremony.

Using a restricted visual vocabulary of dots, lines and ochre, Kantilla created compositions that achieve remarkable variation, rhythm and beauty. The distinctive inwardness of her style derives from its profound continuity with ritual practice. Her iconography, though seemingly abstract, resists straightforward symbolic interpretation; yet her jilamara (designs) evoke the atmosphere of ceremony and embody her cultural identity. Like many Tiwi artists, Kantilla first encountered these designs within ceremonial contexts before translating them into carved and painted forms associated with the Pukumani tradition.

Kantilla described her work as grounded in her father's designs, which she learned by observing him during mourning ceremonies as a young girl. Her artworks remain deeply connected to the foundational Tiwi creation story of Purrukaparli, whose mourning for his son established the first Pukumani ceremony. This ritual, the most important in Tiwi life, honours the deceased through song and dance and ensures the safe passage of their spirit to Country.

$35,000 USD €30,000 EUR $52,000 AUD

PADDY BEDFORD
c. 1922 – 2007
Gija language

Untitled 2003
ochres and pigments with synthetic binder
on composition board
79 × 98 cm
31.1 × 38.6 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Kununurra, Western Australia
Jirrawun Arts, Kununurra, Western Australia,
cat. no. PB-CB 8-2003-3.
Private Collection, Queensland, acquired from the above .
Important Australian and International Fine Art, Deutscher and Hackett, Melbourne, Victoria, 6 May 2015, lot 53.
Carey Lyon and Joanne Crosby Collection, Melbourne, Victoria, acquired from the above.

LITERATURE
Russell Storer, *Paddy Bedford*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006, p. 160 (illus.).

Goowoomji Nyunkuny Paddy Bedford is among the most important artists to come from the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. Known to family and kin as Nyunkuny or Goowoomji in his Gija language, Bedford was born around 1922 at Old Bedford Downs Station, south-east of Warmun (Turkey Creek). His deep cultural knowledge as a senior lawman inspired his late-life painting practice, which brought East Kimberley painting to international recognition while carefully respecting the rules of customary Gija law.

Bedford's well-balanced paintings are rich with layered and detailed depictions of places from his mother's and father's Country, connected through Ngarrangkarni – the Gija ancestral creation framework that shaped the land and established enduring cultural authority. His artworks capture landscape features, the actions of ancestral beings within the ever-present dimension of Ngarrangkarni, and the overlapping histories of both ancestral and recent past. Ngarrangkarni functions as a living story that guided Bedford's brush with confidence, energising his abstract forms and, in turn, revitalising its presence.

This *Untitled* work from 2003 demonstrates the luminosity and transparency of paint that became characteristic of Bedford's mature practice, achieved through his distinctive wet-on-wet technique, which requires rapid, unhesitating application. Joining Jirrawun Arts in 1998, Bedford was a catalyst for the vision of a small group of Gija Elders to control their identity and create unique visual art forms without compromising cultural law. His advocacy for 'two way' – the Gija expression for reconciliation – permeates his exquisitely balanced compositions, which became potent vehicles for asserting Gija Country with dignity and authority.

The illustration of this painting in the major monograph accompanying the Museum of Contemporary Art's retrospective exhibition affirms its place within the artist's significant body of work from this pivotal period.

MIRDIDINGKINGATHI JUWARNDA
SALLY GABORI
c. 1924 – 2015
Kayardild language

Dibirdibi Country 2008
synthetic polymer paint on linen
152 × 101 cm
60 × 40 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted on Mornington Island, Queensland.
Mornington Island Arts, Queensland, cat. no. 3121-L-SG-0408.
Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria.
Private Collection, Melbourne, Victoria, acquired from the above.

Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori stands among the most celebrated contemporary Australian artists of her generation. Born around 1924 at Mirdidingki, a small creek and estuary on the south side of Bentinck Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, she was a senior Kaiadilt woman who began painting at the age of eighty-one and, in a decade-long career, produced a body of work that has achieved international recognition. Her paintings are held in every major Australian institution and have been the subject of significant international exhibitions, including the landmark retrospective at Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, and Triennale Milano in 2022–2023.

In Kayardild language, Mirdidingkingathi means 'born at Mirdidingki', while her totemic name, Juwarnda, relates to the black dolphin – the creature who presaged her spiritual conception. Sally was the name given to her when the entire Kaiadilt population was evacuated to the Presbyterian mission on Mornington Island in 1947 after disasters had befallen the islands. Being newly married, she took a form of her husband's placename, Dibirdibi, as her surname, Gabori – a Westernised nomenclature that would become a symbol of her people's displacement from Bentinck Island.

$65,000 USD €56,000 EUR $96,000 AUD

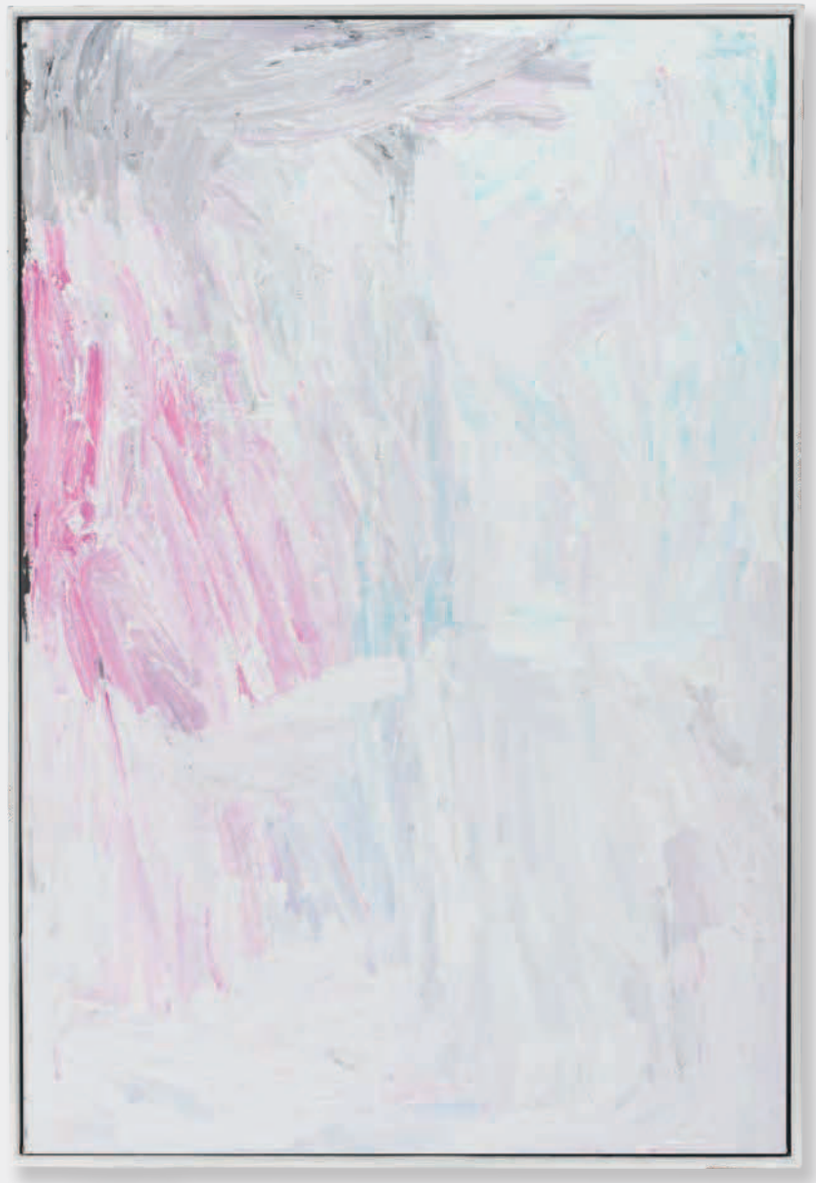
MIRDIDINGKINGATHI JUWARNDA
SALLY GABORI
c. 1924 – 2015
Kayardild language

Thundi 2008
synthetic polymer paint on linen
152 × 101 cm
60 × 40 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted on Mornington Island, Queensland.
Mornington Island Arts, Queensland, cat. no. 3729-L-SG-1008.
Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria.
Private Collection, Sydney, New South Wales, acquired from the above in 2009.

Gabori grew up living an entirely self-sufficient life focused on the rich marine resources of Kaiadilt Country, surrounded by an elaborate system of ancient stone fish traps. The island's isolation meant that stories and songs were transmitted through a unique physical and aural culture void of the graphic traditions found in mainland Australian groups. When Gabori discovered painting in 2005 at the Mornington Island Arts and Crafts Centre, she developed an unprecedented visual language – an expression of the sweeping colours of her Country, the physical landscape of Bentinck Island, and the Kayardild language that divides space into abstract topological blocks reflecting the visible topography.

This 2008 painting, *Thundi*, depicts her husband's Country and represents the shift in palette that evolved in Gabori's work at this time. A series of ghostly pastel paintings with softly smeared surfaces emerged through the application of white brushstrokes over brightly coloured wet paint. Working quickly alla prima, Gabori created subtle tonal shifts reflecting nuances of light and shadow, revealing intimate sensations of a landscape held in memory for more than sixty years.



$80,000 USD €69,000 EUR $120,000 AUD

MAKINTI NAPANANGKA AM
c. 1922 – 2011
Pintupi language

Untitled – Lupulnga 2009
synthetic polymer paint on linen
183 × 153 cm
72 × 60 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Kintore, Northern Territory.
Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, cat. no. MN0901031.
Private Collection, acquired from the above.

Makinti Napanangka was born at Lupul, south-west of Walungurru (Kintore), and held this Country with her for fifty years of displacement before finally giving form to it in acrylic paint. This monumental canvas depicts designs associated with Lupulnga, a rockhole site situated south of the Kintore community. The site is connected to the Peewee (small bird) Tjukurrpa as well as the Kungka Kutjarra – the Two Travelling Women – whose ancestral journeys traverse this region of Pintupi Country.

During ancestral times, a group of women visited this site, holding ceremonies before continuing their travels north to Karrkurutinyja (Lake Macdonald) and later the Kintore area. The sweeping linear marks that characterise this painting represent spun hairstring, used to make nyimparra (hairbelts) worn by both men and women during ceremony. Napanangka's distinctive style draws directly from the laws of the female realm and the accumulated experiences of migration and homecoming that defined her generation of Pintupi women.

Napanangka was among a powerful cohort of senior Pintupi women who reshaped the Western Desert art movement in the mid 1990s. After a twenty-year hiatus in women's participation at Papunya Tula Artists, these senior women approached painting from their exclusive cultural knowledge, creating what emerged as a distinct 'Kintore' style. Guided by touch and the application of multiple bright colours with brush, fingers and hands, Napanangka formed a sensuous dialogue on canvas that captures the eternal dance of the ancestral women as they travel across Country. Her gestural, colour-laden compositions helped reshape the blueprint of Western Desert art, transforming formal dot-and-circle iconography into a striking, holistic visual language.

Napanangka was posthumously appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2011 for her services to Indigenous art. This powerful 2009 canvas, created in the final years of her life, exemplifies the sensuous, rhythmic abstraction of her late period – luminous fields of yellow, pink and grey applied with characteristic gestural freedom and chromatic intensity.

$250,000 USD €215,000 EUR $370,000 AUD

MIRDIDINGKINGATHI JUWARNDA
SALLY GABORI
c. 1924 – 2015
Kayardild language

Dibirdibi Country 2011
synthetic polymer paint on linen
151×198 cm
60×78 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted on Mornington Island, Queensland
Mornington Island Art, Queensland, cat. no. 7303-L-SG-1011.
Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria.
Private Collection, acquired from the above.

LITERATURE
Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori: Dulka Warngiid – Land of All, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, Queensland, 2016.

EXHIBITED
Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori: Dulka Warngiid – Land of All, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, Queensland, 21 May – 28 August 2016; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria, 23 September 2016 – 29 January 2017.
Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori: Mundamurra Ngijinda Dulk – My Island Home, Cairns Art Gallery, Cairns, Queensland, 13 September – 30 November 2025.

Dibirdibi Country depicts Sally Gabori's husband's Country on Bentinck Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Dibirdibi refers to the Rock Cod ancestor, a powerful figure whose journeys shaped the land and seascape of Kaiadilt Country. The subject held profound personal significance for Gabori – being newly married at the time of the 1947 evacuation, she took a form of this placename as her surname, and throughout her painting career Dibirdibi remained among her most frequently depicted subjects, a testament to the enduring bonds of kinship that connect Kaiadilt people to their ancestral estates.

The low-lying Bentinck Island, measuring just twenty kilometres from west to east and twelve kilometres from north to south, is shaped by scrubby casuarina growth meeting coastal sands, by mangroves along tidal flats, and by numerous saltpans across the island's interior. These features create sharp visual boundaries that divide the landscape into blocks of colour that modulate at different times of day. Kayardild, one of the most complex languages in the world, has a rich vocabulary and grammatical system that divides space into abstract topological blocks reflecting this visible topography. Both the landscape and the language reveal much about Gabori's relationship to her painting.

For Gabori, painting was a joyous performance of dance and song in communion with places on Bentinck Island that held deep personal significance – her birthplace and those of her kin. Through vibrant colours and expressive mark-making, she translated cultural memory and place into a bold painterly language. In her own words: *Danda ngijinda dulk, danda ngijinda malaa, danda ngad* – 'This is my Land, this is my Sea, this is who I am.'

The inclusion of this monumental late work in the major retrospective *Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori: Dulka Warngiid* – Land of All at Queensland's Gallery of Modern Art (2016) and the National Gallery of Victoria (2016–2017), and the exhibition *Mundamurra Ngijinda Dulk – My Island Home* at Cairns Art Gallery (2025), affirms its significance within the artist's oeuvre and the continuing institutional recognition of Gabori's extraordinary contribution to contemporary art.

$180,000 USD €155,000 EUR $270,000 AUD

ANGELINA PWERLE
born 1947
Alyawarr language

Bush Plum 2019
synthetic polymer paint on linen
150 × 150 cm
59 × 59 inches

PROVENANCE
The Artist, painted at Camel Camp, Utopia, Northern Territory.
Artlore (Marc Gooch), Northern Territory, cat. no. 5-219.
Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, Victoria.
Private Collection, Sydney, New South Wales, acquired from the above.
Private Collection, Melbourne, Victoria, acquired from the above.

EXHIBITED
Angelina Pwerle – Bush Plum and Beyond, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, Victoria, 7–24 July 2021.

Angelina Pwerle is a senior Alyawarr artist from the Utopia region of the Northern Territory, approximately 270 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs. She paints at Camel Camp, one of the outstations on the former Utopia Station, and holds primary custodial responsibility for the bush plum, known in Alyawarr as Arnwekety. This subject is central to her practice and connects her to the broader tradition of Utopia women's painting, which gained international recognition through artists such as Emily Kam Kngwarray.

This monumental canvas depicts Arlperr, a vast area on the former Utopia Station characterised by a large swamp and soak that fills approximately every seven years when the Sandover River runs a banker. During these times, many bush tucker species become plentiful. From an aerial perspective, Pwerle presents this fertile land after good summer rainfall, depicting the bush plum at different stages of ripeness – from green, to red, to deep purple, ready to eat only when it reaches deep purple. The delicate white dot work depicts patches of native grasses and their prized seeds.

During the awely ceremony, Pwerle and her Ngal (classificatory) sisters celebrate the fertility and resilience of this land. Their songs convey knowledge of the functions of various plants as food and medicine, weaving this understanding into a narrative of ancestors and the history of the Utopia area. Pwerle's paintings emerge from this ceremonial context, where mark-making on the body during women's ceremony translates into the dense, luminous fields of dot work that characterise her mature practice.

In this work, Pwerle's restrained palette of deep purples, blacks and whites creates an almost cosmic field that evokes both the night sky and the abundance of ripe bush plums scattered across the land. The painting exemplifies her distinctive approach – building dense layers of fine dots that create subtle tonal variations and atmospheric depth, transforming the botanical subject into a meditation on Country, fertility and the continuing cycles of abundance that sustain her people.

Cover. Pintupi and Anmatyerr artists in the Men's Painting Room, Papunya, 1972.
Photographer. Michael Jensen