



Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre
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Artist Biography

Artist: Nongirrŋa Marawili
Date of Birth: 1938
Homeland: Bãniyala
Community: Yirrkala : NT
Clan: Madarrpa, Yithuwa group
Moiety: Yirritja



Nongirrŋa is the daughter of the Madarrpa' warrior Mundukul (Lightning snake) and a Galpu woman Bu`unguwuy. Nongirrŋa was a wife of Djapu statesman Djutjadjutja Munungurr (deceased) who won Best Bark painting at the National Aboriginal Art Awards 1997 in which she ably assisted. She was the mother of four sons before birthing her two daughters, Marrnyula and Rerrkirrwaŋa (both artists- Rerrkirr won Best Bark in Telstra 2009). Nongirrŋa is a highly respected senior in her community knowledgeable in two educational systems and practitioner in bush and also institutions. She is a prolific producer of art, her work includes carvings, bark paintings and editioned prints. As well many of the works attributed to her husbands were crosshatched by Nongirrŋa teaching her family the required skills. She most often paints her husband's Djapu clan, her mother's Gãlpu clan's designs or her own Madarrpa. In her sell out show And I am still here.. in 2013 this was an extract from the accompanying essay. }ongirrŋa started life as one of the numerous children of Mundukul the Madarrpa warrior (c.1890-c.1950). He was a famed leader/warrior with uncountable wives of the Marrakulu, Dhudi Djapu and Galpu clans. She was a child of one of the four Galpu wives, Bulunguwuy. Life was a bountiful but disciplined subsistence amongst a working family group of closely related mothers, brothers and sisters. This was over fifty people! She was born on the beach at Darrpirra north of Cape Shield on the ocean side. But they were Wakir' – camping- moving around. They went to Yilpara. They went to Djarrakpi. But their special place was Guwaŋarripa (Woodah Island). They were a fleet of canoes travelling all the way to Groote Island and back and forth from the mainland. They lived in this rich place surrounded by coral reefs. When they wanted to catch the wind they would break off the branch of a tree and use that as the sail. Mums, babes, dogs, kids being paddled by their husbands, brothers and fathers through tropical waters full of huge reptiles, mammals, fish, turtles and sharks. One day she was at Bariŋura when the great leader Mawunbuy was lost in a canoe capsized by a whale or a Japanese submarine whichever witness you believe. She went to Yirrkala with her father's sisters. She did not go to school as she was too scared. Her father died on Warrpirrimatji Island near Groote. Later they carried his bones to Baykultji in the far west of Blue Mud Bay to stand in a larrakitj (hollow memorial pole). The rythm of that life is different from the staccato, repetitive machine-like beat of the 'working week'. It is better to zig when another instinct would zag. That's how to avoid the crocodile, the cyclone, the illness, the ambush, the dispute. Like the music of the didjeridu. The 'music' is not the melody. The colour and flavour and story comes in the rythm which is as fluent and changing as the melody of an aria. Watch a metronomic person try and clap to the 'beat'. There isn't one. The clapsticks provide a structure but within that the tongue of the player dips and darts without a rigid pattern. It is this unrythm that Yolngu are at one with. And which these works sing with. And a bark like one of }ongirrŋa's could be seen in the same way. Like a didjeridu is a monotone, the palate of earth pigments is limited. There are no purples greens or blues in this melody. But the 'music' is in the patterns of the percussion. The countless breath strokes and their interplay have the spontaneity and narrative of any melody but within a single note. And it is this rythm that cannot be preplanned or manipulated or replicated by mechanic people. Djutjadjutja Munungurr came to Yirrkala from Wanŋawuy. He helped build the airstrip for the army during the war. She was in her early teens. They gave her to him. Three of her children were born in Ward Two of the newly built Yirrkala Hospital. This is now Gallery Two of the Buku-Larrnggay

Mulka Centre where she painted the works of this exhibition. Her father and daughter each went on to win the NATSIAA prize for best bark painting. So why now do we hear of }ongirrnga? Has something changed? No. She has always been this good. Its only now that we are noticing. Maybe we have changed and are becoming receptive to the "I saw the Makarratha. Where they stood against each other with spears at Matarawatj under the old law. There were three men Djapu, Dhalwanu and Gumatj. And I am still here and I am still strong and I am still working." }ongirrnga Marawili (trans.) Yirrkala October 2012. Her second show at Alcaston Yathikpa was also a sell out with institutional purchases strong. It represented a move from her husband's Djapu clan Dhuwa moiety imagery to her own Madarra clan Yirritja moiety waters and fire. For the first time she was painting her own identity with power and passion.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2016** Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland, NZ - Nongirrnga Marawili Bark
- 2016** Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne VIC - Nongirrnga Marawili - Baratjula
- 2015** Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne VIC - Lightning and the Rock
- 2014** Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne VIC - Yathikpa - Nongirrnga Marawili
- 2013** Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne VIC - Nongirrnga Marawili: And I am still here. Solo exhibition

Group Exhibitions

- 2016** Nomad Art, Darwin NT - Gapan Gallery, Darwin
- 2016** Nomad Art Productions, Darwin NT - Gapan Gallery in the Past
- 2016** Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Printspace Exhibition
- 2016** Koskela, Sydney NSW - Yirrkala Print Space Group Show
- 2016** Charles Darwin University Gallery, Darwin NT - Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression
- 2016** Raft Artspace - Core Collective Studio Space, Hobart TAS - Mala - Together as a Group
- 2015** Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), Darwin NT - 32nd National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
- 2015** Art Gallery of Western Australia, WA - Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards
- 2015** Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Sydney NSW - Nongirrnga Marawili represented by Alcaston Gallery
- 2015** Brumby Ute, USA - Lumggurma/North
- 2015** James Cohen Gallery, New York City, USA - All Watched Over
- 2015** The Cross Art Projects, Sydney NSW - Mother to Daughter: On Art and Caring for Homelands
- 2015** Yirrkala, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Bark Paintings and Sculptures from East Arnhem Land
- 2014** Goulburn Regional Gallery, Goulburn NSW - Kitchenalia
- 2014** Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), Darwin NT - 31st Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
- 2014** Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition
- 2013** Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin NT - 30th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
- 2013** Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition
- 2012** Darwin, NT - Gan'yu Gallery, Darwin Festival
- 2012** Chan Contemporary Art Space, Darwin NT - Togart NT Contemporary Art Awards
- 2011** Framed Gallery, Darwin NT - Miyalk - Women, Feminine Art from Yirrkala
- 2008** Galuku Gallery, Darwin Festival, Darwin Botanical Gardens, NT - 'After Berndt - Etchings from the Drawings
- 2008** Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - 'After Berndt - Etchings from the Drawings
- 2007** Galuku Gallery, Darwin Festival Print Exhibition, Botanical gardens, Darwin NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Japanese woodblock

- 2007** Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Japanese woodblock
- 2007** Annandale Galleries, Sydney NSW - Mother and Daughter, Nongirrna and Marrnyula
- 2006** Albury Regional Museum, NSW - Ngann Girra Festival
- 2006** Darwin Festival, Darwin Botanical Gardens, NT - Galuku Gallery
- 2006** Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition
- 2005** Darwin Festival, Darwin Botanical Gardens, NT - Galuku Gallery
- 2005** Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition
- 2004** Darwin Festival, Darwin Botanical Gardens, NT - Galuku Gallery
- 2004** Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition
- 2001** Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne VIC - Yirrkala
- 2001** Northern Territory University, Darwin NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Screenprints
- 2000** Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane QLD - Printmakers Touring Exhibition
- 2000** Ben Grady Gallery, Canberra ACT - Buku-Larrnggay Printmakers - Touring Exhibition
- 1999** Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane QLD - 'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala' - A National Tour
- 1999** Hogarth Gallery, Sydney NSW - Buku-Larrnggay Printmakers - Touring Exhibition
- 1999** The Original Dreamtime Gallery, Alice Springs NT - Buku-Larrnggay Printmakers - Touring Exhibition
- 1999** Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs NT - 'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala' - A National Tour
- 1999** Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne VIC - 'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala' - A National Tour
- 1999** The National Maritime Museum, Sydney NSW - 'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala' - A National Tour
- 1999** John Curtin Gallery, Curtin University, Perth WA - 'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala' - A National Tour
- 1999** Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London UK - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Printmakers and Dhalwangu Clan Bark Paintings
- 1999** Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra ACT - 'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala' - A National Tour
- 1999** Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne VIC - Buku Printmakers and Djambawaw Marawili Carvings
- 1999** Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, Sydney NSW - Printmakers Touring Exhibition
- 1999** Crafts Museum, Delhi, India - Gapu Miny'tji - Sacred Water Designs of the Australian Aborigines of north-east Arnhem Land
- 1998** Japingka Gallery, Fremantle WA - Buku Printmakers and Bark Paintings
- 1998** Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), Darwin NT - 15th National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
- 1998** Aboriginal Fine Arts Gallery, Darwin NT - Buku-Larrnggay Printmakers Exhibition
- 1998** Buku-Larrnggay, Yirrkala NT - Buku-Larrnggay Mulka printmakers exhibition
- 1996** Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin NT - 13th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards
- 1995** National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne VIC - Miny'tji Buku-Larrnggay, Paintings from the East
- 1994** National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne VIC - Power of the Land, Masterpieces of Aboriginal Art
- 1994** Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin NT - The 11th National Aboriginal Art Awards Exhibition

Mediums

Print Making

Earth pigments on Stringybark

Mediums

Earth pigments on native hibiscus

Earth pigments on Stringybark hollow pole

Collections

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney NSW

Berndt Museum, University of Western Australia, Perth WA

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne VIC

Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection

Awards

2015 Finalist and highly commended:Western
Australian Indigenous Art Awards

2015 Winner: Best Bark Painting 32th Telstra National
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards

2014 Finalist 31th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres
Strait Islander Art Awards

2013 Finalist Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize,
Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo VIC

2013 Finalist 30th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres
Strait Islander Art Awards