



SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE

Spirit figures from Northern Australia

NEW YORK

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THE MARTIN RAE COLLECTION

Marty's journey as a leading collector of Australian First Nations art and objects is as profound as the works he has gathered over five decades. A native New Yorker, his unexpected path began with love. His marriage to an Australian marked the beginning of his enduring connection with the continent itself. While, during early business trips, he was not initially aware of Australia's First Nations cultures. Subsequent family visits sparked a curiosity that would shape the course of his life as a collector. During a trip to Australia in the early 1960s, with his wife, Rae, Marty made his first purchase of a modest yet memorable pipe and a woomera. However humble, these objects were the spark for what would grow into a lifelong passion for Australian First Nations art, and they remain in his collection to this day.

Guided by his desire to learn more, Marty returned to Australia regularly, each time visiting different remote communities and forging direct connections with artists and cultural custodians. Navigating dirt roads and rural airstrips his explorations took him to Maningrida and the Tiwi Islands. He often shared these journeys with Rae, whose presence and perspective enriched the experience of the collection. 'If I hadn't met Rae,' Marty reflects, 'the collection might not have existed.'

For Marty, the allure of objects lay in the immediacy of their connection to culture and daily life of the Indigenous people. Although he has assembled a diverse collection of meaningful material, it was the raw energy of Mokuy, Mimih and Tiwi sculptures that particularly captivated him. The power of their weathered surfaces, their age-nuanced textures, and the stories attached to them spoke to Marty in a way that felt direct and profound. He comments, 'It's less about the viewing and more about the experiencing', underscoring the importance of integrity when making choices as a collector.



Marty and Rae,
Arnhem Land, 1998

Over time, Marty's collection has become an important resource for institutions including the The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection and the Nevada Museum of Art, all of which has inspired museum visitors to explore the important narratives these traditional objects embody. For Marty, the greatest satisfaction comes from knowing that his contribution to these institutions can ignite a deeper appreciation for Australian First Nations art.

Over the years, Marty has built strong relationships with trusted advisors and galleries that helped further shape his collecting. Individuals such as Mary Macha, Malcolm Davidson and Tim Klingender have been invaluable in guiding him through the complex and evolving world of Indigenous art. Each brought unique insights into the significance and provenance of individual acquisitions, ensuring that Marty's choices were well-informed and respectful. These partnerships have been further enhanced by his continued collaboration with D'LAN Davidson, through which the shared commitment to celebrating Aboriginal art has elevated the Martin Rae Collection to new heights.

Now, as Marty entrusts D'LAN Contemporary to bring his collection to the world, we are reminded of his belief that art has the power to transcend boundaries. This special exhibition offers New Yorkers a rare glimpse into an esteemed collector's universe, attesting to a lifelong commitment to appreciate and honour Australia's First Nations cultures.

LUCY FOSTER

GALLERY MANAGER, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY NEW YORK



Arnhem Land aerial, Photographer: Steve Strike

SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE: SPIRIT FIGURES FROM NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Aboriginal people in Australia have carved and decorated three-dimensional wooden forms for tens of thousands of years. Created primarily for use in ceremony, these poles, ornaments, weapons and ritual objects relate to the religious lives of their makers. Carved representations of the human form were first observed in the early twentieth century by missionaries in north-east Arnhem Land. Since then, motivated by their contact with balanda (outsiders), various cultural groups across Northern Australia have sculpted figurative forms for ceremony, and to trade and sell. Many of these figures are visual manifestations of spirit beings. Some depict specific creation ancestors central to the origins of each cultural group; others represent spirits of the deceased.

Relief-carved from solid hardwood, spirit figures are shaped and decorated in accordance with the ancient visual language specific to each cultural group. The evocative presence and human-like characteristics of these figures continues to capture the imagination of collectors, curators and scholars, resulting in the intense collecting focus of cultural institutions in Australia and overseas.

TIWI SCULPTURE

As they have done for thousands of years, Tiwi people continue to carve poles, objects and ornaments for use in ceremony. The person credited with instigating the production of carved figures on the Tiwi Islands is Cardo Kerinauia. In the 1920s, Kerinauia and other Tiwi men gained employment on pearling luggers and other coastal vessels that had begun to frequent the Islands. On one of his journeys to Darwin, Kerinauia encountered carved figures that had possibly been collected at Milingimbi Mission. This experience led Kerinauia to pioneer the carving of human figures atop Pukumani (funerary) poles. Such figures were created to deceive mapurtiti (spirits of the recently deceased). Tiwi believe that the mapurtiti would be tricked into channelling their attention toward the carved figures and away from the human relatives of the deceased. In the 1940s, Kerinauia and others began carving human, bird and animal forms separately and on a smaller scale.

At Paru on the southern coast of Melville Island, an extended family group referred to as the Mandimbula continued to develop their innovative sculptural practice and quickly established a reputation as gifted sculptors. Tiwi carved figures typically represent the primary creation ancestors Purrukuparli, Wai-ai – or Bima, and Taparra.

DECLAN APUATIMI

c. 1930 – 1985
Tiwi language

Purrukuparli circa 1979
earth pigments on hardwood
with resin, softwood and feathers
20 × 5 inches (50.8 × 12.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Bathurst
Island, Northern Territory
Tiwi Pima Art, Northern Territory
Private Collection
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 20 July 2009, lot 37
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above
USD 15,000

Declan Aputimi was a pioneering Tiwi artist born at Iminulapi on Bathurst Island. Later, after settling in Nguuu he traced his heritage to Munupi, his father's Country on Melville Island. A saltwater person, Declan worked on Japanese, Malay and Filipino pearling boats until World War II, when he relocated to Darwin's RAAF base. He returned to Bathurst Island post-war and married Jeanne Baptiste, with whom he raised ten children, though only six survived, a profound loss commemorated in his performances at Pukumani (funerary) ceremonies. A master woodcarver, Declan specialised in tutini (burial posts), integrating geometric patterns and innovative figurative designs. With the encouragement of missionaries, he first began carving works for sale in the 1950s and gained recognition for his work in the 1970s.

Declan's haunting interpretation of Purrukuparli – mouth agape, with a vacant stare – captures his despair upon learning of the death of his son, Jinani. Purrukuparli stands decorated with jilamara (designs) that continue to be worn by Tiwi ceremonial performers. Replete with black cockatoo feathers and male sexual organs (which would occasionally be included on sculptures during this period) his shapely chest, torso and face are divided into partitions of fine yellow and white dotting. The arms, legs and back of the head are decorated with parallel striated patterning against his black 'skin'.



ENRAELD DJULABINYANNA**MUNKARA**

c. 1895 – 1965

Tiwi language

Purrukuparli circa 1955

earth pigments on Ironwood

23.5 × 4.5 inches (59.6 × 11.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Bathurst or Melville Islands, Northern Territory

Private Collection, Western Australia, 1970s

Private Collection, Queensland, acquired from the above

Important Aboriginal & Oceanic Art, Deutscher and Hackett,

Melbourne, 6 October 2010, lot 4

The Martin Rae Collection,

New York, acquired from the above

USD 50,000

Enraeld Djulabinyanna Munkara was a master Tiwi sculptor, ceremonial leader and cultural custodian from Milikapiti on Melville Island. While living at the independent community of Paru, away from the influence of the Catholic mission, Enraeld developed a singular practice distinct from his Tiwi peers. His work evolved from the Pukumani funeral tradition, in which striking poles and mourning figures were placed as grave markers to symbolise the journey to the afterlife in Tiwi belief. His carvings resonated with collectors and institutions and were exhibited internationally, helping to introduce Tiwi art to the mainstream, and cementing his legacy as one of the most celebrated artists in Tiwi history.

Appearing hunched and off-kilter, his highly decorated Cubist-like forms capture the gesture and vigour of the Tiwi ancestors they represent. His roughly hewn figures are distinguished by their bulbous heads, deep-set eyes and lively decoration. Their stance suggests the posture of ritual dancers as they wait poised in anticipation of ceremony.

In this example Enraeld has painted white circles around the eyes of *Purrukuparli* to convey his sorrow at the loss of his son. This mirrors the face paint worn by Tiwi performers during Pukumani (funerary) ceremonies.



MICK ARUNI ILLORTAMINI

c. 1917 – 1973
Tiwi language

Untitled early to mid 1960s
earth pigments on Ironwood
33.5 × 4.5 inches (85 × 11.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milikapiti,
Melville Island, Northern Territory
Melville Island Catholic
Mission, Northern Territory
Aboriginal Arts and Crafts
Board, Sydney
Rothmans of Pall Mall
Canada Collection
McIntosh Gallery, Western University,
Ontario, gifted from the above, 1978
De-accessioned 2003
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

LITERATURE

D. Bennett & K. Kahn (eds), *Art of
Aboriginal Australia*, Rothmans
of Pall Mall Canada Limited,
Toronto, 1974, p. 62 (illus.)

EXHIBITED

Art of Aboriginal Australia, Rothmans
Art Gallery of Stratford, Ontario,
4 June – 2 September 1974 (touring
exhibition); Glenbow-Alberta Institute,
Alberta, 21 September –
20 October 1974; Mendel Art Gallery,
Saskatchewan, 2 November –
1 December 1974; Vancouver
Centennial Museum, British Columbia,
14 December 1974 – 12 January 1975;
Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, 25
January – 16 February 1975; Art Gallery
of Hamilton, Ontario, 1–30 March 1975;
Musee du Quebec, Quebec, 17 May –
15 June 1975; Dalhousie University
Art Gallery, Nova Scotia, 28 June –
20 July 1975; Memorial University Art
Gallery, Newfoundland, 2 August –
31 August 1975; Confederation Art
Gallery & Museum, Charlottetown,
13 September – 16 November 1975;
Agnes Etherington Art Gallery,
Ontario, 18 October – 16 November
1975; Royal Ontario Museum,
Ontario, 26 April – 24 May 1976

USD 14,000

This female Tiwi ceremonial figure is strikingly decorated with jilamara (designs) on its face, breasts, torso and legs. The white ochre cross-hatching is bisected vertically by yellow ochre bands. The cloth-like garment worn beneath the waist suggests the influence of the mission, which deterred artists from depicting male and female genitalia.

Running from the back of the shoulders to behind the knees is a fine chevron patterning which evokes the cicatrices (body scarification) worn by knowledgeable Tiwi men of Illortamini's generation.

Between 1974 and 1976 this work toured throughout Canada as part of the exhibition *Art of Aboriginal Australia*. This was the first major exhibition instigated by the Aboriginal Arts Board after its formation in 1973 and received extensive media coverage.



MICK ARUNI ILLORTAMINI

c. 1917 – 1973
Tiwi language

Purrukuparli and Bima circa 1976
earth pigments on Ironwood
38 × 6 inches (96.5 × 15.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milikapiti,
Melville Island, Northern Territory
Melville Island Catholic
Mission, Northern Territory
Blaxland Gallery, Myer
Grace Bros, Sydney
Private Collection, acquired
from the above in 1978
Aboriginal Fine Art, Lawson-Menzies,
Sydney, 9 November 2005, lot 2
Private Collection
Aboriginal & Oceanic Art, Sotheby's
Melbourne, 26 & 27 July 2010, lot 199
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above
USD 14,000

This unique double-sided figure has been recess carved from a single length of wood. Its tall, slender proportion maintains the material quality of the Ironwood branch Illortamini has expertly crafted while suggesting the shape and form of the Pukumani poles that were a precursor to figurative Tiwi carving.

This sculpture bears representations of the two primary creation ancestors, Purrukuparli and Bima (also known as Wai-ai). Illortamini is likely to have burnt a quantity of yellow ochre in a fire to procure the deep orange ochre used to decorate both figures. Only subtle variations, such as face markings and the size and shape of the chest, separate their appearance.



PADDY HENRY TEEAMPI**RIPJINGIMPI**

c. 1925 – 1999

Tiwi language

*Tokwampini and**Purrukuparli* circa 1975

earth pigments on Ironwood

59.5 × 5 inches (151 × 12.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milikapiti,

Melville Island, Northern Territory

Melville Island Catholic

Mission, Northern Territory

Private Collection, New South Wales

Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,

Melbourne, 25 July 2005, lot 110

The Martin Rae Collection,

New York, acquired from the above

USD 18,000

Paddy Henry Teeampi was a renowned Tiwi sculptor whose works captured the spiritual essence and ancestral narratives of the Tiwi Islands. His sculptures often drew on the Pukumani (funerary) ceremonies central to Tiwi culture.

The story of Tokwampini warning Purrukuparli of his son's death, which led to the decree of mortality for all Tiwi, is a recurring theme in Teeampi's work. His stylised, elongated figures convey a strong presence while honouring the ancestral connections between land, people and the spiritual world. His sculptures, housed in major collections such as the National Gallery of Australia, serve as enduring representations of Tiwi cultural identity and heritage.

It is highly likely that this sculpture features Tokwampini, the Jabiru, atop Purrukuparli, the Tiwi ancestral leader. Tokwampini was the messenger in the Pukumani ancestral story who told Purrukuparli that his wife, Bima, had committed adultery with Taparra. Similar sculptures created by Teeampi feature Tokwampini (bird in the Tiwi language) in the form of various other birds including the pelican.

The tiered configuration of this sculpture has its origins in the making of Pukumani (funerary) poles. Early twentieth century examples of these poles featured carved human, bird and animal figures at their top. Later, innovative Tiwi carvers began sculpting figurative forms separately and on a smaller scale.





Tiwi Islands Photographer: Steve Strike



PURRUKUPARLI & BIMA

Every day Purrukuparli's wife, Bima, went out gathering food for him, accompanied by their young son, Jinani. In the same camp lived an unmarried man, Taparra, who used to persuade Bima to leave her child under the shade of a tree and go into the bush with him.

On one very hot day Bima neglected her son for too long and he died in the hot sun. On hearing of the child's death, Purrukuparli became so enraged that he struck his wife on the head with a throwing stick and hounded her into the bush. In an effort to help the anguished father, Taparra promised to restore the dead child to life within three days, but Purrukuparli was inconsolable, and the two men soon became locked in a deadly struggle.

Purrukuparli picked up the dead body of his son and, walking backwards into the sea, he decreed that death should come to the whole world. As his son had died, the whole of creation would die and, once dead, never again would come to life. There was not death before this time.

The place where Purrukuparli died, on the east coast of Melville Island, became a whirlpool so strong that anybody who approached it in a canoe would be drowned. When Taparra saw what happened, he changed himself into the moon. But he did not escape the decree of Purrukuparli, for even though his body is eternally reincarnated, he has to die for three days every month.

One can see on the face of the moon man the wounds that he received in his fight with Purrukuparli. Bima, still bearing scars on her head, became Wai-ai, the curlew that still roams the bush at night, wailing in remorse for her misdeeds and for the child that she lost.

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Reference: Tiwi Land Council

**KITTY KANTILLA KUTUWULUMI
PURAWARRUMPATU**

c. 1928 – 2003
Tiwi language

Bima circa 1980
earth pigments on Ironwood
22.5 × 14.5 inches (57.1 × 36.8 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Bathurst
Island, Northern Territory
Private Collection, New South Wales
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 7 June 2011, lot 69
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 14,000

Kitty Kantilla Kutuwulumi Purawarrumpatu, a celebrated Tiwi artist, redefined Tiwi art by blending ceremonial traditions with contemporary abstraction. Kantilla was a master of *jilamara* (designs), her works – spanning carved objects, paintings on bark, canvas and paper – featuring intricate dotting and linear patterns inspired by Tiwi spirituality, particularly the story of Purrukuparli, Bima and Taparra.

Kantilla's innovative use of white pigment, paired with ochres of red, yellow and black, symbolised elemental forces and spiritual transformation. Her minimalist designs captured the emotional depth of

Tiwi mourning rituals and the tidal rhythms created by Purrukuparli's grief. Eschewing modern tools, she meticulously shaped her materials by hand, balancing tradition with modern aesthetics.

The prominent breasts on the chest of this figure suggests that this sculpture may represent the ancestral figure of Bima. Other sculptures of Bima made by Kantilla share the black painted crutch of this example. The sculpture has minimal articulation of the arms, nor has the figure's mouth been incorporated. The furrowed brow and vacant eyes suggest the shock Bima experienced upon learning of the death of her son.



**KITTY KANTILLA KUTUWULUMI
PURAWARRUMPATU**

c. 1928 – 2003
Tiwi language

Bima and Wai-ai 1980
earth pigments on Ironwood
51 × 6 inches (129.5 × 15.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Bathurst
Island, Northern Territory
Tiwi Pima Art or Tiwi Design,
Northern Territory
Private Collection, New South Wales
Aboriginal Fine Art, Lawson+Menzies,
Sydney, 23 May 2007, lot 29
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 18,000

Kantilla's sculpted figures are immediately recognisable for their unique rectilinear-shaped bodies and deep-set pill-shaped eyes. This impressive two-tiered sculpture incorporates the ancestral figure of Bima and her post-death incarnation as the curlew Wai-ai. At the foot of the sculpture, Bima is highly decorated with grid-like patterning and dots. Standing upright above is Wai-ai with her wings tucked back. According to Tiwi belief, Wai-ai still roams the bush at night, wailing in remorse for her misdeeds and the death of her only child.



**KITTY KANTILLA KUTUWULUMI
PURAWARRUMPATU**

c. 1928 – 2003

Tiwi language

*Purrukuparli, Bima and
Taparra* circa 1980

earth pigments on Ironwood

46 × 5.5 inches (116.8 × 13.9 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Bathurst
Island, Northern Territory

Tiwi Pima Art, Bathurst Island,
Northern Territory

Private Collection, New South Wales

Aboriginal Art, Lawson-Menzies,
Sydney, 30 May 2006, lot 268

The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 18,000

This remarkable multi-tiered sculpture features the three ancestral creator beings central to Tiwi life and death, Purrukuparli, Bima (or Wai-ai) and Taparra. The face of each figure is distinguished by specific jilamara (designs) decipherable only to Tiwi people themselves. Kitty Kantilla moved to Paru as a teenager, where she observed the early period of figurative Tiwi carving in which some of the most revered of all Tiwi artists would emerge.



MICKEY GERANIUM WARLAPINNI

c. 1905 – 1985
Tiwi language

Untitled circa 1970
earth pigments on Ironwood
33.75 × 3 inches (85.7 × 7.6 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Melville or Bathurst Islands, Northern Territory
Private Collection, Darwin
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, Sydney, 29 July 2003, lot 427
The Martin Rae Collection, New York, acquired from the above

EXHIBITED

Michael C. Rockefeller Wing, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, September 2009 – September 2012, cat. no. L.2009.49.3 (on loan)

USD 14,000

Geranium's subtly articulated figure stands gracefully above a square base. Its rectilinear-shaped body, decorated in vertical bands of colour, is minimally shaped from a slender Ironwood branch. Its lithe face with small, beaded eyes and a large nose is divided into quarters and decorated in contrasting chevron designs.



BEN TIPUNGWUTI

c. 1916 – 1979

Tiwi language

Untitled circa 1960

earth pigments, resin and

hair on Ironwood

23 × 4.25 inches (58.4 × 10.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Nguui,

Bathurst Island, Northern Territory

Bathurst Island Mission,

Northern Territory

Stephen Kellner Gallery, Sydney

Private Collection, Sydney

Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,

Melbourne, 24 July 2007, lot 75

The Luczo Family Collection,

United States of America

*Aboriginal Art from the Luczo Family**Collection USA*, Deutscher and

Hackett, Melbourne, 19 Oct 2016, lot 19

The Martin Rae Collection,

New York, acquired from the above

USD 18,000

Tipungwuti's slender Tiwi figure features an elongated head divided by parallel lines running across its face. Designs on the body and face are consistent with contemporary designs worn by Tiwi ceremonial performers. Beneath sloping shoulders hang two finely articulated arms. A large white cross adorns the figure's slight torso, emphasising its impressive physique.

Unlike the majority of carved Tiwi figures that merge into a solid wooden base, the legs of Tipungwuti's figure are finely modelled in proportion to its corresponding arms.



MANI LUKI HARRY CARPENTER
WOMMATAKIMMI
 c. 1914 – 1980
 Tiwi language

Bima circa 1972
 earth pigments on Ironwood
 25.75 × 7 inches (63.5 × 17.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milikapiti,
 Melville Island, Northern Territory
 Melville Island Catholic
 Mission, Northern Territory
 Private Collection, Perth
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
 Melbourne, 26 June 2000, lot 57
 The Martin Rae Collection,
 New York, acquired from the above

USD 14,000

Mani Luki, also known as Harry Carpenter, was a master Tiwi artist, born around 1914 on Melville Island in the Northern Territory. A skilled carver, his work reflected his deep commitment to Tiwi cultural practices and ancestral storytelling. Artistically, Luki was influenced by his father Joe Wommatakimmi and brother Young Brook Aurangnamarri Wommatakimmi, both accomplished carvers.

Inspired by Macassan and Timorese traditions, Luki bridged cultural boundaries while preserving Tiwi heritage. In the 1960s, Luki created some of his most iconic works, including sculptures of Purrukuparli, and his wife, Bima. He holds an enduring legacy as a cultural custodian and one of the greatest carvers of his generation.

Luki and other Tiwi sculptors occasionally produced busts of ancestral figures such as this example of the first Tiwi woman, Bima (or Wai-ai). He often did little to distinguish between his male and female figures. Although the chiselled face of this figure appears to be wearing a false beard for ceremonial purposes, the decorated breasts identify this bust as that of Bima.

The uniform parallel dotting on the torso and back of the figure is similar to that produced by a Tiwi painting 'comb' known as the *kayimwagakimi*, or *pwoja*. Hand carved from Ironwood and unique to the Tiwi Islands, these special tools were originally devised to decorate the bodies of ceremonial performers with dots.



MANI LUKI HARRY CARPENTER
WOMMATAKIMMI

c. 1914 – 1980

Tiwi language

Untitled circa 1970

earth pigments on Ironwood

24 × 8.75 inches (60.9 × 22.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milikapiti,

Melville Island, Northern Territory

Melville Island Catholic

Mission, Northern Territory

Private Collection

Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, Melbourne,

31 October 2006, lot 80

The Martin Rae Collection,

New York, acquired from the above

USD 28,000

Mani Luki's expressive figures are distinct for their elongated heads, broad shoulders and splayed arms. Unlike most sculptors who relied upon a single piece of wood to fashion the entirety of their figures, Luki often attached separate lengths of wood to depict arms. Combined with large cat-like eyes and expressive faces, Luki's figures appear highly animated as if poised to break into dance.

Luki was widely travelled and encountered other artists and cultural groups, which may have influenced his artistic practice. Many of his figures wear belts, loin cloths or aprons similar to apparel worn by Macassans who made intermittent contact with Tiwi people while fishing for trepang.



PUDJAMALI DON HOCKING

c. 1920 – 1976

Tiwi language

Untitled circa 1960human hair, shells, bush gum,
earth pigments on Ironwood
15.5 × 4.75 inches (39.7 × 12 cm)**PROVENANCE**

The Artist, created at Bathurst
Island, Northern Territory
Bathurst Island Catholic
Mission, Northern Territory
Lance Bennett, Northern Territory,
acquired from the above
Thomas Vroom, The Netherlands
*The Thomas Vroom
Collection*, Bonhams, Sydney,
6 September 2015, lot 21
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above
USD 18,000

Pudjamali Don Hocking was a revered Tiwi artist, cultural leader and Elder from Melville Island. Raised within a community deeply rooted in tradition, he became a key figure in adapting Tiwi ceremonial art into portable forms. Pudjamali's art and leadership continues to inspire Tiwi people, to preserve their cultural identity for future generations.

His bark paintings and carved objects focussed upon the Pukumani (mortuary) ceremonies. His works featured intricate geometric patterns and symbolic motifs, including dotted designs and

ceremonial objects like false beards, aprons and feather adornments.

As a strong advocate for Tiwi traditions, Pudjamali emphasised the vital role of women in ceremonial life, often depicting female figures adorned with ceremonial body paint.

Pudjamali's thickset figure is highly decorated for ceremonial purposes. A highlight of this sculpture is the uncommon use of two small shells to represent the eyes of the figure, the shells having been inlaid in carved eye sockets using japartinga (bush gum).



PUDJAMALI DON HOCKING

c. 1920 – 1976

Tiwi language

Untitled 1966

earth pigments on Ironwood

22.5 × 4.5 inches (57.1 × 11.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Bathurst Island, Northern Territory
 Bathurst Island Catholic Mission, Northern Territory
 Lance Bennett, Northern Territory,
 acquired from the above in 1966
 Thomas Vroom, The Netherlands
The Thomas Vroom Collection,
 Bonhams, Sydney, 6 June 2015, lot 20
 The Martin Rae Collection,
 New York, acquired from the above

USD 18,000

Pudjamali Don Hocking was part of an extended family group based at Paru on the southern coast of Melville Island. Here, artists worked independently of the mission at nearby Milikapiti on Bathurst Island. Pudjamali was one of several artists sought after by collectors for his rare, expressive carved figures. He is known to have produced a small number of barks, many of which feature figurative depictions of Tiwi ancestral beings.

Although not recorded, it is likely that this figure is female, due to the presence of carved breasts. This suggests the possibility that the sculpture is a three-dimensional manifestation of the ancestral figure of Bima (or Wai-ai). The head of Pudjamali's figure is out of proportion with its smaller body. Unlike other extant figures created by Pudjamali, this example wears a white painted loin cloth.



WEST ARNHEM LAND

Early figurative sculptures produced in West Arnhem Land almost exclusively represented Mimih spirits. Mimih are tall, slender beings who provided Aboriginal people in West Arnhem Land with the foundations of language, knowledge and culture. Mimih continue to live in family groups in relative harmony with Aboriginal people in the escarpment regions of West Arnhem Land.

In the early 1960s, the Kuninjku artist Crusoe Kuningbal (c. 1922 – 1984) pioneered the creation of carved Mimih figures. During World War II, while working with Donald Thomson's Aboriginal observer force, Kuningbal visited Milingimbi, where he observed Yolngu artists crafting Mokuy figures. Inspired by what he had seen, many years later he began carving Mimih sculptures. Initially he employed these sculptures to humorous effect during Mamurrng ceremonies associated with malignant Mam (ghost) ancestors.

Prior to Kuningbal's innovations, some figurative wood-carved objects appeared in ceremonial contexts. Similar forms, known as kunwaral (spirit figures) and made from paperbark and bound with string, were used in mortuary ceremonies and represent the ghosts of the deceased.¹ Mimih figures – inspired by the precedent set by Kuningbal – continue to be carved and decorated in West Arnhem Land.

1. Luke Taylor, 'Fire in the water: inspiration from country', in Jon Altman & Hetti Perkins (ed.), *Crossing Country: The Alchemy of Western Arnhem Land*, Art Gallery of NSW, 2004, pp.127–8.

CRUSOE GUNINGBAL

c. 1922 – 1984
Kuninjku language

Mimih Spirit circa 1979
earth pigments on wood
55.1 × 4 inches (140 × 10 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Maningrida,
West Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Maningrida Arts & Culture,
Northern Territory
Private Collection, United States of
America, acquired from the above
USD 6,000

CRUSOE GUNINGBAL

c. 1922 – 1984
Kuninjku language

Mimih Spirit circa 1970
earth pigments on wood
39.5 × 3.5 inches (100.3 × 39.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Maningrida,
West Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Maningrida Progress Association,
Northern Territory
Private Collection, Sydney
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 24 June 2002, lot 364
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above
USD 4,000

CRUSOE GUNINGBAL

c. 1922 – 1984
Kuninjku language

Mimih Spirit circa 1979
earth pigments on wood
68.8 × 5 inches (175 × 14 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Maningrida,
West Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Maningrida Arts & Culture,
Northern Territory
Private Collection, United States of
America, acquired from the above
USD 8,000

Crusoe Guningbal was a celebrated Aboriginal artist and ceremonial leader of the Kuninjku people from West Arnhem Land. Renowned for his contributions to both visual art and performance, Guningbal was a master of Mimih spirit carving, which became a central feature of his artistic practice.

Guningbal is believed to be the first artist to articulate Mimih figures in a three-dimensional form. With his finely crafted Mimih spirits – Kuninjku ancestral beings – and ceremonial dances, he blended visual storytelling with ritual

performance. The tall spirit bodies of Guningbal's Mimihis are steeped in deep red ochre and decorated with white dotted pigment.

This type of sculpture is now ubiquitous throughout central Arnhem Land. Contemporary artists such as Owen Yalandga, who typically reside at Maningrida and its surrounding homeland outstations, continue to make similar sculptures. The eyes and mouths of these figures are typically adorned using black. Minimal shape is given to the arms, shoulders and head, with the legs the only feature of the figure to be articulated.



NORTH-EAST ARNHEM LAND

Carved figures from north-east Arnhem Land often take the form of Mokuy (a sinister spirit or ghost). In Yolŋu culture there are two dimensions to a person's spirit, the birrimbirr (soul) and the Mokuy. The birrimbirr spirit is conceived of as the positive dimension of the deceased. The Mokuy is a malicious spirit that seeks to spread blame for the death, while haunting and making demands on the living.¹ After the death of individuals, clan groups related to the deceased engage in ceremonial activity to dispel the presence of the Mokuy from burial grounds to distant areas where the memory of its existence will fade.

Carved Mokuy figures are derived from painted grave posts called wuramu. Large and intricately decorated, wuramu developed through the influence of Macassan traders from Sulawesi who were seasonal travellers to Arnhem Land for over 400 years until the beginning of the twentieth century. Macassan people carved and decorated tall cylindrical posts for mortuary ceremonies. They featured a large hat at the top of the post, beneath which was a face with carved eyes, nose, mouth and triangular-shaped chin, or beard.

Yolŋu wuramu were erected at the grave, or camp of the deceased. Gradually, these posts began to adopt a human form until they developed into figures now representing Mokuy. Anthropologist Donald Thomson and mission superintendent Wilbur Chaseling collected sculptures from Yirrkala during the 1930s. The anthropologists Ronald M. Berndt and Charles P. Mountford made some of the first collections of carved Mokuy figures during the 1940s. Carved figures continue to be created across north-east Arnhem Land today.

¹ Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal art / Howard Morphy*, Phaidon Press, London, 1998, p. 206.

LIPUNDJA

c. 1912 – 1968
Gupapuyŋu language

Untitled – Wild Honey
Figure circa 1963
earth pigments on wood
20.5 × 5 inches (52 × 12.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milingimbi,
East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Private Collection, Melbourne
Important Aboriginal & Oceanic
Art, Deutscher and Hackett,
Melbourne, 27 March 2013, lot 25
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 18,000

This remarkable figure represents Murayana, a Wild Honey Spirit that bears Gupapuyŋu clan designs belonging to the artist. During the Wanarr (ancestral period), Murayana created the sacred songs, dances and designs for niwuda, the wild honey of the Yirritja moiety. The painted diamond shapes represent the honeycomb structure of a beehive filled with honey. The white vertical dots indicate the native wild bee. Murayana's triangular shaped head features a similarly shaped mouth and relief carved eyes that protrude from his face. The distinct body shape with a curved front and 'notched' lower hips was believed to have been developed by Lipundja.



LIPUNDJA

c. 1912 – 1968
Gupapuyngu language

Untitled circa 1965
earth pigments on wood
15.75 × 2.25 inches (40 × 5.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, executed at Milingimbi,
East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Private Collection
Aboriginal & Oceanic Art,
Sotheby's, Melbourne,
15–16 November 2005, lot 473
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above
USD 5,000

The horizontal lines across the face, torso and arms of this figure relate to the string binding that encased earlier iterations of figurative sculptures in parts of Arnhem Land. Paperbark and, later, wooden figures were wrapped in string and used in mortuary ceremonies. As Mokuy figures, such as this example, became more common, string binding was replaced by bands of painted ochre. This slender figure with its unusually elongated neck has legs that reduce almost to pointed tips, a legacy from when these sculptures were plunged into the earth during mortuary ceremonies.



LIPUNDJA

c. 1912 – 1968
Gupapuyngu language

Untitled circa 1965
earth pigments on wood
35.5 × 4.25 inches (90.1 × 10.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milingimbi,
East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Leo Fleischmann, Sydney
Private Collection, Sydney,
acquired in 1984
*Australian Indigenous & Oceanic
Art, Day 1*, Mossgreen Auctions,
Melbourne, 22 July 2014, lot 34
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 16,000

Lipundja's Mokuy sculptures are defined by their strong vertical forms, pointed chins and textured surfaces adorned with clan designs. These markings, including diamonds and chevrons, symbolise wind, waterholes and other elements linked to the deceased's journey through the afterlife. Through his sculptures, Lipundja gives a sophisticated three-dimensional form to Yolŋu ancestral beings, that present as powerful embodiments of his cultural identity.



DICK NGULMARMAR (ATTRIBUTED)

c. 1911 – 1977

Ganalbinju language

Untitled circa 1960

earth pigments on softwood

47 × 6.5 inches (119.3 × 16.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milingimbi,
East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Geoffrey W. Spence, Botanical
Gardens Museum and Gallery, Darwin
George W. Gill, Kansas,
United States of America
The Spence-Gill Collection, Wyoming,
United States of America
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 28 June 1999, lot 126
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 35,000

This particular type of Mokuy, identified as a Ganalbinju Mokuy of the Yirritja moiety, appears to have derived from Macassan grave posts. Ganalbinju Mokuy are distinguished by their sloping shoulder line, minimal definition of the hips and horizontal banding of the face. The banding across the face of this figure is believed to imitate the string binding that earlier figures were wrapped within.

Distinct chevron patterning running from the shoulders down to the knees signify *lungurra* (the north-east wind), which blows from October to December and brings monsoons to Arnhem Land. This design, also known as 'ribs and flesh' patterning, indicates that this figure serves as a receptacle for the spirit of the deceased.



ARTIST UNKNOWN

Untitled circa 1960
 earth pigments on wood
 41 × 7 inches (104.1 × 17.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milingimbi,
 East Arnhem Land
 Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
 Northern Territory
 Stan Moriarty Collection, cat. no. 8425
 Gabriella Roy, Sydney
 Private Collection, Melbourne
*Aboriginal, African & Oceanic
 Art*, Sotheby's, Melbourne,
 9 November 1998, lot 222
 Private Collection, Melbourne
*Aboriginal Art: 10th Anniversary
 Auction*, Sotheby's, Melbourne,
 31 July 2006, lot 49
 The Martin Rae Collection,
 New York, acquired from the above
 USD 35,000

The face, torso and thighs of this tall figure provide the artist with a series of surfaces on which to imbue meaning. Its expressive 'painted-up' face and shoulders sit above its beautifully decorated chest featuring clan designs specific to the affiliations of the unknown maker.

Yam-like designs on its thighs suggest its classification as guardian Mokuy, entrusted to provide sustenance to more significant Mokuy that embody the spirits of the deceased. Rare for Mokuy figures, this example features tiny feet and delicately carved fingers.



ARTIST UNKNOWN

Untitled circa 1960
 earth pigments on wood
 48.75 × 6 inches (123.8 × 15.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milingimbi,
 East Arnhem Land
 Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
 Northern Territory
 Private Collection
 William Jamieson, Toronto
African & Oceanic Art, Sotheby's,
 New York, November 2002, lot 195
 The Martin Rae Collection,
 New York, acquired from the above
 USD 35,000

The seniority and ritual experience of an artist can determine the aesthetics of a carved figure. This may manifest in the designs used to decorate the figure, its shape, type, and what body parts can be included. This tall, free-standing figure displays cross-hatched clan designs that are sectioned into panels by an elongated shaft of black ochre. Its arms are strapped to either side of the body, and its legs face outwards. The expressive face is highly decorated with ritual painting surrounding the mouth and distinct painted ears.



ARTIST UNKNOWN

Untitled circa 1963
 earth pigments on hardwood
 32.75 × 16 inches (83.1 × 40.6 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milingimbi,
 East Arnhem Land
 Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
 Northern Territory
 Gardens Museum and
 Art Gallery, Darwin
 George W. Spence, New South Wales
 Spence-Gill Collection, University of
 Wyoming, United States of America
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
 Melbourne, 28 June 1999, lot 127
 Private Collection, Melbourne,
 acquired from the above
 Joel Fine Art, Melbourne,
 6 May 2007, lot 8
 The Luczo Family Collection,
 United States of America,
 acquired from the above
*Aboriginal Art from the Luczo Family
 Collection*, Deutscher and Hackett,
 Melbourne, 19 October 2016, lot 73
 The Martin Rae Collection,
 New York, acquired from the above

USD 35,000

This impressive Ganalbinu Mokuy figure features a unique hooked arm and yam-like designs on its legs and torso. It is possible that the arm once held a small dillybag, eluding to the primary purpose of this type of Mokuy: to provide sustenance, including yams, to other, more significant Mokuy. These Mokuy, typically decorated in chevron patterning, are receptacles for the spirits of the dead. The large triangular-shaped head shows minimal surface modelling apart from slightly recessed eyes. Typical of sculpted Mokuy from Milingimbi, the legs are turned outward, with the knees shown at the sides.



ARTIST UNKNOWN

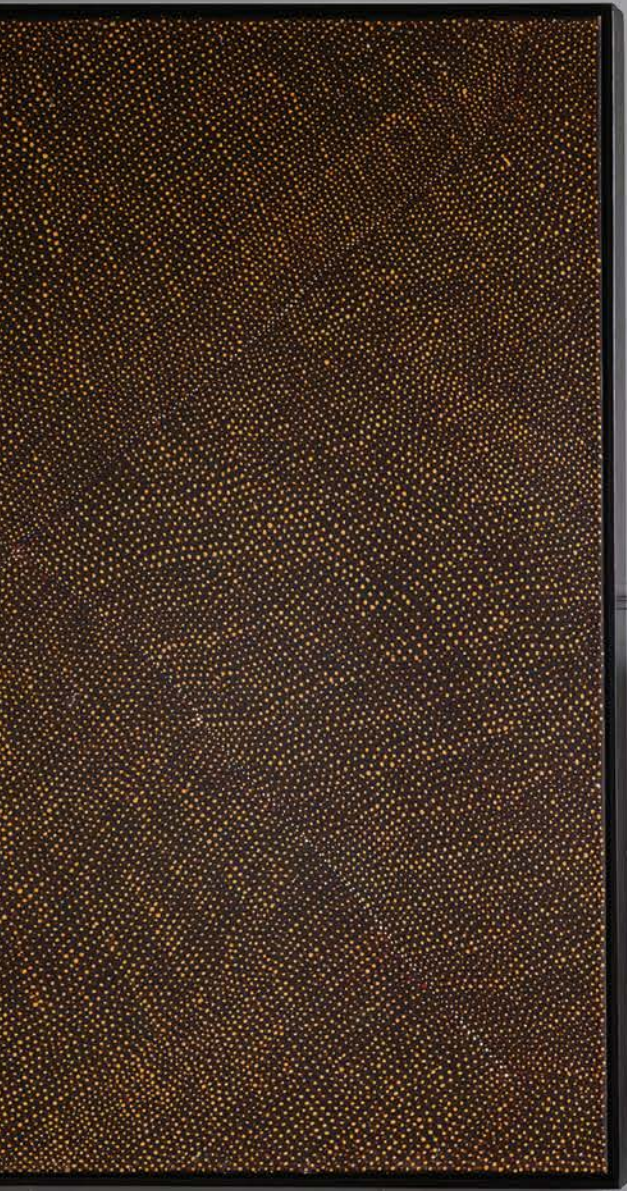
Untitled 1965
 earth pigments on wood
 19 × 5 inches (48.25 × 12.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milingimbi,
 East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
 Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
 Northern Territory
 Collected by Joseph Von Sternberg,
 1965, United States of America,
 acquired from the above
 Sotheby's, New York, 1984, lot 501
 Private Collection, Queensland
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's
 Melbourne 25 July 2005, lot 216
 The Martin Rae Collection,
 New York, acquired from the above
 USD 6,000

Created by an unknown Yolŋu artist in the mid 1960s, this elegant Mokuy figure is decorated with fine cross-hatching representing clan designs. Carved at Milingimbi, this example displays a number of stylistic traits specific to carvers from this region. The flattened body shape and broad chest originated in earlier post-type figures inspired by Macassan grave posts observed at Milingimbi in the 1930s. So too the sharply angled jawline, which is believed to represent the pointed beards of Macassan men. While naturalistically shaped buttocks such as the ones on this figure are common in Mokuy carved at Yirrkala, it was rare for figures created at Milingimbi.





MUNḠURRAWUY YUNUPIŊU

c. 1907 – 1979
Gumatj language

Lanydjung circa 1960

earth pigments on wood, human hair,
resin, feathers, plant fibre string
35 × 5 inches (88.9 × 12.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Yirrkala, north-
east Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Yirrkala Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Private Collection
Thomas Vroom, The Netherlands
The Thomas Vroom Collection,
Bonhams, Sydney,
6 September 2015, lot 23
Tim Klingender Art, Sydney, 2019
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above
USD 30,000

Munḡurrawuy Yunupiŋu was a revered Yolŋu artist and ceremonial leader of the Gumatj clan in north-east Arnhem Land. He was a custodian of Yolŋu law and knowledge, and his art served as a vital link between ancestral stories and the present. Central to his work was the Lanydjung story, which he used to convey key cultural and spiritual narratives to the outside world.

A leading figure in the Yolŋu land rights movement, he contributed to the 1962 Yirrkala Church Panels and the 1963 Bark Petitions, cementing art's role in political advocacy. His legacy lives on through his children, many of who made, and continue to make significant cultural, artistic and political contributions to Australia.



MUNGURRAWUY YUNUPIJU

c. 1907 – 1979
Gumatj language

Lanydjung 1959

earth pigments, resin, feathers, plant
fibre, feathers, string on hardwood
32.5 × 4.5 inches (82.5 × 11.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Yirrkala, north-
east Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Yirrkala Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Private Collection
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 24 June 2002, lot 50
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

EXHIBITED

Michael C. Rockefeller Wing,
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New
York, 14 November 2007 – 18 October
2009, cat. no. L.2007.72.3 (on loan)

USD 30,000

These rare 1950s sculptures (p. 67 & p. 69)
by Mungurrawuy Yunupiju depict one of the
Yirritja creator beings, Lanydjung. Lanydjung is
remembered as an indistinct and shadowy figure,
who sometimes took on the entity and names of
other spirit ancestors.

On the coast of north-east Arnhem Land,
Lanydjung and his brother, or companion, Banaitja
emerged out of the sea. As they did so, the foam
and spray ran in white lines down their bodies
and formed a honeycomb pattern as they dried.
The two men travelled with their digging sticks,
forming the land and the animals that inhabited it.
Both figures are decorated with resplendent body
paint designs and ceremonial ornaments featuring
lorikeet feathers.



DAWIDI BIRRIJAMA

c. 1921 – 1970
Liyagalawumirr language

Untitled circa 1965
earth pigments and cockatoo
feathers on wood
34 × 15 inches (86.3 × 38 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Milingimbi,
East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Milingimbi Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Private Collection
D'LAN Davidson, Queensland, 2016
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above
USD 12,000

Dawidi Birritjama was a Liyagalawumirr artist and community leader from Milingimbi. Raised during a time of significant social change, Dawidi balanced his artistic practice with various forms of employment, including farming and community infrastructure projects, which were expectations imposed by the mission that was established in the 1920s.

Dawidi's artistic style was heavily influenced by earlier generations, reflecting a deep understanding of Yolŋu culture. His works often utilised figurative elements and precise cross-hatching. Recognised as a key figure in the dynamic Milingimbi art movement of the mid twentieth century, Dawidi's legacy is marked by his role in shaping the visual

language of Yolŋu art and inspiring subsequent generations of artists.

Most of Dawidi's paintings and carvings feature elements of the Wāgilak sister's story. In ancestral times the Wāgilak sisters travelled from south-central Arnhem Land toward Dawidi's Country at Milingimbi. During their travels they disturbed a waterhole belonging to Julungul, the Rainbow Serpent. In retaliation, Julungul swallowed the women and their children whole.

Upon the chest of Dawidi's carved figure is a painted depiction of Julungul. The poles to the right of Julungul may be the burial containers belonging to the sisters, or the morning star poles that guided their journey before death.



BIRRIKITJI GUMANA

c. 1898 – 1982
Yolŋu language

Untitled circa 1960
earth pigments on wood with
dillybag, string and feathers
15.5 × 4.5 inches (39 × 11.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Yirrkala, north-east Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Yirrkala Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Private Collection
Aboriginal & Oceanic Art,
Sotheby's, Melbourne,
15–16 November 2005, lot 473
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 10,000

Birrikitji Gumana was a Yolŋu artist and ceremonial leader, and a pivotal figure in the cultural and political history of Arnhem Land. As leader of the Dhaŋwaŋu clan of the Yirritja moiety, he held extensive ceremonial knowledge and was deeply committed to preserving Yolŋu law and ancestral traditions. Born decades before the establishment of the Yirrkala Mission, he witnessed the full impact of European colonisation, including the 1911 massacre at Gängaŋ, where he discovered the bodies of his deceased relatives.

Gumana was a renowned bark painter, creating works that conveyed the sacred stories of his homeland, particularly those associated with the creation ancestor, Barama and the sacred billabong at Gängaŋ. He was a senior contributor to the 1962

Yirrkala Church Panels and a strong advocate for Yolŋu land rights.

This highly decorated carved and painted figure of an unknown ancestor is distinguished by its diamond-shaped body paint designs and miniature ceremonial belongings. A small ceremonial dillybag decorated in lorikeet feathers hangs around its neck. Ornaments appear on the upper arms and beneath its chin. In its mouth it carries a feathered length of string. The softwood used for this sculpture has enabled Gumana to fashion the figure's small hands.

The pattern of interlocking diamonds, specific to Gumana's clan group, continue to be painted on the bodies of ceremonial participants at various locations in Arnhem Land.



NARRITJIN MAYMURU

c. 1916 – 1981
Manggalili language

Untitled circa 1968
earth pigments on wood
21 × 3.5 inches (53.3 × 8.8 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Yirrkala, north-east Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Yirrkala Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Valentine Smith, acquired late 1960s
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above

USD 8,000

Narritjin Maymuru was a visionary Yolŋu artist and ceremonial leader. Known for his intricate and symbolically rich artworks, he was a driving force in the Yolŋu art movement and a champion of cultural preservation through art. Narritjin's work spanned bark paintings, carvings and monumental projects like the Yirrkala Church Panels in 1962.

In addition to being a prolific artist, Narritjin was a mediator within his community and a teacher, fostering the next generation of Yolŋu artists. His collaborations with art dealers and representation in exhibitions in Sydney and internationally broadened recognition of Yolŋu culture. In 1978, he was awarded a Creative Arts Fellowship from

the Australian National University, cementing his legacy as a cultural ambassador and one of the most significant contributors to Yolŋu art.

This shapely carved figure is an early precursor to a genre of sculptures that would define contemporary Yolŋu carving over the following decades. Later, similarly fashioned but smaller figures were often decorated with a mixture of intaglio carving and earth pigments. Clan designs feature on both sides of the figure. Much attention has been given to the shaping of the surface of this figure, particularly to the ears, which was uncommon. The oval-shaped eyes and mouths are typical for figures carved at Yirrkala.



MAWALAN MARIKA

c. 1908 – 1967
Rirratjinu language

Untitled circa 1962
earth pigments on milkwood
18.75 × 4.25 inches (47.6 × 10.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Yirrkala,
north-east Arnhem Land
Yirrkala Methodist Mission,
Northern Territory
Private Collection, Australian
Capital Territory
Australian Aboriginal Art,
Lawson-Menzies, Sydney,
14 November 2007, lot 153
The Martin Rae Collection,
New York, acquired from the above
USD 6,000

Mawalan Marika was a highly respected artist, cultural leader and senior figure in his Yolŋu community at Yirrkala. He belonged to the Rirratjinu clan, part of a larger social and spiritual grouping known as the Dhuwa moiety. Marika often focussed on the Djan'kawu creation story. This story describes the actions of ancestral beings who are believed to have shaped the land and created the Yolŋu clans.

Marika was also a political advocate, protesting mining activities in Arnhem Land and defending

Yolŋu land rights. As one of the first artists to create barks for sale and to exhibit in southern cities, Marika bridged cultural and artistic worlds, leaving a legacy of advocacy and artistic mastery.

This rare sculpture, created in the early 1960s, displays skeletal-like features with large carved teeth and hollowed eyes. Its largely cylindrical form and the mound at its base provides a surface for the artist to carefully articulate the legs, feet and toes of the Mokuy figure. A notched spine uniquely divides the back of the figure into decorated recessed panels.





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ABOUT

Established in 2016, D'Lan Contemporary presents exceptional modern and contemporary art by leading and emerging First Nations artists at its galleries in Melbourne, Sydney, and New York alongside an international programme of exhibitions, educational talks and events that celebrate and promote the rich art and culture of Australia's first peoples.

ETHICS

D'Lan Contemporary maintains strict ethical practices and is committed to generating positive industry change to create a sustainable marketplace for this important segment of Australian art and culture.

D'Lan Contemporary allocates 30% of annual net profits to centralise and distribute proceeds from art sales back to Australian First Nations artists and their working communities.

PROVENANCE

Every work of art exhibited and sold by D'Lan Contemporary has a clear line of provenance.

Documentation we draw upon to establish provenance includes:

- Community Art Centre certificate of provenance/authenticity
- Transfer of ownership documentation
- Purchase receipt or invoice
- Inclusion in academic / art historical publications
- Inclusion in exhibitions, and exhibition catalogues (private and/or public institution)
- Collection/exhibition inventory numbers (private and/or public institution)
- Inclusion in auction catalogues
- Documented appraisals

D'Lan Contemporary's guidance on best practice for buying Australian First Nations art is:

CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS (1980–PRESENT)

All contemporary Australian First Nations works of art should be accompanied by documentation linking the artwork to the artist via their Community Art Centre or their primary gallery/representative.

Community Art Centres operate with an ethical focus and establish their own individual guidelines by which all artworks are sold.

Primary market artworks should only be bought from a Community Art Centre or an official artist gallery/representative.

Secondary market artworks should only be bought with a source of provenance from a Community Art Centre or an official artist gallery/representative.

MODERN AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS ART (1950S–1980)

For artworks created prior to the establishment of Community Art Centres, such as bark paintings, Hermannsburg watercolours, Papunya boards and sculptural artworks made for sale, there is less necessity for Community Art Centre provenance.

However, artworks from this period with no traceable history are likely to have less market value than those that do – even when an artwork is clearly authentic.

Highly desirable provenance for artworks from this period includes Papunya Tula Artists, Stuart Art Centre and Maningrida Arts, or a clear link to a primary collector such as Geoffrey Bardon, Dorothy Bennett, Sandra Le Brun Holmes or Dr Scougall – who were all active in the 1950s–1970s.

ARTEFACTS AND OBJECTS (1880S–1950)

With artefacts, often much of the important collection history has been lost over time. Therefore, proven provenance can greatly impact value.

Before acquisition, research should be undertaken to ascertain the origin of the artefact or object, and how and when it left its country of origin.

Best practice in this segment is to obtain advice from a trusted industry expert before buying or selling.

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The *Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1985* (PMCH Act) implements Australia's obligations under the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970 (1970 UNESCO Convention), to which Australia is a State Party.

The 1970 UNESCO Convention requires State Parties to ensure that no collecting institution accepts illegally exported items.

The Australian Government administers the PMCH Act through the Ministry for the Arts. The PMCH Act regulates the export of Australia's most significant cultural heritage objects by implementing export controls for objects defined as 'Australian Protected Objects'.

If you have any questions about acquiring or selling Australian First Nations art, please contact us at: enquiries@dlancontemporary.com.au



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