

Tradition and Innovation in Nonggirnga Marawili's BoIngu

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Tradition and Innovation in Nonggirnga Marawili's *Bolngu*

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1. Foreword

In recent years, the Ishibashi Foundation has been expanding the scope of its collection, and has been collecting Australian art for the past several years.¹ In 2017, the Foundation newly acquired six works including *Bolngu* (2016, fig. 1) by Nonggirnga Marawili, a leading Australian Aboriginal artist. This article is a discussion of Nonggirnga Marawili's *Bolngu*.

1.1 Nonggirnga Marawili

Nonggirnga Marawili (born c. 1939) is an Aboriginal artist who is a member of the Indigenous Australian Yolngu community inhabiting northeastern Arnhem Land, in the northeast part of the Northern Territory of Australia. In Arnhem Land, home to the Yolngu community, the traditional practice of bark painting, in which designs are painted on eucalyptus bark with natural ochre pigments, has been handed down for thousands of years. Bark painting is a technique specific to the Arnhem Land region, and an art form that embodies the community's traditional culture. In recent years, Marawili has been highly regarded both in Australia and overseas as a female artist working in this traditionally male medium. She has exhibited in large-scale art festivals including the Sydney Biennale² (June – September 2020), the 2019 Tarnanthi Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Festival (Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide), and the 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2017), and a comprehensive retrospective of her career was scrupulously presented in her first solo exhibition *From My Heart and Mind* (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, November 2018 – February 2019). In 2019 she won the Telstra Bark Painting Award at the 36th Telstra Awards,³ the most prestigious honor for Aboriginal artists.

1.2 Marawili's Tradition and Innovation

While firmly rooted in the traditions of the Yolngu community, Marawili's work reveals new possibilities for creative expression in bark painting. Henry F. Skerritt, curator of The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, describes the features of Marawili's work: "This is not to suggest that Nonggirnga's work is some kind of 'hybrid' form, caught between the traditional and the modern. Rather, it pictures the presence of coexisting worlds that resist assimilation."⁴ *Bolngu* (2016, fig. 1), in the collection of the Ishibashi Foundation, is a distinctive work embodying both tradition and an innovative approach not bound by tradition, as Skerritt noted. This article explores, based on the issues Skerritt raises, how Marawili

achieves expression of both tradition and innovation in *Bolngu*.

First, the tradition referred to here is a social structure and sense of identity that emphasizes belonging to one of the blood-related "clans" that form the Yolngu community, which will be described in detail later, and a culture of visual clan design, which has historically been handed down from father to son as an aspect of the patriarchal system.

Marawili's innovation, which simultaneously adheres to and breaks free of tradition, reflects the arc of change in traditional Yolngu culture, which is being altered by contact with Western society. The most significant aspect of this change has been transformation of the patriarchal system. For example, clan designs which were historically passed down from father to son can now also be transmitted from father to daughter, or from husband to wife as in Marawili's case. This is largely due to contact with Western society starting in the late 19th century during the British colonial era, and to rapid expansion of the Aboriginal art market since the 1970s. Marawili's career is one of the earliest examples of adaptation to such changes in the times.

However, Marawili always thoroughly respects past traditions and never incorporates more clan designs, or their symbolic meanings, into her work than her husband would allow. This is intriguing because, on the contrary, she has deliberately distanced herself from sacred meanings associated with the design, emphasizing visual effects achieved with simpler lines and designs and the resulting aesthetic sensibility.⁵ In this we can see the inherently contemporary quality of Marawili's work pointed out by Skerritt.

Among the most prominent and successful female Aboriginal artists employing techniques to render subjects more simplified and abstract was Emily Kame Kngwarreye (c. 1910–1996). Kngwarreye's *Spring Landscape* (1993, fig. 2), in the Artizon Museum collection, clearly shows her distinctive approach. The work depicts Kngwarreye's home region of Alhalkere, but application of dots to the entire painting surface makes it an abstract expression of the subject. Alhalkere is deeply tied to Kngwarreye's internal spiritual world, but the work contains no design elements that imply this per se. In an analysis of this approach, the art historian Hetti Perkins describes it as stripping away of intricate designs with cultural significance to reveal the core and essence of the subject, while in visual terms pursuing the grace of simple lines and markings.⁶ Marawili is an artist who renders subject matter abstract in a very similar manner. Marawili has succeeded in honoring the culture of Yolngu, the inherited traditions of the clan's symbolic

designs, and their meanings, while using abstract lines that avoid further comment and place priority on visual effects. And she has simultaneously imbued *Bolngu* with both tradition and innovation without either one being lost through assimilation into the work.

This article will first discuss the history and characteristics of bark painting, which are important aspects of any examination of Marawili's *Bolngu*. It will go on to consider how social structures in the culture of the Yolngu people of northeastern Arnhem Land, one of the most basic elements of an understanding of Marawili's work, and the ongoing transformation of these structures are profoundly connected to Marawili's bark painting practice. Finally, while interpreting the iconography of *Bolngu*, this article will consider how the artist has succeeded in synthesizing tradition and innovation in her work.

2. Bark Painting

Bark painting is a vibrant tradition in Arnhem Land, a region in the northeast of the Northern Territory of Australia. Its techniques have been handed down for millennia in the Aboriginal community of this region. Bark used as a painting surface is taken from the stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*) trees native to the area. The ideal time to collect this bark is during the rainy season, from December to April, or through June or July when eucalyptus sap levels rise and the bark does not adhere to the tree within.⁷ The stripped bark is heated to remove excess moisture, pressed beneath weights to flatten its surface, and dried for several days. Once the surface is as flat as possible, it is colored with natural earth pigments known as ochres. These pigments may be extracted at sites close to the artists' place of residence, or they may travel long distances to procure soil or rocks from which to derive them. Artists grind ochre and mix it with a small amount of fixative to make paint, then sit on the ground and paint designs on bark with fine brushes made with fibrous tree branches or human hair. Together this series of actions constitutes a sacred rite and a fundamental process that deepens relationships and connections between the artist and their country (here meaning region inhabited by a specific group of Aboriginal Australians, rather than nation).

The origins of bark painting lie in shelters that can be quickly constructed with bark during the rainy season, and sketches that are drawn inside them (fig. 3). The designs drawn there are derived from rock art on cave walls and exposed rock surfaces, decorations on hollow log poles used in burial rituals, and ritual body paintings.⁸ Designs and symbols used in bark painting are classified as either sacred or secular. The sacred designs are associated with creation myths and spiritual worlds related to the spirits of ancestors, the Australian Aboriginal community's distinctive religio-cultural worldview described as the Dreaming or Dreamtime, and these designs are tightly controlled by each of the clans in Arnhem Land. Secular designs are primarily depictions of real-life events, and can reflect more personal interpretations and styles.⁹

Bark painting can be broadly divided into four regional styles, those of northeastern Arnhem Land, western Arnhem Land, central Arnhem Land, and the island of Groote Eylandt. Works from these four regions can be characterized according

to composition, technique, type of subject and so on, and according to an analysis by Judith Ryan, senior curator of the National Gallery of Victoria, the most complex style is that of Nonggirnga Marawili's birthplace of northeastern Arnhem Land.¹⁰ As to why the style of this particular region is so complex, the art historian Wally Caruana cites a keen sense of curiosity propelling artists to find ways of transforming the rough, dark surface of bark into bright, gleaming works of art using ochre pigments.¹¹

The stunning visual effects that enable artists to transform these sheets of bark into brilliant, lustrous works are produced with geometric patterns called *miny'tji*.¹² These *miny'tji* patterns are painted using cross-hatching techniques, and the bark painting of northeastern Arnhem Land in particular is characterized by patterns covering the entire surface of the bark. Another characteristic is that figurative objects are usually rendered as black silhouettes, with the entirety of their surroundings and the background filled with cross-hatching (fig. 4). The apex of visual effects is a technique in which different shades of ochre such as red, yellow and black are layered with cross-hatching, and the result is finished with a white ochre.

However, these cross-hatching techniques are not used simply for aesthetic or visual purposes. They are driven by the goal of pulling the depicted subject close to the world of ancestral spirits, the above-mentioned mythical and spiritual realm known as the Dreaming or Dreamtime which is unique to the Aboriginal community. The radiance and depth achieved by cross-hatching evidently signify the ancestral spirits dwelling within the depicted subject, reflecting the spirits' sacred power.

Imbued with spiritual energy, the intricate patterns generated with this cross-hatching technique were once used in the sacred designs most tightly controlled under community law. These sacred designs were primarily used in male-oriented ceremonies and could only be seen by a limited number of people. For example, cross-hatching was used to decorate the torso in boys' initiation ceremonies, and the patterns were rubbed off at the end of the ritual. Designs that are rubbed off in this way lose their brilliance and at the same time relinquish the spiritual power of ancestral spirits dwelling in the design. Designs revealed only for a short period of time and to a limited number of people were able to retain their spiritual power due to their scarcity.¹³ This sequence of actions safeguarded people from the sacred power inherent to the designs, and also controlled the community's strictly protected knowledge.

Thus far we have considered the history and characteristics of bark painting, and the nature of the meanings and power of *miny'tji* cross-hatched geometric patterns. However, to grasp the specific characteristics of bark painting in Marawili's birthplace of northeastern Arnhem Land requires, beyond the above explanation, a brief outline of the regional social structure, the underlying framework within which these designs are produced.

3. Yolngu

Northeastern Arnhem Land is called Yolngu in the local language. There are 13 clans in Yolngu, and people belong to the clan of their father's side even if they marry a member of another clan.¹⁴ The group of 13 clans is further subdivided into

two categories, known as moieties. These two moieties are called Dhuwa and Yirritja, and almost all clan groups in Arnhem Land belong to one or the other. Moieties play a crucial role in both the social and spiritual worlds of Arnhem Land's Aboriginal community. In terms of social life, marriage is a good example: members of a clan must marry exogamously (outside their clan of origin), and this also applies to moieties, so a Dhuwa person must always marry a Yirritja and vice versa. The Djapu, Marrakulu and Rirratjingu clans belong to the Dhuwa moiety, and the Madarrpa, Gumatj and Munyuku clans belong to the Yirritja. So, for example, a Djapu clan member belonging to Dhuwa must not marry a Marrakulu member belonging to the same Dhuwa moiety, but must marry someone originating from a clan in Yirritja moiety. The reverse is also true. Marawili is originally from the Madarrpa clan, belonging to Yirritja, and her late husband, Djutjadjutja Mununggurr, is from the Djapu clan belonging to Dhuwa.

This strict system of affiliations also applies to all things and phenomena in the surrounding environment. Plants, animals, the land, and the spirits of the ancestors are always associated with one or the other moiety. During the Dreamtime, Ancestral Beings created the land and gave it meaning. Thus it was Ancestral Beings belonging to each moiety that granted possession of the land to each of the clans in the moieties, and rights and responsibilities as caretakers of the animals, plants, terrain and even the Dreaming mythos associated with the clan's land from generation to generation. For example, the shark spirit *Maarna* is associated with the Dhuwa lands, and the crocodile spirit *Baru* is associated with Yirritja.¹⁵ However, as a result of kinships with those outside the clan and moiety formed through exogamous marriage, these worldviews are not totally separate but rather mutually complementary.

Through its specific designs, each clan expresses things and phenomena connected to the moiety. This relates to designs and patterns produced through the cross-hatching technique of bark painting. Yirritja evokes ancestral spirits on the painting's surface with diamond-shaped *miny'tji*, while Dhuwa *miny'tji* features patterns and designs incorporating straight parallel lines. Just as each clan's stewardship of the Dreaming differs, the designs composed of diamond shapes and parallel lines differ subtly depending on the clan, and these differences are maintained as essential to each clan's identity. Designs are passed down from father to son. Diamond-shape and parallel-line patterns are never shared with the other moiety, and even within the clan a person must never render a design not considered within their possession without permission. Anyone breaking this law is punished as a serious violator. As the art historian Howard Morphy describes in his book *Aboriginal Art*, awareness of identity as a member of the clan and moiety, which governs everything from social life to the spiritual world, plays a central role in artists' works.¹⁶

Thus far, this article has described people's consciousness of belonging to the Yolngu society of northeastern Arnhem Land and the clans and moieties that sustain and govern it. Viewed in light of the distinctive fusion of "tradition and innovation" that characterizes Marawili's work, the cultural phenomena discussed above are "traditions" for which she has the greatest respect. Awareness of belonging to the clan is essential for Marawili as a resident of Yolngu: she is of the Madarrpa clan and

Yirritja moiety, and will never shed that identity. However, as described in the foreword, she is of a generation that witnessed the transformation of Yolngu after contact with Western society. As a Yirritja woman who has absorbed design traditions from the Dhuwa to which her husband belongs, Marawili has had an experience that is novel and yet inevitable amid ongoing social change. *Bolngu* (2016, fig. 1), in the Ishibashi Foundation collection, is clearly a work depicting Marawili's husband's country, and that in itself represents an innovation.

The following sections will analyze how Marawili obtained permission to represent her husband's country, the related chain of events, and the iconography and meanings of *Bolngu*. These aspects reveal Marawili's innovations, which this article will further examine.

4. Nonggirnga Marawili's Background

Nonggirnga Marawili was born circa 1939 on Darrpirra Beach in Cape Shield, located in northeastern Arnhem Land, as a member of the Madarrpa clan and Yirritja moiety. As a child she led a traditional lifestyle with a group of about 50 family and relatives in Blue Mud Bay, a cove historically connected to the Madarrpa. It is the site of frequent cyclones, high tides and powerful tidal currents, and is home to many crocodiles worshiped as spirits by the Yirritja. Marawili's father was Mundukul Marawili, a well-known Yolngu community leader and painter. He was active during the period when Western society first began to show an interest in bark painting. In particular he established a close relationship with Donald Thomson, an anthropologist from Melbourne, and later promoted the acquisition of bark paintings produced in the area by major museums and public institutions.¹⁷ Thus Nonggirnga Marawili came from a family background rich in artistic talent, and her own talent has progressively blossomed since the 1990s when she first took up a paintbrush.

4.1 Marawili's Early Work

Nonggirnga Marawili began painting in 1993, when she was around 54 years old. This was when Andrew Blake, who took the position of arts coordinator at the Arts Center in the Yolngu community of Yirrkala in 1993, recommended that Marawili's husband, the painter Djutjadjutja Mununggurr, produce a huge bark painting with 2.5 meters tall. Until then, the most prevalent bark painting format had been "suitcase bark,"¹⁸ small and inexpensive works geared toward tourists. However, Blake urged the male artists of Yolngu to take on the challenge of pieces of enormous size. Marawili's husband Mununggurr took this advice and started making works, but he struggled with a skill deficit due to never having worked at this scale, and decided to recruit his wife Marawili and his daughters to help with the endeavor. Their works produced collectively as a family quickly drew attention, and a total of 25 of their bark paintings were purchased by the National Gallery of Victoria in 1994.¹⁹ Then, in 1996, the American collector John W. Kluge commissioned 28 new bark paintings, which are now in the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia.²⁰ As her husband's assistant, Marawili was involved in producing all the major works. Her main responsibility was to paint *miny'tji*, intricate cross-hatched patterns that distinguish

the paintings of northeastern Arnhem Land, with fine human-hair brushes known as *marwat*.²¹

Originally from the Djapu clan, belonging to the Dhuwa moiety, Mununggurr produced bark paintings depicting his country of Wandawuy, and the Dreaming that is profoundly connected to it. Marawili worked with him on these paintings of Wandawuy, and through their bark painting as a couple, Marawili secured her husband's permission to paint Dhuwa / Djapu clan designs.

This was a new and exceptional development in Yolngu history, as clan designs have long been the exclusive province of men, handed down from father to son. However, that tradition began changing very recently, just one or two generations ago, when fathers started teaching their daughters directly and granting them permission to paint clan designs. Clearly, one major reason for this change was the demand for bark painting in Western societies. Aboriginal art has been praised for its complex iconography and elaborately patterned compositions since it was first encountered by other cultures, but most of it consisted of sand painting and body painting during ceremonies, which was not permanent. However, bark paintings came to be produced in large quantities from the 1940s onward, and were optimal for collection by anthropologists as they are portable and can be hung on walls like Western paintings. Museums subsequently began acquiring them, elevating their perceived value as works of art. Bark painters came to be respected as vital spokespersons introducing their culture to the outside world, and as important sources of income for the community. The art historian Howard Morphy described in his book *Aboriginal Art* the change in Yolngu tradition caused by this demand for bark painting: "The increasing role that women have taken in the art is likewise part of a continuing process of adjustment to new circumstances and a response to new opportunities... The increased participation of women was viewed by Yolngu as an enrichment of community life and a recognition of the important role played by women in holding the community together in times of social stress."²²

Marawili is a member of one of the earliest generations to embrace these changes. Rather than being taught bark painting by her father, she learned from her husband and obtained permission to paint his country. For this reason she chose to paint her husband's Dhuwa Djapu designs rather than the designs maintained by her own moiety and clan of origin, the Yirritja / Madarrpa.²³ Marawili has continued painting her husband's country even since his death in 1999. *Bolngu* (2016), in the Ishibashi Foundation collection, is one of the works depicting the landscape of this country, Wandawuy.

4.2 Wandawuy

Wandawuy is a land surrounded by rivers, with floodplains extending in the downstream region. During the rainy season, swollen rivers flow through the Wandawuy and into these downstream floodplains, resulting in flooding. With an appearance that changes drastically due to the weather and seasons, Wandawuy is associated with Bolngu, the thunderman spirit, and the shark spirit Maarna associated with the Dhuwa moiety. Bolngu is said to travel south from the Wessel Islands through Dhuwa country along with *wolma*, heavy clouds that bring the first rain signaling the arrival of the rainy season.²⁴

When Bolngu swings his club, thunder reverberates across the land, and when he urinates it rains. The rain caused by Bolngu makes rivers flood, resulting in the formation of oxbow lakes, known as billabongs, and fertile breeding grounds for a variety of organisms throughout Wandawuy.

Marawili's *Bolngu* (fig. 1) is a work depicting the actions of the thunderman, and their effects on the land of Wandawuy. The painting is divided into three parts: the upper part contains a semicircular form, a grid pattern occupies the left and center of the area below this, and on the right are wavy parallel lines divided into three vertically arrayed sections.

4.3 *Bolngu*

The semicircle at the top of the picture represents the arc described when Bolngu swings his club above his head, and is similar in shape to the clouds from which Bolngu causes it to rain. Parallel lines extending from the semicircle are diffused in all directions as if lightning were flashing through the atmosphere. Such parallel lines are a Dhuwa design motif, and these clearly show Marawili employing designs of the clan to which her husband Mununggurr belongs. The lines are rendered by laying down a thick black and demarcating each line by outlining it with white ochre, with gaps between lines filled with cross-hatching using brown and yellow-brown ochre pigments. Cross-hatching is employed across the entire work, succeeding in dynamically capturing the changing appearance of Wandawuy depending on the seasons and weather. The multiple layers of ochre coloration effectively give the bark surface a profound sense of depth.

The grid pattern occupying the center-left of the picture, taking up the largest area of any motif, depicts the state of the land. It is a bird's-eye view of Wandawuy after the rain brought by Bolngu has flooded the rivers and billabongs have formed everywhere, and the network of billabongs extending vertically and horizontally across the land is represented as a grid-like design. According to the Art Gallery of New South Wales curator Cara Pinchbeck, this grid pattern representation of the land also references the fish traps used in Wandawuy, which are arrayed in a chessboard-like formation.²⁵ Fish trapping is a traditional Djapu practice, and like billabongs it is profoundly related to the aquatic system of Wandawuy, while the fish traps arrayed in a chessboard formation serve as the basis of a Djapu clan design.

Another characteristic of this grid pattern is its usage of color, unified by a consistent background of white cross-hatching. In Marawili's description, "streams of white water flow from Bolngu out across the country."²⁶ As she says, the white water produced by Bolngu is replicated as white cross-hatching on the bark's surface. This white cross-hatched background, occupying the largest area of the picture, evokes dazzling, flickering sunlight reflected on the surface of water.

The three vertically arranged compartments on the right side contain wavy vertical parallel lines. Will Stubbs, coordinator at the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre where Marawili has her studio, describes Marawili's lines as moving organically "like a plant grows."²⁷ These gentle waves on the right side most aptly embody Marawili's striking style of line depiction. Unlike the white grid that partially surrounds the curved-line areas, brown and yellow-brown ochre cross-hatching is interspersed with the white, acting in concert with the lines' dynamism to give the

piece an overall rhythm. Marawili's intentional color variations also represent different states of water flowing through Wandawuy. In Pinchbeck's analysis of Marawili's choice of colors and effects in depicting the region's waters, "Nonggirnga's deliberate variations in color evoke the differing states of water at Wandawuy from running to still, agitated to calm, and silty to clear."²⁸ The movement and states of water are particularly skillfully expressed through the visual effects comprehensively deployed over the entire picture, such as the varying grid widths, the motion of curved lines, the angles and densities of cross-hatching, and the ochre color scheme.

5. Marawili's Tradition and Innovation as Seen in *Bolngu*

As described above, with Yolngu transformed by growing demand for Aboriginal art in recent years and contact with Western society, women are now granted the right to inherit clan designs, which had previously been passed down from father to son. In this historical context, Marawili was given permission to portray the Djapu country of her husband, transcending the confines of clan and moiety affiliation. The land of Wandawuy has always been a source of inspiration for Marawili, and the work *Bolngu* in the Ishibashi Foundation collection is an excellent example of her adept handling of the grid patterns that symbolize this land. Of particular interest are the striking curved lines on the right side, which represent the movement of water flowing through Wandawuy. These curved lines differ from anything in her husband Djutjadjutja Mununggurr's depictions of Wandawuy, and can be seen as Marawili's own invention. Of course, Marawili always honors the divinity of clan designs, and fully understands and sincerely respects the community's traditional system, in which employing designs to which one does not have rights and depicting the Dreaming are grave violations. As a result, Marawili works very carefully with Djapu designs. Even in this context, she has confidently found her own mode of expression and succeeded in incorporating it into the framework Djapu clan design. This is significantly related to the special position Marawili holds. She stated in the catalogue for her solo exhibition *From My Heart and Mind* (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, November 3, 2018 – February 24, 2019):

This is water and it belongs to our daughter. It belongs to her and her father, this painting... I only know the painting he taught me – the patterns and painting that he owned – that's what I learnt.²⁹

Clan and moiety affiliations are passed down from father to child. In other words, no matter how much permission Marawili received from her husband to depict clan designs, Marawili is Madarrpa and Yirritja, while her daughter Marnnyula Manunggurr is Djapu and Dhuwa like her father, making her an heir to clan designs in a more orthodox sense than Marawili. As Marawili herself says, her work represents the land of Wandawuy, concealing none of the underlying sacred patterns only accessible to those who have undergone initiation. Marawili's older brother, the artist Djambawa Marawili, says of Nonggirnga Marawili's working process:

As a man and ceremonial leader, he has a responsibility to hold on to the designs that were passed down to him, and his work must operate within the strict nature of these designs. Nonggirnga, as a woman, has more freedom of expression, for she does not hold the same responsibility in handing these designs down to future generations, as this is the responsibility of fathers.³⁰

In short, Marawili does not create works according to strict rules in order to carry on tradition, but rather works with Djapu design motifs in a manner based more on her spiritual relationship with Wandawuy and with her husband. Marawili's curving lines, painted "like a plant grows," energetically convey the freedom of self-expression and aesthetic sensibility she has been granted. She avoids figurative depiction of subject matter, and devotes herself to pursuing visual effects by deploying design and patterns, which represent subject matter in abstract form, across the entire surface. By doing so Marawili gains greater freedom of expression, avoiding profound involvement with the Dreaming through use of related designs, and focusing on depicting events more phenomenologically. In *Bolngu* Marawili shows reverence for the traditions and significance of clan design while structuring the composition in an abstract manner that avoids dealing with these designs more deeply, practicing an intuitive approach made possible by her singular position, and successfully fusing tradition and innovation in her art.

(Curator, Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation)
(Translated by Christopher Stephens)

Notes

1. The Ishibashi Foundation held the exhibition *Prism: Contemporary Australian Art* in 2006. On the occasion of this exhibition, the Foundation acquired a total of seven works including two by Emily Kame Ngwarreye, a leading figure in Australian Aboriginal art.
2. Marawili's work was exhibited at the Australia Centre for Contemporary Art and Campbelltown Art Gallery.
3. Officially called the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA), the Telstra Awards are jointly presented annually by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and Telstra, Australia's largest telecommunications company, and are the oldest and most prestigious awards in Australia focused on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander art.
4. Henry F. Skerritt, "The country speaks through her" in *Nonggirnga Marawili: from my heart and mind*, ed. Cara Pinchbeck with Djambawa Marawili, Kade McDonald and Henry F. Skerritt (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2018), p. 36.

5. Hetti Perkins, "Nonggirra Marawili" in *Defying Empire: 3rd Indigenous Art Triennial*, ed. Tina Baum (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2017), p. 90.
6. Perkins, "Nonggirra Marawili," p. 90.
7. The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, ed., *Crossroads Toward A New Reality: Aboriginal Art from Australia*, (Kyoto: The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, 1992), p. 34.
8. Judith Ryan, *Spirit in Land: Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land in the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1990), p. 3.
9. Ryan, *Spirit in Land: Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land*, p. 10.
10. Ryan, *Spirit in Land: Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land*, p. 77.
11. Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), p. 60.
12. In West Arnhem Land, designs created with cross-hatching are known as *rarrk*.
13. Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2013), p. 190.
14. East Arnhem Regional Council, *Yirrkalá*, <https://www.eastarnhem.nt.gov.au/yirrkalá-detailed>. Accessed May 8. 2020.
15. Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, p. 153.
16. Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, p. 159.
17. Cara Pinchbeck, "Nonggirra Marawili: From My Heart and Mind," in *Nonggirra Marawili: From My Heart and Mind*, ed. Cara Pinchbeck with Djambawa Marawili, Kade McDonald and Henry F. Skerritt (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2018), p. 11.
18. Skerritt, "The Country Speaks Through Her," p. 37.
19. Skerritt, "The Country Speaks Through Her," p. 37.
20. Skerritt, "The Country Speaks Through Her," p. 37.
21. Perkins, "Nonggirra Marawili," p. 90.
22. Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, p. 252.
23. Pinchbeck, "Nonggirra Marawili: From My Heart and Mind," p. 16.
24. Pinchbeck, "Nonggirra Marawili: From My Heart and Mind," p. 13.
25. Art Gallery of New South Wales, *Fish Trap at Wandawuy*, <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/108.2013/>. Accessed May 10. 2020.
26. Pinchbeck, "Nonggirra Marawili: From My Heart and Mind," p. 13.
27. Alcaston Gallery, Nonggirra Marawili, <http://alcastongallery.com.au/artist/read/63-nonggirra-marawili>, Accessed May 10. 2020.
28. Pinchbeck, "Nonggirra Marawili: From My Heart and Mind," p. 13.
29. Nonggirra Marawili, "This Is Just My Thinking" in *Nonggirra Marawili: From My Heart and Mind*, ed. Cara Pinchbeck with Djambawa Marawili, Kade McDonald and Henry F. Skerritt (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2018), p. 27.
30. Pinchbeck, "Nonggirra Marawili: From My Heart and Mind," p. 20.

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- fig. 2—Emily Kame KNGWARREYE, *Spring Landscape*, 1993, Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 122.0×152.0cm, Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation, Tokyo
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- fig. 4—Wandjuk MARIKA, *Wuwarku and Djanda*, 1985–86, Earth pigments on bark, 117.5×36.0cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
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