

Gurrutu: The Art Of Mulkun Wirrpanda

25 January to 4 March

An exhibition of works on Larrakitj, bark, board & paper by the late Mulkun Wirrpanda.



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Nanka-Bakarra*, 2017, 67.5cm x 55cm, work on paper. Image courtesy of the artist & JGM Gallery.

LONDON, 25 January, 2023 - JGM Gallery presents *Gurrutu: The Art Of Mulkun Wirrpanda*, an exhibition of 36 works on Larrakitj, bark, board & paper by the late Mulkun Wirrpanda (1942-2021).

Wirrpanda's style and subject were distinct from her contemporaries in various ways. Rather than depicting her Country or Dreaming, Wirrpanda had instead focused on the botanical life of her surroundings in Northeastern Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. Though there is certainly a conceptual richness to the work, there is a utilitarian aspect to it also and it can be conceived, as Jennifer Guerrini Maraldi (Director of JGM Gallery) states, "... as a manual of sorts, intended to inform future generations on the ecological wisdom of the artist's ancestry."

Wirrpanda was concerned about the impact of the modern diet on the health of her Yolnu community. Following a collaboration with another artist and botanist, John Wolseley, a publication titled *Midawarr | Harvest* was published. In the foreword to this text, William Stubbs (Coordinator of the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre) quotes a conversation he once had with Wirrpanda, in which she says of her work that, "This is the food we ate when I was young. Back then everywhere you looked there were old people. Strong and healthy - they lived with us for a long time. Nowadays people die when they are only young. There are very few people as old as I am. Children are given rubbish to eat. It is killing us."

Aside from its dietary utility, the exhibition also conveys Wirrpanda's broader societal views, a vision of the world where every organism lives harmoniously together. The artist's hatching technique (known as Rarrk painting to First Nations Australians), amongst other aesthetic elements, imbues the work with a sense of interconnectedness. Every piece in *Gurrutu: The Art Of Mulkun Wirrpanda* is, in some sense, a profoundly insightful self - and societal - portrait, the macro expressed through the micro. This is particularly true of the depictions of termite ecosystems. These mounds are populated, not by the termites themselves, but by their symbiotic partners: northern meat ants, known to the Yolnu as "nadi".

The term "gurrutu" refers to Wirrpanda and the Yolnu's understanding of the cosmos, what William Stubbs describes as a "...matrix of meaning... which is invisible to us and too complex for casual comprehension." It is perhaps most easily comprehended, however, through the work of Wirrpanda who conveyed a familial bond with every natural element she depicted.

Gurrutu: The Art Of Mulkun Wirrpanda is the result of an ongoing relationship between JGM Gallery's Jennifer Guerrini Maraldi and the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre. Guerrini Maraldi says of the association that "We (JGM Gallery) have had a longstanding relationship with the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre. It is an honour to be entrusted with this exhibition by both the Art Centre and the artist's estate."

Opening Reception:

Wednesday, January 25, 6:00pm-8:00pm
24 Howie St, Battersea, London

For further information and press enquiries, please contact the gallery at info@jgmgallery.com or + 44 (0) 207 228 6027.