

# **FROM BARK TO NEON INDIGENOUS ART FROM THE NGV COLLECTION**

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This exhibition celebrates Indigenous art in Australia and explores some watershed moments in its recent history. It looks at major artists across time and place who have been at the forefront in creating new forms of expression and in maintaining and regenerating customary cultural practices and iconography. Great individual artists, working in Aboriginal-owned art centres or independently after studying at art school have shaped and transformed the face of Indigenous art in Australia and inspired many artists to follow their example.

The exhibition begins with a selection of singular contemporary artists of influence in contrasting centres of art production, from Melbourne and Adelaide to the Kimberley and Far North Queensland. Rover Thomas, leader of the East Kimberley School of landscape painting and Trevor Nickolls, ‘father of urban Aboriginal art’ – the first Indigenous artists chosen to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale – share the space with outstanding Melbourne-based artists, the photo-realist Lin Onus, and the iconoclastic Destiny Deacon and Brook Andrew. The iconic figurative images of Alec Mingelmanganu’s *Wanjina* and Andrew’s *Sexy and dangerous* are in marked contrast to Sally Gabori’s inventive fields of brilliant colour honouring places on Bentinck Island that are strong in her cultural memory.

# Trevor Nickolls

Ngarrindjeri 1949–2012

## Childhood Dreaming

1973–74, Adelaide

oil on canvas

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Alcoa of Australia Limited,  
Governor, 1991

O.225-1991

This work grew out of Nickolls's original idea of a mother and child sitting at a bus stop, whom he saw as a Madonna and child enthroned, surrounded by the city on the left and the country on the right. This idea enabled Nickolls to explore the dichotomy between Aboriginal Dreamtime, nature and spirituality, and the 'Machinetime' – mechanisation and the modern world, which is central to his practice. The work concerns the artist's life as a child, and his dreams and fantasies, and reflects his interest in Surrealism and the work of Salvador Dalí, seen in the proliferation of contrary details.

# Lin Onus

Yorta Yorta 1948–96

## Fish

1991 Upwey, Melbourne, Victoria  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Shell Australia Limited,  
Honorary Life Benefactor, 2002

2002.239

The artist depicts multiple fish moving in a current of brackish water. Some appear as shadowed reflections, others are shown in X-ray and bear rarrk (crosshatched) designs that occur in Onus's art through his close association with Jack Wunuwun, a Murrungun/Djinang leader from Gamardi in Central Arnhem Land. Wunuwun gave Onus permission to introduce crosshatching into his work and also instructed him in the meaning of his clan designs. The artist's use of ochre colours, crosshatching and dots emphasises his Yorta Yorta cultural heritage within a contemporary Australian context.

## For kids

Lin Onus was a Yorta Yorta man who was a self-taught artist. He did not learn how to paint at an art school, but he learnt a lot about art from his family. His Yorta Yorta dad painted souvenir items like boomerangs for tourists and his grandparents on his mother's side often showed him European paintings. Lin's exposure to Aboriginal and European art influenced him to create paintings that combined realistic images, such as trees and mountains, with Aboriginal designs from Arnhem Land such as the crosshatching on the fish in this painting.

# Brook Andrew

Australian born 1970

## Sexy and dangerous

1996, printed Melbourne 2005

computer-generated colour transparency on transparent  
synthetic polymer resin  
artist's proof 1/2

Purchased with funds from the Victorian Foundation  
for Living Australian Artists, 2005

2005.166

*Sexy and dangerous* re-purposes and re-positions a nineteenth-century photograph by Charles Kerry of an unidentified Aboriginal man from Barron River, Queensland. By superimposing Chinese characters and 'sexy and dangerous' onto the youth's torso, Andrew transforms the original image into a desirable object – a subject worthy of a seductive billboard campaign where the nature of the commodity for sale may be difficult to identify, but the allure of the 'brand' is undeniable. As Andrew states, 'Now we see him as what he still is today, how many people still view Aboriginal people today, regardless of appearance or authenticity, we are Sexy and Dangerous'.

# Alec Mingelmanganu

Woonambal c. 1910–81

## Wanjina

1980 Kalumburu, Western Australia

earth pigments and natural binder on canvas

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1990

O.156-1990

Wanjina is the general name of spirit ancestors of the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambal peoples of the North-West and Central Kimberley. It is believed that Wanjina ancestral beings left themselves behind as paintings on rock in the Dreaming and created the laws of social behaviour. Wanjina are associated with the life-giving properties of water, bringing the monsoonal rains and distributing spirits of the unborn to their clan waterholes. This Wanjina shares certain features with *Wanjina on rock*, being a frontal, solid image of a mouthless anthropomorphic being. A red ochre band with linear markings, symbolic of lightning, encircles the Wanjina's head.

# Destiny Deacon

Kuku/Erub/Mer born 1957

## Where's Mickey?

2002, 2016 printed Melbourne  
lambda jet print from Polaroid  
artist's proof

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for  
Living Australian Artists, 2016

2016.618

Destiny Deacon was born in Maryborough, Queensland, of the Kuku and Erub/Mer people of the Torres Strait Islands. She began her professional career in photography in her late thirties as a way to express herself and her political beliefs. A self-taught artist, Deacon is primarily known for her photographs and videos where she subverts familiar icons with humour and wit. *Where's Mickey?* plays on the phrase 'Mickey Mouse' to refer to something that is substandard, poorly executed or amateurish.



# Destiny Deacon

Kuku/Erub/Mer born 1957

## Smile

2017 Melbourne

lightjet print

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2018

In *Smile*, Deacon challenges our trust in the innocuous smiley face emoji and prompts the viewer to look closely at the everyday symbols that proliferate in our lives.

*Smile* aims to rescue and elevate collectable objects of Aboriginalia that Deacon finds derogatory. Employing 'el cheapo' techniques, as well as her own complex brand of humour, Deacon plays on common Indigenous clichés, thus *Smile* is composed of a boomerang and the heads of two black dollies, which form the shape of the smiley face.

## New acquisition

# **Destiny Deacon**

Kuku/Erub/Mer born 1957

## **Meloncholy**

2000, 2016 printed Melbourne  
lambda jet print from Polaroid  
artist's proof

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for  
Living Australian Artists, 2016

2016.616

# Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori

Kaiadilt c. 1924–2015

## Dibirdibi Country

2007 Gununa, Mornington Island, Queensland  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Dr Terry Cutler, 2017

2017.104

In this work, Sally Gabori represents Dibirdibi, her husband's Country on Bentinck Island. Dibirdibi is the story place of Dibirdibi, the Rock Cod ancestor who thrashed about, cutting out channels with his ventral fins and carving up the South Wellesley Islands. Dibirdibi has large estaurine salt pans, long-grass plains, ironstone ridges, stone-walled fish traps and freshwater swamps. The artist remembered sheltering from cyclones there, drinking from the freshwater spring and gathering the long grass to weave into string bags and nets.

## New acquisition

# Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori

Kaiadilt (c. 1924) – 2015

## Dibirdibi Country

2008 Mornington Island, Queensland  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2010

2010.72

Sally Gabori represents Dibirdibi, the story place of Dibirdibi, the Rock Cod ancestor who thrashed about, cutting out channels with his ventral fins and carving up the South Wellesby Islands. Dibirdibi's creative journey ended on Sweers Island, where he was caught and eaten. His liver was discarded, transforming into a freshwater spring that still provides a reliable water source. Dibirdibi is also the name of the artist's husband, Pat Gabori, the inheritor of the song, story and places associated with the Rock Cod ancestor. Its topography is distinguished by large saltpans, iron stone ridges and long-grass plains.

# Rover Thomas

Kukatja/Wangkajunga c. 1926–98

## Dreamtime story of the willy-willy

1989 Warmun, Western Australia

earth pigments and natural binder on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1990

O.1-1990

This painting shows the ancestral path of miowin, a willy-willy or spiralling dust storm, indicated by the red-ochre calligraphic design unleashed on the matt, white surface of the land and rising into the sky. The storm began as a murmur, in the upper right, and kept increasing in size and velocity as it moved through Jaru Country until it reached badangu ngapa (the main waterhole), shown enclosed by the spiral. Here the willy-willy was consumed by Garagi, the Rainbow Serpent, who is associated with storms in the Kimberley region.

During the 1990s, Emily Kam Kngwarray of Utopia in Central Australia transformed women's striped body designs from Awely ceremonies into momentous acrylic paintings of her birthplace, Alhalker, and her Dreaming, the pencil yam. Kngwarray effected a revolution because her art resists interpretation as any kind of map making, diagram or landscape. Instead, it is a daring form of 'visual music'. Kngwarray's rise to prominence signalled the emergence of Indigenous women as contemporary artists of invention and opened up opportunities for others to work in modern and customary mediums.

Western Desert artist Naata Nungurrayi works with different combinations of layered dots, nuances of colour and lines to represent women's ritual designs, whereas Doreen Reid and Charlotte Phillipus create optical compositions of parallel zigzag designs to represent the sand-hill topography of their homelands. May Moodoonuthi of Bentinck Island, Queensland strengthens her connection to family and Country by painting striped burrkunda (body scars) that signify mourning. Spinifex artist Patju Presley, by contrast, expresses his deep connections with Markurapiti, Western Australia, through a geometric colourfield of kinti kinti (close close dots), whereas Paddy Bedford devises a minimalist geometry of ochres to represent a dangerous Dreaming site near Bedford Downs in the East Kimberley.

# Emily Kam Kngwarray

Anmatyerr c. 1910–1996

## Anwerlarr anganenty (Big yam Dreaming)

1995 Delmore Downs, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Donald and Janet Holt and family,  
Governors, 1995

1995.709

Kngwarray celebrates the natural increase of anwerlarr (the pencil yam) at Alhalker, her birthplace, in this work. The bold white lines on black derive from women's striped body paintings for awely ceremonies and signify the long branching tuberous plant underground. When the yam is in full growth, a green leaf spreads over the ground. As the yam ripens and is ready to eat, the leaf withers and a crack materialises in the ground, indicating the tuber and its pattern of growth. The white linear design resembles the veins, sinews and contours seen in the body of the land from above.

## For kids

*Big yam Dreaming* is the biggest painting by an Indigenous artist in the NGV Collection. It is nearly three metres high and over eight metres long! You would think that such a big painting would take a long time to make, but Emily made this in only two days. She used one continuous line: this means that every line you see is joined together with the other lines.

Try standing back from the painting and following the lines with your finger. How far can you get?



# Thunduyingathi Bijarrb May Moodoonuthi

Kaiadilt 1929–2008

## Burrkunda

2008 Gununa, Mornington Island, Queensland  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Ben and Helen Korman through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

Moodoonuthi represents burrkunda, the permanent scarification markings that senior Kaiadilt people made on their bodies in pre-contact times to connect them to kandu, their blood relations and their family, in times of mourning. By making these markings on canvas, Moodoonuthi strengthens her connection to family and Country.

## New acquisition

# **Thunduyingathi Bijarrb May Moodoonuthi**

Kaiadilt 1929–2008

## **Burrkunda**

2008 Gununa, Mornington Island, Queensland  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Ben and Helen Korman through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

**New acquisition**

# **Paddy Bedford**

Gija c. 1922–2007

## **Joowarringayin – Devil Dreaming**

2000 Kununurra, Western Australia

earth pigments and binder on canvas

Gift of Stephen Shostak through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

Paddy Bedford depicts the site of Joowarringayin, located in the Leopold Range close to Elgee Cliffs Station in the East Kimberley. According to Bedford, 'This is a very cold and dangerous place where devil devil spirits live. They are all sitting there in every shade looking out. They don't like strangers who go there: they kill them'. Located south-west of Bedford Downs Station, where the artist was born and grew up, the area is characterised by a creek bed running between high, sheer cliffs and, significantly, is associated with Bedford's mother, who was born nearby at Wirndoowoon.

### **New acquisition**

# Naata Nungurrayi

Pintupi born c. 1932

## Women's Dreaming at Marrapinti

2000 Kintore, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of Ian and Dorothy Hicks, Fellows,  
2001 2001.578

The artist represents the rockhole site of Marrapinti, to the west of Pollock Hills in Western Australia. A group of senior ancestral women came from Yunala, further west, and camped at this rock hole. The women made nose bones, also called marrapinti, worn through a hole in the nose web. Upon completion of ceremonies at Marrapinti, the women continued their journey east to Ngaminya and then on to Wirrulinga before eventually travelling to Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay). On their travels, they gathered kampurarrpa (desert raisin) from the small shrub *Solanum centrale*. The lines in these works represent the tali (sandhills) that surround the site.

# **Naata Nungurrayi**

Pintupi born c. 1932

## **Women's Dreaming at Marrapinti**

2002 Kintore, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of Ian Hicks AM and Dorothy Hicks,  
Fellows, 2002 2002.180

**Naata Nungurrayi**

Pintupi born c. 1932

**Women's Dreaming at Tjulturunga**

2001 Kintore, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, 2003

2003.1

**Naata Nungurrayi**

Pintupi born c. 1932

**Senior women camped at the rockhole  
site of Marrapinti**

2002 Kintore, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, 2003

2003.488

# **Naata Nungurrayi**

Pintupi born c. 1932

## **Designs associated with the rockhole site of Marrapinti**

1998 Kintore, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of The Hon. Justice David Angel through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program,  
2009

2009.373



# **Naata Nungurrayi**

Pintupi born c. 1932

## **Women's Dreaming at Marrapinti**

1999 Kintore, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Marina Strocchi and Wayne Eager through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2010

2010.145

# **Naata Nungurrayi**

Pintupi born c. 1932

## **Designs associated with Unkunya**

2007 Kintore, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of The Hon. David Angel QC through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2015

2015.220

# Naata Nungurrayi

Pintupi born c. 1932

## Designs associated with Yumari

2003 Kintore, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of The Hon. David Angel QC through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

This painting depicts designs associated with the rockhole site of Yumari, situated in sandhill Country, east of Mount Webb in Western Australia. A large group of ancestral women travelled to this site from the west after passing through a number of sites, including Marrapinti near Kiwirrkura. At Yumari the women gathered a variety of different bush foods including *kampurarrpa* (bush raisins) from the shrub *Solanum centrale* and *ngamunypurru* (cockleberries) from the shrub *Carissa lanceolata*, both of which are abundant at this site. The women later continued their travels towards the east of Pinari.

### New acquisition

# Charlotte Phillipus Napurrula

Pintupi/Luritja born 1959

## Kalipinyapa

2018 Papunya, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2018

Charlotte Phillipus represents the Water Dreaming at the sacred site of Kalipinyapa, for which she is a custodian. The artist tells the story of rain and hail-making ceremonies for Kalipinyapa, which invoke ancestral forces to generate a powerful storm with lightning, thunderclouds and rain. Such ceremonies send a deluge to rejuvenate the earth, filling the rockholes, clay pans and creeks and creating new life and growth upon the land. The forms created by the repetition of parallel zigzag designs represent the sandhills making waves across the desert, but also symbolise waterways and ceremonial body paint.

**New acquisition**

# Doreen Reid Nakamarra

Pintupi/Ngaatjatjarra c. 1955–2009

## Women's Dreaming at Marrapinti

2006 Kiwirrkura, Western Australia

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV Women's Association, 2006

2016.420

The artist represents the rockhole site of Marrapinti, where ceremonies were performed by Nangala and Napangati ancestral women. While at the site the senior women made nose bones, also known as marrapinti, worn through a hole made in the nose web. They also pierced the nasal septums of younger women who participated in the ceremony. The lines in the painting depict the creek at the site and the sandhills surrounding it. The mesmerising linear striations and herringbone designs gyrate to create an illusion of the third dimension. The ridges of sandhills appear to stand up on the canvas surface.

# Patju Presley

Pitjantjatjara born c. 1945

## Markurapiti

2015 Tjuntjuntjara, Western Australia  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV supporters of Indigenous Art, 2016

2016.413

In this painting, Patju Presley represents the sacred site of Markurapiti in the Great Victoria Desert of Western Australia. Markurapiti was formed in the tjukurpa (Dreaming) by the actions of various ancestral beings in human form and animal spirit people, including papa inura (the wild dog or dingo). Presley pares back the circle-path iconography used by senior men to narrate creation stories or map tracts of land, and expresses his deep connections with Markurapiti through a geometric colourfield of kinti kinti (close close dots).

# Rosella Namok

Aankum born 1979

## Pink house

2002 Lockhart River, Queensland  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Ben and Helen Korman through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

Rosella Namok depicts one of the vacant houses in the Lockhart River community in Far North Queensland. The artist states, 'We call it "Pink House" because the colour is pink. It's one of the empty houses now, getting ready to be pulled down. We always use the empty house for playing cards. It's a shame because there's always memories when you grow up in that house'.

# Ronnie Tjampitjinpa

Pintupi born c. 1943

## **Body paint designs for Tingarri ceremonies associated with the rockhole site of Ralagna**

1996 Kintore, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of The Hon. Justice David Angel through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2005

2005.77

This painting depicts men's body paint designs worn during Tingarri ceremonies performed at the rockhole site of Ralagna, indicated by the central roundel. This work is characteristic of Tjampitjinpa's bold geometric abstractions from the mid 1990s, in which the artist enlarges small sections of his earlier, more detailed conceptual maps of the journey of Tingarri ancestors across his Country.



During the late 1950s, artists living in the escarpment country of Western Arnhem Land rendered tangible in ochre on stringybark, Mimih spirit beings who left their images on rock faces. Paris-based Czech artist Karel Kupka cited the work of Namadbara, Yirawala and Midjawmidjaw as examples of the 'dawn of art'. Almost six decades later, Gumatj sisters, Nyapanyapa and Barrupu Yunupingu of North-Eastern Arnhem Land began creating bark paintings that transformed our idea of Yolngu art, formerly the preserve of men, by breaking free of replicating ordered sequences of meticulous crosshatching. Barrupu, a painter of vigorous diamond gestures that encode fire, and Nyapanyapa, a compulsive maker of marks, are artists known for their paintings of tonal nuance, materiality of surface and gestural freedom that defy earlier examples of Yolngu painting.

Provocative city-based artists Brook Andrew, Reko Rennie and Jonathan Jones adopt the language and mediums of contemporary art and popular street culture to challenge romanticised stereotypes of Indigenous people and to comment on postcolonialism. Their bold use of neon and fluorescent light juxtaposed against works composed of natural ochres on stringybark defy preconceptions of what Indigenous art should look like and mean.

# Brook Andrew

Australian born 1970

## Buuga-Buuga

2000 Sydney

neon, transparent synthetic polymer resin

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of The Marjory and Alexander Lynch Endowment, Governor, 2000

2000.54

*'Buuga-Buuga* is a neon work which comments on the continual beating up of Aboriginal subjects, culture and people by non-Aboriginal perceptions which continue to define Aboriginal people in a negative light. Buuga-Buuga literally means "very rotten meat" in the Wiradjuri language. Buuga-Buuga also refers to the Walt Disney cartoons, which show kangaroos and pygmies chasing each other with the pygmy screaming out "ooga booga". Hence the animated neon boondi (club) slams down and sparks up the text "BUUGA BUUGA".'

**BROOK ANDREW, 2000**

# Brook Andrew

Australian born 1970

## dhalaay yuulayn (passionate skin)

2004 Melbourne

enamel paint on anodised aluminium and wood, neon

Purchased with funds from the Victorian Foundation  
for Living Australian Artists, 2005

2005.72

The neon emu in this work is adapted from a brochure for Charles Chauvel's 1955 film, *Jedda*, a watershed film about race relations in Australia. But contrary messages lurk within the flashing neon design of the bird on the Australian coat of arms: its backdrop is the Union Jack and the blinking acronym 'USA' falls from its beak: but is the bird eating or vomiting the letters? Moreover, the emu's yellow centre and the black and red halves of the work's frame create a covert Aboriginal flag. The work investigates Australia's relationship to Britain and America and the idea of 'Australianness'.

# Brook Andrew

Australian born 1970

## Polemics

2000 Sydney

neon, mirror, transparent synthetic polymer resin

Gift of the artist, 2002

2002.39

This flashing neon work juxtaposes Wiradjuri and English words emblematic of Andrew's dual ancestry and of unsuccessful historical endeavours to communicate across cultural divides. The text says that one 'who lives passionately offers a social exchange: polemics is the skin of now', mirroring the mixed messages of postcolonial life and the power of advertising. Representing Wiradjuri words in neon reverses the power relationships implied by the dominant position of English over a silenced language that, for Andrew, is 'not the stuff of museum culture'.

## For kids

This work by Wiradjuri artist Brook Andrew includes words written in the Wiradjuri language. The Wiradjuri nation is the largest Indigenous nation in New South Wales. Before Europeans arrived, there were over 250 different languages in Australia. About 120 of those Indigenous languages are still spoken, but many are in danger of being lost in the future. This is because Indigenous people were forbidden to speak their languages and were forced to learn English. Despite this, languages spoken by Yolngu, Pintupi and Warlpiri people are still thriving.

How many Indigenous languages can you find mentioned on the labels of works in this exhibition?

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Regalia

2013 Melbourne

opaque synthetic polymer resin, neon  
ed. 1/2

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

2015.178.a-c

'Three hand-drawn symbols – the crown, the diamond and the Aboriginal flag – present an emblematic statement about the original royalty of Australia. The crown symbol pays homage to my graffiti roots, pays due respect to Jean-Michel Basquiat, but most importantly reminds us that Aboriginal people are the original sovereigns of this country. The diamond symbol expresses my connection to the Kamilaroi people: it is similar to a family crest; it is part of me. The hand-drawn Aboriginal flag in the form of a graffiti tag pays respect to all Aboriginal people, from environments both urban and remote, and anywhere in between.'

REKO RENNIE, 2013

# Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

## Untitled (Ancestral fire)

2010 Yirrkala, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased with funds donated by Lou and Mary Senini, 2010

2010.370

The artist represents the Gumatj miny'tji (sacred design) that embodies gurtha (fire). Horizontal and vertical lines of different intensities of flame, smoke and ash cross each other asymmetrically and are accentuated in the composition. The red flames, the white smoke and ash, and the black charcoal pulsate through the bark, paralleling the spread of ancestral fire from Ngalarrwuy to other sacred sites implicated in this narrative. Barrupu shows the fire in close-up, stressing its paramount importance to the Gumatj people. The Gumatj language, Dhuwalandja, is itself the tongue of flame, which incinerates dishonesty, leaving only the bones of truth.

# Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

## Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010 Yirrkala, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

2017.185



# Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

## Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2011 Yirrkala, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

2017.187

# Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

## Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010 Yirrkala, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

2017.189

# Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

## Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010 Yirrkala, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

2017.190

# Nyapanyapa Yunupingu

Gumatj born c. 1945

## Pink diptych

2015 Yirrkala, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased with funds donated by Judith and Leon Gorr  
and NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2016

2016.414.a-b

This diptych in a palette of white, pinks and reds is intensely marked and layered, creating textural variations and many nuances of pink and white. The diptych was an impromptu happening because the right side, created first, fitted beautifully with the left edge of the second part. In this work, painted by the artist when she was working in tonalities of pink, Nyapanyapa expresses her capacity to live in the moment through the freedom of her mark-making and her absolute absorption in the process of painting.

# Jambalulu Mulwirrkbirrk

Iwaidja 1908 – c. 1986

## Spear fight

1959 Gunbalanya, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Gift of Louise Rath through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

Jambalulu represents two men fighting each other with barbed spears. The men bear ritual designs of slanting parallel lines on their bodies and wear balluk (biting bags or power bags) around their necks. Images of men wearing biting bags are found in the rock art galleries on Injalak Hill at Gunbalanja in Western Arnhem Land.

# Wally Mandarrk

Dangbon/Dalabon c. 1915–87

## Female Namomoyak spirit

1971 Yaymini, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Gift of Mrs Douglas Carnegie OAM, 1988

O.23-1988

Regarded as a 'man of high degree', Wally Mandarrk was believed to have been in close contact with Mimih spirits in the escarpment country, where he painted on rock before he made the transition to stringybark. In his art of simple icon on a red ochre ground, spirit figures such as this are given palpable form, enlivened by the immediacy of the artist's hand. By stubbornly refusing to use synthetic glue to bind the earth pigments, Mandarrk forged primal images of strong presence imbued with a dense materiality of texture and matte, like bones.

# Wally Mandarrk

Dangbon/Dalabon c. 1915–87

## Male spirit figure

1971 Yaymini, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Gift of Ruth and Reuben Hall, 1988

O.24-1988

# Jimmy Midjawmidjaw

Kunwinjku 1897–1985

## Male and female mimih spirits

1959 Minjilang, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Gift of Dr Margaret Bullen, 2007

2007.429

Here, Jimmy Midjawmidjaw represents slender male and female Mimih spirits of the escarpment, their gender clearly differentiated by the male's prominent genitalia and the female's ample breasts. The faces, limbs and torsos of these beings credited with teaching Kunwinjku people how to hunt, make love, dance, sing and paint, are fluently drawn. The figures are painted in the old East Alligator River style, exemplified by rock paintings from Deaf Adder Creek and Nourlangie Rock. The Mimih stand out in space, with features omitted, enlarged or distorted to intensify their power.



# Yirawala

Kunwinjku c. 1903–76

## Mardayin ceremony

c. 1969 Minjilang, Croker Island, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Presented by Mossgreen Gallery, 2008

2008.281

# Paddy Compass Namadbara

Iwaidja c. 1890–1973

## Namarnday spirits

early 1960s Minjilang, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Gerstl Bequest, 2000

2000.224

Iwaidja artist Paddy Compass Namadbara was born in the Cobourg Peninsula in Western Arnhem Land and spent long periods of his life at nearby Minjilang, on Croker Island, working with historically important Kunwinjku bark painters – Yirawala, Midjawmidjaw and Nangunyarri. This brazen sketch represents male and female malignant spirits, known as Maam or Wayarra, who are associated with love magic and acts of sorcery used as a punishment for sexual misconduct. These animated spirits have prominent genitalia, common in sorcery paintings found on cave walls.

# Paddy Compass Namadbara

Iwaidja c. 1890–1973

## Namarnday spirits

early 1960s Minjilang, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
by Mr Ian Rogers, Member, 2000

2000.220

# Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

## MacDonnell Ranges at Heavitree Gap

early 1950s, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory  
watercolour

Presented by Esso Australia Pty Ltd, 2018

A central focus of Namatjira's work is the ghost gum (*Corymbia aparrerinja* sp.). It marks Arrernte Country, clinging to the face of precipitous cliffs, growing by creeks, or rising from spinifex plains. In this work, Namatjira represents a ghost gum in brilliant sunlight, rising into a crystalline sky. In this dramatic close-up view, not all of the tree's olive-green foliage and upper branches appear. Instead of receding, the background hills of Heavitree Gap are sharply delineated, which gives the composition different points of focus, a mark of the artist's watercolour representations of specific sites in his Country.

**New acquisition**

The vibrant figurative landscapes of self-taught artists such as Robert Campbell Junior, Ian Abdulla and Trevor Turbo Brown narrate their personal histories in rural Australia, whereas Ginger Riley and Billy Benn, who encountered the great Arrernte watercolourist Albert Namatjira while working as stockmen in the Northern Territory, were inspired to create their own forms of landscape painting which celebrate Namatjira's legacy. Namatjira, the first Aboriginal artist to be included in the biographical book series *Who's Who in Australia*, met Anmatyerre artists Tim Leura and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri at Papunya and taught them watercolour technique. This influenced pictorial elements of their painting practice, as exemplified by their visionary landscape painting, *Spirit Dreaming through Napperby Country*, 1980.

Artists living on Country across Arnhem Land create hollow logs (customary mourning objects) that display designs symbolic of identity and place for contemporary art contexts. This practice was popularised by the powerful political statement of *The Aboriginal Memorial*, an installation of 200 hollow logs signifying Indigenous deaths and loss during 200 years of white contact, made for the Bicentennial of 1988. By contrast, Michael Cook's *Invasion* series re-imagines the colonisation of Australia, recasting the invaders as oversized Australian animals and the invaded as 1960s residents on the streets of London.

# Ian Abdulla

Ngarrindjeri 1947–2011

## Night story

1997 Barmera, South Australia

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, 1998

1998.285

*Night story* represents an incident drawn from Ian Abdulla's early life, when he worked in the farming industry at Cobdogla, South Australia, picking grapes and monitoring irrigation and driving machinery, as indicated by the narrative text: 'Steeling tomatoes from the white people at night to feed the family for the week, or for as long as the tomatoes lasted. This was back in the '50s and '60s.'

# Robert Campbell Junior

Ngaku 1944–93

## Dorrigo Falls

1989 Kempsey, New South Wales  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV Supporters and Patrons of  
Indigenous Art, 2007

2007.451

The surface of this horizonless landscape bears designs that reference incised markings on Indigenous cultural objects and carved trees of New South Wales. The artist focuses on roads cut into the mountain to service the logging of native forests, represented by the truck laden with timber. The truck crosses through the trunks and branches of the trees, which are symbols of greenness. The escarpment is dense with tall, proud eucalyptus and palm trees, but the truck prefigures the widespread clearing of the land and foreshadows a damaged, fragile environment. The distorted perspectives and sharp hairpin bends carved into the road envision an altered landscape.

# **Trevor Turbo Brown**

Latje Latje 1967–2017

## **Near the water dreamtime**

2007 Brunswick

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Hans Sip through the Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program, 2017

2017.1332

**New acquisition**



# **Trevor Turbo Brown**

Latje Latje 1967

## **Getting their photo taken by tourists**

2007 Brunswick

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Hans Sip through the Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program, 2017

2017.1333

**New acquisition**

# Trevor Turbo Brown

Latje Latje 1967–2017

## Self Portrait, 'I am the Dingo Spirit'

2015 Brunswick

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Vince Sinni in memory of the artist through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

Trevor Turbo Brown, or 'Turbo' as he was known, was born in Mildura and grew up on Latje Latje Country. In 1981, Turbo moved to Melbourne where he became a celebrity in the Koori community. He trained as a boxer at the Fitzroy Stars Gym from 1986–91 and would do breakdance street performances throughout Melbourne during the 1980s and 90s. It was here that he got his nickname. Turbo was a regular character on the streets of Brunswick before he passed away in 2017. In this self-portrait, Turbo imagines himself as a dingo, wild and free in the night.

### New acquisition

## For kids

Trevor 'Turbo' Brown was a Latje Latje man who was born with an intellectual disability. His parents couldn't take care of him so as a teenager he spent time living on the streets. Trevor lived in a town called Mildura, where he said the animals were his only friends. As an adult he became a very successful and loved artist in Melbourne, with the support of Koori Elders and fellow artists Uncle Herb Patten and Aunty Bunta Patten. The subjects of his much-loved paintings were often the animals who were always kind to him.

Do you have any animals that are special to you?

# Michael Cook

Bidjara born 1968

## **Invasion, kangaroo**

from the *Invasion* series 2018

2018 Brisbane

inkjet print

ed. 5/6

Michael Cook's *Invasion, kangaroo* from his *Invasion* series is a contemporary re-imagining and inversion of the 'arrival' of Europeans in Australia. Cook shows the moment of encounter as an experience of imminent danger and terror, alluding to the experiences of Aboriginal people in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Australia. Rather than recreating this experience in a naturalistic way, Cook has recast the invaders as oversized Australian animals, and the invaded as contemporary residents on the streets of London. These elaborate photo-collages bear an uncanny resemblance to B-grade sci-fi movies from the 1960s.

### **New acquisition**

**Michael Cook**

Bidjara born 1968

**Invasion, giant birds**

from the *Invasion* series 2018

2018 Brisbane

inkjet print

ed. 5/6

**New acquisition**

**Michael Cook**

Bidjara born 1968

**Invasion, UFO possums**

from the *Invasion* series 2018

2018 Brisbane

inkjet print

ed. 5/6

**New acquisition**

# **Billy Benn Perrurle**

Alyawarr/Akara 1943–2012

## **Artetyerre**

2007 Alice Springs, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Dr Terry Cutler, 2018

During the 1950s, the artist remembers encountering the great Arrernte landscape artist Albert Namatjira sitting on the road outside Artetyerre (Harts Range), painting Mount Palm and Mount Brady. This meeting in Central Australia sowed seeds of romantic ambition in Benn – the idea that one day he might also capture Namatjira's 'colour country' in landscapes of his own making. In this work, on a monumental scale, Benn represents his strong memory of his birthplace Artetyerre. He celebrates this Country with pigment, mixing, layering and experimenting with the visual effects of colour against colour.

**New acquisition**

# Ginger Riley Munduwalawala

Marra c. 1936–2002

## Ngak Ngak and the Four Archers

1993 Alice Springs, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Presented by the National Gallery Society of Victoria, 1994

O.80-1994

The artist represents his mother's Country adjacent to the Limmen Bight River, for which he was djungkayi (custodian). The work shows the Four Archers, which are four perfectly formed pyramidal hills. The Four Archers were created by Garimala, a venomous snake believed to be two snakes, which later travelled to Nyamiyukanji in the Limmen Bight River, disappeared under water and metamorphosed into the rainbow serpent. Ngak Ngak, the white-breasted sea eagle, who plays the role of a sentinel or guardian, is shown protecting his mother Country. The upper border of V-shapes and straight lines references Marra body painting.



# Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri

Anmatyerre c. 1929–84,

# Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri

Anmatyerre c. 1932–2002

## Spirit Dreaming through Napperby country

1980 Napperby, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1988

O.33-1988

This cartographic work, both cultural self-portrait and history painting, is visionary in its dimensions and its mapping of different Dreamings. Its monumental size physically draws the viewer into its complex and layered surface, and the horizontal march of the possum's journey anchors the gaze. Uniquely, Tim Leura incorporated miniature iterations of three of his early paintings in this composition, thereby re-establishing himself within the history of the Papunya Tula movement. The skeletal spirit figure perhaps represents Tim Leura's father in transition from the corporeal existence into the Dreaming, invoking Anmatyerr belief that time is indivisible.

# Jack Beimunumbi

Rembarrnga 1935–86

## Lorrkon (Hollow log coffin)

1985 Bodkarri, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on wood

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1986

O.18-1986

# Dr Gumana

Dhalwangu c. 1935–2016

## Birrkuda

2002 Gängan, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Presented through the NGV Foundation in memory of Ron Castan AM by Anita Castan, Governor,  
2003 2003.658

# Dr Gumana

Dhalwangu c. 1935–2016

## Guyamirrilil

2003 Gängan, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Presented through the NGV Foundation in memory of Noel Castan by Anita Castan, Governor,  
2003

2003.659

# Dr Gumana

Dhalwangu c. 1935–2016

## Barama

2008 Gängan, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased with funds donated by friends in memory of Catherine Allen, 2010

2010.356

# Dr Gumana

Dhalwangu c. 1935–2016

## Djarwarrk

2003 Gängan, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Presented through the NGV Foundation in memory of Annia Castan OAM by Anita Castan,  
Governor, 2003

2003.661

# John Mawurndjul

Kuninjku born c. 1952

## Lorrkon (Hollow log)

2006 Milmingkan, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased with funds donated by Supporters  
and Patrons of Indigenous Art, 2006

2006.221

# John Mawurndjul

Kuninjku born c. 1952

## Lorrkon (Hollow log)

2003 Milmingkan, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Gift of Mark Young through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2013 2013.60



# Baluka Maymuru

Manggalili born 1947

# Manggalili Yothu Yindi Larrakitj

2007 Djarrakpi, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*), synthetic fur

Purchased with funds donated by friends in memory of Catherine Allen, 2010

2010.357

**Ivan Namirrkki**

Kuninjku born 1960

**Lorrkon, Gungura (Hollow log  
representing the spiralling wind)**

2005 Marrkolidjban, Northern Territory

earth pigments on wood

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with funds donated in memory of Gabrielle Pizzi by Robbie Barker, Michael Casper, Steven Casper, Rodney Davis, Sandra Ferman, Robert Gould, Honorary Life Benefactor, Vivien Knowles, Member, Jan Minchin, Robert Piaggio, Rae Rothfield, Fellow, Geoffrey Smith and Loti Smorgon, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2005 2005.542

# Samuel Namunjdja

Kuninjku 1965–2018

## Lorrkon (Hollow log)

2002 Mankalord, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Presented through the NGV Foundation in memory of Axel Poignant by an anonymous donor,  
2003

2003.689

# Jimmy Njiminjuma

Kuninjku c. 1945–2004

## Lorrkon (Hollow log)

1990 Mumeka, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Presented through the NGV Foundation by  
Gabrielle Pizzi, Governor, 2003

2003.90

# **Paddy Fordham Wainburranga**

Rembarrnga c. 1938–2006

## **Hollow log coffin**

1989 Beswick Station, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on wood

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1992

O.31-1992

# Wukun Wanambi

Marrakulu born 1962

# Wawurritjpal II

2005 Yirrkala, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Gift of Mark Young through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2013 2013.59

# Jimmy Wululu

Gupapuyngu 1936–2005

## Hollow log coffin

1986 Ramingining, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on wood

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1986

O.37-1986

# Philip Gudthaykudthay

Liyagalawumirr born c. 1925

## Lorrkon

1985 Ramingining, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on wood

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1986

O.23-1986



# **Helen Ganalmirrawuy**

Garrawurra/Liyagalawumirr born 1955

## **Djiti Djiti body paint design**

2006 Milingimbi, Northern Territory

earth pigments on wood

Gift of Dan Mossenson through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.79

# **Helen Ganalmirrawuy**

Garrawurra/Liyagalawumirr born 1955

## **Djiti Djiti body paint design**

2006 Milingimbi, Northern Territory

earth pigments on wood

Gift of Dan Mossenson through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.80

# **Helen Ganalmirrawuy**

Garrawurra/Liyagalawumirr born 1955

## **Djiti Djiti body paint design**

2006 Milingimbi, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on wood

Gift of Dan Mossenson through the Australian Government's Cultural  
Gifts Program, 2009

2009.81

# James Iyuna

Kuninjku 1959–2016

## Lorrkon (Hollow log)

2010 Mumeka, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Kurrajong (*Brachychiton diversifolius*)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2011

2011.13

# Seymour Wulida

Kuninjku born 1969

## Lorrkon (Hollow log)

2008 Maningrida, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of  
Indigenous Art, 2008

2008.570

# Timothy Nadjowh

Kunwinjku born c. 1940

## Lorrkon, hollow log coffin

1988 Gunbalunya, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on wood

Gift of Penny Blazey, 1989

O.148-1989

# Gulumbu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1945–2012

## Ganyu

2009 Yirrkala, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Gift of Elizabeth Foster and Margaret Colquhoun in honour of their mother Madge Minty through  
the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2014

2014.99

# **Lena Walunydjunalil**

Dambugarramirr born 1944

## **Djiti Djiti body paint design**

2006 Milingimbi, Northern Territory

earth pigments on wood

Gift of Dan Mossenson through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.78



# Ruth Nalmakarra

Garrawurra/Liyagalawumirr born 1955

## **Djiti Djiti body paint design**

2006 Milingimbi, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on wood

Gift of Dan Mossenson through the Australian Government's Cultural  
Gifts Program, 2009

2009.77

# Nawurapu Wunungmurra

Dhalwangu born c. 1952

## Gapu ga Gitkit (Water and birds)

2005 Gurrumurru, Northern Territory

earth pigments on wood

Purchased with funds donated by Jason Yeap OAM and Min Lee Wong, 2010

2010.526.a-e

Artists across Arnhem Land make hollow log coffins from stringybark trees, hollowed out by termites. These mourning objects have now become a major contemporary art form that reveals *miny'tji* (designs) and *rarrk* (cross-hatching) specific to individual artists. This practice was popularised with *The Aboriginal Memorial*, 1987–88, made for the 1988 Bicentennial and which signified Indigenous deaths and loss over 200 years of colonisation. Through the continuation of customary cultural practices and processes of making, female and male artists in Arnhem Land assert their sovereignty through their lived relationship with the land and each other, and remain connected to their ancestors.

# Joe Djembangu

Gupapuyngu born c. 1924

## Wagilag Sisters story

2008 Milingimbi, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Gabrielle Roy through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2010 2010.26

# Willie Jolpa

Burarra c. 1937–2001

## Larrkan (Hollow log)

1994 Gorronggorrong, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*)

Gift of Elliot Swart, 1995

1995.599

# Willie Jolpa

Burarra c. 1937–2001

## Larrkan (Hollow log)

1994 Gorronggorrong, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*)

Gift of Bettie Kornhauser, 1995

1995.600

# Ronnie Janbardi

Gurrgoni c. 1920–94

## Lorrkon (Hollow log coffin)

1983 Maningrida, Northern Territory  
earth pigments on wood

Gift of Geoff and Janette Todd, 1992

O.36-1992

# Kay Lindjuwanga

Kuninjku born 1957

## Lorrkon (Hollow log)

2005 Milmilngkan, Northern Territory

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

Purchased through the NGV Foundation in memory of Axel Poignant with funds donated  
by an anonymous donor, 2005

2005.516

In 1971–72, senior male artists at Papunya in the Western Desert transformed previously ephemeral ritual designs from the body, ground and object into modern acrylic paintings of bold geometry and multiple dots. Astoundingly, artefact became art. These early Papunya artists used an inherited visual language of concentric circles, geometric symbols and dots to conceptualise place and the presence or trace of creator ancestors who entered into and became the land. Moreover, in 1972, the artists formed their own company, Papunya Tula Artists, independent of Government subsidy, setting a precedent for numerous Aboriginal-owned art centres now operating across Indigenous Australia.

During the 1980s and 90s, Pintupi male artists built on the daring inventions of the first Papunya Tula artists by making the transition from scraps of composition board the size of a man's torso to large canvases. They developed a sophisticated circle-path iconography to represent songlines of named resting places interconnected by travelling paths of ancestral beings, and to map the topography of large tracts of land associated with their Tingarri ancestors. In the horizonless Pintupi men's paintings of linear geometry, artists express their intimate connections with sources of spiritual power in Country, and distance themselves from direct allusions to ceremony.



# Anatjari Tjakamarra

Ngaatjatjarra/Pintupi c. 1930–92

## Big Pintupi Dreaming ceremony

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of North Broken Hill Pty Ltd, Fellow, 1987

O.51-1987

The complex central design in this work represents a cleared ceremonial ground and the surrounding roundels represent the ritual participants. Human footprints lead diagonally into the central nucleus from the south-west and north-east, suggesting two groups of performers travelling to and performing at the ceremony, while conveying the deep connection of people with place. The stone knives of immense size that point at tangents across the terrain from the ceremonial ground probably indicate that the work represents Wapintjanya, where the Possum Ancestors from Warlpiri Country fought the local Possum people with stone knives because of an elopement that contravened the marriage law.

# Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra

Pintupi/Luritja born c. 1932

## Emu Dreaming

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1987

O.22-1987

In this work, Long Jack Phillipus views the land from a bird's eye or planar perspective, like that of a hunter/gatherer aware of the presence of game or the ripening of bush plants from marks in the earth. The tracks of many emus appear as 'arrow' marks and the presence of many men as circles that denote their headdresses seen from above. A creek appears as a meander, signifying a Water Dreaming. The boldness of the visual marks on a black ground derives from the Western Desert tradition of telling stories by drawing with fingers in the sand.

# Mick Wallangkarri Tjakamarra

Kukatja/Ngalia c. 1905–96

## Old man's Dreaming on death or destiny

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of North Broken Hill Ltd, Fellow, 1987

O.49-1987

This work is related in scale to that of human performers and objects decorated for customary ritual. The elemental motifs – stark, condensed and heightened with an edging of white dots – stand out against the background as on the human body. The black half circles represent senior men seated around a camp fire. Curvilinear motifs above and below represent windbreaks; concentric circles are fireplaces; the dots indicate bush tucker and prepared ceremonial earth. Such a conjunction of ancient designs and modern materials results in a visionary work that affirms the indelible place of Aboriginal people in the Australian social landscape.

# Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri

Anmatyerre c. 1929–84

## Yam spirit Dreaming

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Private Collection

Different varieties of bush yam and bush potato are an important bush food for Anmatyerre people in the Western Desert. In this work, the white-ochre wild yam plant emerges out of desert terrain, conceived as a field of dots. The light stippling indicates grass and the dark stippling shows where grass has been burnt away through seasonal firestick burning. The branching, tuberous roots of the yam plant underground in turn nourish families of Anmatyerre gatherers, who are imagined seemingly germinating from and being nourished physically and spiritually by the yam, their Dreaming.

# Walter Tjampitjinpa

Pintupi c. 1912–81

## Water Dreaming at Kalipinyapa

1971 Papunya, Northern Territory

enamel paint on composition board

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Alcoa of Australia Limited, Governor, 1993

O.21-1993

The artist represents the major Water Dreaming site of Kalipinyapa where a huge storm occurred in the ancestral period. Five concentric circles identify this place, where the water ancestor emerged from deep in the ground, creating places of living water. The bold network of curved lines represents thunder and lightning over Kalipinyapa and the dots indicate rain: children of the rain ancestor that fall from sky, soak into and renew the land. Thus, the artist is painting the land where his spirit is embedded, as if inside it, condensing what lies below the ground with the sky above.

# Uta Uta Tjangala

Pintupi c. 1926–90

## Untitled

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Gift of Graeme Marshall, 1991

O.223-1991

Startling works such as this by Uta Uta Tjangala forged a new art form at Papunya during 1971–72. Working on a discarded scrap of composition board, the artist renders visible and permanent ephemeral designs formerly made only for use in closed and secret ceremonial contexts on bodies, objects or the ground. The closeness of this painting to its source in men's business gives it a solemn liturgical power and a sense that it points to cosmological secrets unknowable to uninitiated members of the community. Yet, because of the permanent materials of its construction, it demands to be seen as a work of art and not an artefact.

# Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri

Anmatyerre c. 1932–2002

## Old man's love story

1973 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Private Collection

An old Tjungurrayi man has fallen in love with a Napangati woman with whom he is forbidden by customary law to marry. The old man is sitting at his campsite, performing love magic. He creates a painting in the sand, cuts his hair, spins it into an unbroken length of string and sings the woman a love song. Throwing the spindle towards her with its long length of spun hair, he draws her to his campsite. The iconography of this story depicts the man, shown as the U-shape, with the spindle and its long hair-string, together with the footprints of the couple.

# Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri

Pintupi c. 1926–98

## Water Dreaming

1971 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Lauraine Diggins, Governor, 2006

2006.232

In this work painted during the first six months of the Papunya Tula movement, the artist represents a Water Dreaming design on a plain black ground. The iconography includes concentric circles (waterholes) joined by lines of running water and meanders (also indicating a creek seen from above) and short bars indicating lightning or clapsticks used in ceremony. Linear parallel markings denote fresh plant growth after rain. Like a drawing in the sand, on a cave wall or the human body, the graphic symbols are spontaneously painted and heightened by parallel lines of white dots.



# Charlie Wartuma Tjungurrayi

Pintupi c. 1921–99

## Old man's Dreaming at Mitukatjirri

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory  
gouache on composition board

Gift of Mrs Douglas Carnegie OAM, 1988

O.31-1988

The artist tells a complex story in the very simplest of visual language – red ochre designs edged with white dots to make them stand out on a black background. Two men, indicated by 'U' shapes, participate in a ceremony at Mitukatjirri (Ligertwood Cliffs), a cave site in mountainous terrain. The motif on the far right is a ground painting. The linked concentric circles represent a Dreaming journey that is part of the story. Linear patterns possibly represent ritual string and women's digging sticks.

# Shorty Lungkata Tjungurrayi

Pintupi c. 1920–87

## Waterhole in a cave

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance  
of ICI Australia Ltd, Fellow, 1988

O.11-1988

This work has a landscape dimension and is distinguished by its tessellated field of tightly clustered dots, linear markings and meanders that rise out of a red ochre ground. The central circle around which concentric circles radiate represents a cleared ceremonial ground in the interior of a cave. A rocky outcrop or escarpment is indicated by the layered angular designs which open out towards the left. The subtle variations in patterning delineate ritual designs and the way water drains into this cave site. The long oval cultural objects allude to ceremony, but the details remain undisclosed.

# Yala Yala Gibbs Tjungurrayi

Pintupi c. 1928–98

## Snake and water Dreaming

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory

earth pigments and synthetic polymer paint on  
composition board

Gift of Mrs Douglas Carnegie OAM, 1989

O.9-1989

This work in red ochre against a ground composed of white dots reads like a miniaturised ground painting. The artist represents a snake in its profound elemental power at its place of emergence in the Dreaming. The concentric circles are the coiled-up body of the snake and its camp or waterhole. The dots derive from men's ritual body paintings and shields, cave art and the tufts of wamulu (wild cotton down) attached to men's ground designs. The artist's use of dots heightens the geometric designs that signify meaning and impart texture to the flat, two-dimensional surface.

# Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula

Pintupi/Luritja c. 1925–2001

## A bush tucker story

1972 Papunya, Northern Territory

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance  
of North Broken Hill Ltd, Fellow, 1987

O.48-1987

This work, with its many layers of dots and multiple brushstrokes, mirrors the transformation of the desert, alive with new seeds, flowers and grasses, after rain. In painting kapi (water, rain), symbolised by multiple markings and dots laden with white, Warangkula, the boss of the Water Dreaming, summons into the picture plane the horizon, characteristically rendered as signs for clouds, lightning, rain, rainbow, hail or atmospheric disturbance. The proliferation of white markings creates shimmering visual qualities that invoke the power of the big Storm Dreaming at Kalipinypa.

# Donkeyman Lee Tjupurrula

Kukatja c. 1921–94

## Tingarri Dreaming at Walawala

1989 Balgo, Western Australia

synthetic polymer on canvas

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1989

O.150-1989

The artist maps water sources and major landforms of his Country, Walla Walla near Kiwirrkura in the Gibson Desert. The three large roundels depict major water sources of Pilginya, Tingarijara and Porurunya, from which patches of vegetation spring. The parallel contour lines represent sandhills, which dominate this terrain. The smaller concentric circles are waterholes, the green and white lines indicate grasses coming up after rains, and the red curving line is a creek. Above the grassy area is a cluster of sacred caves and a small billabong; below is a medicine place for men of high degree marked by black lines.

# Uta Uta Tjangala

Pintupi c. 1926–90

## Ngurrapalangu

1989 Muyinga, Western Australia  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Elizabeth and Colin Lavery,  
Governors, 2001

2001.177

The artist maps the sacred geography of Ngurrapalangu, his conception site, and chronicles the ancestral activities embodied in its landforms. He represents an encounter between Tjuntamurtu (Short Legs); the Two Women; and Yina, the Old Man at Ngurrapalangu. Frightened by Yina's approach, the Women fled towards Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay), while Tjuntamurtu crawled inside a cave and cast aside its sacred objects. These became a hill called Wintalynga, south of the Ngurrapalangu claypans created by the Two Women's dancing. The plant *mungilypa* grows in the claypans after rain, and its seeds are ground into nourishing seedcakes.

# Kumantjayi Tjapaltjarri

Pintupi c. 1957–2017

## Designs associated with the rockhole site of Kurlkurta

2002 Kintore, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased with funds donated by Supporters and Patrons of Indigenous Art, 2004

2004.593

The artist represents the rockhole and soakage water site of Kurlkurta, situated among sandhills north of Kaarkuratintja (Lake Macdonald) and west of Tjukula community in Western Australia. The lines at one end of the work represent sandhills. In ancestral times a large group of Tingarri men camped at this site before continuing their travels to the north-west. The concentric circles represent waterholes and the sinuous lines denote the tracks taken by the Tingarri. On another level, the multiplicity of concentric circles emphasises the large size of the group of Tingarri men at Kurlkurta as part of their travels.

# Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri

Pintupi c. 1926–98

## Tarkarnpa

1995 Kintore, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of The Hon. Justice David Angel through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2007

2007.365

In this painting, consisting of rectangles within rectangles, the artist has depicted the site of Tarkarnpa, a round hill with a nearby swampy area, to the north of Kintore. This is the artist's father's Country and he stated that his father is still there, dreaming inside the rock. Mina (grass) is gathered at this site and the seed is found and used to form a type of damper.



# Dini Campbell Tjampitjinpa

Pintupi c. 1942–2000

## Tingarri Dreaming

1986 Papunya, Northern Territory  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1987

O.20-1987

Dini Campbell represents a Tingarri Dreaming story associated with Nyinmi, a swampy region near Kintore in the Gibson Desert. The concentric circles represent many Tingarri ceremonial participants who have gathered at Nyinmi, as well as places that form part of their ancestral journeys, shown by the curving lines of travel. The parallel lines in the upper section depict sandhills. Winding through the centre of the work is piltati (a poisonous snake). The artist's rhythmical repetition of circle-path iconography celebrates the endless travelling and resting of Tingarri ancestors across a broad expanse of the Western Desert.

The new millennium marked the emergence of several painting movements led by senior women in Aboriginal-owned art centres in the Far Western Desert and North Queensland. Most of these artists have parallel experiences of first encountering Europeans, adapting to the enormous social and economic changes that ensued, and making art with introduced materials on canvases of increasing scale for the commercial market.

Art by performative painters such as Nora Wompi, Sally Gabori and Naomi Hobson is an explosion of iridescent colours, forms, textures and stories, and of tactile sensations that express deep connections with Country. Their work runs counter to the stylistic tendency of the 1990s, evident in many parts of Aboriginal Australia, towards ever finer and more nuanced abstraction, focused on lines, dots and movement generated by fluctuating linear rhythms and shifting tonalities of an increasingly restricted palette. Rather, the expansive designs issue from an artist's whole body – the strength of a body's gesture – not just from fingers trained to hold a pencil and extend beyond the frame to conjure the vastness of freshwater and saltwater lands. Much of the art's radical edge and dynamism results from its daring break with customary pigments.

# Boxer Milner Tjampitjin

Jaru c. 1934–2009

## Purkitji, Sturt Creek

2004 Balgo, Western Australia

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased with funds donated by Supporters and Patrons of Indigenous Art, 2004

2004.571

This vibrant geometric composition represents the flooding of Purkitji (Sturt Creek) located on the northern fringes of the Great Sandy Desert Country where the artist grew up. The central lines indicate the main channel of Sturt Creek. The outer shapes depict the 'milkwater' phase of the wet season, when the white clay soils flowing down from the northern banks of Sturt Creek cloud the fresh water.

# Nora Wompi

Manyjilyjarra c. 1935–2017

## Kunawarritji (Well 33)

2009 Balgo, Western Australia

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Felton Bequest, 2011

2011.283

This monumental work depicts Kunawarritji (Well 33), which is located along the middle stretches of the Canning Stock Route in Western Australia. Kunawarritji is an important rockhole near the artist's birthplace which is associated with a number of tjukurpa (ancestral stories), including the Seven Sisters Dreaming. The sweeping contours of the work represent tali (sandhills) that dominate the topography of this important water source. This is good country for collecting pura (bush tomato) and kantjilyi (bush raisin). The circular shapes indicate rockholes, places of living water that punctuate the desert.

# **Nora Wompi**

Manyjilyjarra c. 1935–2017

## **Kunawarritji (Well 33)**

2010 Balgo, Western Australia  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Felton Bequest, 2011

2011.284

# Bugai Whylouter

Manyjilyjarra born (c. 1945)

## Kunawarritji

2009 Kunawarritji, Western Australia  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Felton Bequest, 2011

2011.278

Bugai represents Kunawarritji (Well 33) on the Canning Stock Route, an important rockhole associated with the Minyipuru (Seven Sisters) who are still standing up as a group of trees between Nyipil (Well 34) and Kunawarritji. These ancestral beings are the stars in the sky. The sweeping contours represent tali (sandhills) that dominate the topography of this vital water source. This is good country for collecting pura (bush tomato) and kantjilyi (bush raisin). The circular shapes indicate rockholes, places of living water that punctuate the desert.

# Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori

Kaiadilt c. 1924–2015

## Big River at King Alfred's Country

2007 Gununa, Mornington Island, Queensland  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of James Cousins AO and Libby Cousins  
through the Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program, 2017

2017.218

Here the artist remembers Makarrki, the Country of her elder brother, King Alfred. Gabori holds this hunting place dear because King Alfred looked after her when she was young. King Alfred was a strong warrior and the leader of the main Kaiadilt clan before its removal to Mornington Island. During the late 1940s, a period of intense conflict caused by prolonged drought, King Alfred took the life of Gabori's brother-in-law, Buddy. Consequently, Buddy's brother, Pat Gabori, killed King Alfred and took his younger sister, Sally Gabori, as his wife.

### New acquisition

# Sandy Brumby

Pitjantjatjara born c. 1935

## Walyatjatjara

2010 Kalka, South Australia

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2011

2011.354

Here Sandy Brumby paints his Country, Walyatjatjara, an important place associated with the Seven Sisters Dreaming, located north of Kalka in South Australia. The dominant shapes in the painting represent the mayi (bush food) found at this site. The small schematic figure in the bottom-left corner represents the mischievous old man Nyiru, who chased the Seven Sisters right across the Western Desert and through the APY Lands. The Sisters constantly evaded his sexual advances and finally became part of the Pleiades, a star cluster of which seven are visible to the eye in the southern sky below the belt of Orion.



# Kuruwarriyngathi Bijarrb Paula Paul

Kaiadilt born 1937

## My Country

2009 Mornington Island, Queensland

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV Supporters of  
Indigenous Art, 2009

2009.578

Here the artist has painted her Bentinck Island homeland as a flat diamond shape surrounded by a massive tracing of stone ngurruwarr (fish walls designed to trap fish and turtles as the tides fall). These man-made constructed walls appear in the lower right of the painting. Paula Paul represents burrkunda (scarification) motifs, signifying the young boy's first body scars and women's cutting of the body in mourning, as vibrant trajectories of colour. She also references the cockleshells which Kaiadilt women gather and line up in pleasing patterns in the ashes as they cook them.

# Sandy Brumby

Pitjantjatjara born c. 1935

## Kulitja

2012 Pipalyatjara, South Australia  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2013

2013.42

In this work, the artist represents a tjukurpa (Dreaming) associated with Kulitja, near Victory Downs in Yankunytjatjara Country, South Australia. There are many rockholes, shown as circles, at this place, which is the home of Wati Wanampi (the male water serpent). He is looking for kuka (meat) and mai (bush tucker), such as kampurarpa (bush tomato) and wayanu (quandong). One day, another water snake comes to Kulitja, but Wati Wanampi fights him off, causing him to run away. This leaves Wati Wanampi free to eat his food, curl up and go to sleep at the large rockhole, where he is still present.

# Naomi Hobson

Kaantju/Umpila born 1978

## After the fire

2018

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased with funds donated by Elizabeth Foster, 2018

Naomi Hobson's work celebrates the regeneration of her Country through fire burning, as she explains: 'To manage our country and maintain its ancient cultural integrity, every year in the early to middle dry season and then later after the first storms, we still do mosaic burning. This keeps our country clean and alive, refreshed and enticing for new life to thrive. *After the Fire* is my expression of this massive landscape change that comes with the burning seasons. What at first looks barren, burnt and finished of life, is simply a new beginning that rebounds almost instantly with dynamic abundance.'

## New acquisition

# Wakartu Cory Surprise

Walmajarri c. 1929–2011

## Tapu

2010 Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2010

2010.369

Wakartu represents her birthplace, Tapu, in the Great Sandy Desert of Western Australia, the site of a fire that killed her father and other family members. It is a place of living water and a warla (salt lake), indicated by the blue circle. The warla is surrounded by different shades of brown and yellow brushstrokes, signifying small and large jilji (sandhills). The yellow and pink designs signify people performing ritual dances and being burned, perhaps alluding to the fire at Tapu. The designs reference Country and evoke sensations of ritual body-painting, singing and dancing.

**Birmuyingathi Maali Netta Loogatha,  
Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally  
Gabori,  
Warthadangathi Bijarrba Ethel  
Thomas,  
Thunduyingathi Bijarrb  
May Moodoonuthi,  
Kuruwarriyingathi Bijarrb Paula Paul,  
Wirrngajingathi Bijarrb Kurdalalngk  
Dawn Naranatjil,  
Rayarriwarrtharrbayingathi  
Mingungurra Amy Loogatha**

Kaiadilt born 1942, Kaiadilt (c. 1924) – 2015, Kaiadilt born 1946, Kaiadilt 1929–2008, Kaiadilt born 1937, Kaiadilt 1935–2009, Kaiadilt born 1946

## **Dulka Warngiid**

2007 Gununa, Mornington Island, Queensland  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased with funds donated by Catherine Allen, Carolyn Berger and Delma Valmorbida, 2007  
2007.527

*Dulka Warngiid* translates as 'land of all'. Seven Kaiadilt women have collaborated to create a holistic vision of their tiny island home, the saltwater that surrounds it, the sun and the sky. Strong in cultural memory, consolidated in diaspora, the canvas works as a conceptual map of Bentinck Island that reveals seven artists' detailed

knowledge of special places. The colour sense and painterly flair of the work reflects the hand of seven intuitive painters who are communicating the way they see their Country and how they work with colour and brushstroke.