

## **BIRABAHN THE COLLECTION: BUILDING THE ART GALLERY 1**

### **1. Nyangarni Penny K Lyons**

Walmajarri  
*Mangkajakura* 2009  
acrylic on canvas

Nyangarni Penny K Lyons painted the waterholes and country around her birthplace near Japingka waterhole in the Great Sandy Desert. This painting depicts the Mangkajakura waterhole in Walmajarri country in the Great Sandy Desert and is surrounded by jilji (sand hills). Mangkaja is a white bird from the Dreamtime, like an owl, with black and white markings around his eyes, who travels at night. Mangkaja came from Kiyili, and where he landed there sprung a waterhole, Mangkajakura.

### **2. Yuyuya Nampitjinpa and Irene Nangala**

Pintupi  
*Minyima Tijutangku Nyinarra Yinkanyi Tulku* 2000  
acrylic on canvas

This artwork was painted by two Pintupi Women, Irene Nangala and Yuyuya Nampitjinpa, who visited Wollotuka in November 2000. The artwork represents the images and colours the women saw when they visited the Newcastle area which, they commented, were a huge contrast to their own country in the Western Desert area.

### **3. Mayapu Elsie Thomas**

Wangkatjungka  
*Kulyayi - Artist's Country* 2004  
acrylic on canvas

In this painting Elsie depicts the sandhill country typical of her ancestral lands in the Great Sandy Desert. It shows a waterhole where there is fresh, or living, water – a *jila*, in Elsie's language. Knowledge of the waterholes and maintenance of them was a vital part of survival for desert people. The record of family ownership of groups of waterholes in the Great Sandy Desert is embedded in the knowledge and Dreaming law of Wangkatjungka people. Several waterholes were claimed by the Canning Stock Route builders and have had wells excavated next to them. Others are in more remote country and only knowledge by the traditional owners allows them to be mapped and connected to other waterholes. This painting is a statement of connection between the traditional owners and the chains of waterholes that underpinned life for Wangkatjungka people of the Great Sandy Desert.

### **4. Lynette Rowlands**

Manyjilyjarra  
*Yimiri* 2022  
acrylic on canvas

Yimiri comprises two freshwater soaks situated in the middle of a salt lake in the Percival Lakes area, within Western Australia's Great Sandy Desert. Around these soaks the Country is dominated by permanent *tuwa* (sand hills). When visiting this site to drink water, the bulrushes surrounding the soaks are pushed back to access the *kapi* (water).

Yimiri is home to an ancestral *jila* (snake). The Western Desert term *jila* is used interchangeably to describe springs considered to be 'living' waters and snakes, both of which play a central role in Martu culture and *Jukurrpa*

(Dreaming). During the *pujiman* (traditional, desert dwelling) period, knowledge of water sources was critical for survival, and today Martu Country is still defined in terms of the location of water sources.

#### 5. **Ngamaru Bidu**

Manyjilyjarra  
*Untitled* 2022  
acrylic on linen

This work portrays an area of Country that can be interpreted in multiple ways. First, the image may be read as an aerial representation of a particular location known to the artist - either land that they or their family travelled, from the *pujiman* (traditional, desert dwelling) era to now. An additional layer of meaning in the work relates to more intangible concepts; life cycles based around *kalyu* (rain, water) and *waru* (fire) are also often evident. Today the ancient practice of fire burning continues to be carried out as both an aid for hunting and a means of land management. As the Martu travelled and hunted they would burn tracts of land, ensuring plant and animal biodiversity and reducing the risk of unmanageable, spontaneous bush fires. The patchwork of regrowth is evident in many landscape works, with each of the five distinctive phases of fire burning visually described with respect to the cycle of burning and regrowth.

Finally, metaphysical information relating to a location may also be recorded; *Jukurrpa* (Dreaming) narratives chronicle the creation of physical landmarks, and can be referenced through depictions of ceremonial sites, songlines, and markers left in the land. Often, however, information relating to *Jukurrpa* is censored by omission, or alternatively painted over with dotted patterns.

#### 6. **Nada Tjigila Rawlins**

Wangkatjungka  
*Wirnti* 2009  
acrylic on canvas

Nada Tjigila Rawlins painted the waterholes and country around her birthplace at Kirriwirri in the southern region of the Great Sandy Desert. This area is dominated by a long series of salt lakes, the Percival Lakes, which stretch for hundreds of kilometres across the desert.

Amongst these vast salt lakes are small sources of fresh water that are known to the local custodians and are critical to supporting life in this part of the desert. Nada Tjigila Rawlins had a mental map of the region, reciting the series of names of waterholes that taken together to form the pathway for the movement of people and animals across the desert country. As custodians and traditional owners of this country, Nada's clan had an intimate knowledge of this country and its resources. As an artist Nada continued to access this knowledge as the underlying subject of her work, representing the country and its sandhill structures, the waterholes and the bush foods that her people harvested in season.

#### 7. **Nyangarni Penny K Lyons**

Walmajarri  
*Mangkajakura* 2005  
acrylic on canvas

Nyangarni Penny K Lyons painted the waterholes and country around her birthplace near Japingka waterhole in the Great Sandy Desert. This painting depicts the Mangkajakura waterhole in Walmajarri country in the Great Sandy Desert and is surrounded by jilji (sand hills). Mangkaja is a white bird from the Dreamtime, like an owl, with black and white markings around his eyes, who travels at night. Mangkaja came from Kiyili, and where he landed there sprung a waterhole, Mangkajakura.

**8. Nada Tjigila Rawlins**

Wangkatjungka  
*Yiimirri* 2016  
acrylic on canvas

Nada Tjigila Rawlins explained the story of this painting, "This jila ngapa (living spring) is right in the middle of a warla (lake), when we come from a long way jilji (sandhill) side, we look at that jila Yiimirri and we can see that water rise up. That snake (ancestral spirit snake) been seen us walking, we sing out to that snake 'ooooiii' we been come to visit you, don't get angry we from this country, send ngapa (water) this way."

**9. Biddee Baadjo**

Kukuja/Wangkatjungka  
*Ngawuli* 2002  
acrylic on canvas

The traditional country for Biddee Baadjo includes the lands surrounding the waterhole called Piyurr, that she most often paints. It is named after a small bird, red and black in colour, with a call that sounds like 'piyurr, piyurr'. In this painting however, she has depicted Ngawuli. She says of this site: "This is a rockhole in my mother's country. Water comes down through hole. Good water that one."

**10. Jukuja Nora Tjookootja**

Wangkatjungka  
*Saltwater and Turkey Track* 2004  
acrylic on canvas

In this painting Jukuja Nora Tjookootja has depicted the tracks of the Bush Turkey or Bustard. The tracks depict the bush turkey's marks which are journeying back from a waterhole in the Great Sandy Desert. Jukuja Nora Tjookootja's paintings record the main features of the Great Sandy Desert - its long rows of parallel sandhills that flow out of the centre of the continent. Clearly visible from the air, these bands of sandhills affect wind and rain patterns and have developed localised conditions that form various biological pockets in the valleys between them.

**11. Jukuja Nora Tjookootja**

Wangkatjungka  
*Lirtawarti* 2002  
acrylic on canvas

This is Lirtawarti, a site in the artist's ancestral Country. Lirtawarti is Jukuja's Grandmother's country. Jukuja says of it: "Big river there - running spring water. There's sandhills, with running water inside. Two waterholes, joined up underneath in a cave. There's trees and running water inside." Living water is the term used to refer to a waterhole that has freshwater that can be used all year, it does not run dry. This is an area for gathering and families meeting together as well as for replenishing and reviving. This country of the Great Sandy Desert has no surface water, and knowledge of its underground soaks and springs is critical to both animals and humans for survival. Wangkatjungka people have incorporated knowledge of the water sources into their song cycles, a learned body of knowledge that has been passed down through the generations.

**12. Damien Marks Jangala and Yilpi Marks Atira**

Luritja  
*My Country* 2022  
acrylic on canvas

Damien Marks Jangala and Yilpi Marks Atira are a husband and wife team who collaborate on paintings that tell the story of both Women's and Men's Dreaming stories, using traditional iconography and dot work to represent sites of significance. Many of the Jukurrpa or Dreaming narratives come from Damien's home country around Papunya in central Australia. The iconography indicates campsites and ceremonial grounds, water sources as either small creeks or rock holes, areas reliable for bushtucker and other areas of hilly and stony ground.

**13. Patricia Baker Tunkin**

Pitjantjatjara  
*Minma Marlilu Tjukurrpa* 2022  
acrylic on canvas

This painting deals with the legendary figure of Marlilu, a woman who features in many of the stories of Patricia's mother Kay Baker Tunkin, which she handed down to her daughters.

The story takes place between Kanpi and Watarru in the Pitjantjatjara lands. Marlilu is responsible for the formation of many of the landforms in the area including the underground caverns one finds at Mt Lindsay, the mountain that towers over the Watarru community. This creation aspect of her persona lends to a comparison with the Tingari of the Pintupi tribes further north and west. In this painting, Marlilu and her sister are walking around the countryside at Katatitja, near Kanpi, looking for water (kaapi) and bush tucker (mai). Times are hard in the desert country, hence the strong, desert colours, and the women have not been having a lot of success finding food. Eventually, after much searching and digging, they find food. As they move around the country, they are pursued by a man who is looking for a wife. The man never finds the two elusive sisters, although he searches everywhere.

**14. Lance Peck**

Manyjilyjarra  
*Mantjiltjara – Lake Maitland* 2022  
acrylic on linen

In this painting, Lance Peck has depicted a part of his ancestral homelands at Mantjiltjara where he lived with his family as a boy. It is painted from an aerial perspective, creating a map showing important creation sites, including waterholes, journey lines between them and the land formations that characterise the country.

## MEDIA SPACE

**15. Gracie Morton Pwerle**

Alyawarr  
*Hunting for Bush Tucker* 2021  
acrylic on canvas

In this painting Gracie Morton Pwerle depicts an aerial view of her ancestral Country showing the walking paths made by the women as they hunt for food. One of the favourite sources of bush tucker is the Anwekety - the Bush Plum, and Gracie depicts the changing seasonal influences on this plant that is of the greatest significance to the Alyawarre women of the Eastern Desert region of the Northern Territory. It is a highly nutritious small fruit with black seeds, rich in vitamin C. It can be eaten raw or cooked.

**16. Djakaṅu Yunupiṅu**

Gumatj, Rrakpala Group  
*Ṇerrk* 2022  
earth pigments on Stringybark  
34 x 76cm

In the Yolṅu world, ancestral spirits are present in the landscape and at the forefront of people's interpretation of their lived experience in a vibrant and largely unspoiled natural landscape.

It is normal for Yolṅu people to attribute a specific clan identity to any feature of the natural environment that makes itself apparent. A bird is never just a bird but a mnemonic to a person dead or alive, a place and a whole network of kinship. Yolṅu perceive this as the spiritual world sending a signal. The Yirritja birds, Ṇerrk the sulphur crested cockatoo and the smaller Laparr or bronze wing pigeon are sung by multiple Yirritja clans including Dhalwaṅu and Gumatj. At times of Yolṅu mourning/mortuary the spirit of ancestor's past may visit the site of grieving manifesting as these birds.

**17. Jukuja Nora Tjookootja**

Wangkatjungka  
*Pampilyi - Bush Banana* 2002  
acrylic on canvas

This painting depicts Pampilyi, the native Bush Banana, which grows on a small vine and is collected for eating. Jukuja Nora Tjookootja and her family lived off the land when she was a young child. Knowledge of bush foods was an integral part of that life, and the artist continued to hunt and gather bush foods throughout the rest of her life. These bush foods were always considered a great delicacy and were highly prized.

**18. Jakapa Dora Kwilla**

Wangkatjungka  
*Mother's Country* 2003  
acrylic on canvas

Kakapa Dora Kwilla painted the waterholes and country around her birthplace at Yimiri waterhole. She travelled across this country with her family when she was young, moving between the waterholes that are central to life on her ancestral desert country. Her extended family kinship group moved across these traditional lands on seasonal migrations to hunt and gather food and to perform ceremonies.

Knowledge of the permanent desert waterholes, called living water, was critical to the traditional inhabitants. Each waterhole was incorporated into the Dreaming stories of the region, and learned in a song cycle that contained all the information related to survival in the area.

**19. George Tuckerbox**

Wangkatjungka  
*Kurtukurta* 2005  
acrylic on canvas

In this painting George has marked a waterhole situated between long parallel sandhills. The location he has called Kurtukurta. The landscape is covered in dots indicating the variety of grasses, plants and bush tucker in the area.

**20. Angkaliya Nelson**

Pitjantjatjara  
*Kungkarangkalpa (Seven Sisters Story)* 2022  
acrylic on canvas

This work tells of the seven sisters who travelled from Kaliwarra to Wanarn in Western Australia, stopping at significant sites and rockholes including Kuru Ala, a sacred place for women. They encountered a lustful man named Wati Nyiru, who chased them around the desert. Some of the details of this Tjukurpa (Dreaming story) are sacred and cannot be repeated.

**GALLERY 2**

**21. Kristy Faulkner, Hannah Pipe, Rhyann Roberts, Jade Nicholson, Caelli Brooker, Darcy Fish, Tamara Fish, Sam Clifton, Renae Lamb**

*Untitled* 2022  
acrylic on canvas

Created at the Wollotuka Institute in September 2022, this collaborative artwork was created by an Indigenous women's group sharing their own stories and how they have come together at the university.

22. **Nada Tjigila Rawlins**

Wangkatjungka  
*Kirriwirri* 2010  
acrylic on canvas

Of this painting the artist says, "This is Kirriwirri Jila- desert waterhole at Kirriwirri. This is where I was born. My father passed away in this country. The water never dries up in the jila. Near Kirriwirri there are lots of warla (claypans where water collects after rain, often salty). You can see the lines of salt which are left when the water dries up in the warla. There are lots of yellow bush flowers we call karwili karwili."

23. **Nada Tjigila Rawlins**

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24. **Jukuja Nora Tjookootja**

Wangkatjungka  
*Piparr* 2008  
acrylic on canvas

This is Piparr Rockhole in Jukuja Nora Tjookootja's Country. She says of Piparr, "Piparr, big hills, desert sandhills, and 'jila' living water." The term living water refers to the fact that the waterhole has freshwater that can be used all year, it does not run dry. This is an area for gathering and families meeting together as well as for replenishing and reviving.

25. **Janet Golder Kngwarreye**

Anmatyerre  
*My Country* 2021  
acrylic on canvas

This painting depicts the variety of bush tucker that is found in the Utopia homelands as well as elements of the landscape in which it grows. The most staple type of food is the Bush Yam, which has an extensive root system. At ground level the Yam exhibits bright green leaves with yellow flowers and its branches cover a great deal of surface area. A few months after rainfall, the plant surface will die off, and it takes certain skills by the Aboriginal women to look for signs that indicate where the roots are likely to be located. Often large areas will be excavated in their search to find the roots, which are the edible part of the plant. Another type of bush tucker is the Bush Berry, which is found only six weeks of the year and is a special favourite among the people. Bush Banana, Bush Plum, Bush Raison and Bush Tomato are also popular. All these foods are collected by the women and placed in their coolamons or wooden bowls. Then the food is taken back to the community and shared. What is not eaten, is dried and stored for the leaner months, when food is scarce.

26. **Nada Tjigila Rawlins**

Wangkatjungka  
*Kupankurlu* 2003  
acrylic on canvas

Nada Rawlins paints the waterholes and country around her birthplace at Kirriwirri in the southern region of the Great Sandy Desert. This area is dominated by a long series of salt lakes, the Percival Lakes, which stretch for hundreds of kilometres across the desert. Amongst these vast salt lakes are small sources of fresh water that are known to the local custodians and are critical to supporting life in this part of the desert. Kupankurlu is a large waterhole with jila (living water) that means green grass will grow all year round.

27. **Rosie Goodjie**  
Wangkatjungka  
*Kurrunjunku* 2002  
acrylic on canvas

Rosie travelled through this country with her parents as a teenager, when they visited these waterholes at Yartaru and Kurunjungku. 'Kuru' means river and 'jila' is a living water hole that never runs dry. This 'jila', Kurnujungku, makes up part of the traditional lands of Rosie's kinship group, who made seasonal migrations through this country in the Great Sandy Desert to hunt and gather food.

### GALLERY 3

28. **Rosie Karadada**  
Woonambal  
*Wandjina and Lightning Man* Unknown  
lithograph on paper, edition 12/20
29. **Simon Nolan**  
*Gone Fishing* 1999  
acrylic paint on paper
30. **Maryanne Mungatopi**  
Tiwi  
*Objects used in Kulama* 2000  
etching and aquatint print on paper
31. **Mini Heath**  
Worimi  
*Eastern Rosella* 1986  
linocut print on paper, ed. AP
32. **Mini Heath**  
Worimi  
*Bird with Egg* 1986  
linocut print on paper, ed. 12/40
33. **Mini Heath**  
Worimi  
*Sugar Glider* 1986  
linocut print on paper, ed. 22/40
34. **Mini Heath**  
Worimi  
*Echidna* unknown  
linocut print on paper, ed. 16/40
35. **Mini Heath**  
36. Worimi  
*Serpent* 1986  
linocut print on paper, ed. 29/40
37. **Mini Heath**  
Worimi  
*Two Goannas* 1986  
linocut print on paper, ed. 25/40

## FOYER

### 38. **Judy Napangardi Martin**

Warlpiri

*Women's Ceremony* 2006

acrylic on canvas

This painting tells the story of older Warlpiri women passing on the traditional knowledge to the younger women. This type of ceremony can take months, as the women move from community to community, covering the many Dreaming or Creation sites and stories.

The women travel with their digging sticks and coolamon dishes, which are used for collecting bush tucker, especially the prized bush yams. The yams grow as long tuber roots underground, so the women need to use the digging sticks to free them from the earth. These sticks are also used by the women in ceremonial dances, and in these instances, they are covered with brightly coloured patterns. The women paint the sticks with various meanings for ceremonies and they also are used as trade items.

In this painting the women are depicted by U-shapes and the digging sticks by straight lines. They are shown at different ceremonial sites, represented by concentric circles, and the journey lines between them.

### 39. **Winnie Reid Nakamarra**

Pintupi

*My Country* 2022

acrylic on canvas

Using the land as a memory map Winnie Reid Nakamarra has represented elements of her traditional country from an aerial perspective. The subject matter is always drawn from acute observation and memory, intimate knowledge of country, personal history and ancestral journey. In miniature we see a contemporary translation of the oldest laws and culture, through a modern language that crosses all boundaries. The effects of the seasons and the location of water sources are also often seen in these paintings. Winnie paints women's ceremonial sites and stories involving the peewee bird associated with the rockhole site of Lupul, and peewee bird tracks are sometimes discernible in her work. The U shapes in the painting represent the women sitting painted up for ceremony. The concentric spiral depicts the rockholes, and the lines between them the journeys made by the women as well as the topography of the country.

### 40. **Mayapu Elsie Thomas**

Wangkatjungka

*Bush Peanut Trees* 2004

acrylic on canvas

In this painting Elsie depicts the sandhill country typical of her ancestral lands in the Great Sandy Desert of Western Australia and the bush tucker that is found there. The painting shows Tjurtajarti and Jilji Country trees, which are types of bush peanut trees, the painting also shows a waterhole where there is fresh, or living, water – a jila, in Elsie's language.