
Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori's *My Grandfather's Country*: Country Rising from the Depths of Memory

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In 2017, the Ishibashi Foundation acquired *My Grandfather's Country* (fig. 1) by an Australian Indigenous artist Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori (1924–2015). Gabori, a member of the Kaiadilt community, was born on Bentinck Island, located on the southern side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, in northwestern Queensland. She began painting in 2005, when she was more than eighty years old. During her brief eight-year career as a painter, she produced nearly two thousand works. Recent exhibitions of her work include *Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori*, a large-scale solo retrospective held in Paris from July 3 to November 6, 2022 and organized by the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain (Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art). From February 16 to May 14, 2023, that exhibition traveled to Italy, for the Triennale Milano. As a result of these exhibitions, her international reputation has soared.

The theme of Gabori's work is the land, and primarily Bentinck Island, where she was born. She paints using acrylic pigments on large canvases. The subject of *My Grandfather's Country* is closely tied to the land of her birth and to the Kaiadilt people. Her Country is depicted abstractly, her swift brushwork and rich colors working vigorously with the textures of the pigments clearly visible on the canvas. Besides the bold, unwavering brushwork that is Gabori's hallmark, the context in which she creates her works is unlike any seen in works produced by artists from other Aboriginal communities. That is, the community to which she was born has no traditional form of visual art. Seeking the wellspring of her creative work in visual art that suddenly blossomed after she was more than eighty years old, however hard we look, we see no trace of the visual images, symbols, and rituals passed down from generation to generation by the ancestors, on which other Indigenous artists draw. Nonetheless, she continued to paint until a few years before her passing at ninety-one. In the short span of eight years, she produced nearly 2000 works, including *My Grandfather's Country* when she was eighty-seven. Where, in the last stage of her life, did her wondrous speed of production and boldly confident, unhesitating brushwork come from?

Before I attempt to answer this question, I want to touch briefly on a related aspect of Gabori's creative context. That is her experience in 1948 of being forced by natural disasters to flee her Country, Bentinck Island. After the island was devastated by prolonged drought and a major cyclone, the Kaiadilt were forced to flee to nearby Mornington Island, and they have not, to this day, been able to return to Bentinck as a whole community. After the move to the nearby island, Kaiadilt families were divided and use of their language prohibited, causing much

suffering. That is, the land depicted in Gabori's paintings is not a reproduction of the real land unfolding before her eyes. Her works depict her birthplace, her Country as it emerges from the depths of her memory.

One key to understanding Gabori's works, given that background, can be found in the words of Nicholas Evans, a linguist and speaker of the Kayardild language. He contributed the following remarks for the catalogue for the *Sally Gabori, Kaiadilt Eyes—the Art of Seeing* solo exhibition in 2018:

Confronted with the paintings of someone who has spent their life looking at the world in a particular way, fundamentally shaped by the distinctive Kaiadilt orientation to sea, strand and story places, but not by any pre-existing visual art tradition, is to remind ourselves that art is about seeing before it is about style.¹

What Evans' words tell us is that ordinarily the method for understanding Australian Indigenous art begins in most cases with artists' references to traditional visual art. In Gabori's case, however, there are no such traditions. It is, thus, essential to understand her world view, i.e., the Kaiadilt world view. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the world as Gabori sees it, the whole of her life on Bentinck Island and the lives of the people who lived there. That includes the suffering she experienced—being forced to leave by natural disasters, the breaking up of families, the loss of her language, her Country that lives in memory. What we gain by understanding Gabori's art in the way that Evans describes is an understanding that transcends its framing as "Australian Indigenous art" to extend the way in which we think about art. In other words, our thinking about what this art should no longer be shackled by that framing.

In this essay I begin with a brief discussion of Gabori's early life, starting with her Country, Bentinck Island. Next will come an outline of Gabori's paintings and a study of *My Grandfather's Country*, now in the Ishibashi Foundation collection. The essay ends with an interpretation of the world depicted in Gabori's works and the origins of her creativity.

Gabori's Country—the South Wellesley Islands and Bentinck Island

Bentinck Island is a small island, only 16 kilometers long and 18 kilometers wide, located in the Gulf of Carpentaria in the northwest part of Queensland. The islands in the gulf are

collectively called the Wellesley Islands, and Bentinck Island is one of the South Wellesley Islands.² Bentinck Island was home to the Kaiadilt community to which Sally Gabori belonged. Archeological research has revealed that the Kaiadilt had lived on this island for approximately 6000 years.³ During the last Ice Age, Bentinck Island was still attached to the Australian mainland, allowing people to migrate to that adjacent land. Then, however, as the sea level rose, the island was separated from the mainland. No longer influenced by mainland cultures, the Kaiadilt constructed their own distinctive way of life. Living on a small island, the Kaiadilt acquired a deep knowledge of the distinctive features of the island, its environment, its flora and fauna.⁴ They told all sorts of stories (including myths) about the island's history, with many details and variations.

The Kaiadilt who lived on Bentinck Island were not cut off completely from external contact. Before English colonization at the end of the eighteenth century, Makassan from Sulawesi in Indonesia came annually to collect live sea cucumbers known as trepang from coral reefs near the island. Trade and other interactions between the Makassan from Indonesia and Australian Indigenous communities were not confined to Bentinck Island but widespread along the northern coast of Australia.⁵ Not much is known about trade between the Makassan and the Kaiadilt, but evidence of Makassan trade and contact can be found in the tamarind trees, introduced by the Makassan, that flourish on Fowler Island, another of the South Wellesley Islands.⁶

Contact between English colonists and the Kaiadilt can be traced back to 1802. That is when Matthew Flinders,⁷ the first explorer to circumnavigate Australia (1801–1803), visited Bentinck Island. Flinders named a small island located east of Bentinck Island Sweers Island. Since, however, there was no ongoing contact with colonists, the Kaiadilt were able to continue their traditional way of life for a long time. Norman Tindale, an anthropologist who conducted research on Bentinck Island in 1960, explains why this island was of particular interest to anthropologists as follows:

The island is of particular interest to anthropologists because of the isolation of these people and to historians because it was one of the first parts of the Gulf of Carpentaria examined in detail by Matthew Flinders in 1802; he met North Australian aborigines face to face in this vicinity for the first time. Following his brief encounter these aborigines, who today call themselves Kaiadilt ['Kaiadil, 'Kaija ;lil, 'Kaiadilt], remained isolated and away from Western contacts for another 145 years, to become the very last tribal group of coastal Australian aborigines to meet the civilized world.⁸

Bentinck Island has gone down in history as a place visited by Flinders. The next contact with Western society occurred sometime in the latter half of the decade that began in 1910. The event now known as "The McKenzie Massacre" occurred around 1918, when John McKenzie, who had moved to the island to mine limestone and raise livestock around 1916, murdered eleven Kaiadilt.⁹ According to Bruce Johnson-McClean, the Barbara Jean Humphreys Assistant Director, Indigenous Engagement, at the National Gallery of Australia, Tindale was told during his research that Gabori's mother had

survived a gunshot wound during the massacre.¹⁰ However, Australia's mainstream society has no record of the massacre, and there is also no record of McKenzie being tried for his crimes. What Tindale's research made clear was that the eleven individuals who were killed were ten percent of the total Kaiadilt population when the massacre occurred.

After these events, Kaiadilt contact with Western society was intermittent and largely confined to the Presbyterian mission on nearby Mornington Island. As a result, Bentinck Island remained almost entirely free of colonial influence until the 1940s. As a result, of all of the peoples on Australia's north coast, the Kaiadilt were able to continue for the longest time their traditional way of life without being influenced by colonists.

Why, then, were the Kaiadilt forced to leave Bentinck Island? As described in the introduction, the reasons were natural disasters in the late 1940s, a protracted drought followed by a large cyclone. Tindale's research confirmed the impact everywhere on the island of the drought in September-October 1946. In August 1947, 42 Kaiadilt suffering from malnutrition were found on Sweers Island and were sent to the mission on Mornington Island.¹¹ Then came the cyclone after the prolonged drought. In February 1948 a large cyclone struck Bentinck Island. The 3.7 meter storm surge swallowed up every source of fresh water. The disruption of the fresh water supply was so destructive that the sixty-three Kaiadilt remaining on the island had no other choice and were forced to move to Mornington Island. When this happened, Gabori was a young woman in her mid-twenties. She had just married and was intending to start a family when she lost the place of her birth.

Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori

Gabori was born around 1924 on Bentinck Island. Her full name, Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori, combines her Kaiadilt name Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda with a name of Christian origin, Sally Gabori. At the start of her life she was Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda, a name following the traditional Kaiadilt naming system, in which names attest to the person born and the place he or she was born. This system creates an unbreakable bond between the person with that name and the place that provided it. That bond is the most important key to understanding Gabori's art.

"Mirdidingkingathi" can be separated into two parts, "Mirdidingki" and "ngathi." "Ngathi" is a suffix that in the Kaiadilt language means "was born in." "Mirdidingki" is the name of the place where Gabori was born, a small inlet in the southern part of Bentinck Island, where a stream flows from the interior of the island into the sea. "Juwarnda" means "dolphin," her totem.¹² "Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda" thus means "Born in Mirdidingki with the dolphin totem." Because she was given this name, Gabori has an identity inseparable from her birthplace, 'Mirdidingki.' In words that convey the strength of this spiritual connection, she herself says, "This is my Land, this is my Sea, this is who I am."¹³

Sally Gabori" is a Christian name she acquired after being forced to move to the mission on Mornington Island. "Sally" is a Christian given name, and "Gabori" is a Westernized, condensed version of her husband's name, following the Christian tradition that wives take their husbands' surnames.

Born in around 1924, Gabori had lived for twenty-four years on Bentinck Island before being forced to emigrate in 1948. During that period, her life included catching fish and sea turtles trapped by stone walls built in the shallows, weaving dillybags, baskets and bags made of plant fibers, and performing a variety of rituals to maintain spiritual ties with the land and the ancestors. Gabori belongs to the last generation with memories of that way of life on Bentinck Island. When the cyclone's devastating blow ended the Kaiadilt way of life on Bentinck Island, Gabori had just married her husband, becoming his fourth wife.

Life after the move continued to be full of suffering for the Kaiadilt. Children were separated from their families and placed in dormitory schools operated by the mission. There the use of Kayardild, the Kaiadilt language, was forbidden, and the education they received was in English.¹⁴ The Lardil, the community on Mornington Island, was the traditional owner of the land. As outsiders, the Kaiadilt were without exception only allowed to live in the difficult to survive environment in the lowlands.¹⁵ For Gabori, life for several years after the move was both physically and psychologically difficult. Before her first surviving child was born in 1953, she experienced a series of miscarriages in 1948, 1949, and 1950. Later she gave birth to eight children and had many grandchildren and great-grandchildren; but her late twenties were a time of bitter suffering as she lost her Country and a series of children.

On Mornington Island, the Kaiadilt rarely if ever interacted with the Lardil. The Kaiadilt were exceptional in having no contact with other Aboriginal communities. Thus, the songs and dances of their rituals continued untainted by external influence even after leaving their land, and Gabori never forgot how to make the devices used in hunting and the dillybags.

Gabori Encounters Painting in Acrylics

Gabori, who spent most of her life as a refugee on Mornington Island, did not encounter acrylic painting until 2005. She was already more than eighty years old. The occasion was a workshop held at the Mornington Island Arts and Crafts Centre. The instructor was Simon Turner, a curator at the Woolloongabba Art Gallery in Brisbane.¹⁶ Residents in The Aged Person's Hostel (APH), a nearby facility for the elderly, were invited to participate in the workshop, twice each week. According to McClean, Turner's reasons for making a special effort to get elderly people to participate in the workshop were Aboriginal elders' deep knowledge of traditional art and the influence of the paintings they create.¹⁷ In most cases, designs that appear in Aboriginal art could only be used by those recognized by their communities as having the right to do so, because the content of the designs in Aboriginal art was either related to the community's laws and norms or connected to the "Dreaming," ancestral stories that Australian Indigenous communities possess. In their communities, age and initiations grant the authority to access this knowledge. Thus, in works painted by elders, we find multilayered references to social norms, cultural traditions, and representations of myths. Those works also receive great trust and respect, and thus have the power to influence their communities. That is why Turner, having realized the many, multilayered roles played by its art,

focused on elders who create it. At first it was mainly Lardil men who participated in the workshop. But Turner had seen for himself Utopia, an Aboriginal community in the Central Desert, where women artists were active. That is why he proactively urged elderly women to participate in the workshop on Mornington Island. Gabori participated as a resident of the Aged Persons' Hostel. Gabori had never before held a brush in her hand, but the second time she participated, she tried painting on a canvas. Nobody anticipated what she would produce (fig. 2).

The Kaiadilt had no traditions of visual art such as bark painting, sand painting, or body painting for rituals, which are thought to be typical of Aboriginal art. Other communities decorated traditional objects and implements, but the Kaiadilt almost never decorated anything. Instead, they scarred their bodies. The scars left on the body by rituals gradually developed into motifs. Some Kaiadilt who participated in the workshop took this ritual scarring as their inspiration.

Gabori, however, had painted a work that no one would have expected. Her first painting,¹⁸ *My Country* (fig. 2), depicted, she said, a fish trap. She had woven the story that became the painting's subject from her memories and transformed that story into a painting. That painting was neither an example of an Aboriginal community's traditional visual art nor had it borrowed designs from any other community. Nor did it reflect knowledge of Western art. Gabori's painting could be described as the outpouring of the creativity of an individual human being.

A few months after she first picked up a brush, Gabori completed *All the fish* (fig. 3), a large-format painting about two meters tall and more than four meters wide. In this work, all sorts of fish found in the seas around Bentinck Island—rock cod, flathead grey mullet, mangrove jack, sea bream—and sea turtles are all represented by circular shapes differentiated by color. In the works from Gabori's early period, her subjects are fish or the traps used to catch fish, taken from her personal, visceral experience on Bentinck Island.¹⁹ In the vivid colors and circular shapes crowded together on her canvasses, we glimpse the bubbles and ripples on the surface of the sea caused by vast schools of fish below. In this work we can glimpse how Gabori captures her world. She is not interested in the shapes of the fish but attempts to capture intuitively the image and atmosphere of phenomena caused by the fish. In other words, Gabori has no interest in figurative paintings of fish themselves. She pours her effort into transforming the whole into an abstract concept. In 2005, Gabori's creativity exploded as she produced one canvas after another. In many she experimented with composition, color, and visual effects. In December of that year she had her first solo exhibition. The following year, the Alcaston Gallery in Melbourne became her representative. Also in 2006, her work was shown for the first time at the Xstrata Coal Emerging Indigenous Art Awards at the Queensland Art Gallery.

Broadly speaking, Gabori's works have six themes: Mirdidingki, Thundi, Makarrki, Dingkarri, Dibirdibi, and Nyinyilki. All are places on Bentinck Island or other South Wellesley Islands of special significance to the artist. All of these place names were incorporated in the names of members of Gabori's family. Mirdidingki is where Gabori was born and thus part of her name. Thundi was her father's Country, Makarrki her older

brother's Country. Dingkarri was a place with which her older brother and grandfather were associated. Gabori's husband was from Dibirdibi, which was also sacred ground, where the ancestral spirit, Dibirdibi, the Rock Cod, who created Bentinck Island emerged. The majority of her paintings depicts Dibirdibi. Nyinyilki became another place of great importance to the Kaiadilt. The passage of The Aboriginal Land Rights Act in 1976 spurred the start of a movement to restore ownership of Bentinck Island to the Kaiadilt. In 1986 an outstation was built in Nyinyilki in the southeast part of the island to provide an access for an occasional visit to the island.²⁰ In 1994, Kaiadilt ownership of part of the island was recognized, and in 2008, the greater part of the island became the property of the Kaiadilt.²¹ When Gabori had opportunities to travel to Bentinck Island, Nyinyilki was where she stayed. To the Kaiadilt, Nyinyilki had become a symbol for the return of their stolen Country. It became the theme of many of Gabori's paintings, second only in number to Dibirdibi.

My Grandfather's Country

My Grandfather's Country (fig. 1) in the Ishibashi Foundation Collection was painted in 2011. It was shown in the *Sally Gabori: A Survey Exhibition of Paintings 2005–2012* at the Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, March 30 to May 5, 2013. Later it was shown in the *Mirdidingingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori: Dulka Warngiid – Land of All* exhibition at the Queensland Art Gallery, May 21 to August 28, 2016 and the National Gallery of Victoria, September 23, 2016 to January 29, 2017. In Japan, it was shown in the Artizon Museum's *STEPS AHEAD: Recent Acquisitions* exhibition, February 13 to September 5, 2021. It was purchased from the Alcaston Gallery in March of 2017.

As we see in the name of this work, this work depicts Dingkarri, a place associated with the artist's grandfather. Dingkarri is a small island located off the southern tip of Sweers Island, the second largest of the South Wellesley Islands after Bentinck Island. The shallows surrounding this island are filled with coral reefs, which connect Dingkarri to Sweers Island. For the Kaiadilt, Dingkarri was an important place for hunting. There were deep spots right beside the coral reef shoals, where dugong, sea turtles, and large fish could be caught. Kaiadilt men set out on long rafts called *walpu* to hunt them.

When Gabori paints Dingkarri, she paints round and egg-shaped forms, or rectangular oblongs. These correspond to the appearance of Dingkarri at high and low tide. In some works, for example, she includes the coral reefs that connect Dingkarri to Sweers Island. In others, she depicts Dingkarri at high tide, a single small island floating in the sea. In *My Grandfather's Country*, a circular form stands out, then a thick line with jagged protrusions above and below extends from the right side of the circular form. At the opposite side of that line is a long, thin oblong form extending from the upper right to the bottom. The circular form represents Dingkarri, the narrow oblong form on the right Sweers Island. The jagged form connecting the two islands diagonally represents the coral reefs. This composition presents Gabori's development towards a simpler and more aerial composition than seen in works from her early period. Art historian Judith Ryan, who has analyzed the development of Gabori's style, says that the overall form emerges as she paints

multiple, overlapping motifs with colors that blend together.²² Ryan's description of how form emerges is a good fit with the expression of Dingkarri in *My Grandfather's Country*.

What is distinctive about this work is the use of color. The land is painted in bright red, surrounded by white, not at all like the actual Dingkarri and Sweers Island. What this use of color embodies is Gabori's creativity and explosive energy. Gabori's encounter with milk-white pigment led to a major transformation in her style from around 2008. Starting with vivid colors that are painted over with white paint before they dry is a technique found in what art historian John McPhee calls her "ice-cream works."²³ This "wet into wet" technique, in which pigments are layered before they dry, is a convincing method to support the number of works she painted in her eight-year career.

In *My Grandfather's Country*, except for the parts painted red or orange, in most of the negative space, Gabori has used her preferred white pigment. In some parts the colors are blended and outlines blurred. In most parts, however, we can see that the colors are not particularly mingled. This reflects changes in Gabori's technique, starting around 2011.

Previously, Gabori had only taken one day to finish a large-format work, but deteriorating health made her work more slowly. While before she had immediately overlaid white paint on other colors before they had dried, now she waited until the next day. Waiting until the next day, when the other colors of paint had dried, resulted in a picture plane with a different texture. The underneath color was covered by the white paint like a veil, and the colors only showed through where the white had not been applied, in parts where the color now seemed to float to the surface. As seen here (fig. 4), the white overlay strongly evokes her perception of her Country through the white veil of memory.

This work was likely created after Gabori's technique changed. In some of the parts painted white, some pigments are blended and the image is blurred. But the islands are painted and left in bright red, with a powerful impact that attracts the viewer's eye. In Gabori's choice of colors, besides white, black also had a distinctive characteristic. To Gabori, black is the most appropriate color for a tropical region's violent storms, the raging seas, and gloomy, overcast skies of the rainy season. The storms that affected this region from the end of 2010 to the early spring of 2011 may have been a major influence on this work.²⁴ The black pigment used in *My Grandfather's Country* reflects the storms that struck Dingkarri. The insertion of the black paint that represents the raging seas as an accent color adds rhythm, tempo, and depth. Also, in *My Grandfather's Country* the blending of the red pigment applied above the white, red on the lefthand side of Dingkarri, generates slight gradations in the outline and emphasizes the shading. The blurred contours (fig. 5) soften the impact of the bright red land. Here, beneath the intuitively applied quick brushwork, we can see the sensitive balance of Gabori's composition and her keen color sense.

Country Rising from the Depths of Memory

When Gabori painted, she painted her Country in her memory and places whose names lived on in her family's names. According to McLean, they were also portraits of people she

loved.²⁵ *My Grandfather's Country* depicts Dingkarri; but as the title suggests, it may also represent her family, her grandfather. When Gabori, who has a deep knowledge of the lands where the Kaiadilt had lived for centuries, painted her grandfather's Country, she recreated the fundamental nature of this land in an abstract form, conceptually recreating her grandfather's Country as she remembered it. Her choice of hyper-real colors was determined by her own sensibility, and her approach to painting was the result of repeated experiments in which her concerns and physical limits were tested. Underlying all of her works is her love for her remembered Country, a love sustained by a powerful spiritual connection and passion.

Born a Kaiadilt with no tradition of visual art, Gabori encountered painting when she was more than eighty years old. Her talent exploded. In here we see a wealth of human creativity. Why? Because Gabori was an artist who discovered and developed visual art entirely on her own. Gabori's paintings are, however, more than displays of creativity, for her work has a theme. Gabori's works all depict the land of the Kaiadilt. Her paintings embody her deep affection for the lands and for her family with its ties to those lands despite all the suffering and the losses she had to endure. They evoke universal human feelings. Woven from threads in the depths of her memories, Gabori's paintings possess many distinctive features not found in the traditions that inform other Australian Indigenous art. Through her work, we not only come to understand the diversity of Australian Indigenous art. We also glimpse an insight into creativity unshackled from that framework.

(Curator, Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation)
(Translated by Ruth S. McCreery, The Word Works)

Notes

1. Alcaston Gallery, *Sally Gabori Kaiadilt Eyes—the Art of Seeing*, exh. cat. (Melbourne: Alcaston Gallery, 2018)
2. The South Wellesley Islands consist of Albinia Island, Allen Island, Sweers Island, Fowler Island, Bentinck Island, and Horseshoe Island. Bentinck Island is the largest of the South Wellesley Islands.
3. Bruce Johnson McLean, "Dulka Warngiid: The Whole World" in *Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori: Dulka Warngiid: Land of All*, exh. cat. (South Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2016), p. 14.
4. John McPhee, "Sally Gabori: feeling the landscape," *Art Monthly Australia* (249) (2012), p. 8.
5. For information on trade between the Makassan and the Kaiadilt, see Charles Campbell Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege: Macassan Trepanners in Northern Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976); Marshall Clark and Sally K. May, *Macassan History and Heritage: Journeys, Encounters and Influences* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013); G. J. Knaap and Heather Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders: Ships, Skippers and Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Makassar* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004).
6. Norman Barnett Tindale, "Geographical knowledge of the Kaiadilt people of Bentinck Island," in *Records of the South Australian Museum*, Vol. 14 (Adelaide: South Australian Museum, 1962), pp. 259–296 <https://archive.org/details/RecordsSouthAus14Sout/page/n283/mode/2up>
7. Matthew Flinders (1774–1814) was the captain of the *HMS Investigator*, a maritime explorer, and a surveyor. He circumnavigated Australia between 1801 and 1803. His book, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, contributed to popularizing the name "Australia."
8. Norman Tindale, "Geographical knowledge of the Kaiadilt people of Bentinck Island," p. 260.
9. Roma Kelly and Nicholas Evans, "The McKenzie Massacre on Bentinck Island," *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 9, no. 1/2 (1985), pp. 44–52. This article presents the story of the McKenzie Massacre as one of the authors, Roma Kelly, heard it from her parents.
10. Bruce Johnson McLean, "Dulka Warngiid: The Whole World," in *Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori* (Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, 2022), p. 172.
11. Norman Tindale, "Geographical knowledge of the Kaiadilt people of Bentinck Island," pp. 269–270.
12. The totem symbolizes a particular group of people or kinship group, with religious reasons behind it. Natural phenomena, plants, and animals are often used as totems.
13. Bruce Johnson McLean, "Dulka Warngiid: The Whole World," in *Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori: Dulka Warngiid: Land of All*, exh. cat. (South Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2016), p. 29.
14. None of the children born after their forced move can speak Kayardild. Gabori was one of few who retained knowledge of that language. Louise Martin-Chew, "Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori: The splendour of colour," *Art Monthly Australasia* (289) (2016), pp. 49–53. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.009314929854697>

15. McLean, "Dulka Warngiid: The Whole World," p. 14.
16. Brett Evans, "Our Family" in *Mornington Island Arts and Crafts Centre* (Brisbane: Woolloongabba Art Gallery, 2005).
17. McLean, "Dulka Warngiid: The Whole World," p. 17.
18. Nicholas Evans, *The Heart of Everything: The Art and Artists of Mornington & Bentinck Islands* (Melbourne: McCulloch & McCulloch, 2008) p. 45.
This work was displayed at the Art Center on Mornington Island to inspire subsequent artists. It was acquired by the Queensland Art Gallery in 2017 and is now part of its collection.
19. John McPhee, *Sally Gabori: a survey exhibition of paintings 2005–2012: Danda ngijinda dulk, danda ngijinda malaa, danda ngad — this is my land, this is my sea, this is who I am*, exh. cat. (Canberra: Drill Hall Gallery, 2013), p. 16.
20. McPhee, "Sally Gabori: feeling the landscape," p. 6.
21. McLean, "Dulka Warngiid: The Whole World," p. 15.
22. Judith Ryan, "Unprecedented: the Art of Sally Gabori" in *Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori* (Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, 2022), p. 87.
23. McPhee, "Sally Gabori: feeling the landscape," p. 9.
24. McPhee, *Sally Gabori: a survey exhibition of paintings 2005–2012*, p. 20.
25. McLean, "Dulka Warngiid: The Whole World," p. 17.

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- fig. 2—Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori, Kaiadilt people, *My Country*, 2005, Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 60.0×30.0 cm, Gift of the Estate of Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori through the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Foundation 2017, Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art
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- fig. 3—Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori, *All the fish*, 2005, Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 190.0 × 424.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria
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- fig. 5—Detail of *My Grandfather's Country* (fig. 1)
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