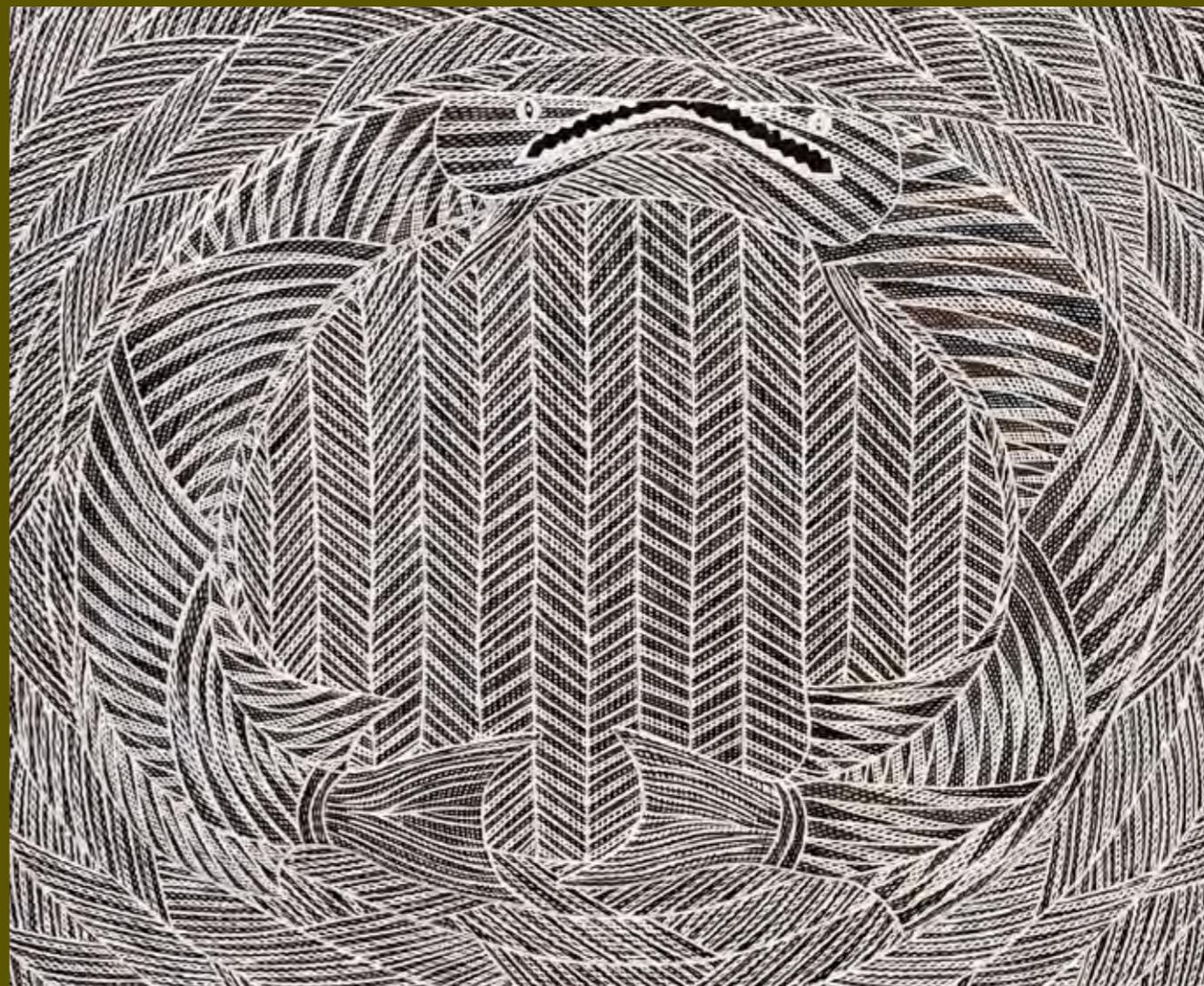


ANNANDALE GALLERIES

GUNYBI GANAMBARR

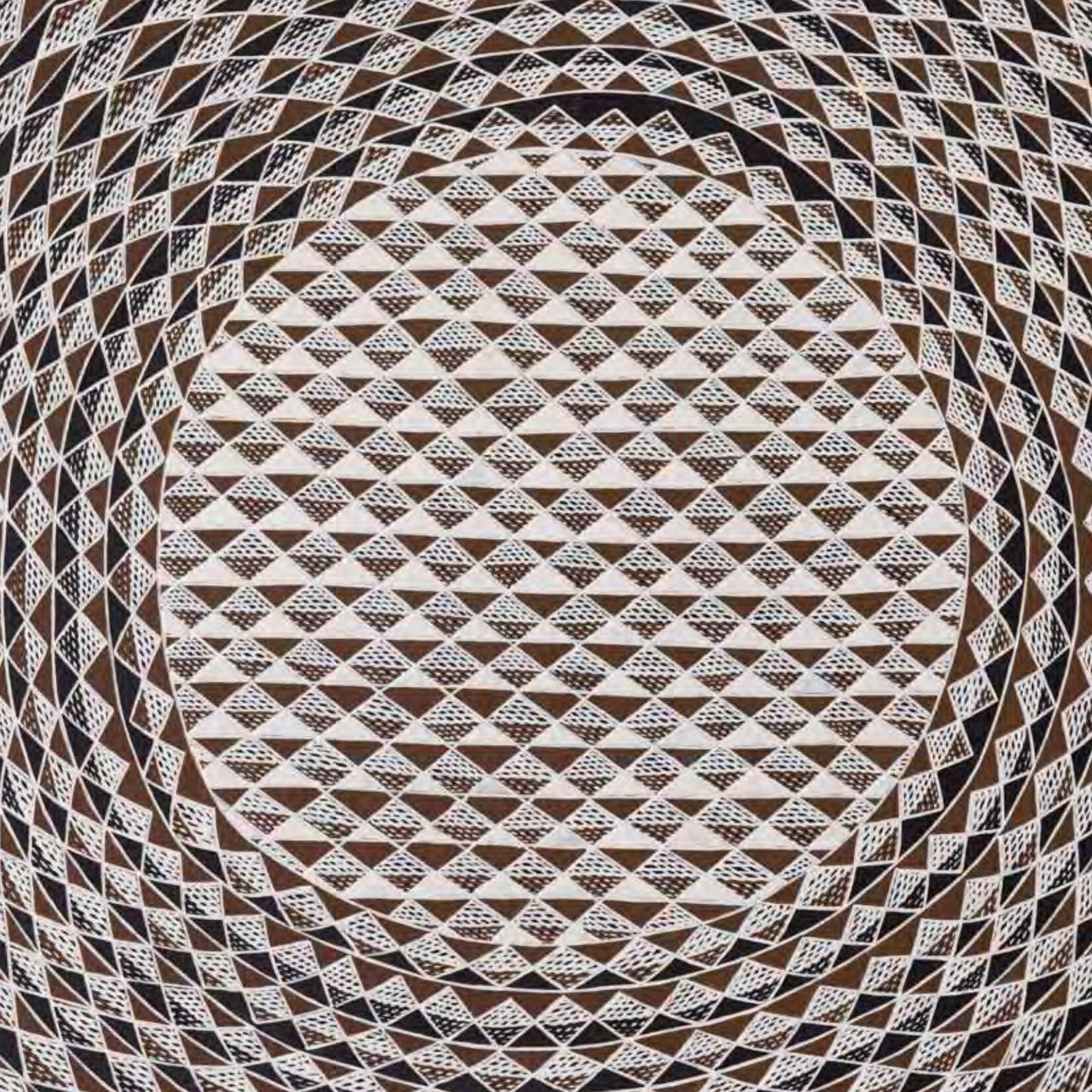
ANNANDALE GALLERIES

GUNYBI GANAMBARR



from my mind





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Back cover *Balawurru* 2011 natural earth pigments on incised aircell insulation 120 x 118 cm BLA 676 4027C

GUNYBI GANAMBARR

from my mind

barks sculpture multi-media works

OPENING RECEPTION FOR THE ARTIST

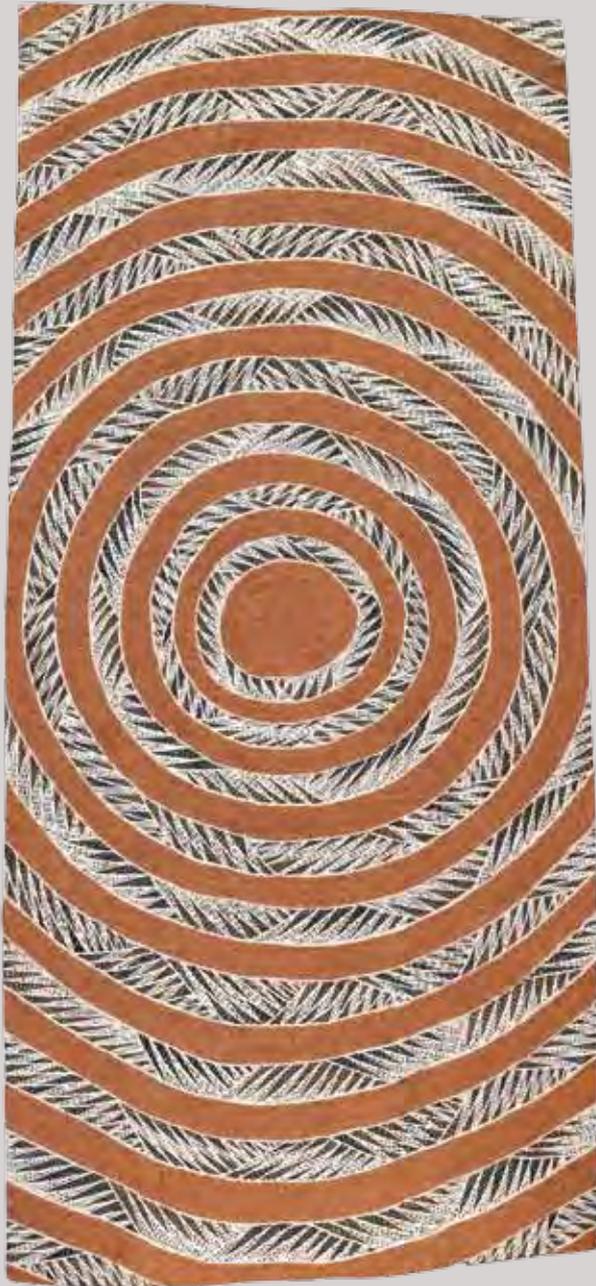
Wednesday 9 May 6:30 - 9:00 pm

Exhibition dates 1 May - 7 June 2012

In association with Buku - Larrnggay Mulka Arts
Yirrkala NE Arnhem Land

ANNANDALE GALLERIES

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Gallery Hours Tuesday - Saturday 11:00 - 5:00 pm
Directors Anne & Bill Gregory **acga**



Milngurr 2011 (detail opposite)
natural earth pigments on bark
133 x 60 cm BLA 648 4063H





Bilthu ga Baypinga 2011
bronze
ca. 50 x 50 cm BLA 697 4154K

INTRODUCTION

Bill Gregory

The thing that I most enjoy as an art dealer is to be surprised. Relationships with artists may go on for years and are sometimes likened to a marriage with all that entails. Some terrific successes often balanced by unexpected failures. One is never sure how new work might be received by the critics, collectors and public. Exhibitions are planned a long way in advance and the economic climate as well as the artworld zeitgeist is difficult to fathom. However, I can always be sure that something stimulating will come if my first reaction to a visit to a studio or an arts centre is one of surprise.

Gunybi Ganambarr is an artist whose new work has always left me quite breathless. Indeed, when works that I have not previously seen on my visits to Yirrkala are delivered to Annandale, I always feel a little like a kid at Christmas. What will this next package hold? This time there were chicken wire sculptures that float in space, sculpture made from PVC tubing, bark designs laid down on rubber or roofing insulation, Styrofoam fish and more. While I was aware of some of these developments from past visits to Yirrkala, nothing could really prepare me for what arrived.

Gunybi is not an artist who stands still or becomes formulaic. He is always thinking outside the square. He is confident in himself and in his art and is fearless in realising new materials and hitherto almost unknown forms of expression. He is a respected Aboriginal lawman and knows how to respect the timeless dreamtime stories on which his work is based but as far as materials and expression goes – he has thrown out the rulebook. Designs may remind me more of Bridget Riley than Yolgnu Aboriginal art. In fact, one of my aims when I started showing bark paintings in 1995 was to help facilitate the day that this extraordinary contemporary art from Arnhemland could be presented in a similar manner as

Western art, with no particular 'Aboriginal' explanation. Let the work speak for itself.

This is in no way to lessen the unique effect that Indigenous art and artists have to offer the mainstream – quite the opposite. It is just to say that I am delighted when I can hang a work by Gunybi Ganambarr next to a work by William Kentridge and above a globe sculpture by Yves Klein and they all compliment one another. Quality and freshness are the keys.

Gunybi is a robust man with a healthy air about him. He is intensely curious about anything and everything – asking me questions while visiting in Yirrkala last year about the upcoming show in Sydney and chattering about his shift to unusual materials that are the hallmark of his current work. Artists may be perhaps best judged by their influence on other artists and many of his innovations, from incising the bark supports to his original palette, have already been embraced with gusto by his peers and he is still under forty years of age. He is, unusually, already in his prime as an artist with so much more to come. In our first exhibition in 2006 – Young Guns – he was already asserting an individuality and talent that set him aside from others as someone to watch. By 2009 when we had our sell-out show with full catalogue, he had truly arrived as a highly talented and influential artist. The National Gallery acquired five works from that exhibition – an extraordinary vote of confidence. Last year he won the richest art prize for Indigenous art in the country (see CV – awards).

The new work promises to be the most stimulating show to date and we feel very lucky to have been involved in the meteoric rise of this extraordinarily creative artist and human being. We would like to recognize the enthusiasm and curiosity of Will Stubbs and Kade McDonald at Buku Larrngay Arts and of course Gunybi Ganambarr for this extraordinary exhibition and their visit to Sydney.

Bill Gregory Director Annandale Galleries Sydney
March 2012

GUNYBI GANAMBARR

John McDonald

When the Aboriginal art movement began to gather worldwide momentum in the 1980s it was greeted with enthusiasm in some quarters, but distrust and bewilderment in others. While many recognised the work as a new and original contribution to the international art scene, there were sceptics who saw only a glorified folk art, or a marketing phenomenon orchestrated by white entrepreneurs.

It has taken a long time for Aboriginal art to shake off these misapprehensions, which have never been completely eradicated. In Australia, at least, indigenous art is now integrated into many general museum displays of Australian art, including Sydney's newly renovated Museum of Contemporary Art.

Of the many and varied forms of Aboriginal art, bark painting has been possibly the most misunderstood. Some viewers have wanted to see "authentic" or even "ancient" barks, made before European occupation. Others have taken the opposite approach, feeling that work in this medium is too fragile or ephemeral to collect. But until the modern era, bark paintings were never made to last. Produced for ceremonial purposes or for the sheer pleasure of decoration, these small pieces were soon discarded by a nomadic people who did not value material possessions that had outlasted their utility or spiritual significance.

Bark painting today is almost unrecognisable from what it was like thirty years ago. The invention of lightweight aluminium supports, the improved methods of fixing ochres to boards, the greater size and stability of the sheets of bark involved – all these factors have transformed the medium into a dynamic form of contemporary art. The distinguishing characteristic that sets this work apart is that it is a present-day activity with roots in cultural traditions

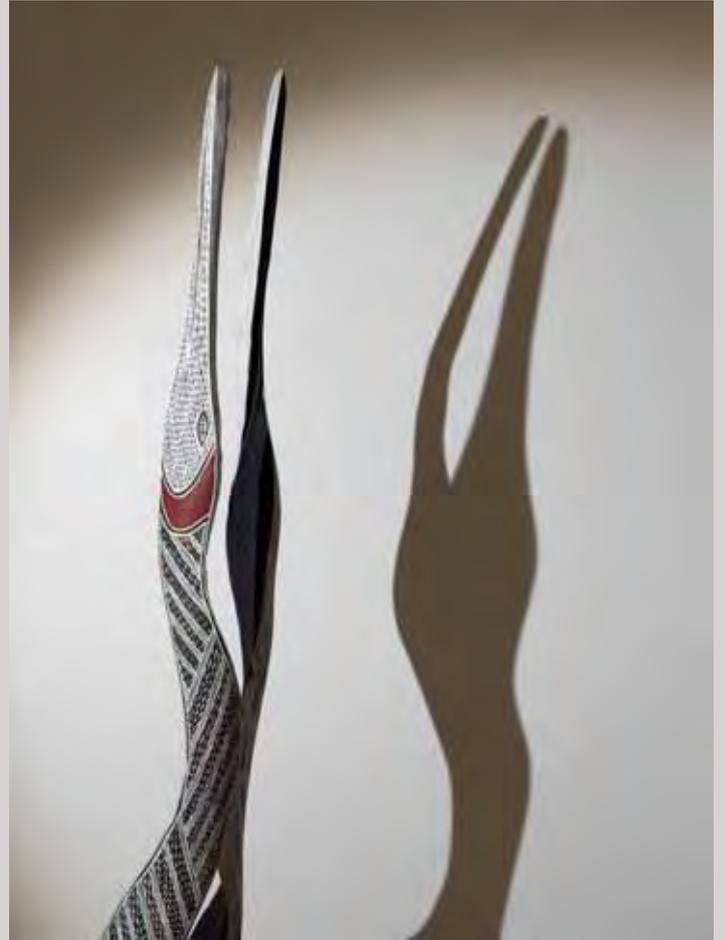
that stretch back tens of thousands of years. Oil painting by comparison, is a mere infant.

The transformation of bark painting over the past forty years, has been driven by a series of innovators. One could reel off a long list, starting with figures such as Yirawala (1897-1976) and including such latter-day masters as John Mawurndjul and his younger contemporary Samuel Namunjaja. Yet there is no doubt that the most radical innovator ever to work in the medium is Gunybi Ganambarr, a 39-year-old Yolngu artist who has taken Australian art by storm.

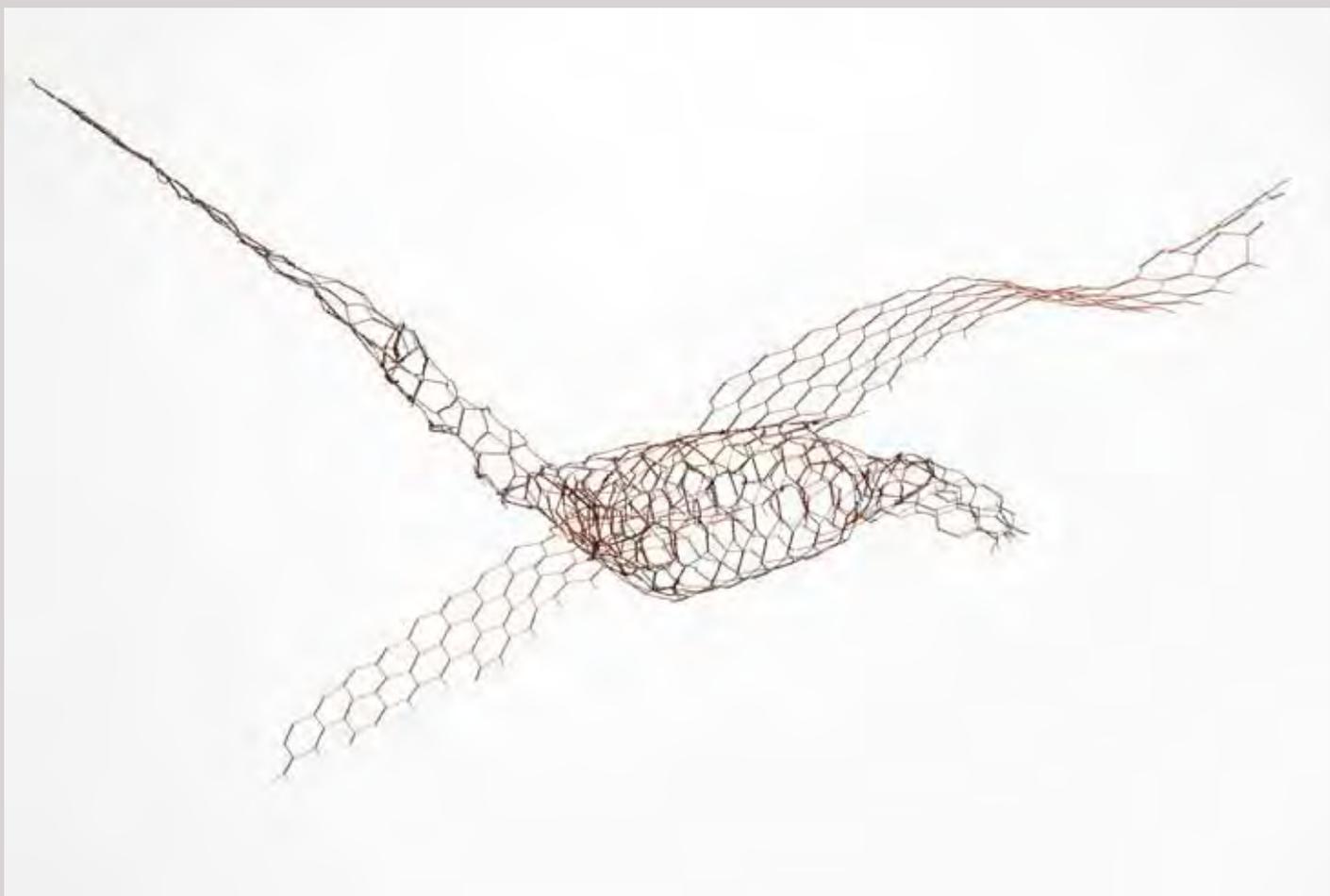
When one hears about an artist 'revolutionising' a medium, it is usually hype and bluster. It was considered revolutionary when Carl Andre stopped stacking pieces of wood vertically, and laid them flat on the floor. It was revolutionary when Andy Warhol exhibited a collection of phoney Brillo boxes. These art historical milestones seem ridiculously trivial alongside the quantity of new ideas found in Gunybi's 2009 show at Annandale Galleries.

Never before had an artist incised a design on to a sheet of bark, or shaped the bark itself. Never had an artist used bark shavings to create a paste that was glued on to the sheet to create texture and a shallow relief effect. No previous artist had used the holes and deformations in a pole as part of the design, or carved a shape from the top of a pole rather than trimming it off neatly. Gunybi's ability to re-invent his chosen medium seemed miraculous. No artist, not even Picasso, had ever managed to come up with so many revolutionary gestures in the course of a single exhibition.

If the 2009 show was mind-boggling, it is astonishing to find that three years later, Gunybi is back with an even more radical set of new departures. This time he has experimented with a range of unusual materials. His designs are not only to be found on pieces of shaped, incised bark or wooden poles, but on thin sheets of metal; slabs of dense, black, industrial-grade rubber



Brolga 2012 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on wood
172 x 15 cm BLA 696 4128M



Dhangultji 2010
wire

40 x 143 cm BLA 706 3722E

used for conveyor belts in the nearby Bauxite mine; and on shiny pieces of ceiling insulation. Some of the poles in this exhibition are not made from tree trunks, but from PVC piping, artfully disguised with shaved and powdered wood. He has made lightweight, three-dimensional sculptures from chicken wire; and a large screen featuring two dancing brolgas, fashioned from a galvanised iron water tank.

Even stylistically, Gunybi is a risk-taker, combining figurative imagery with traditional patterning on the same piece of bark in *Two Views*. One imagines a story, or stories, in which one part is for everybody, the other for no-one but the initiated.

After sampling such a fund of invention, it is almost surprising to realise that Gunybi's work still conforms to every sacred, traditional stricture. Nothing he has made has caused unease among his peers in the community. He maintains the greatest respect for the law and for the stories passed down from one generation to the next. His Eureka moment came when he realized there was no reason why traditional imagery had to be confined to traditional materials. Anybody might have been the first to paint on ceiling insulation, or make a sculpture from a PVC pipe, but it was Gunybi who had the inspiration and initiative.

If Gunybi were merely an ideas man, he would cut an impressive figure, but he has all the skills, and a capacity for hard work that seems almost unbelievable. There is a remarkable density and power to many of these new works, even those that employ a simple, repetitive symbolic language, such as *Bukyu*, or the two works titled *Milngir*. One can sense the commitment in these works: the unflinching perfectionism of a master craftsman combined with a deep, spiritual devotion. While some of Gunybi's works appear to have been made as playful exercises, these large barks have a vortex-like force. They may resemble pieces of Op Art, but they have more in common with the great altarpieces.

When one turns to other barks such as *Mungurru*, the patterns flow and overlap with a natural rhythm, each line bending and gently rippling as it follows the undulations of the surface. This apparent spontaneity is offset by the precise layering and intersection of motifs, testifying to a high level of control and concentration. In the unique work, *Tsunami Over Yindiwirryun*, the patterning is even more complex and evocative, conjuring up visions of surging waves and the tail of a whale as it pushes back under the water.

Although he is first and foremost, a Yolngu man, ready to admit his debt to an important older painter such as Djambawa Marawili (b.1953), it would be laughable to classify Gunybi as simply an Aboriginal artist. He is one of those rare figures whose work speaks to all times and all places. It is hard to think of another artist, of any ethnicity or nationality, that has made so many leaps in such a short space of time. Gunybi is modest and unassuming in demeanour, but his work invites hyperbole because the magnitude of his achievements is indisputable. He is an artist who plays by the rules of his clan and community, but transgresses every stylistic boundary set by habit or convention. Working within an age-old set of beliefs, he has treated the secular elements of his art as field of unlimited possibility.

John McDonald
Art critic for the Sydney Morning Herald
March 2012

www.johnmcdonald.com.au





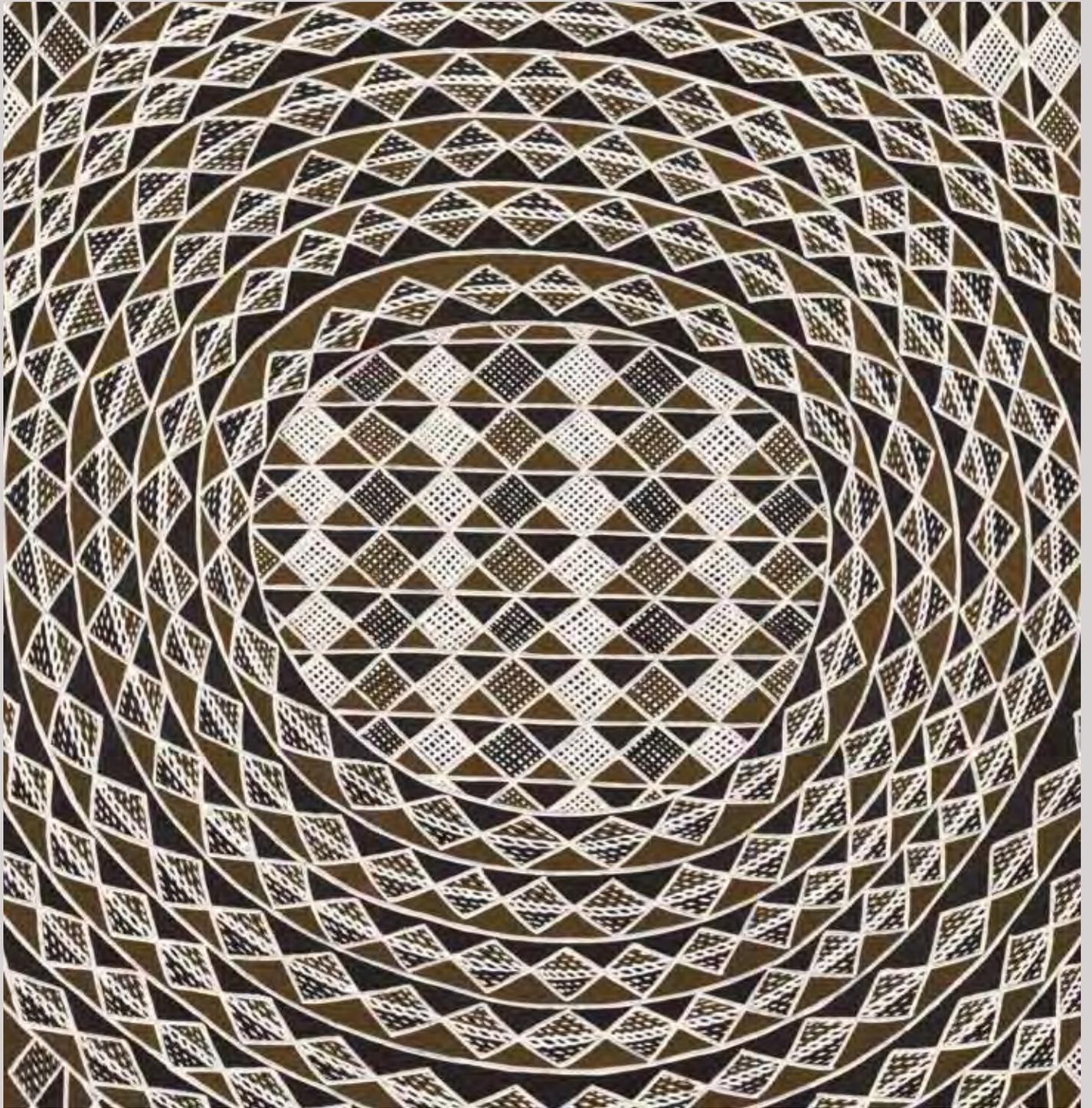
Lorr 2010 (detail left)
natural earth pigments incised aircell insulation
120 x 111 cm BLA 675 3945E



Darra 2011
incised aircell insulation & natural earth pigments
102 x 88 cm BLA 704 4045R

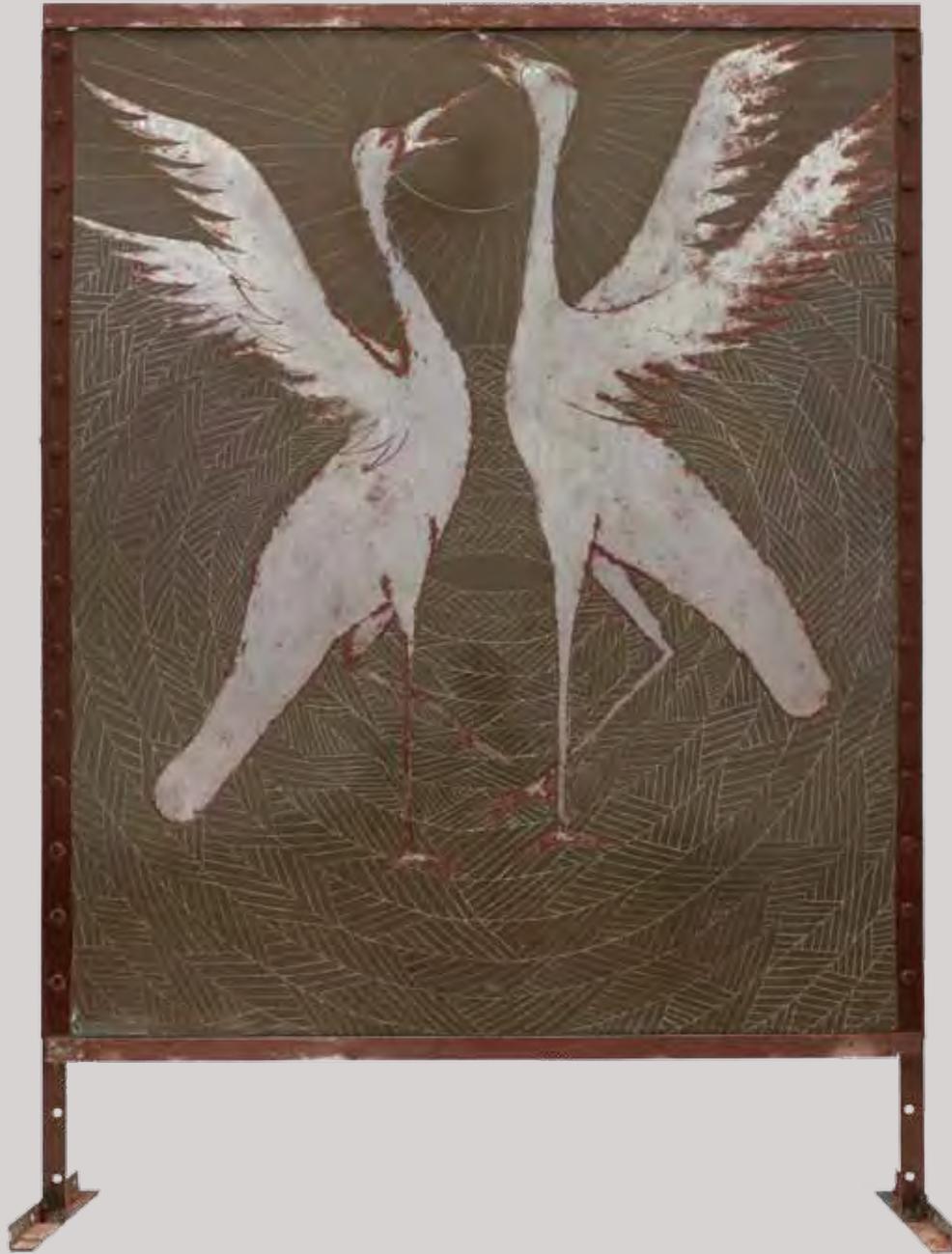


Warukay 2010
natural earth pigments on masonite
181 x 121.5 cm BLA 707 4142W

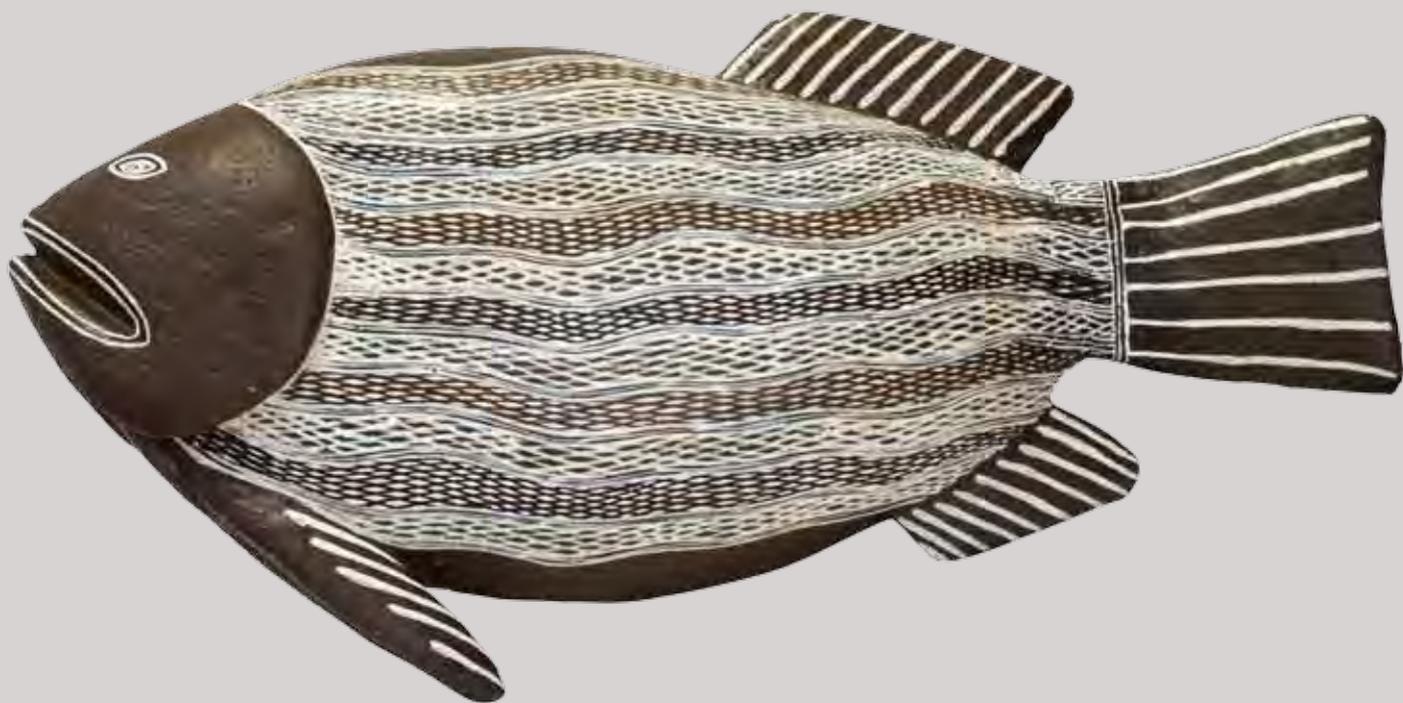




Buyku 2011 (detail left)
natural earth pigments on
incised conveyor belt rubber
123 x 54 cm BLA 692 4110U



Gudurrkgu (Tin Brolga) 2010
oil paints on galvanised water tank sheet metal
166 x 118.5 cm BLA 690 3672U



Yambirru 2012
natural earth pigments on fishing float foam
33 x 66 cm BLA 695 4128G



Wurran 2010
wire
95 x 81 cm BLA 702 3904F





SHOCK AND AWE

Will Stubbs

This will hopefully not be an oblique and dense art essay full of analysis and jargon. I hope to shed an informal light on Gunybi and where he comes from. As a remote Indigenous art co-ordinator I feel something like the shock absorber between the two cultures. To respect the strengths of each and to try and prevent or soften direct clashes between their conflicting entrenched values.

This can put me in a false position sometimes and it makes me cringe to think of how many inaccurate explanations or unwanted advice I have inflicted over the years. But even after seventeen years in the job I am still passionate about the importance of a person like Gunybi to Australia. Not that there is anyone else like Gunybi. He is a one off and viewed that way at home as well.

As melodramatic as it sounds, when I try to explain Gunybi to other people who don't know him I often start with a hypothetical. I say that if a foreign power invaded Australia (as almost happened in 1942 when the Yolngu formed the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit) I would immediately go and find Gunybi. Because I know that he would devise an effective strategy to defend his land. And I know that he would be fearless in the face of any odds. And I imagine that he would attract a growing group of warriors to him and I would trust his judgment about how to survive and how to resist. But mainly because if we were to be annihilated and overcome by a superior force I know that we would at least have laughter and fun along the way.

Because those are the main characteristics I associate with him- courage, confidence and humour. He is a leader and I would follow him if the chips were down.

I told him this once and he laughed. Point proven!

It has been speculated that Gunybi had somehow compromised the austere sanctity of Yolngu art history and was now making 'art for art's sake'. It has been asked

whether this was due to the influence of the co-ordinators. That was my turn to laugh. Because I knew the history and had lived through it. It was in fact the opposite! It was Gunybi who was the sole engine of the shifting styles and media that he fearlessly and constantly brought forth. The reception from the art centre was contrastingly, often timid and conservative.

I would be worried that these forms might break some convention. He would be unconcerned. He knew that the breach was in my head alone.

I started to suspect that he was getting some personal enjoyment out of my discomfort when he would ring me and say "I am working on a brolga - it's made out of the old tank stand. I've taught myself to weld and put some legs on it." He would laugh and say "Don't worry. Wait until you see it. I'll be in next Wednesday." I began to realize there was no purpose to these phone calls but to reveal me as a venal coward which clearly tickled him.

We live under a system of respect for elders and extreme caution around sacred law and design. The strict sanctity of the intellectual property in identity is the basis of Yolngu art. There are rules.

One of these rules was formalized at an artists committee meeting in 1996 when we commissioned the Yirrkala Print Space. As we had now 'seized the means of production' and were going to be making our own limited edition fine art prints on our own press with Indigenous printmakers we had to address the issue of industrial art production. At that meeting the elders decreed that "if you paint the land you must use the land". This meant that repeated images created in industrial pigments by a machine regarded as a 'copycat' could not use "miny'tji" – sacred clan design.

Over the subsequent twelve years prints made at Buku have never reproduced a bark painting in full colour.

But the corollary should mean that sacred designs made with the use of foreign materials such as rubber, PVC pipe or wire break this edict. And yet we have never fielded any complaint on this score. Has Gunybi has remained within the convention because he uses those materials he finds on the land? Are things discarded by others and left lying on the earth akin to a natural resource to be gathered? It makes sense. They are in effect part of the land. He is thus

“using the land to paint the land”. We know that he has the support of the leadership in this view and it has been formally recognized by the Committee.

Although once no doubt available at Mitre 10, none of the raw materials he gathers have been inside such a store for quite a while. I remember one irate call I got from a family member Gunybi had stayed with at Birritjimi. After making a brolga from an abandoned piece of ancient chicken wire he felt it looked lonely. And so the call came “He’s gone and taken the rest of my *#&+^@ fence!”

One of the conveyor belt pieces was actually a re-recycled piece as it had spent fifteen years under the water tank at the remote homeland of Djarrakpi until the funeral of a respected Manggalili man had drawn the community there in late 2011. And this also gives a hint at how the ceremonial and artistic fluidly overlaps in the lives of so many Yolngu artists.*

One of the most careful three dimensional pieces that I saw Gunybi make was the funeral shelter he built with his bare hands to house the body of Ralwurrandji’s sister after comforting her and singing to her for three months in early 2011. And once the lawmen had dispatched her soul on its journey to its origin spring he set fire to it.

And another theme of Gunybi’s influence emerges here too. Despite suffering from her own illness the remarkable rejuvenation that Ralwurrandji’s art showed after this extended contact with Gunybi and his liberating approach is exemplified by her use of sand from her sister’s grave in the first of her radical multi media incised works that are exhibited in her companion show.

Like Djambawa before him Gunybi is not scared or resentful of imitation but positively encouraging of a wide circle of artists who draw inspiration from his lead. This characteristic emphasizes his art-historical importance. His entire generation is aware of what he does and even those who do not experiment with materials or styles like he does are almost consciously avoiding doing so!

In a previous essay for the 2009 show I listed nine innovations that he had “either devised or championed: Sculpting in ironwood; Painting barks on both sides; ‘Grinderism’ - elaborately shaping larrakitj (memorial poles); inseting carved Kapok figures to hollowed eucalypt

poles; incising the surface of barks; chiseling patterns into larrakitj; elaborately shaping barks; laminating bark onto bark to create three dimensions; attaching barks to timber frames.” This statement was out of date within weeks as he launched into found media and continued to innovate with natural materials as well.

It is now almost pointless to try and count the variations. However it would be a mistake to think of his innovation as restricted to his manipulation of media or to his experimentation with new materials. It is the conception, composition and execution of his works that is truly novel. And yet it is also facile to celebrate just the novelty of his work. At root this is a person with a strong desire to communicate a set of ideas which burn within him and the capacity to do so. He acknowledges no boundaries in that exercise.

He inspires and encourages artists of all ages including his elders to embark anew on the task of speaking the identity of the land. He is sharing this passion. We are now receiving objects in all sorts of media with all sorts of ‘Gunybiesque’ techniques from artists with a wide range of skill and all ages.

And so his trajectory in the Western view of art is also stunning. His prizes and fellowships mark him as a success but he pays little regard to this status and craves only the satisfaction of his appetite to make bigger and more muscular works. His interest is to enter what he calls stage two. A chance to render his visions on a massive scale as public art. Something tells me that he may manage this in the near future.

In the meantime that’s me on the side, awestruck and slightly nervous. An absorber of shock. So please enjoy this man’s work because it is truly the product of a daring and joyous mind. I know I do.

*This conveyor belt which services the mining opposed in the Gove Land Rights case was at one time the longest in the Southern Hemisphere.

Will Stubbs
Art Co-ordinator Buku-Larrngay Mulka
Yirrkala NE Arnhem Land
March 2012



Burrutötji 2011 (detail above)
natural earth pigments on bark
237 x 71 cm BLA 673 3922U



NGARRAKU MULKURR - FROM MY MIND

Guynbi Ganambarr

People ask me why do I make work that is different. I usually say "Ngarraku mulkurr"- it's from my mind. These are ideas which come to me when I work at sharing my culture and law.

It starts from our foundation. I went into Ngarra (restricted secret ceremonies) and that's when I started to make art. Our djalkiri (foundation) is my beginning. Once I saw the foundation of Yirritja and Dhuwa law and saw what was true and what was false I began to learn more and more and now I have become an artist. I have changed to become an artist. I worked on the same level -same like the flat area- on the flat bark. On the bark. And I started and I worked and I worked...and then halfway through my thoughts changed. That flat turned into a different work. It changed into a different style and I got many ideas. It began to change into half and half. Flat and carved. And I worked and I worked and it kept changing.

But my other original influence was in building. I worked as a contractor in housing in the homelands. I worked there for twelve years. This is where I gained these skills on the building side. I worked with Michael Bird the contractor around the homelands. First at Bawaka, then Buymarr, Garrthalala, Bukudal, Djarrakpi, Barraratjpi, Wandawuy then Gurrumurru, Rurrangala, Yilpara, Dhuruputjpi and Gangan. And the last was Gutjangan Bremer Island and that's where I got pneumonia and they gave me a week off with fulltime pay. And then I went back to home. I was born at Yirrkala but grew up at Gangan. My circumcision was at Gangan. After the building I spent a few months at Yangunbi. But it was too close to alcohol. And I spent too much time talking to them about discipline but my family wouldn't listen. But then Gawirrin rang me up through the radio and he called me back and they gave me my wife and I have stayed there ever since.

For twelve years I worked building houses and then

the old people noticed me and invited me to Ngarra. And from there I worked in Ngarra. I worked on my foundation for the old people. I hadn't worked that way for very long before I changed into an artist. That was where I learnt. I was an artist. I fitted in to being an artist and began to work at it. And then I changed again. I started to find my own ideas. Like carving into things like barks and poles. Different, different styles. Sand. So many different styles that I have found. Ideas...more and more and more. I don't know where my instinct to innovate comes from? Because I am trying to balance the two worlds. Balancing the Yolngu knowledge with the Ngapaki technology. And now I feel that I have jumped up to my goal. To stage two. And that's all I can say.

And some of my community say "Way! Robert you are too smart!" and some do not recognize me at all. But half of the people do recognize me and my skills and my style. So there is support there and then there are others who criticize me and question whether I am a true Yolngu. Because after a while I started using Ngapaki materials which I found. This is after we came back from Sydney. I started using the different materials that I found at Gangan. To balance the Yolngu world and the Ngapaki world systems. To balance those systems. What is in the land with what is on the land. Because all those things come from the land don't they? Iron, board, fibreglass, plastic, rubber. They come from minerals don't they? Which comes from the land.

I was showing these old people and they were supporting me. Especially Djambawa, Wuyal, old man Gawirrin, and Yumutjin. And when we tell those stories and that story and so many stories. Because so many times we Yolngu cut wood to tell these stories and it's not growing well. And I found these materials which hold that pattern forever. So I can give the trees a rest.

And our Ngarra, Djalkiri, Rangga, law and sacred objects and foundation rest here. And so this is part of my task to share this law with outsiders.

Transcribed and translated statement from Gangan by phone 21.3.12



Untitled 2010
natural earth pigments on bark
113 x 88 cm BLA 670 3945F



Balawurru 2011
natural earth pigments on bark
103 x 93 cm BLA 703 4033V



Warrukay 2010
natural earth pigments on bark
97 x 64 cm BLA 657 3706T



Garkman (Green Frog) 2010
natural earth pigments on bark
78 x 46 cm BLA 661 3927X



Two Views 2011 (detail right)
crayon and natural earth pigments on bark
116 x 57 cm BLA 665 3989O

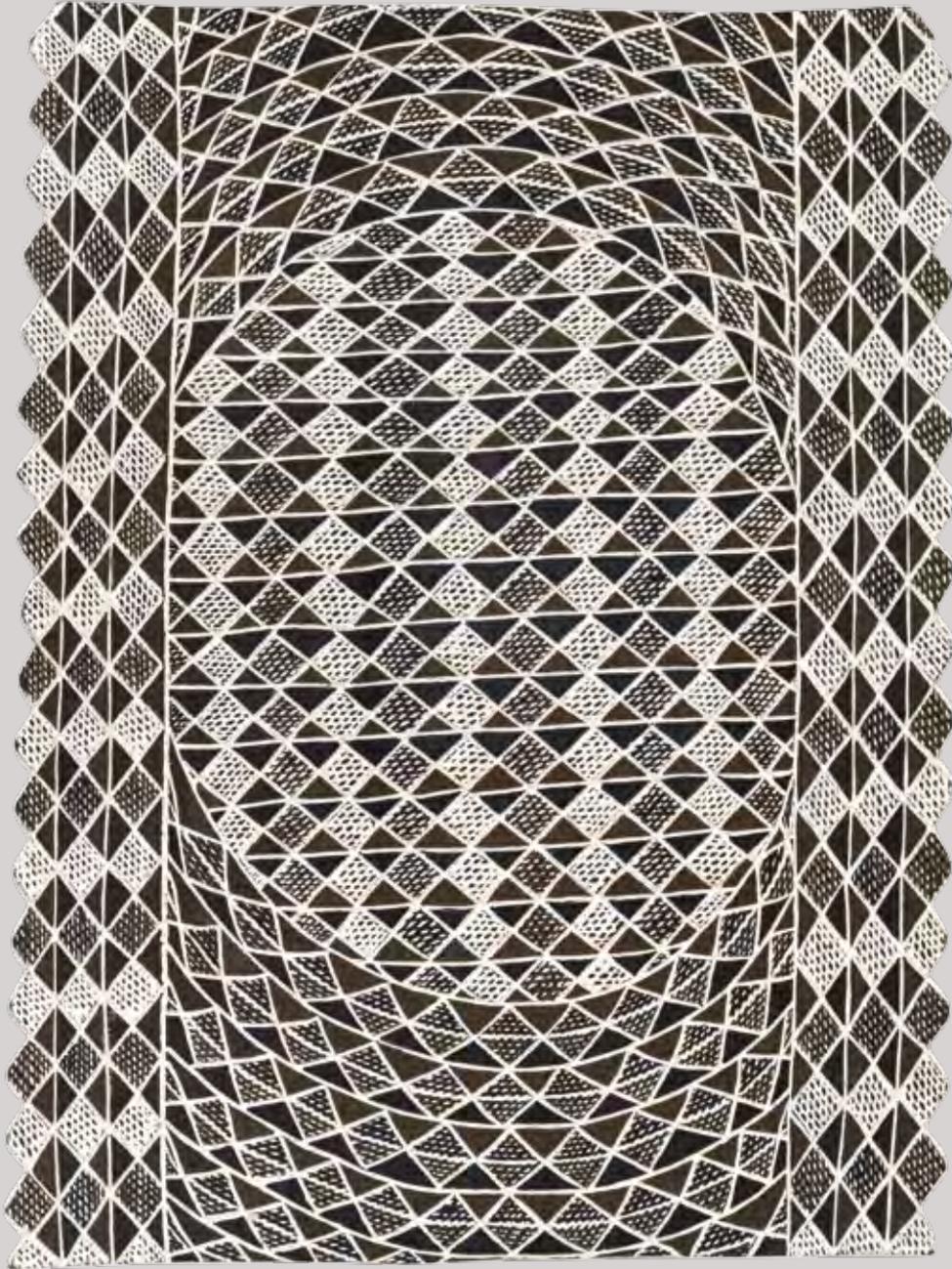




Buyku 2011
natural earth pigments on bark
136 x 52 cm BLA 721 3942U



Mungurru 2011
natural earth pigments on incised bark
162 x 84 cm BLA 647 4002]



Munbi 2011
natural earth pigments on bark
66 x 50 cm BLA 669 4012P



Baraltja 2011
natural earth pigments and sand on bark
173 x 74 cm BLA 646 3917A



Milngur 2011
natural earth pigments on bark
107 x 92 cm BLA 691 4093D



Milngurr 2011
natural earth pigments on bark with bark felt
143 x 69 cm BLA 644 4047R



Baypinga 2010

natural earth pigments on laminate

TOP 103 x 29 cm BLA 686 3954X BOTTOM 111 x 33 cm BLA 687 3954W





Warrukay 2010 (detail right)
earth pigments on pvc pipe
147 x 11.5 cm BLA 699 3902S



Warrukay ga Dhangultji 2010
earth pigments on pvc pipe
267 x 29 cm BLA 698 3902Q



Gudurrku (Brolga) 2011
natural earth pigments on incised pole
197 x 21 cm BLA 640 3933V



Ganytjurr 2009 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on wood
159 x 14 cm BLA 689 3652Y



Gurrku (detail)
natural earth pigments on wood
119 x 14 cm BLA 708 4128j



Gudurku 2009
natural earth pigments on wood
188 x 14 cm BLA 688 3680M



Dhangultji 2010
incised pvc pipe
117 x 11 cm BLA 655 3718W



Dhangulji 2010
natural earth pigments on wood
166 x 15 cm BLA 701 3701J



Dhangulji 2010
incised pvc pipe
245 x 14 cm BLA 656 3718V



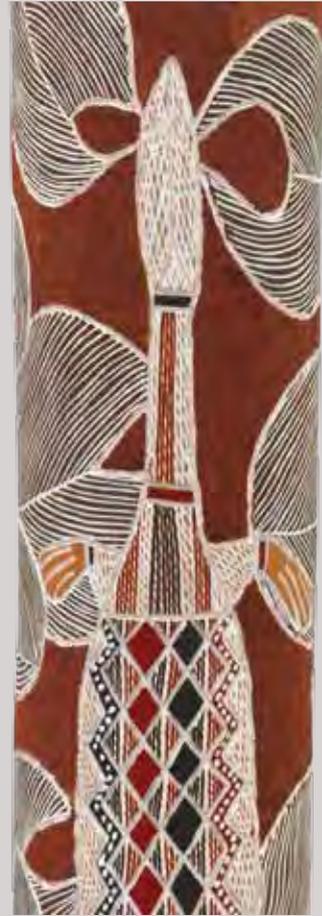
Wurran ga Baypinga 2011 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on wood
160 x 22.5 cm BLA 693 4123W



Gunyuru 2011 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on larrikitj
200 x 20.5 cm BLA 678 4002M



Baypinga 2012 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on larrikitj
145 x 14 cm BLA 694 4140J



Minhala and Baypinga 2010 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on larrikitj
150 x 19 cm BLA 663 3662V



Warrukay Larrakitj 2010 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on larrikitj
145 x 11.5 cm BLA 659 3930E



Warrukay 2009 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on larrikitj with laminated bark
122 x 18 cm BLA 653 3650U



Baypinga ga Minhala 2010
natural earth pigments on carving
163 cm BLA 658 3913E



Dhakawa ga Wurrán 2010
earth pigments on pvc pipe
147 x 11.5 cm BLA 700 3902R



Baypinga 2012 (detail right)
natural earth pigments on wood
130 x 17.5 cm BLA 680 3945Y



Burrut'ji 2010
natural earth pigments on bark
40 x 127 cm BLA 709 3987B



Tsunami over Yindiwirryun 2010
natural earth pigments on bark
95 x 44 cm BLA 662 3947X



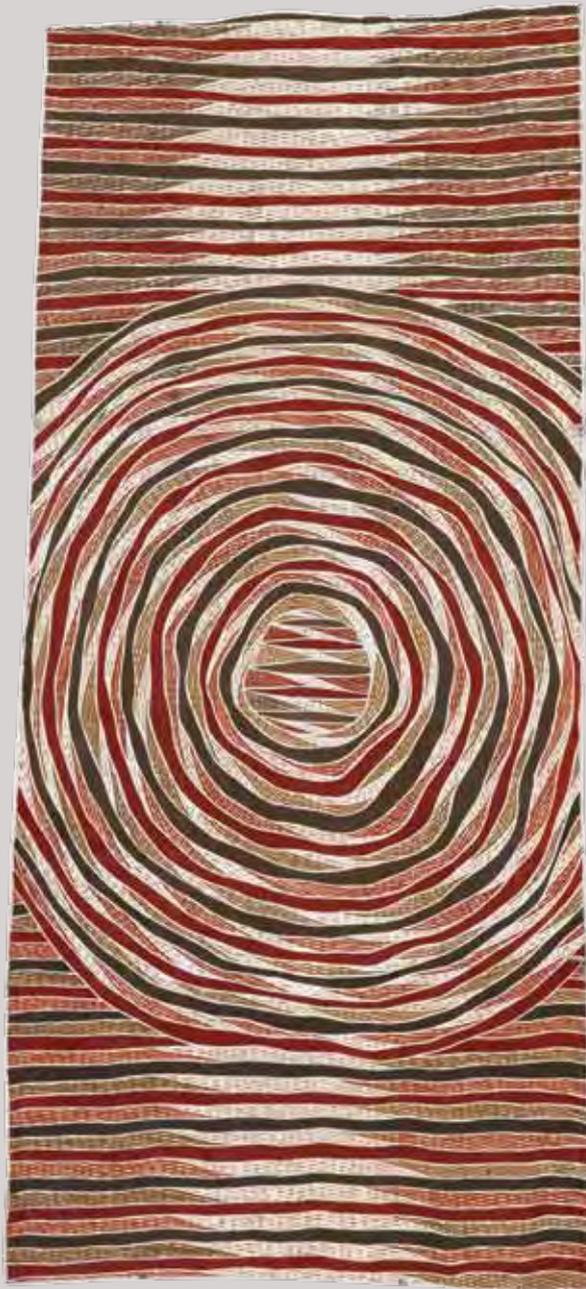
Balawurru 2011
natural earth pigments on bark
93 x 47 cm BLA 645 4048G



Milngurr 2011
natural earth pigments on bark
78 x 48 cm BLA 672 4012Q



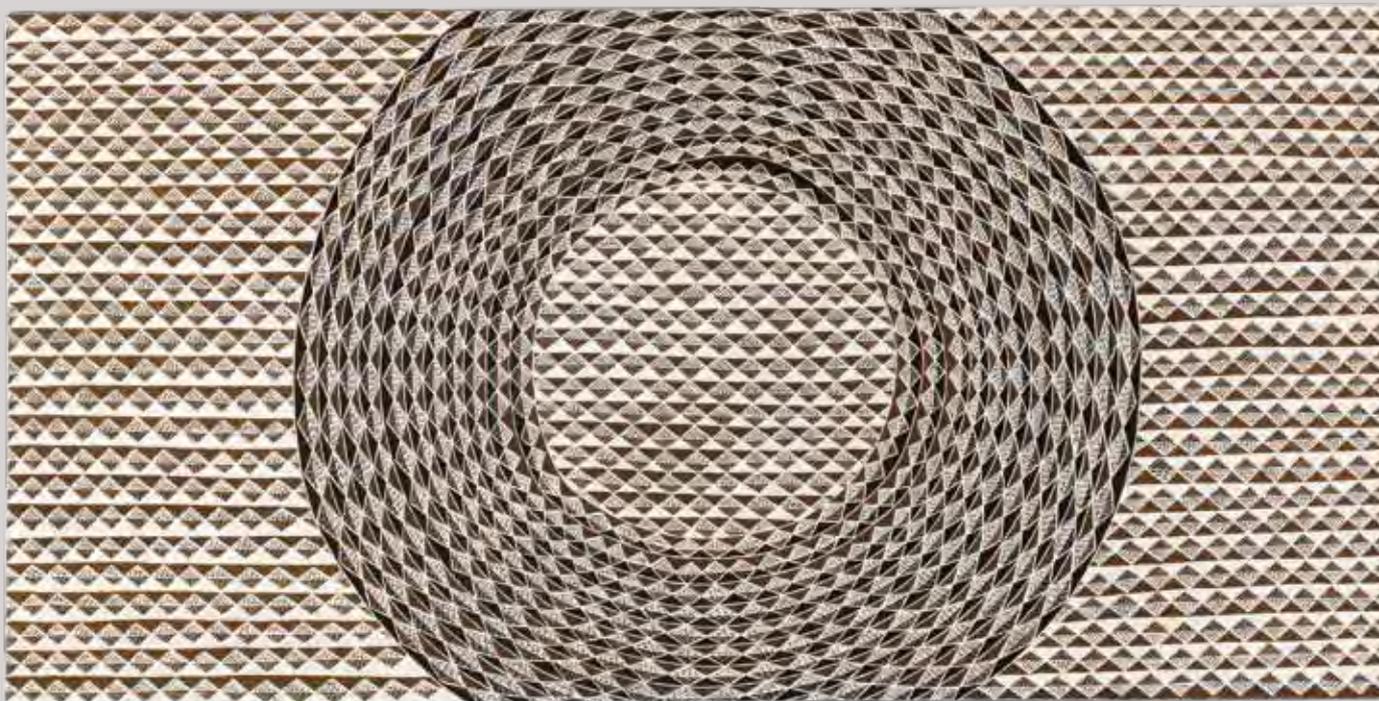
Garkman 2011
natural earth pigments on bark
70 x 29 cm BLA 671 4016I



Baraltja 2011
natural earth pigments on bark
133 x 60 cm BLA 685 3917B



Milngurr 2011
incised conveyor belt rubber
97 x 76 cm BLA 705 4035A



Buyku 2011
natural earth pigments on incised laminate board
91 x 181 cm BLA 684 4055T

GUNYBI GANAMBARR

Born	15.04.1973
Moiety	Dhuwa
Homeland	Yangunbi
Clan	Ngaymil
Other Names	Robert

GUNYBI GANAMBARR has mainly lived and worked as an artist at Gängan, sometimes based at Dhuruputjpi or Yilpara. A ceremonial yidaki player who is sought after by elders. Accompanied the Yolngu delegations to the opening of the National Museum in Canberra 2001 and the larrakitj installation at the Sydney Opera House 2002, and played at the opening of Djambawa Marawili's exhibition in the 2006 Sydney Biennale.

He spent twelve years working as a builder for the Laynhapuy Homelands Association making houses in overten homeland centres. He eventually moved back to his mother's homeland at Gangan. Under the tutelage of artists like Gawirrin Gumana and Yumutjin Wunungmurra from his mother's Dhalwangu clan whilst living on their country he has now assumed ceremonial authority.

Gunybi Ganambarr first came to the notice of the Buku-Larrnggay staff as an artist with a carved and painted Ironwood sculpture of a Wurrän or cormorant (a totemic species of his mother clan) in 2002. The wood's natural shape suggested itself to him and he commenced to reveal the bird within. He then added pigment to novel and still entirely consistent with Yolngu madayin (law). His first recognition in a wider sphere was when he was invited by Brenda Croft of the National Gallery of Australia to enter the National Sculpture Prize in 2005. He submitted one of his first sculpted larrakitj. In the year of 2008 he was chosen as an exhibiting finalist in the Xstrata Coal Emerging Indigenous Artist Award at the Gallery of Modern Art at Queensland Art Gallery. He went on to win that Award.

Gunybi has had the instinct to introduce radical new forms without offending community tolerance. He has introduced or developed novel forms such as double sided barks, heavily sculpted poles, incised barks, ironwood sculpture, inserting sculptures into poles.

Gunybi is an energetic participant in ceremonial life who is always cheerful with a robust sense of humour. He is a natural leader amongst his peers. His vigorous zest for life sees him throw himself into whatever activity he is engaged in. He is married to Lamangirra Marawili a daughter of Djambawa Marawili.

After his sold out show at Annandale Galleries in Sydney in late 2009 where he received great acclaim and press coverage he returned home with a renewed vigour. He immediately moved into using found materials on his own initiative and with the blessing of his mentors.

In 2011 Gunybi won the West Australian Indigenous Art Award. At this time The Australian wrote; *"When Ganambarr was a young man, senior Yolngu artists recognized his ability and ensured he had the skills and knowledge to create the extraordinary bark paintings on show. These wonderfully complex and technically brilliant barks sit alongside new works that exploit the potential of materials found around mining sites. Using the layered webs of lines fundamental to traditional Yolngu painting and the incising of lines that characterizes Yolngu carving, he has reclaimed the insulation panels and rubber belts discarded by miners and transformed them into panels that combine traditional image-making with an enhanced sense of visual depth and tangible space. Ganambarr's work epitomizes the innovative and exploratory nature of contemporary Aboriginal arts practice and not surprisingly the judges awarded him the \$50,000 main prize."*

EXHIBITIONS

- 2004 *Circle Line Column*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney
entrant to National Sculpture Competition 2004-5
- 2005 Telstra NATSIAA MAGNT
National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition NGA 2005
National Sculpture Prize Macquarie Bank Travelling Exhibition first venue QCA Brisbane
- 2006 *Young Guns*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney
- 2007 Galuku Gallery, Festival of Darwin, NT
- 2007 Bukulu\thunmi - Coming Together, One Place, Raft Artspace, Darwin, NT
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards, Museum and Art Gallery of the NT, Darwin NT
- 2008 *Important Aboriginal Art*, Caruana Reid Fine Art, Sydney, NSW
- 2008 *Young Guns Two*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney.
- 2008 Bitpit Yirrkala Sculpture, RAFT Artspace Darwin.
Xstrata Emerging Indigenous Artist Award (by invitation), QAG (winner)
- 2009 Larrakitj - Kerry Stokes Collection, Art Gallery Western Australia
- 2009 Togart Contemporary Art Award (NT) 2009, Parliament House, Darwin, NT
- 2009 *Gunybi Ganambarr*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney, NSW
- 2010 *17th Biennale of Sydney*, Larrakitj - the Kerry Stokes Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, NSW
- 2010 *27th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards*, Art Gallery NT Darwin
- 2011 *28th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards*
- 2011 Winner of the *West Australian Indigenous Art Award AGWA* Perth
- 2011 TOGART NT Contemporary Art Award, Darwin
- 2011 KIAF – Korean International Art Fair, solo show w/Annandale Galleries, Seoul Korea
- 2012 *National Indigenous Art Triennale*, National Gallery of Australia
- 2012 *Gunybi Ganambarr* Annandale Galleries, Sydney

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Australia
South Australian Museum
Queensland Art Gallery
Levi Kaplan Collection, Seattle, WA, USA
Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth, WA
Levi Kaplan Collection, Seattle, WA, USA
Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth, WA
Numerous private collections in Australia and overseas

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Catalogue for the National Sculpture Award
<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23661313-16947,00.html>
Gunybi Ganambarr - catalogue Annandale Galleries exhibition October Australian Art Collector Magazine - Issue 51, 2009-
Agenda Setters - *Gunybi Ganambarr*; by John McDonald.
Catalogue: *17th Biennale of Sydney - The Beauty of Distance, Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age*
Larrakitj' The Kerry Stokes Collection published 2011

AWARDS

Finalist National Sculpture Award NGA 2005
Finalist and Winner of the *Xstrata Emerging Indigenous Artist Award* 2008 QAG
Finalist and Winner *West Australian Indigenous Art Award* 2011
Myer Foundation Creative Fellowship 2011-13



