

# MASTER ARTISTS OF ARNHEM LAND



## KEY WORKS



### **Sam Baramba Wurramara** (1919–84)

Anindilyakwa, Groote Eylandt/Bickerton Island, Arnhem region

### **MACASSAN PRAU** 1948

natural pigments on bark  
57 x 29 cm  
Gift of Allan D Mashfield 1982  
234.1982

© Estate of Sam Baramba Wurramara, courtesy Anindilyakwa Art, Alyangula  
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**Laurie Nelson Mungatopi** (c1923–deceased),  
**Bob One Akuatimi** (1925–76), **Jack Yarunga** (c1910–73),  
**Don Burakmadjua** (1925–95), **Charlie Kwangdini** (c1905–  
 deceased), **Artist unknown**  
 Tiwi, Millikapiti, Melville Island, North Region

**TUTINI (PUKUMANI GRAVEPOSTS) 1958**

natural pigments on wood  
 various sizes  
 Gift of Dr Stuart Scougall 1959  
 IA1-17.1959  
 © Estate of the artists, courtesy Jilamara Arts and Crafts  
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**Mawalan Marika** (c1908–67), **Wandjuk Marika** (c1930–87),  
**Mathaman Marika** (c1915–70), **Woreimo** (c1934–deceased)  
Rirratjingu, Yirrkala, Arnhem region

**DJAN'KAWU CREATION STORY 1959**

natural pigments on bark  
191.8 x 69.8 cm  
Gift of Dr Stuart Scougall 1959  
IA64.1959

© Estate of the artists, courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Art Centre and Museum, Yirrkala  
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**Binyinyuwuy (1928–82)**

Djambarrpuyungu, Buckingham Bay/Milingimbi, Arnhem region

**YIRRITJA HONEY BEE DESIGN c1960**

natural pigments on bark

74.5 x 35 cm

Gift of Dr Stuart Scougall 1960

IA48.1960

© Estate of Binyinyuwuy, courtesy Bula'bula Arts Aboriginal Corporation,  
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**Samuel Manggudja (1909–83)**

Kunwinjku, Kunbarlanja (Oenpelli), Arnhem region

**FIGURE WITH LONG FINGERS 1960**

natural pigments on bark

103.5 x 34.5 cm

Gift of Dr Stuart Scougall 1961

IA9.1961

© Estate of Samuel Manggudja, courtesy Injalak Arts and Crafts Association, Kunbarlanja

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**Kevin Bunduck** (1942–94), **Nym Bunduck** (c1907–81)  
Murrinh-patha, Wadeye (Port Keats), Fitzmaurice region

**EMUS FEEDING 1961**

natural pigments on bark  
179 x 78.8 cm  
Gift of Dr Stuart Scougall 1961  
IA22.1961  
© Estate of Kevin and Nym Bunduck, courtesy Karlu Minda Council, Wadeye  
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# MASTER ARTISTS OF ARNHEM LAND

The bark painting movement has revolutionised the understanding of Aboriginal culture and the Art Gallery of New South Wales has played a pivotal role in its development. First stolen from people's shelters and considered the curiosity of a 'primitive race', bark painting has become part of our complex national identity. Bark painting, and other representations of cultural and artistic practice such as the Tiwi tutini, or Pukumani graveposts, encapsulate many themes from the celebration of creation to asserting cultural and political connection to country; from an observation of nature to reflections on contemporary social experiences. These representations of Aboriginal culture have been ever-present, and have, in recent times, been the subject of major national and international exhibitions. In 2003 Kuninjku bark painter John Mawurndjul (b1952) was recognised as one of Australia's contemporary leading artists winning the prestigious Clemenger Contemporary Art Award at the National Gallery of Victoria, further cementing bark painting's place in art history, and extending the boundaries of contemporary art.

Bark painting was first described by Europeans in 1802 when the French disembarked on Maria Island in Tasmania to bury a crew member who had fallen to dysentery. Ironically, while on shore, the French found and desecrated a local burial tomb. The perpetrator, François Péron (1775–1810), described the tomb as a 'conical structure roughly made of pieces of bark'.<sup>1</sup> The interior was decorated with painted designs, and the ancestral remains were concealed in the base. Bark painting was also documented in Victoria in 1843 by the infamous Chief Protector of Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson (1791–1866), who noted that many shelters in the Loddon River area were decorated with depictions of humans, and emus and other birds. Sourced from the same region, bark drawings (etchings or drawings on shard pieces of bark) were exhibited at the International Exhibition in Paris, 1855.

In 1879 the Macleay Museum acquired a set of small yet significant artworks that are recognised today as the best example of 18th century bark painting. This collection of ten works has been attributed to the Ōirig (Oitbi) people whose homelands centre around Endyalgout Island on the southern side of the Cobourg Peninsula in western Arnhem Land.<sup>2</sup> This suite of works is typical of western Arnhem Land style – predominantly white figures, including human and human-like figures, turtles, goannas, crocodiles, birds and dugongs, set against a plain background. The subject matter and representation is linked to the region's abundant rock art, which adorns the sandstone escarpment. Here, images were created and maintained by countless generations of artists, making these galleries the oldest in the world. Arnhem Land rock art illustrates a great antiquity and marks pivotal historical moments, including the enormous environmental shift that followed the end of the last ice age, some 15 000 years ago. As water levels rose, artists' muses changed accordingly: freshwater fish, plants and animals are overlaid with brackish, saltwater subjects including the iconic barramundi and saltwater crocodile.

In 1912 anthropologist Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer (1869–1929) travelled to the small western Arnhem Land outpost of Kunbarlanja (Oenpelli) to study the region's wealth of artistic expression. Kunbarlanja had been established in 1906 by pastoralist and buffalo hunter Paddy (Patrick) Cahill (c1863–1923) who developed a close relationship with the local Aboriginal people whom he employed. Together, Spencer and Cahill made the proactive step to directly engage with artists by commissioning over 200 bark paintings for the Melbourne Museum in exchange for sticks of tobacco. Again, these works speak directly to the region's rock art tradition (at Spencer's request), with strongly graphic figures created with a bold use of white ochre on a plain background.

The next major body of work to come out of Arnhem Land was a result of the combined efforts of artists from the communities of Ayangkulyumuda (Groote Eylandt), Yirrkala, Milingimbi and Kunbarlanja for the 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land (AASEAL) led by Charles Percy Mountford (1890–1976). This expedition was the largest of its kind with 16 scientific members including an archaeologist, ethnologist and nutritionist present. Over 500 artworks were created: paintings both on bark and, a first for many artists, on paper, and sculptures and weavings. Half of the collection was distributed among Australia's state galleries and museums by the Commonwealth Government in 1956. These historic gifts, within the context of the art gallery, were ground-breaking. At this time, most galleries had not collected Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander art, and were happy to confine Indigenous cultures to museums and ethnographic studies, keeping gallery walls free of 'primitive art'. Today, AASEAL artworks form the foundation of many contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections, including that of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales received 24 AASEAL artworks, including a set of arresting bark paintings from Ayangkulyumuda (Groote Eylandt). These exquisite works with their suspended subjects, like Dinungkwulanguwa (dugong), set against an iconic black manganese background were created with a delicate combination of red, yellow and white; dashes, dots and lines. Painted at the same time, a more recent addition to the Ayangkulyumuda collection is *Macassan prau* by Sam Baramba Wurramara (1919–1984). This work celebrates the complex cultural relationship between the locals and the Macassan (present-day Sulawesi in Indonesia) traders. Macassan traders had been visiting the north coast of Australia since the 1500s, arriving on the northwest monsoon winds in December and staying for months at a time. While here, they worked the sea floor for trepang (sea cucumber), for sale to a Chinese market, returning home to Indonesia in March or April on the east winds.<sup>3</sup> This subject is also seen in the work of the great Djapu leader and artist Wonggu Mununggurr (1884–1959) who depicted the Macassan prau and trepang, both of which many Aboriginal people were involved with, manning the boats and collecting trepang. The Macassan influence is a testimony to Indigenous Australia's long-term international



engagement and, although trade was prohibited by the Australian Government with the 1906 Immigration Act, this influence is remembered and celebrated in ceremony, language, blood lines and bark painting, such as Sam Baramba Wurramara's *Macassan prau*. The cultural exchange between Aboriginal Australia and the Macassan traders was replaced with an influx of missionaries who were evangelically committed to substituting the region's 40 000 year old religion and beliefs with 2000 year old Christianity. The Methodist Overseas Mission played a major role in Arnhem Land, establishing, in the west, the early mission station at Waruwi (Goulburn Island) in 1916; Minjilang, Croker Island in 1941; Maningrida in 1957; Milingimbi mission in central Arnhem Land in 1923; Yirrkala in 1935; and Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island in 1942 in the east. The Church Missionary Society formed a mission at Kunbarlanja, the site of Cahill's pastoral lease, and later established a mission at Umbakumba on Ayangkulyumuda in 1958 for the local Warnindilyakwa people. Missions provided a marshalling point, centralising the many different nations who were coerced to come in with food and medicine, among other things. Missions also functioned as a platform to produce art for the small, but growing, art industry.

In 1957 a historical exhibition, *The art of Arnhem Land*, was launched at Sydney's David Jones' Art Gallery. This exhibition was curated by husband and wife team Ronald and Catherine Berndt who pioneered the attribution of work to individual artists and the recording of artists' biographies. This was an essential step towards vindicating Aboriginal art from imperious museums that portrayed Aboriginal people as doomed and nameless. *The art of Arnhem Land*, along with the AASEAL artworks gifted to the Art Gallery of New South Wales around the same time, captured the attention of assistant director Tony Tuckson (1921–73) and he was inspired to develop a collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Tuckson was a visionary; he believed Aboriginal art belonged in an art gallery context, a concept which, at the time, was considered revolutionary. With the support of Aboriginal art enthusiast and philanthropist Dr Stuart Scougall (1889–1964) – a Sydney based orthopaedic surgeon who had taken an interest in Aboriginal art while doing field research – Tuckson set about changing the cultural landscape of Australia forever. In 1958 Tuckson and Scougall travelled to the small Tiwi community of Milikapiti (Snake Bay) on Melville Island to commission works for the Gallery directly from the artists, thus becoming pioneers in redefining the representation of Indigenous Australia. The Milikapiti artists responded immediately with an overriding passion to communicate their cultural identity, and converted their age-old tradition of carving and painting for ceremony into contemporary art. Artists including Laurie Nelson Mungatopi (c1923–deceased), Bob One Aputimi (1925–76), Jack Yarunga (c1910–73), Don Burakmadjua (1925–95) and Charlie Kwangdini (c1905–deceased) created a set of tutini. These contemporary sculptures were based on tutini from the Tiwi funeral ceremony, Pukumani. However, commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales and free from ceremonial connections, these works reference the Pukumani ceremony but

exist within a new contemporary art context. Contemporary Tiwi artist Pedro Wonaeamirri acknowledged this distinction stating tutini 'used for ceremony are made from bloodwood timber, and the ones for exhibitions and galleries are made from heavy, hard, ironwood timber'.<sup>4</sup> Ever since this pivotal moment Tiwi artists have been carving and painting their ochre jilamara (designs) for two audiences: ceremony and art gallery.

When placed in the Grand Courts of the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1959 the Tiwi tutini challenged mainstream society. Many critics opposed the placement of the tutini in an art gallery, promoting racist ideas that the sculptures were primitive and did not belong. Tuckson persevered and later that year, with the continued support of Scougall, travelled to Yirrkala in eastern Arnhem Land to commission more work. Waiting for them at Yirrkala's beach camp were the great Yolngu clan leaders who had already promoted an understanding of their culture with missionaries since 1935 and random visitors, including the AASEAL over a decade before. Yolngu artists, dedicated to documenting the epic travels and actions of their ancestors, worked with a combination of figurative elements and miny'tji (sacred rarrk or crosshatching designs) to produce major barks. Contained within miny'tji is the ancestral knowledge of each clan, either Dhuwa or Yirritja in the binary moiety system that underpins all Yolngu life. Yirritja artist Munggurawuy Yunupingu (c1907–79), monarch of the Gumatj clan from Caledon Bay, honoured the diamond fire miny'tji created, and seen today, on Bäru the ancestral crocodile.

Rirratjingu leaders Mawalan (c1908–67), Mathaman (c1915–70) and Wandjuk Marika (c1930–87), along with Woreimo (c1934–deceased), collaborated on *Djan'kawu creation story* 1959. Divided into small vignettes or windows, a style typical of work from Yirrkala at the time, this bark depicts the travels of the Djan'kawu, the major Dhuwa creation figures. Travelling in their canoe, the Djan'kawu followed Banumbirr, the morning star, to land at Yalangbara, home of the Rirratjingu, bringing with them the first dawn and the light and warmth of day. On landing, the Djan'kawu created and named the landscape, giving birth to the clans. Together the artists tell the first chapter of the important Djan'kawu story, painting each section of the divided bark using their unique miny'tji associated with individual places and ancestral events. This bark, along with a suite of successive ones portraying the creative journey of the Djan'kawu across Arnhem Land, is of national significance.

Two other instances of the assertion of Yolngu sovereignty through the use of miny'tji include the Dhuwa and Yirritja Church Panels of 1962–63, and the Bark Petition of 1963. The latter was a direct response to the threat of mining on the Gove Peninsula, adjacent to Yirrkala. It combines written statements and signatures with clan miny'tji, protesting the mine and proclaiming Yolngu land rights. The mine, however, went ahead, destroying much of the local environment and many sacred sites. More recently Yolngu artists used their miny'tji in the exhibition *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country* to fight for Native Title over their seas. In 2008 they

were successful, winning exclusive fishing rights to the Blue Mud Bay region.

In the 1960s central Arnhem Land artists were also actively painting their culture within a growing art industry sponsored by the missions. Work from the following three regions, Milingimbi, Maningrida and Wadeye (Port Keats), was gifted to the Art Gallery of New South Wales by Scougall in the early 1960s. Artists from Milingimbi included Binyinyuwuy (1928–82), Samuel Lipundja (1912–68) and Tom Djawa (1905–80) whose work operates on a more intimate scale in both size and subject, often addressing just one theme, one figure, or one miny'tji. The scale of these delicate bark paintings is often understood as having a strong relationship to ceremonial body painting. Subjects, Dhuwa or Yirritja, range from ephemeral environmental conditions, including the reflecting light on mud flats and rain falling through trees, to detailed studies of flora and fauna, such as oysters, catfish and flying fox.

Djambarrpuyungu artist Binyinyuwuy painted birrkuḍa, or sugar bag (native honey), a cherished subject inherited from his mother's clan estate and detailed in the image *Yirritja honey bee design* c1960. This Yirritja honey is connected to Bāru, the ancestral crocodile, depicted in the work of Yunupingu. As Bāru's fire spread, Murryana, the honey spirit, fled and deposited his honey throughout the landscape. Today, the two subjects share the same design blueprint. The diamond miny'tji for Binyinyuwuy represents the honeycomb or wax cells; the use of rarrk within the honeycomb is the sweet birrkuḍa; the dots represent the bees, pollen and larvae; and slender triangle is the entrance to the hive, which is set deep within the log. This miny'tji decorated Murryana, and today is painted on the young Yirritja initiates and performers of the birrkuḍa ceremony.<sup>5</sup>

The western Arnhem Land movement was fostered in the settlement of Maningrida when, in 1963, the Methodist minister Reverend Gowan Armstrong started to buy and sell bark paintings, sculptures and weavings from underneath the stilts of his elevated house, donating the proceeds to the development of community amenities. Kunwinjku artists Spider Namirri Nabunu (1924–73) and Samuel Manggudja (1909–83) were key artists in this movement, translating traditional painting skills learnt on the region's surrounding rock art walls into new forms with classic solid bold gestures and chunks of colour, infilled with dots and lines. Yet Manggudja's subjects encompass his contemporary frontier experiences, such as the introduction of the devastating disease leprosy, as seen in the work *Man with leprosy* 1961. The unique horizontal bark *Figure with long fingers* 1960 is concerned with a more classic subject, the malevolent long-fingered spirit Namorrordo, who shoots across the sky clawing at the souls of the living.

Further to the west, the community of Wadeye (Port Keats) with its violent and traumatising colonial history commenced painting to affirm and sustain their culture. Works from the 1960s are known to depict sacred ideas, concepts and objects, like that seen in the

work *The Garaphon story* by Murrinh-patha artist Indji Tharwul (c1900–deceased). The expression of these subjects on bark correlates with the restrictions imposed by the Roman Catholic Mission, established 1935, which forbade traditional ceremonial practice. Broad fields of ochre, accentuated by a perimeter of white dots and inhabited by a figurative schematic, creates the open landscape particular to the Wadeye region style. This representation is echoed in later east Kimberley art. Nym Bunduck (c1907–81), a Murrinh-patha leader instrumental in the art movement, collaborated with his son Kevin Bunduck (1942–94) on *Emus feeding* 1961. In this immense work a central water hole is depicted in dry season; it is filled with water lilies and acts as a refuge for emus, which travel the landscape alongside ancestral snakes.

The work on display in the Grand Courts not only celebrates 20th century Aboriginal art, but marks an important moment in the history of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. These bark paintings and tutini celebrate the vision and collaboration of Tony Tuckson and Dr Stuart Scougall. The placement of the works in this section of the gallery is a remembrance not only of their efforts but a celebration of the determination of Aboriginal artists to share their culture and art. These works signify the ways in which the Gallery's collection was formed and developed: from commissioning work from the Tiwi Islands and Yirrkala to the generous gifting of works from Milingimbi, Maningrida and Wadeye by Scougall. These works represent an enormous shift in the Australia cultural landscape: they mark the first time an art gallery commissioned, collected and exhibited Aboriginal art, squarely placing Aboriginal culture in the national consciousness. They illustrate the presence and continuation of Aboriginal culture, asserting legal ties to country, international engagement and giving insight into the world's oldest living culture. By their placement in a public arena, and their contextualisation as art, these artworks promote respect and understanding of culture. As a record, they serve to protect against the repeating of past injustices. More importantly, these artworks are significant for the role they have played, and continue to play, in keeping Aboriginal culture alive and strong, connecting people to their sacred ancestral knowledge.

Jonathan Jones  
Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Programs

1 N J B Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802*, Blubber Head Press, Hobart 1983, pp 57–58

2 Paul SC Taçon and Susan M Davies, 'Transitional traditions: 'Port Essington' bark-paintings and the European discovery of Aboriginal aesthetics', 2004, [http://aiatsis.gov.au/asj/docs/Tacon\\_and\\_Davies\\_AAS0204.pdf](http://aiatsis.gov.au/asj/docs/Tacon_and_Davies_AAS0204.pdf)

3 Northern Territory Government, Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport, 'Monsoon traders (Macassans)', <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/heritage/maritime/monsoon.html>

4 Pedro Wonaeamirri, in Hetti Perkins and Margie West (eds), *One sun one moon: Aboriginal art in Australia*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2007, p 133

5 *Tradition today: Indigenous art in Australia*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2007 p 30

6 Bob One Apuatimi was originally from Bathurst Island

7 Scougall quoted in Maurice O'Riordan, 'Australian icons: twenty artists from the collection, *Artlink*, vol 20 no 4, December 2000, p 73

### Sam Baramba Wurramara

Sam Baramba Wurramara (1919–84) was an Anindilyakwa artist from Ayangkulyumuda (Groote Eylandt). *Macassan Prau* 1948 attests to the history of trade and cultural exchange between the people of Arnhem Land and the Macassan people (of present-day Sulawesi in Indonesia) since the 1500s. This work was painted around the same time as the set of 24 bark paintings from Ayangkulyumuda collected by the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land (AASEAL), but is a more recent addition to the collection.

- Look closely at this work and describe its qualities of surface, composition, scale and mark making. Consider the use of space and assess the effect of the image floating on a black background. Find other examples of work from Ayangkulyumuda (Groote Eylandt) in the exhibition and identify similarities and differences between them. What tells you that the artists come from an island nation? Compare and contrast the work from this region with that of artists from western Arnhem Land such as Samuel Manggudja (1909–83), and describe the elements of colours, mark making, application of paint, perspective and composition.
- Investigate the history of contact between Indonesia and Australia. Find other depictions of cultural relations between Macassan and Aboriginal people and list Indonesian words still found in the languages of Arnhem Land. Compare Wurramara's depiction of a prau with that of other artists from the north coast of Australia. Find out about the different kinds of Indigenous watercraft in Australia. Write an account of the different regional styles and technologies.
- Research the AASEAL expedition of 1948 led by Charles Pearcy Mountford. Consider the role played by this and other such expeditions in focusing attention on Indigenous art and culture. Why was the distribution of the collected artworks among state art galleries and museums significant? Research the evolution of the Gallery's collection of Indigenous art.

### Laurie Nelson Mungatopi, Bob One Apuatimi, Jack Yarunga, Don Burakmadjua, Charlie Kwangdini, Artist unknown

In 1958 a group of senior Tiwi artists including Laurie Nelson Mungatopi (c1923–deceased), Bob One Apuatimi (1925–76), Jack Yarunga (c1910–73), Don Burakmadjua (1925–95) and Charlie Kwangdini (c1905–deceased) from Milikapiti, in the Tiwi Islands<sup>6</sup> chose to create a set of 17 tutini (pukumani poles) for the Art Gallery of New South Wales. These sculptures were created using traditional techniques of carving and painting, yet were made from a different material in recognition of the change in context. Since then, Tiwi artists have been producing two types of tutini, one for ceremony and the other for art galleries.

- Consider the different purposes and roles of tutini created for a ceremonial or art gallery context. Why do the artists use ironwood instead of bloodwood for tutini which will be displayed in a gallery? Assess the role of context in creating meaning. Think about the ways in which contemporary artists such as Marcel Duchamp (1887–68) have focused attention on the implications of context. How does this compare and contrast with the case of the Tiwi tutini? Find out about the reasons why people in communities such as Milikapiti, Papunya and Redfern decided to create art for the public. What is the role of art for Indigenous people in Australia?
- Plan a large-scale public sculpture or memorial to be installed in a significant location. Make drawings, photomontages and models to illustrate your concept. Think about how you will execute your ideas. Will you work alone or collaboratively? Consider how the materials, form, scale and subject of your work will relate to the site and how they may react to time and the elements. What ideas and issues may be evoked? Think about how different audiences may respond.
- Research the process by which these tutini came to be installed at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Report on the roles played by Dr Stuart Scougall (1889–1964), Tony Tuckson (1921–73) and the Tiwi artists. It is 50 years since the tutini were first installed in this position at the Gallery. Create a timeline which includes major events in Indigenous art history and describe the ways in which the position of Indigenous art in Australia has changed or stayed the same.

## Mawalan Marika, Wandjuk Marika, Mathaman Marika, Woreimo

In 1959 Tony Tuckson, the Art Gallery of New South Wales' then assistant director, and Dr Stuart Scougall, travelled to Yirrkala in east Arnhem Land and commissioned a series of bark paintings by Rirratjingu leaders Mawalan (c1908–67), Mathaman (c1915–70) and Wandjuk Marika (c1930–87) along with Woreimo (c1934–deceased). *Djan'kawu creation story* 1959, painted in response to this commission, depicts the epic ancestral travels of the Djan'kawu from Burralku Island, and their arrival at Yalangbara (Port Bradshaw). Travelling in their canoe, the Djan'kawu followed Banumbirr, the morning star, to land at Yalangbara, bringing with them the first dawn and the light and warmth of day. The miny'tji, or sacred rarrk, represents aspects of the environment including clouds, the sunlight on the sand, the wake of the canoe, waves breaking, sea foam and different kinds of water.

- Study *Djan'kawu creation story*. Notice the materials, colour, composition and abstract and figurative elements and describe how the artists have represented an ocean voyage and conveyed information about the journey. Find out about the miny'tji. How does its abstract patterning communicate information about place and events?

- *Djan'kawu creation story* 1959 is part of an epic bark painting series. Scougall described the series as 'a pictorial ballad sequence'.<sup>7</sup> Research this significant suite of barks on the Art Gallery of New South Wales website, looking at the associated sequence of barks and text, and explain what Scougall meant by this. Why did the artists create a series of works to represent this ancestral narrative?

- Investigate bark painting styles across Arnhem Land. Explore the works exhibited in the Grand Courts and identify stylistic features of art from the northeast, central and western Arnhem Land regions. Find examples of work from Milingimbi, Maningrida, Kunbarlanja and Wadeye. Notice similarities and differences in style, patterning, materials, subject and use of pictorial space. Create a poster to convey your findings to the class.

## Binyinyuwuy

Djambarrpuyungu artist Binyinyuwuy (1928–1982) lived most of his life at the island community of Milingimbi in central Arnhem Land. As a revered ceremonial leader, he actively resisted the control exercised by the local Methodist mission and throughout his life, was a strong advocate for traditional values. Binyinyuwuy was a skilled artist and transcribed his extensive knowledge, painting a range of subjects including Därrpa snakes, fire, flying foxes, and sugarbag (native honey), as seen in *Yirritja honey bee design* c1960. These subjects and their miny'tji are continually celebrated and feature in ceremonies, painted on bodies and objects.

- Look at *Yirritja honey bee design* c1960 and describe the artist's use of brush strokes, colour and line work to create the intricate patterning of the miny'tji. Analyse the composition. Look at the different planes and spatial relationships. Is there a line of symmetry? Speculate on how the small and intimate scale of bark painting from east Arnhem Land relates to body painting. Research the use of sugarbag (native honey) and native bees in Aboriginal communities and compare with other examples of bees from around the world. In class, discuss the relation of the natural environment to social, symbolic and ceremonial life.

- The Yolngu world is divided into two halves, Dhuwa and Yirritja. This important organising principle determines all aspects of life. Binyinyuwuy, being Yirritja, only made paintings relating to Yirritja subjects, including Yirritja sugarbag. Find other examples of his work addressing this theme and identify the diamond miny'tji related to Yirritja sugarbag.

- Make a detailed study of one aspect of your physical environment. Record your observations of this place and its associated atmospheric effects over time. Draw, paint, take photographs or make sound recordings. Using non-representational imagery such as line, pattern, colour, sound or digital imagery create an abstracted representation of this place based on your initial observations.

## Samuel Manggudja

Kunwinjku artist Samuel Manggudja (1909–83) lived in western Arnhem Land. In 1949 he worked closely with husband and wife team Ronald and Catherine Berndt, who, unlike most ethnographic and anthropological collectors of this period, including Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer and Mountford, recorded artists' names and language groups. Manggudja actively promoted and supported the Aboriginal art industry and was one of the first artists to be appointed to the newly formed Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, between 1973 and 1975. Manggudja's bold and confident painting style has strong rock art characteristics, with floating bodies and dotting typical of early western Arnhem Land bark painting.

- Namorrorddo is a shooting star spirit who steals humans' souls. Look at *Figure with long fingers* 1960 and analyse Manggudja's use of figuration, distortion and composition to create drama. Experiment with distortion and exaggeration to illustrate the abilities or special qualities of a character in popular culture. Write a short narrative based on this character and create a stop-motion animation or flip book.
- Locate Maningrida on a map of Arnhem Land. Find out about the tools and materials used by artists from this region. How are materials sourced and prepared for use? Analyse the qualities of bark, such as texture, shape, weight and way it sits against the wall, that contribute to a viewer's experience of the work. How would your response to these paintings be altered if they were made with canvas and acrylic paint, or as a digital print?
- Find images of rock art from the stone country of western Arnhem Land. Describe how paintings such as *Figure with long fingers* relate to rock art and think about the use of space and the positioning of figures on the bark. Compare this work with painting from east Arnhem Land, such as Binyinyuwuy's *Yirritja honey bee design* c1960, which is more closely related to body painting, and discuss the differences.

## Kevin Bunduck, Nym Bunduck

Nym Bunduck (c1907–81) was a Murrinh-patha leader from the Wadeye (Port Keats) community on the west coast of the Northern Territory. He experienced first-hand the colonisation of his country, and the frontier violence it brought. The mission was established on his country in 1935 and it was here that he started to paint his traditional stories and culture, a skill which he passed on to his son Kevin Bunduck (1942–94). Together they collaborated on the painting *Emus feeding* 1961 depicting their country during the dry season. Snakes define the landscape, framing the central waterhole, while emus move through different environments denoted by changes in colour.

- Look at *Emus feeding* and describe your immediate subjective response. Find the black and green areas relating to changes in the landscape, the flocks of emus feeding near the waterhole, the dry creek bed, boab trees, water lilies, flowers and the three snakes, one of which is pregnant with eggs. List ways in which this work celebrates the fertility of the artists' country and its regenerative power. Find iconographic and compositional connections with art making styles of the east Kimberly and the desert.
- Locate the mission settlements of Groote Eylandt, Yirrkala, Milingimbi, Kunbarlanja and Wadeye on a map. Research the history of missions and missionaries in Australia and outline the effects they have had on Aboriginal culture. Discuss how art forms developed in many Indigenous communities considered to be 'traditional' are actually innovative responses to new circumstances. Write an account of the role of cultural production in keeping culture and community strong.
- Write a critical review of the exhibition of these works in the Grand Courts. Outline your interpretations of the selection and grouping of the artworks. Why have these works been exhibited in this part of the Gallery at this time? Consider the relationships between the tutini, the bark paintings, the neoclassical European architecture and the paintings from the Colonial era. What story does it tell about the history of Indigenous art production, collection and exhibition in Australia since colonisation?

## SELECTED RESOURCES

### SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- Isaacs, Jenny. *Wandjuk Marika: life story*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland 1995
- Jones, Jonathan. *Mountford gifts*, online exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2009
- Perkins, Hetti. *Crossing country: the alchemy of western Arnhem Land art*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2004
- Perkins, Hetti and West, Margie (eds), *One sun one moon: Aboriginal art in Australia*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2007
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- Saltwater: Yirrkala bark paintings of sea country: recognising Indigenous sea rights*, exhibition catalogue, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, Yirrkala, Northern Territory, in association with Jennifer Isaacs Publishing, Sydney 1999

### EDUCATION KITS

- Crossing Country: the alchemy of western Arnhem Land art, education kit, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2004
- Country, Culture, Community: an education kit for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collection, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2009

### JOURNALS

- Perkins, Hetti. 'A privileged moment: retracing Tony Tuckson's pioneering journey north', *Art & Australia*, Spring 2009, pp 108–117

### DVD

- Crossing Country*, DVD, 25 min, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2004. Directors James Marshall and Jonathan Jones

### WEBSITES

- Jilamara Arts & Crafts, [www.jilamara.com](http://www.jilamara.com)
- Maningrida Arts & Culture, [www.maningrida.com](http://www.maningrida.com)
- Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre and Museum, [www.yirrkala.com](http://www.yirrkala.com)
- Sugarbag (Australia's stingless native bees), [www.sugarbag.net](http://www.sugarbag.net)
- Twelve Canoes, [www.12canoes.com.au](http://www.12canoes.com.au)

### GLOSSARY

- Dhuwa** – one half of the Arnhem Land moiety system, which divides all aspects of society and natural phenomena into two halves, as in Yirritja and Dhuwa
- Kuninjku/Kunwinjku** – language groups in western Arnhem Land
- miny'tji** – designs comprised of crosshatching relating to people's spiritual identity, their ancestral lands and the ancestors who made the lands, essentially identifying people's connection to country
- Pukumani** – burial ceremony performed to ensure the safe departure of the spirits of the deceased
- rarrk** – crosshatching relating to people's spiritual identity, their ancestral lands and the ancestors who made these lands, essentially identifying people's connection to country
- Tiwi** – language group both on Melville and Bathurst Islands, located 100kms off the coast of Darwin
- Yirritja** – one half of the Arnhem Land moiety system, which divides all aspects of society and natural phenomena into two halves, as in Yirritja and Dhuwa
- Yolngu** – a generic name for Aboriginal people of central and eastern Arnhem Land

### Acknowledgements

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### cover:

Laurie Nelson Mungatopi (c1923–deceased), Bob One Apuatimi (1925–76), Jack Yarunga (c1910–73), Don Burakmadjua (1925–95), Charlie Kwangdini (c1905–deceased), Artist unknown. Tiwi, Milikapiti, Melville Island, North Region  
*Tutini (Pukumani graveposts)* 1958 (detail) Gift of Dr Stuart Scougall 1959  
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