

BARK LADIES: ELEVEN ARTISTS FROM YIRRKALA

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Ringitjmi gapu

'These designs I have been doing like this focus back to the land, the people, and song, because they are all related. Through songs, through rivers, through people.'

NAMINAPU MAYMURU-WHITE, 2021

As a prelude to the exhibition itself, *Bark Ladies: Eleven Artists from Yirrkala* begins with a newly commissioned work by Manggalili clanswoman of the Yirritja moiety, Naminapu Maymuru-White. Maymuru-White's paintings are highly labour intensive. She uses a skewer stick and marwat (human hair paintbrush) to map out stars and galaxies in graphic black and white ochre. The main subject matter for Maymuru-White is the Yolŋu concept of Milnjiyawuy, or as it is known in English, the Milky Way. For this exhibition, Maymuru-White has worked with NGV to create a vinyl floor-based work titled *Ringitjmi gapu*, 2021.

Ringitjmi gapu as a concept roughly translates in English to mean 'river of Heaven and Earth'. For Maymuru-White the temporal Milnjiyawuy River and the astral Milky Way are one and the same. Maymuru-White's *Ringitjmi gapu* is an immersive depiction of the night sky that audiences are encouraged to walk across and look up to a mirror that reflects the floor and the sky. Through the work, she shifts perspective by inverting sky, sea and land, turning the bluestone floor into a conceptual and spiritual river of stars.

The NGV warmly thanks *Bark Ladies: Eleven Artists* from Yirrkala Major Patron Lisa Fox for her support.

Bark Ladies: Eleven Artists from Yirrkala

The complex symbolism that is present in nearly all Yolŋu art originates from iconographic and symbolic visual languages that have been passed down by Yolŋu people – the Traditional Owners of Arnhem Land – for thousands of years. Before 1970, no Yolŋu women painted sacred themes on bark or *larrakitj* (memorial poles) in their own right. Bark painting was strictly the business of men. In recent decades, however, the inventive works of Yolŋu women artists in these media have garnered national and international recognition.

Bark Ladies examines this revolution as a watershed moment within the history of Australian art, giving prominence to the work of eleven artists who each in their own way has used their art to challenge preconceptions about both contemporary art and Indigenous art in Australia.

Each of the artists on display has, throughout her life, made work at Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, or Buku as it is known colloquially. The centre takes its name from Yolŋu Matha (the language of Yolŋu people) and when translated into English means ‘the feeling on your face as it is struck by the first rays of the sun’, and ‘a sacred but public ceremony’.

THIS EXHIBITION HAS BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE NGV AND BUKU-LARRŊGAY MULKA CENTRE.

THE NGV WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RECENT PASSING OF MS N YUNUPIŊU.

WE OFFER OUR SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO EVERYONE AT BUKU, ESPECIALLY FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

Star Lady

Gulumbu Yunupingu, also known as the Star Lady, was the first Yolngu woman to gain significant international acclaim for her bark paintings. A great source of her inspiration came from stories told to her by her father, Munḡurrawuy, who would describe Ancestral histories about the creation of the Yolngu universe. Her fascination with stars led Gulumbu to develop her signature style – a dense network of crosses unified by fields of dots.

When viewing Star Lady's work, we are presented with a cosmos that is full. There is no negative space, and everything is connected. Each cross represents a star, and all that is visible within the known universe. The dots in-between the crosses represent everything that isn't seen. These are sometimes referred to by Yolngu peoples as 'the second stars'.

During her life, Gulumbu spoke about how if you could see everything that exists, then the night sky would be nothing but stars. The slight variations in colour, tonality, density and scale create an opportunity for contemplative meditation; each individual painting operates like a window into infinity.

Gäna (self)

'My father Munggurrawuy Yunupiṅu taught me how to paint. I learnt from watching him. He was always working. He said to me, "When I am gone you will follow behind me and paint too. Show the people – paint and work". That is what he said, and that's what I do.'

MS N YUNUPIṅU

Ms N Yunupiṅu was the daughter of Munggurrawuy Yunupiṅu and Bunay Wanambi. She was the wife of the late Djapu clan leader Djiriny Munungurr, who died in 1977. Ms N Yunupiṅu began creating coloured screenprints for more than a decade before she first started to paint on bark in 2007. Her earliest paintings were small in scale and filled with figuration. She would paint formless images of unspecified creatures resembling geckos, turtles, crocodiles and other animals.

Ms N Yunupiṅu's immense installation *Gäna (self)* is a hypnotic work comprising sixteen irregularly shaped bark paintings and nine Iarrakitj. *Gäna* embodies Ms N Yunupiṅu's intuitive style; as a collection of paintings, the work can be read as a self-portrait, through which we sense the artist's hand and body in every mark.

I am a mermaid

Eunice Djerrkñu Yunupinju's work stems from a memory she has of a time from before she was born, when her spirit appeared before her father in the form of a mermaid, signalling her conception. The day after this magical encounter, Djerrkñu's mother found out she was pregnant. As she tells the story:

'One day, my dad sees the tail of the mermaid and thinks he has seen a fish, so he walks closer and closer and closer and silently puts the woomera into the spear ready to throw. He throws the spear at the mermaid, but she jumps into the water. The spear hits her tail though and the blood from it sits on the water. My father speared my spirit being ...

He speared me thinking I was a big fish ... and there was lots and lots of blood. My father felt sorry for that fish seeing lots of blood. He cupped a handful and smelt it and realised that it was human blood!

He dreams. In his dream he sees the mermaid and realises it was no ordinary fish. It was me. I was telling him in the dream, that was me dad, don't spear me. Bapa ... why did you try to spear me? It is I, it was not a fish ...'

EUNICE DJERRKÑU YUNUPIÑU, 2021

Ochre, ink and acrylic

Presented along the outer walls of this gallery is work by four senior artists from Yirrkala: Nongirrŋa Marawili, Dhambit Mununŋurr, Naminapu Maymuru-White and Mulkun Wirrpanda. It is customary for Yolŋu artists who paint Country and the stories it holds to use materials collected from Country. In recent years, however, some artists have begun to challenge what this means, working with a variety of unexpected materials.

Madarpa artist Nongirrŋa Marawili and Djapu artist Dhambit Mununŋurr are two artists at the forefront of this innovation. In late 2017, Nongirrŋa became the first artist to paint with reclaimed ink from discarded printer cartridges, introducing a technicolour array of pigments that had previously not been used by artists at Buku. Dhambit Mununŋurr is similarly known for painting the first 'blue barks' in 2019, made using acrylic blue paint.

The works by Mulkun Wirrpanda and Naminapu Maymuru-White stand in stark contrast to Nongirrŋa and Dhambit. Naminapu is known for her immediately recognisable and intricate use of naturally occurring monochrome ochres. The selection of works by Mulkun are similarly minimalist. Rooted in her knowledge of edible plants and natural species found throughout her home in Arnhem Land, Mulkun has used natural pigments, floating her compositions within an expanse of negative space.

Reflection

Yolŋu artists across Arnhem Land make larrakitj by painting trees that have been hollowed out by termites. Larrakitj were traditionally funerary objects, or ossuaries (bone containers), made from stringybark trees. Through the continuation of customary cultural practices like this, Yolŋu artists continue to assert their sovereignty over land and culture, and create a tangible connection to their Ancestors. What were once intended for mourning ceremonies are now produced as a major contemporary art form.

The larrakitj in this gallery include pink and white works by Nonŋirrŋa Marawili, blue poles by Dhambit Munuŋgurr, and five recent green ochre works by the late Malaluba Gumana. The design of this space acts as an architectural reference to the Djapu grid pattern seen in the work of Nonŋirrŋa Marawili. The mirrored walls create an illusion of infinity, metaphorically referencing the past and continuing nature of this important ceremonial practice.

Birth of a nation

Dhuwarrwarr Marika is a Rirratjinju Elder and the daughter of ceremonial leader, political activist and artist Mawalan Marika, who taught her to paint on bark. She is often regarded as the first Yolŋu woman to paint on bark in her own right. The designs in her work contain within them the identity of the coastal place known as Yalanbara, a location of the utmost importance to Dhuwa moiety people. Yalanbara is the fabled landing site of the Djan'kawu Sisters, the major creator beings who arrived there from their mythical island Burralku.

Birth of a nation comprises six bark paintings and five *larrakitj*, which bear the Rirratjinju *miny'tji* (design). The designs on Dhuwarrwarr's work are rendered in red, black and white ochres, and represent saltwater drying off skin, as well as the sand sliding down the dunes while the Djan'kawu Sisters climbed. Dhuwarrwarr's work creates an optical illusion. The geometric shapes that wrap the barks and *larrakitj* shift irregularly. She paints the trajectory of the Earth and all the Ancestral histories that are embedded within Country, transforming Rirratjinju stories into a mystifying three-dimensional installation.

Naminapu Maymuru-White

Manjalili born 1952

Milŋiyawuy (River of stars)

2020–21

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Lisa Fox, 2021

(2021.308.a-f)

Nancy Gaymala Yunupinju

Gumatj c. 1935–2005

Bäru story

1990

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1990

(O.112-1990)

Gaymala, who was the daughter of Muṅurrawuy and sister to Galarrwuy and Mandawuy Yunupinju, began painting in the 1990s. Depicted are two Ancestral beings, known as Bäru – the crocodile. For Yolṅu people, Bäru is a profoundly important animal and totem. Central to many Ancestral stories, Bäru is the carrier of gurtha (fire) and is connected to a special and powerful story belonging to the Gumatj people.

Gulumbu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1945–2012

Garak, the universe

2008

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Gift of Margaret Bullen through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2014
(2014.359)

Gulumbu Yunupinu

Gumatj 1945–2012

Garak

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013

(2013.953)

Gulumbu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1945–2012

Ganyu (Star)

2006

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters and Patrons of Indigenous Art, 2006

(2006.421)

Gulumbu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1945–2012

Ganyu

2009

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Gift of Margaret Bullen through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2014
(2014.360)

...continued overleaf

Gulumbu Yunupinu

Gumatj 1945–2012

Garak

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013

(2013.950)

Gulumbu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1945–2012

Gan'yu

2011

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013

(2013.951)

Gulumbu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1945–2012

Ganyu

2009

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)

Gulumbu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1945–2012

Garak I, II and III

2011

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Foundation, 2020

(2020.745)

Gulumbu Yunupinu

Gumatj 1945–2012

Ganyu (Star)

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013

(2013.952)

Barrupu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

(2017.188)

Barrupu represents the Gumatj miny'tji (sacred design) that embody gurtha (fire). The Gumatj language, Dhuwalandja, is itself known as the tongue of flame, and is believed to incinerate dishonesty. Many early bark paintings by Yolŋu men show this diamond pattern as ordered and tight. These works by Barrupu, however, are characterised by the artist's spontaneity and gesture. Horizontal and vertical lines represent the different intensities of flame, smoke and ash. Barrupu shows the fire in a macro view, close up and intense, stressing its importance to the Gumatj people.

Barrupu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

(2017.185)

Barrupu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha

2012

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Judith and Leon Gorr, 2013

(2013.577)

Barrupu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

(2017.186)

Barrupu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2009

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2019

(2017.183)

Barrupu Yunupinju

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

(2017.189)

Barrupu Yunupinu

Gumatj 1948–2012

Untitled (Ancestral fire)

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Lou and Mary Senini, 2010

(2010.370)

Ms N Yunupinju

Gumatj born c. 1945–2021

Circles

2016

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Mary and Lou Senini Bequest, 2018

(2018.1058.20)

Throughout her life Ms N Yunupinju's work was constantly evolving, and over the years increased in its scale and visual complexity. In recent times, her work became characterised by its absence of customary meaning. She expressed her obsessive preoccupation with painting through the freeness of her brushstrokes, making art primarily 'for the joy of painting'.

Ms N Yunupinju

Gumatj born c. 1945–2021

Wild apple orchard

2008

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Lou and Mary Senini, 2010

(2010.521)

When Ms N Yunupinju was a young woman, she was gored by a buffalo in a wild apple orchard, and traces of the terrifying experience can still be felt through her work. Early paintings such as this one show her figurative use of circles to represent apples. More recent works by the artist show how those same circles have morphed into abstract shapes and meditations on rhythm and tone.

Ms N Yunupingu

Gumatj born c. 1945–2021

Pink diptych

2015

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Judith and Leon Gorr and NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017 (2016.414.a-b)

Ms N Yunupingu expressed her capacity to live in the moment through the freedom of her mark-making and her absolute absorption in the process of painting. This diptych (painting in two parts) is made in a palette of white, pink and red from intensely marked and layered brushstrokes. The diptych was formed by a happy accident when the artist noticed the white marks on the side of one painting aligned beautifully with the marks on the edge of the second part.

Ms N Yunupiṅu

Gumatj born c. 1945–2021

Gäna (self)

2009–18

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Mary and Lou Senini Bequest, 2018

(2018.1058.13)

Ms N Yunupinju

Gumatj born c. 1945–2021

Untitled (Drawings for Light painting)

2010–11

three-channel video

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013

(2013.103.1-124)

These 121 drawings in white and black fibre-tipped pen on acetate were produced during the dry season when stringybark was in short supply at Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre. As a collection, the drawings are expressly without reference to sacred law or narrative. Like most of Ms N Yunupinju's works they are exercises in line and rhythm, which have been lovingly referred to as mayilimiriw (meaningless).

Eunice Djerrkŋu Yunupiŋu

Gumatj, Rrakpala born 1945

I am a mermaid

2020

earth pigments and recycled print toner on Stringybark
(*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Barbara Hay, 2021

The three works along this wall portray a story of the artist's conception as spiritual mermaid, using a combination of natural earth pigments and reclaimed toner ink (ground polyester) from discarded printer cartridges. Stories about mermaids appear in myths around the world, but the Yolŋu mermaid, which appears in both freshwater and saltwater, is perhaps lesser known. By painting this personal story, Djerrkŋu recalls a mermaid dream that her father had while her mother was pregnant with her.

Eunice Djerrkṇu Yunupinṇu

Gumatj, Rrakpala born 1945

New generation

2021

earth pigments and recycled print toner on Stringybark
(*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2021

Eunice Djerrkṇu Yunupinṇu

Gumatj, Rrakpala born 1945

My wedding

2021

earth pigments and recycled print toner on Stringybark
(*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2021

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Lightning in the rock

2015

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2016

(2016.37)

Nongirrŋa shows a sacred and immovable rock at Baratjala that is set deep underwater. The rock pulsates with electricity that her father, Mundukul, who is also the Ancestral lightning snake spits into the sky in the form of lightning. This work represented a radical departure for Nongirrŋa. For the first time she removed the crosshatching applied to the backgrounds of her earlier works, instead paring back the central imagery so that the electric rock floats elegantly within a field of negative space.

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Baratjala

2019

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate
on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2020

(2020.148)

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Baratjala

2019

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate
on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2021

(2021.167)

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Maḍarrpa born 1939

Baratjala

2019

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists

(2021.168)

In late 2017, Nongirrŋa challenged the Yolŋu convention of what it means to paint with materials collected from Country, when she became the first artist to start working with recycled printer cartridges, producing works that have since increased scale and complexity. Using brilliant pink, magenta and fuchsia tones, Nongirrŋa represents Baratjala, the Maḍarrpa clan estate that borders Cape Shield in the Gulf of Carpentaria. This is where her father, Mundukul the Lightning Snake, lives deep beneath the sea.

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Maḍarrpa born 1939

Djapu (Fish trap at Wandawuy)

2019

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Foundation, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art and funds donated by Claire Hatch and Bruce Rowe 2021

In this installation, Nongirrŋa represents Wandawuy, the Djapu homeland centre of her late husband, Djutadjuta. Wandawuy is the spiritual residence for the Ancestral beings: Mäna the Shark, and Bolngu the Thunderman. The grid refers to the landscape of Wandawuy – a network of billabongs surrounded by ridges and high banks. The lines of the grid also reference woven fish traps used by Ancestral hunters to lure the shark, and the squares refer to different states of freshwater – the source of the Djapu soul.

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Djapu design

2019

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2020

(2020.149)

Dhambit Munungurr

Djapu born 1968

Gamata (Sea grass fire)

2019

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Purchased with funds supported by the Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2020 (2020.128)

Two bathala djunungayaju (big dugong) float among turtles and fish at a place called Waningirr. Seagrass, or gamata, waving in the currents, struck by the sunlight. Strings that look like pearls represent a type of fire that exists within the saltwater. The energy of the fire can be felt in the stings from gaywarr (box jellyfish).

Dhambit Munungurr

Djapu born 1968

Dhambit Blue Bäru

2020

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2021 (2021.47)

Dhambit transforms ancestral stories into bold contemporary artworks with her unique painting style and unconventional use of synthetic paint. Dhambit's works often reference her moiety and clan's totemic animals, as well as the Djapu miny'tji (design). Here, she has painted Bäru (crocodile), an important totem for her late mother's Gumatji clan, and the Garranjali (crocodile nest). Each egg in the nest represents one of Dhambit's family members.

Dhambit Munungurr

Djapu born 1968

Djirikitj-Wop!

2020

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2021

(2021.44)

Depicted here is Djirikitj, the quail (sometimes called the 'fire-making bird'), who in Ancestral times picked up a burning twig from the fire and flew away with it, dropping it at a place called Maṭamaṭa. There is a large paperbark swamp at Maṭamaṭa, where native honeybees live. Fire from the burning twig took hold of the tall grass in the swamp area and the native bees fled to Djiliwirri, in Gupapuyṅu clan country.

Dhambit Munungurr

Djapu born 1968

Bees at Gängän

2019

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with funds supported by the Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2020 (2020.124)

Dhambit recalls a story told to her by Dr Gawirrin Gumana AO, when she was fourteen, about a nest of bees at a place called Gängän. The bees made their home in botj, a general name for ironwood trees. In the corner of this image, the dhuwa ŋatili (black cockatoo) sings from this dhuwa tree.

Dhambit Mununggurr

Djapu born 1968

Order

2021

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Janet Whiting AM and Phil Lukies

(147927)

Order represents a shift in Dhambit's work, which previously featured images mostly related to Ancestral Yolŋu stories. The composition shows former prime minister Julia Gillard AC standing in the Australian Parliament, surrounded by unnamed, seated politicians. Yolŋu people appear in the bottom left, storming the Parliament in ceremony dancing with spears. Julia Gillard was scheduled to visit Yirrkala during her time as prime minister. In anticipation of her visit, Dhambit prepared a small work in her honour; however, following a spill that ousted her as the leader of the Labor Party, the visit was cancelled. This important moment in Australian history has stayed with Dhambit, forming the inspiration for this new work.

Mulkun Wirrpanda

Dhudi-Djapu/Dha-malamirr 1947–2021

Nädi ga Gundirr

2020

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2020

(2020.751)

Throughout her life, senior artist Mulkun Wirrpanda's work was rooted in her knowledge of edible plants and natural species found throughout Arnhem Land. These are four of Mulkun's last bark paintings made in 2020 just before her passing. The subject is gundirr (magnetic termite mounds) that are home to munyukuluṅu (magnetic termites) and nädi (meat ants). Mulkun has removed all background crosshatching so that the termite mound is highlighted within a sheet of negative space. Poignantly, nädi are a talisman of the artist's sacred identity and are associated with mourning ceremonies for the deceased.

Mulkun Wirrpanda

Dhudi-Djapu/Dha-malamirr 1947–2021

Nädi ga Gundirr

2020

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2020

(2020.752)

Mulkun Wirrpanda

Dhudi-Djapu/Dha-malamirr 1947–2021

Nädi ga Gundirr

2020

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2020

(2020.754)

Mulkun Wirrpanda

Dhudi-Djapu/Dha-malamirr 1947–2021

Nädi ga Gundirr

2020

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2020

(2020.753)

Naminapu Maymuru-White

Manjalili born 1952

Milŋiyawuy (River of stars)

2020

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Lisa Fox, 2021

(2021.193)

Naminapu Maymuru-White

Manjalili born 1952

Milŋiyawuy (River of stars)

2020

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Lisa Fox, 2021

(2021.192)

Naminapu Maymuru-White

Manjalili born 1952

Ringitjmi gapu (river of Heaven and Earth)

2021

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

The NGV warmly thanks *Bark Ladies: Eleven Artists from Yirkala* Major Patron Lisa Fox for her support.

Dhuwarrwarr Marika

Rirratjingu born c. 1946

Birth of a nation

2020

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2021

(2021.169.a-k)

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Djapu

2020

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate
on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Paula Fox AO, Linda Herd and Canny Quine
Foundation, Barbara Hay and donors to the 2020 Nongirrŋa Marawili appeal, 2021

(2021.638)

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Djapu

2020

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate
on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Paula Fox AO, Linda Herd and Canny Quine
Foundation, Barbara Hay and donors to the 2020 Nongirrŋa Marawili appeal, 2021

(2021.641)

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Djapu

2020

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate
on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Paula Fox AO, Linda Herd and Canny Quine
Foundation, Barbara Hay and donors to the 2020 Nongirrŋa Marawili appeal, 2021

(2021.640)

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Djapu

2020

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate
on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Paula Fox AO, Linda Herd and Canny Quine
Foundation, Barbara Hay and donors to the 2020 Nongirrŋa Marawili appeal, 2021

(2021.642)

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Djapu

2020

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate
on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Paula Fox AO, Linda Herd and Canny Quine
Foundation, Barbara Hay and donors to the 2020 Nongirrŋa Marawili appeal, 2021

(2021.604)

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Madarrpa born 1939

Djapu

2020

earth pigments, recycled print toner and polyvinyl acetate
on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Paula Fox AO, Linda Herd and Canny Quine
Foundation, Barbara Hay and donors to the 2020 Nongirrŋa Marawili appeal, 2021

(2021.636)

Malaluba Gumana

Dhalwangu born 1954

Dhatam (Waterlilies)

2017

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Elizabeth Foster, 2018

(2018.1338.5)

Malaluba Gumana's five *larrakitj* (memorial poles) are each titled *Dhatam (Waterlilies)*, which refer to plants that grow at Garrimala – a billabong near Gangan and a sacred site for Malaluba's mother clan, the Gälpu people. The twisting lines in white and green ochre reference Witiitj (the olive python) and his companion Djaykung (the Javanese file snake). Witiitj is an omnipotent Ancestral being, known in English as the rainbow serpent. The Gälpu clan *miny'tji* (designs), which appear within the leaves and forms of Malaluba's *Dhatam*, are sacred and elude to the power that exists within these beings.

Malaluba Gumana

Dhalwangu born 1954

Dhatam (Waterlilies)

2017

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Elizabeth Foster, 2018

(2018.1338.4)

In ancestral times, Wititj the rainbow serpent (olive python) travelled through the lands belonging to the Gälpu clan, and now there are sacred snakes that live among the dhatam, causing ripples and djari (rainbows) on the surface of the water. When sunlight hits the scales of the snakes, it forms a prism of light making a rainbow. During storms, the power of lightning is understood to be the moment when snakes strike with their tongues, and thunder is understood to be the sound the snakes make as they move along the ground.

Malaluba Gumana

Dhalwangu born 1954

Dhatam (Waterlilies)

2017

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Elizabeth Foster, 2018

(2018.1338.1)

Malaluba Gumana

Dhalwangu born 1954

Dhatam (Waterlilies)

2017

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Elizabeth Foster, 2018

(2018.1338.2)

Malaluba Gumana

Dhalwangu born 1954

Dhatam (Waterlilies)

2017

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Elizabeth Foster, 2018

(2018.1338.3)

Dhambit Mununggurr

Djapu born 1968

Blue Pole

2020

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2021

(2021.41)

Dhambit Mununggurr

Djapu born 1968

Garma

2020

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with funds
donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2021 (2021.43)

Dhambit Mununggurr

Djapu born 1968

Sea Creatures

2020

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2021

(2021.49)

Dhambit Mununggurr

Djapu born 1968

Gurtha

2020

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2021

(2021.51)

Dhambit Munungurr

Djapu born 1968

Wititj

2020

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2021

(2021.50)

Dhambit Munungurr

Djapu born 1968

Bäru III

2020

synthetic polymer paint on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2021

(2021.52)

Naminapu Maymuru-White

Mangalili born 1952

Milŋiyawuy (River of stars)

2020-21

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

The NGV warmly thanks *Bark Ladies: Eleven Artists from Yirkala* Major Patron Lisa Fox for her support. (2021.308.a-f)

Gulumbu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1945–2012

Garak, the universe

2008

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Gift of Margaret Bullen through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2014
(2014.359)

Ganyu (Stars)

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013 (2013.952)

Ganyu (Stars)

2006

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters and Patrons of Indigenous Art, 2006 (2006.421)

Garak

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013 (2013.950)

...continued overleaf

Ganyu (Stars)

2009

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Gift of Margaret Bullen through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2014
(2014.360)

Garak

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013 (2013.949)

Gan'yu (Stars)

2011

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013 (2013.951)

Garak

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013 (2013.953)

Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2009

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

(2017.190,
2017.185,
2017.186,
2017.189)

Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

Untitled (Ancestral fire)

2010

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Lou and Mary Senini, 2010

(2010.370)

Gurtha

2012

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased with funds donated by Judith and Leon Gorr, 2013

(2013.577)

Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2010

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2009

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

(2017.188, 2017.190, 2017.183)

Barrupu Yunupingu

Gumatj 1948–2012

Gurtha (Ancestral fire)

2011

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2017

(2017.187)

Barrupu represents the Gumatj miny'tji (sacred design) that embodies gurtha (fire). The Gumatj language, Dhuwalandja, is itself known as the tongue of flame, and is believed to incinerate dishonesty. Many early bark paintings by Yolŋu men show this diamond pattern as ordered and tight. These works by Barrupu, however, are characterised by the artist's spontaneity and gesture. Horizontal and vertical lines represent the different intensities of flame, smoke and ash. Barrupu shows the fire in a macro view, close up and intense, stressing its importance to the Gumatj people.