



Mulkun Wirrpanda

Born in 1942, died in 2021, Dhuruputjpi, Eastern Arnhem Land, Australia.

BIOGRAPHY

Mulkun Wirrpanda was a senior artist of the Dhudi-Djapu clan from Dhuruputjpi, in Eastern Arnhem Land, and was a classificatory daughter of the late Dhäkiyarr Wirrpanda and mother (by kinship) to senior artist and clan leader Djambawa Marawili.

Wirrpanda painted Dhudi-Djapu miny'ji (sacred designs) that depicted her land at Dhuruputjpi, including the areas of Yalata and Darrangi. As the eldest and most knowledgeable of her clan, she was acknowledged as a leader, one of the few Yolnu women to have this status. Wirrpanda was an early practitioner of works without figurative imagery within the miny'tji (sacred clan design) – until recently restricted to ceremonial use – using natural earth pigments (ochres). She painted on bark, Larrakitj (memorial poles), Yidaki (didgeridoo) and was a talented carver, weaver and print maker.

From 2012 she began to explore lesser-known edible plant species, the nutritious food that she grew up on, which she feared were being forgotten by younger generations. In stark contrast to today, in those days old people lived for a long time without illness. This exploration coincided with landscape painter John Wolseley's interest in returning to Yilpara, after the two artists had met during the Djalkiri project of 2010, when they spent an extended period exploring the botany of Blue Mud Bay. Wolseley spent a week at Yilpara with Wirrpanda in May 2012 and again at Yirrkala in June 2013, with further extended annual visits every year until her death in 2021. Their exhibition, *Mulkun Wirrpanda & John Wolseley: Two old artists looking for food*, presaged their collaboration, *Midawarr/Harvest*, a joint exhibition at The National Museum of Australia in October 2017 that toured in Darwin and Melbourne. Her subsequent paintings of Maypal (shellfish), which inhabit the coastal waters of the Northern Territory culminated in an exhibition at Salon Art Projects in Darwin.

In 2019, Wolseley and Wirrpanda explored extended ideas of Maypal, which included larvae that bore into wood. This led into her final, significant project on the theme of termite ecosystems, which forms the focus of her work in *The National 2021* at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Using natural pigments on bark, board and Larrakitj, she has depicted the mounds of munyukulunu, magnetic or compass termites (*Amitermes meridionalis*), a species of eusocial insect that is endemic to northern Australia. The common name derives from the fact that the wedge-shaped mound is aligned with its main axis running north and south.

Capturing empirical observational Yolnu knowledge, Wirrpanda painted these idiosyncratic termite mounds inhabited not by their makers, but by their symbiotic partners: nadi or northern meat ants (*Iridomyrmex sanguineus*), diverse bird species (principally pardalotes) and their eggs, as well as beehives. These termites, carnivorous ants, birds and bees are able to live in social balance. As Rachel Kent noted of the works: "They're incredibly beautiful but what they show is this model for adaptive social living and the sharing of space in a harmonious and collaborative way and I think it is a fantastic metaphor for ways we might think about our future."

Each one of Wirrpanda projects led on from the other naturally, creating a unique body of work that showcases the artist's passion for revitalising, maintaining and sharing Yolnu cultural knowledge.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Gurrutu: The Art Of Mulkun Wirrpanda*, JGM Gallery, London, United Kingdom
 - 2021 *Mulkun - The Last Exhibition*, Aboriginal and Pacific Art Gallery, Australia
 - 2020 *Gundirr-Mulkun Wirrpanda*, Outstation Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
 - 2018 *Maypal - Shellfish of the Arafura Coast*, Vickers Street Gallery, Parap, Northern Territory, Australia
 - 2004 *Solo Show*, The Blue Pineapple Cafe, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
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GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Bark Ladies*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
- 2021 *UN/LEARNING Australia*, Seoul Museum of Art, South Korea

- 2021 *38th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards-Finalist*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Australia
- 2021 *Rêves australis*, Villa Théo, Lavandou art center, France
- 2021 *The National*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2020 *Djorra - Works on Paper*, Raft Gallery, Alice Springs, Australia
- 2019 *Tarnanthi 2019*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Australia
- 2019 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, (Touring Exhibition), Whitlam Institute Gallery, University of West Sydney, Australia
- 2019 *Salon des Refuse*, Charles Darwin University Art Gallery
- 2019 *Mulkun Wirrpanda & John Wolseley: Two old artists looking for shellfish*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne, Australia
- 2019 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, Cowra Regional Art Gallery, Cowra, Australia
- 2019 *Top End Ochre*, Everywhen Artspace, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia
- 2019 *Midawarr/Harvest The art of Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley*, Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum, Victoria, Australia
- 2019 *Molluscs/Maypal and the Warming of the Seas : Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley*, Geelong Art Gallery, Australia
- 2019 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, (Touring Exhibition), Wollongong Art Gallery, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia
- 2018 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, (Touring Exhibition), Warwick Art Gallery, Warwick, Queensland, Australia
- 2018 *Matriarchs: Motherlines of the Yolgnu and Tiwi Islands*, The Cross Art Projects, Sydney, Australia
- 2018 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, (Touring Exhibition), Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Caboolture, Queensland, Australia
- 2018 *Minytji - Essence of the Land*, Aboriginal Signature Estrangin Gallery, Bruxelles, Belgium
- 2018 *Midawarr- Harvest - The art of Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley*, Touring Exhibition, Museum and Art gallery of the Northern Territory, Australia
- 2018 *Garma Festival*, Gapan Gallery, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2018 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, Touring Exhibition, Griffith Regional Art Gallery, Griffith NSW
- 2018 *Bark paintings and larrakitj from Yirrkala*, Nomad Art, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2018 *art Karlsruhe 2018*, ARTKELCH, Karlsruhe, Germany
- 2017 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, Touring Exhibition, Tasmanian Museum And Art Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania
- 2017 *Wüste – Meer – Schöpfmythen*, ARTKELCH, Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum Köln, Germany
- 2017 *Gapu-Moluk: Saltwater Journey to Sea Country*, National Australian Maritime Museum, Australia
- 2017 *Entwined*, Tarnanthi 2017, Santos Museum of Economic Botany, Botanical Gardens of South Australia, Australia
- 2017 *Tarnanthi 2017*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
- 2017 *Midawarr- Harvest - The art of Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley*, Touring Exhibition, National Museum Australia, Australia Capital Territory, Australia
- 2017 *Earth Matters: Aboriginal artwork from the Kimberley and Arnhem Land*, FORM, The Goods Shed, Perth, Australia
- 2017 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, Touring Exhibition, Bayside Arts and Cultural Centre Gallery, Brighton, Victoria, Australia
- 2017 *Saltwater: A Collection of Bark Paintings & Carved Objects*, Yaama Ganu Gallery, Moree, New South Wales, Australia
- 2017 *Gapan Gallery 2017*, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2017 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, Touring Exhibition, Castlemaine State Festival, Castlemaine Market Building, Victoria, Australia
- 2017 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, Touring Exhibition, University of Newcastle Gallery, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia
- 2017 *Legends and Lore*, Artitja Fine Art, Perth, Western Australia, Australia
- 2017 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka*, ARTKELCH, Karlsruhe, Germany
- 2017 *Buku-Larrnggay*, ARTKELCH, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany
- 2017 *Mulka*, ARTKELCH, Collectors Lounge @ kptec, Schorndorf, Germany
- 2016 *Gapan 16 - Prints from Garma 2016*, Chapman & Bailey and Hanging Vallery, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
- 2016 *Gapan Gallery*, Nomad Art, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2016 *Gapan Gallery in the Past*, Nomad Art Productions, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2016 *Salon des Refusés 2016*, Charles Darwin University Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2016 *Midawarr - Harvest Series: Woodcuts by Mulkun Wirrapanda and John Wolseley*, Tactile Arts Gallery and Studio, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2016 *The Salon des Refusés 2016*, Charles Darwin University Art Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2016 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Printspace Exhibition*, Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2016 *Yirrkala Print Space Group Show*, Koskela, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2016 *Balnhdhurr - A Lasting Impression*, Charles Darwin University Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2015 *Country & Western: landscape re-imagined*, National Trust S.H Ervin Gallery, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2015 *Balnhdhurr: A Lasting Impression*, Tarnanthi 2015, Adelaide College of the Arts, Adelaide, Southern Australia, Australia
- 2015 *String Theory: Focus on contemporary Australian art (National tour)*, Glasshouse, Port Macquarie, New South Wales, Australia
- 2015 *String Theory: Focus on contemporary Australian art (National tour)*, Wollongong Art Gallery, Wollongong, Australia
- 2015 *The Cross Art Projects*, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2015 *Mother to Daughter: On Art and Caring for Homelands*, The Cross Art Projects, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2015 *String Theory: Focus on contemporary Australian art (National tour)*, Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns, Queensland, Australia
- 2015 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Bark Paintings and Sculptures from East Arnhem Land*, Yirrkala, Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia

- 2015 *Lumggurma Brumby*, Ute Aspen, Colorado, United States
- 2014 *String Theory: Focus on contemporary Australian art (National tour)*, Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Caboolture, Queensland, Australia
- 2014 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition*, Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land Northern Territory, Australia
- 2014 *String Theory: Focus on contemporary Australian art (National tour)*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2013 *Djalkiri, we are standing on their names*, Blue Mud Bay, Wagga Wagga art Gallery, New South Wales, Australia
- 2013 *String Theory: Focus on contemporary Australian art*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2013 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition*, Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2011 *Miyalk - Women, Feminine Art from Yirrkala*, Framed Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2010 *Barrupu Yunupingu & Mulkun Wirrpanda: Fire, Water and Honey*, The Cross Art Projects, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2010 *27th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award - Winner 3D Category*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
- 2010 *Djalkiri - we are standing on their names*, Nomad Art, 24-Hour Art, Darwin Festival, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2010 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Print Space - Collograph Print Exhibition*, Gapan Gallery, Festival of Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2010 *17th Biennale of Sydney - Larrakitj, the Kerry Stokes Collection*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2010 *Art and Soul*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia
- 2010 *Ten: Highlights of the Holmes a Court Collection 2000-2010*, Holmes a Court Gallery, Perth, Western Australia, Australia
- 2009 *After Berndt - Etchings from the Drawings*, Indigenart, Mossenson Gallery, Subiaco. Western Australia, Australia
- 2009 *Flames, Floods and Honey - bark paintings by Mulkun Wirrpanda and Barrupu Yunupingu*, Cross Arts Project, Kings Cross, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2009 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition*, Gapan Gallery, Garma Festival, Gulkula, Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2008 25th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards - Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2008 *Galuku Gallery (Nomad Art Productions)*, Darwin Festival, Darwin Botanical Gardens, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2007 *'One Lore Two Law Outlaw - Dhakiyarr v's the King' recent bark paintings by Mulkun Wirrpanda*, Cross Art Projects, King Cross, Sydney, Australia
- 2007 *Bukulunghunmi - Coming Together*, One Place, Raft Artspace, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
- 2006 *l'Esprit de la terre d'Arnhem, art Aborigene du Nord de l'Australie*, Passage de Retz, Paris, France
- 2006 *'Walking together to aid Aboriginal Health'*, Shalom College, University of New South Wales, Sydney New South Wales, Australia
- 2006 *Art d'Australie*, Galerie Seine 51, Paris, France
- 2005 *Yakumirri*, (exhibition purchased by the Holmes a Court Collection), Holmes a Court Gallery, Perth, Western Australia, Australia
- 2005 *Exhibition*, Australian Embassy, Paris, France
- 2004 *Circle. Line. Column*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2001 *'Extinction Denied' Humane Society International*, Volvo Gallery, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 2000 *'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala'*, A National Tour, John Curtin Gallery, Curtin University, Perth Western Australia, Australia
- 2000 *Printmakers*, Touring Exhibition, Ben Grady Gallery, Canberra Australia Capital Territory, Australia
- 2000 *Printmakers*, Touring Exhibition, Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
- 1999 *'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala'*, A National Tour, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
- 1999 *'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala'*, A National Tour, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia
- 1999 *'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala'*, A National Tour, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
- 1999 *Buku-Larrnggay Printmakers Exhibition*, The Original Dreamtime Gallery, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia
- 1999 *'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala'*, A National Tour, The National Maritime Museum, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 1999 *'Saltwater Country - Bark Paintings from Yirrkala'*, A National Tour, Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
- 1999 *Buku Printmakers and Dhalwa?u Paintings*, Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London United Kingdom
- 1999 *Gapu Miny'tji - Sacred Water Designs of the Australian Aborigines of north-east Arnhem Land*, Crafts Museum, Delhi, India
- 1999 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - Yirrkala Print Space Exhibition*, Alcaston House Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
- 1999 *Printmakers Touring Exhibition*, Boomali, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- 1999 *Printmakers*, Touring Exhibition, Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

- 1998 *Buku-Larrnggay Printmakers Exhibition*, Northern Territory University, Darwin, Australia
1998 *Buku-Larrnggay Mulka printmakers Exhibition*, Buku-Larrnggay, Yirrkala, Northern Territory, Australia
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AWARDS

- 2021 38th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards - Winner - Works On Paper
2020 Finalist NATSIAA, MAGNT, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
2004 Major protagonist in Dhakiyarr vs. The King winner Rouben Mamoulian, Award for the Most Outstanding Film of the 13 Finalists in the Dendy Awards at the Sydney Film Festival.
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COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
Artbank, South Australia, Australia
Berndt Museum, University of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia, Australia
British Museum, London, United Kingdom
Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, Saltwater, Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country Charles Darwin, University Art Collection
Holmes a Court Collection
Kerry Stokes Larrakitj Collection, Western Australia, Australia
National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
National Museum of Australia, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia
RMIT University Art Collection

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