

CULTURAL MEDICINE

THE ART OF INDIGENOUS HEALING



MEDICAL HISTORY MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

The health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is among our nation's most dire social problems. To reduce the unacceptably high rates of illness and premature death suffered by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we must combine the trusted ways of holistic healing that have been practised on this continent for millennia with the most recent Australian and international research, education and clinical practice. The exhibition *Cultural Medicine: The Art of Indigenous Healing* explores the enduring presence and evolution of Indigenous medicine, and presents, through contemporary art, examples of specific treatments and broader approaches to healthy living from across Australia. It affirms that traditional healing is thriving and is an intrinsic part of the lives of many Indigenous communities.



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EDITED BY
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MEDICAL HISTORY MUSEUM
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Wurundjeri people,
who are the traditional custodians of the land upon which the university now stands.
We pay respect to the Elders—both past and present—of the Kulin Nation,
and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians.*

In 2012, as part of its Melbourne Medical School sesquicentenary celebrations, the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences commissioned Wurundjeri artist Mandy Nicholson to create this possum skin cloak, and presented it as a gift to the University of Melbourne. The cloak was first worn by Professor Ian Anderson for the academic procession leading to his admission to the degree of Doctor of Medical Science (*honoris causa*).

In a gesture of respect to her ancestors, and in recognition of the fact that the university's Parkville campus lies within Wurundjeri Country, Mandy Nicholson used traditional symbology to guide her design on the cloak. The symbols pertain to Wurundjeri Country and to students and learning. The intricate swirls represent the smoke of a ceremonial fire to welcome students—from near and far—to the land, and to their personal and academic journeys while at university and beyond. Interlocking and reaching out in many directions, the swirls also call on students to share the knowledge learned at university with their own communities and with the wider world.

Mandy Nicholson (Country: Wurundjeri), **Possum skin cloak** (detail), 2012, possum skin, thread, charcoal, 181.0 × 130.0 cm, University of Melbourne Collection. Photograph by Peter Casamento.



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FOREWORD

After 58 years in the Brownless Biomedical Library, the Medical History Museum embraces a new beginning, with its relocation to a newly refurbished building at 233 Bouverie Street, Carlton. The opening exhibition, *Cultural Medicine: The Art of Indigenous Healing*, acknowledges the contribution of Australia's First Nations people to healing practices.

Since its inception, in 1967, the museum has placed the history of Melbourne Medical School in the context of colonialism and international Western medicine; it was not until a collection policy change in 2017 that it encompassed the traditions of healing practice that have existed in Australia for 65,000 years. The museum's emphasis is now to collect contemporary art that demonstrates the currency and strength of Indigenous healing traditions in communities.

Initially established through a grant from the Wellcome Trust, the Medical History Museum holds more than 10,000 items covering the history of Melbourne Medical School and the broader history of medicine. This diverse collection of art, documents, photographs, artefacts, ceremonial objects and medical and scientific equipment has grown due to the generosity of benefactors associated with Melbourne Medical School. Together with alumni, their families and others, the benefactors have been crucial in building this valuable historical and cultural resource.

A major Wellcome Institute donation was the Savory & Moore pharmacy, shipped from London in 1971. With the museum's move to Bouverie Street, it has been dismantled, restored and relocated. A video documenting the process will soon be available online thanks to the generosity of Jeremy and Helena Savory. Other important gifts include the Australian Medical Association collection of archival material, and additions to the pharmaceutical collection from the estates of Graham Roseby and Sir Russell and Lady Grimwade. A generous donation by Hugh Taylor AC and Elizabeth Dax AM will enrich the collection of Australian Indigenous art relating to healing practices.

With sadness we acknowledge the death of Denise de Gruchy (1925–2025), a great benefactor of the museum. Over many years, Denise gave generously in memory of her brother, Professor Carl de Gruchy, enabling the museum to flourish, including through exhibitions, publications and enhanced online access.

From its new location, the Medical History Museum will continue to contribute to university life through innovative programs and increased visibility and reach.

Professor Mark Cook

Chair, Medical History Museum Advisory Committee, University of Melbourne

Cat. 46 Mary Elizabeth Moreen, **Ningarti Mirrijini Kapiwarta** (detail), 2018, natural ochres on canvas, 120.0 × 150.0 cm, MHM2018.85, Medical History Museum.



PREFACE

The making of Bull Kelp containers and water carriers is a tradition of Aboriginal people of the Furneaux Islands group. These water carriers are just one example of the ingenious health practices that have existed for tens of thousands of years. Kelp naturally contains iodine, so the containers had the health-related benefits of disinfecting the water and preventing thyroid problems.

When Europeans arrived on this continent with their Western medicine in the 1700s, few of their medical practitioners acknowledged the 65,000 years of healing traditions that had supported diverse and complex Indigenous cultures for millennia. These practices continue to be central to Indigenous health and wellbeing.

The exhibition *Cultural Medicine: The Art of Indigenous Healing* follows the premise of *Tjukurpa* (translated from Pitjantjatjara as the Dreaming, or the foundation of life and society). It revisits the themes of *The Art of Healing: Australian Indigenous Bush Medicine* (2018), which toured to King's College London and the Berlin Museum of Medical History, an institution of the Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, furthering the University of Melbourne's connections with these major universities. The exhibition explores the enduring presence and evolution of Indigenous medicine and presents, through contemporary art, examples from many communities. This publication affirms that traditional healing is a thriving practice informed by the past and intrinsic to the lives of many First Nations people. As Al Vance says in his essay on cultural healing, the knowledge and cultural practices of elders greatly benefits the wellbeing of the community. I thank the artists and other contributors for sharing their knowledge and reminding us of the importance of working together with respect.

This exhibition expands the museum's collection of contemporary Indigenous art. The works will continue to benefit us all long after this exhibition, as they are displayed across the faculty. We acknowledge the generous gift of Hugh Taylor AC and Elizabeth Dax AM to the Medical History Museum, which has allowed for the purchase of artworks for the Australian Indigenous Bush Medicine Collection.

I congratulate the Medical History Museum on this exhibition and its successful relocation, and I look forward to its continuing contribution to the life of the university and broader community.

Professor Mike McGuckin

Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne

Cat. 38 Yalmakany Marawili, **Burukpili** (detail), 2023, earth pigment on paper, 150.0 × 75.0 cm, MHM2024.9, Medical History Museum.



BUSH MEDICINE, ART AND HEALING

The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences commissioned a possum skin cloak from Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung elder Mandy Nicholson as part of its 150th celebrations. The cloak is worn on ceremonial occasions with the academic gown, itself a symbol of academic attainment and standing. The pair of cloaks combine to communicate that the wearer is distinguished both as an academic of standing and as an Indigenous leader. Notably worn by the first Aboriginal man from Tasmania to graduate in medicine from the University of Melbourne, the cloak is a magnificent reminder of Indigenous knowledge and its persistence. It is decorated with symbolic patterns representing both the ‘smoke of a welcoming fire’ and the ‘learning and personal journeys of students’.

We must not forget that the university was established with the stated aim of replacing Indigenous knowledge systems with those of the British. This is no longer possible. The veils have been lifted by those prepared to tell the truth about the Indigenous knowledge systems plundered by academics throughout the university’s history. This institution, like many others, has a past marked by racism and marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge. By shedding light on Indigenous traditions, the university can dismantle structures perpetuating inequality and exclusion. This honours Indigenous voices and fosters cross-cultural understanding, respect and knowledge co-creation.

Nor should we forget that the Parkville campus is on Wurundjeri country. Places on the campus resonate with the ancestral past, signified in Billibellary’s Walk.¹ Adding to our understanding of Wurundjeri Country is a commissioned artwork by Mandy Nicholson that will be soon located in the foyer and courtyard of the Medical Museum, on Bouverie Street. It depicts the eels that have travelled down the waterways and creeks of this country since time immemorial.

The exhibition (and this accompanying catalogue) of artworks by Aboriginal artists from across the continent and its islands depicts bush medicine and healing traditions inherited over millennia. Spanning the Taungurung Country of Victoria to the remote islands of the Tiwi, these works demonstrate how art serves not merely as aesthetic expression but also as a vital repository of medicinal knowledge, cultural transmission and spiritual healing. We see the resilience of tradition in these works and the extraordinary understanding of health, illness and ways of treating a wide range of conditions. This knowledge encompasses diverse understandings of the human body, mind and spirit; local ecosystems; human and non-human behaviours; celestial bodies; and the healing

Cat. 15 Deanne Gilson, **Ba-gurrk Yaluk Beenyak (Women Sitting Under the Night Sky and Making Camp by the River)** (detail), 2023, 22-karat gold leaf, acrylic and charcoal (sourced from Marlene Gilson) on canvas, 50.0 × 180.0 cm, MHM2023.43, Medical History Museum.

properties of plants. It is intricately woven into governance, diplomacy, art, dance, storytelling and ceremonial practices passed down through everyday activities, kin relationships and ceremonial teachings. Indigenous healing knowledge has the potential to benefit everyone.

This remarkable collection of artworks reminds us of the complex connection between Indigenous Australians and their traditional lands, waters and seas. These artistic expressions serve as a powerful testament to the enduring wisdom, resilience and creativity of Australia's First Peoples in preserving and sharing their traditional knowledge and practices related to bush medicines and healing. Geographic, cultural and historical influences on art styles and practices are evident in the range of media, both traditional and adopted. In such a vast continent, so rich in languages, cultures and distinctive peoples, we should expect as much.

The Western Aranda/Arrernte artists depict people and Country, plants and medicinal practices. Their watercolour paintings offer a delicate and intimate portrayal of the medicinal plants and their significance. Artists Delray Inkamala, Vanessa Inkamala, Dellina Inkamala, Dianne Inkamala, Mervyn Rubuntja, Mandy Malbunka and Selma Nunay Coulthard have captured the intricate details and vibrant colours of various bush medicines, revealing the versatility of this medium in depicting the textures and hues of their Country. Their works showcase a deep understanding of the medicinal properties and cultural significance of these plants, inviting us to appreciate the resourcefulness and ingenuity of Indigenous communities in utilising plants for sustenance and healing. Vanessa's *Bush Vicks* explains 'gum tree leaves, we called that one Bush Vicks. When we get sick, we use that one, Bush Vicks, for medicine—for cough, for flu and all that.'² The works of these artists demonstrate the sophisticated pharmacological knowledge embedded in Indigenous plant use, with specific applications for respiratory ailments, digestive health and general wellbeing.

The ceramic sculptures provide a tactile, three-dimensional representation of bush medicine practices. Judith Pungarta Inkamala, Shirley Wheeler, Andrea Pungarta Rontji, Dalissa Brown, Beth Mbitjana Inkamala and Hayley Panangka Coulthard have skilfully captured the essence of these practices. From vivid depictions of preparation processes to the application of remedies, these sculptures highlight the importance of touch, physical contact and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Hayley's *Kaltjinthintja (Teaching My Grandchildren)* exemplifies the crucial role of knowledge transmission. It documents the process of teaching grandchildren to identify and prepare bush medicines: 'because my mum is getting old, I want to look after my grandchildren, teaching bush tucker and bush medicine'. From Pukatja (Ernabella), Janice Stanley shares, in stoneware, the knowledge gained from her elders, showing the leaves of the *Ilkuwara* tree.

The acrylic paintings on canvas offer a vibrant and dynamic representation of the bush medicine narratives, inviting us into the rich tapestry of cultural connections and stories. Marie Mudgedell, Anne Ovi, Ned Grant, Helicopter (Joey) Tjungurrayi, Miriam Baadjo, Cecilia Nampijinpa Martin and Betty Mula have employed this medium to convey their stories, weaving together the root systems of various plants and celebrating the gathering of bush medicines and connection to ancestral lands. The Central and Western Desert artists present healing knowledge through sophisticated mapping systems that encode both geographical and spiritual information. Myrtle Pennington's *Kanpa* and Ned Grant's *Tjintir-Tjintirpa* demonstrate how Country itself functions as medicine, with Grant weaving 'the *wata* (root systems) from the *Ngalta* (Desert Kurrajong), *Katiya* (Western Myall) and *Kukara* (Sheoak) through the vast Country they inhabit'. These works reveal how the landscape holds cultural knowledge, with 'daily interactions governed by the moral compass of the first beings who created the physical realm'. Anne Ovi's *Purkitji* depicts Sturt Creek, where 'many bush medicines grow around the waterways', while Marie Mudgedell's *Bush Baby Story* documents traditional birthing practices, explaining that 'birth was sacred' and involved specific protocols for ensuring the health of mother and child. Helicopter Tjungurrayi, identified as a *maparn* (traditional healer), presents his Country Wangkartu as a source of life through the *tjurrnu* (soakwater) that sustained his family.

Farther south, in Pitjantjatjara Country, a place called Anumara Piti, depicted by *ngangkari* (traditional healer) Marinka Burton, is a Dreaming place of the caterpillar. She paints *Anamaruku Tjuta*, or Many Caterpillars, as threads of this story onto her canvas to show small green and white caterpillars burrowing tunnels and holes in the earth, leaving behind patterns on the surface. Her father was 'a special *ngangkari* ... and he taught me about healing'. As a *ngangkari*, she works for the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council: 'As artists and as a community, we should always do more work with the young people, making things together and teaching them about the old ways, too, always remembering Country. This is a good way.'

The Alyawarr artists Kindy Kemarre Ross, Ada Pula Beasley, Jessie Kemarr Beasley, Daisy Ngwarreye Peterson and Triscilla Peterson demonstrate how seasonal knowledge informs medicine gathering, Ada explaining that 'when the rain comes the bush medicines grow. When it's green we collect it—before it gets dry'.

Marjorie Williams' *Get Vaccinated for Covid-19* represents a remarkable synthesis of traditional and contemporary health practices, showing how Indigenous communities navigate modern healthcare while maintaining cultural protocols. The work depicts a family outstation where 'the nurse went to Yuwalki ... to give that old man vaccine', demonstrating community-based healthcare delivery that respects cultural contexts.

The historical significance of Indigenous medicine in global contexts is revealed through the D-Day seasickness tablets made from the Corkwood tree (*Duboisia myoporoides*). This extraordinary example shows how Indigenous knowledge contributed to a pivotal moment in world history, with an Aboriginal medicine helping ensure the success of the Normandy invasion.

The people of Bathurst and Melville Islands, the Tiwi, have rich healing traditions. Artists Mary Elizabeth Moreen and Doriana Bush document island-specific healing practices, with Moreen's *Ningarti Mirrijini Kapiwarta* showing how various plants, including *Parntirringa* (White Currant) and *Murunyini* (Acacia), are used for respiratory ailments and the bark of *Munkarajingi* (Casuarina) treats skin conditions.

In north-east Arnhem Land, Mulkuṇ Wirrpanda and Yalmakany Marawili depict a strength of connection to the land and healing practices through their artworks. Mulkuṇ's *Baby Teeth in the Gunga* intricately brings together the sacred and practical significance of the Pandanus plant in Yolṇu culture. The artwork reflects the Yolṇu first-teeth story, in which the plant's leaves are used for weaving and its stem as an anaesthetic for sore teeth. The ritual of throwing baby teeth into the *Gunga* tree symbolises the renewal and strength of new teeth, echoing the deep-rooted connection between nature and wellbeing. Yalmakany's works delve into the medicinal properties of various plants. Each drawing showcases the healing knowledge passed down through generations and the importance of sustaining Yolṇu plant medicine. Yalmakany's dedication to preserving her mother's legacy and advocating for plant knowledge reflects a deep commitment to cultural heritage and environmental stewardship. Roy Burnyila's *Raypiny Dhawu (Fresh Water Story)* captures the essence of freshwater totems from the swamp in Central Arnhem Land. Depicting catfish, crocodile, file snake, Darwin prawns, Barramundi, waterlilies and bubbles in the water, the artwork celebrates the interconnectedness of water and life in their culture.

In the south-east of Australia, particularly in regions where the impact of colonisation was catastrophically destructive, the persistence of Indigenous healing traditions and art practice underscore the cultural resilience and strength of the peoples of this region. Despite the historical trauma inflicted upon these communities, artists such as Eva Richardson, Deanne Gilson, Cassie Leatham, Zena Cumpston, the Kaiela Arts collective, Al Vance, Louise Smith, Erakye Hair and Ricki-lee Mumbler have continued to uphold and celebrate their cultural heritage through their artistic expressions.

Created for the Indigenous Cultural Practices project, the possum skin works by Al Vance, Erakye Hair and Ricki-lee Mumbler and the etched Cherry Ballart wood by Louise Smith reveal how traditional materials continue to carry contemporary healing messages, including healing relationships between community, Country and cultural practice.

A northern Wathaurung/Wiradjuri artist and psychiatrist, Al uses possum skin etched with pyrograph to convey the significance of Indigenous cultural practices in promoting health and wellbeing. His *Bengadak dyareeka ngam ngam ngarra-weel weel ngeeyt-a baa ngarra goorrk goorrk ngeeyt-a (We are standing on the shoulders of our elders)* articulates the fundamental principle that 'elders know about the cultural practices that can lead to health and wellbeing'. He emphasises the role of elders in preserving and passing down traditional knowledge: 'They enable, supervise and emplace Indigenous cultural practices in Country so that they can lead to health and wellbeing'. He, too, notes the inextricable link between people and Country, and the importance of the cultural governance that elders provided. They 'facilitate practices being passed down through generations and they govern the Aboriginal lore, so cultural practices heal community and Country and make both strong.' In a similar vein, Yuin Wiradjuri/Dhungatti artists Erakye Hair and Ricki-lee Mumbler, and Yorta Yorta artist Louise Smith draw on their heritage to create artworks that reflect the importance of healing on Country and the connection between land and wellbeing. Their pieces, etched with pyrograph on possum skin and sacred wood, embody the spiritual and healing properties of the world around them.

Cassie Leatham, a Taungurung/Wurundjeri artist from Gippsland, Victoria, creates a healing mat using native grasses and emu feathers. This artwork showcases Cassie's commitment to nurturing culture and heritage, especially among Aboriginal youth, and the importance of passing down traditional knowledge for future generations. *Healing Mat* establishes the fundamental principle that healing is intrinsically connected to Country and community. This work embodies the artist's understanding that 'healing is a journey of weaving, connecting the past to the present through significant healing mats'. Leatham's connection to her Taungurung and Wurundjeri heritage reflects the complex kinship systems that underpin Indigenous healing practices. Her work demonstrates how traditional knowledge is transmitted through mentorship and community engagement, particularly her dedication to nurturing youths, who will one day become the elders and teachers. The collaborative ceramic work of artists from Kaiela Arts, on Yorta Yorta Country, embodies the concept of cultural medicine. This, they claim is, 'is not simply a response to illness but a sovereign act of remembering, returning and cultural regeneration, rooted in Country'.

Deanne Gilson, a Wadawurrung artist from Ballarat, Victoria, uses her art to challenge colonial narratives and celebrate the spiritual beauty of Country. Her *Ba-gurrk Yaluk Beenyak* intricately weaves together elements of nature, culture and spirituality, reclaiming Indigenous symbols and practices. Through her visual narratives, Gilson reclaims the cultural significance of flowers, birds and trees, embedding them with ancestral knowledge and cosmic symbolism. Barkandji artist Zena Cumpston explores

the interrelationships between people, plants and animals on her Country through incorporating elements such as emu footprints and *kopi* (gypsum) in her artwork *ngarta-kiira*. She too celebrates the resilience of her people and their connection to the land.

The late Eva Richardson, a Trawlwoolway woman from Cape Portland in north-eastern Tasmania, has honoured her cultural traditions through her creation of a Bull Kelp water carrier. This artwork reflects the ancestral practice of crafting water carriers from kelp, a tradition passed down through generations in Tasmania. Eva's work embodies the connection between Palawa and the sea.

The exhibition reminds us of the urgent need to preserve and protect Indigenous medical and ethno-pharmaceutical knowledge. These artworks transmit wisdom, ensuring knowledge of the medicinal properties of plants and their role in maintaining physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing is not lost to future generations. The artists invite us to appreciate their approach to healing rooted in Indigenous cultures, their knowledge of plants and bush medicines and the interconnectedness of mind, body and spirit. They highlight the importance of protecting plant species and the social structures governing remedies. In a world in which rapid change threatens Indigenous knowledge systems, this collection calls us to engage with these narratives, to learn from them and to embrace Australia's ancient medicinal and healing traditions.

Professor Marcia Langton

- 1 This walk is self-guided using the Billibellary Walk smartphone app and/or downloadable map and narrative. It provides a cultural interpretation of significant places and an experience of connection to the Country, which the Wurundjeri people continue to uphold: <https://sustainablecampus.unimelb.edu.au/get-involved/billibellaris-walk>.
- 2 All quotes in this essay are taken from the artist statements accompanying the artworks shown later in this catalogue.

Cat. 10 Marinka Burton, **Anamaruku Tjuta (Many Caterpillars)** (detail), 2018, acrylic on canvas, 122.0 × 152.5 cm, MHM2018.86, Medical History Museum.

THE POWER OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION





BILLIBELLARY'S WALK: HEALING ENCOUNTERS OF PLACE

Born in 1799, Billibellary was the Ngurungaeta, or clan head, of the Wurundjeri Willam (a distinct patrilineal group within the Wurundjeri), whose diplomacy, intellect, courtesy and skills in negotiation would, in time to come, be put to the test.¹

When Europeans arrived on the banks of the Birrarung (the Yarra River) in 1835, Billibellary, along with Derrimut, head man of one of the Bunurong clans, would employ a sophisticated method of conciliation to protect their people, their role as custodians of the land and their place.²

Billibellary's Walk is a cultural interpretation of the University of Melbourne's Parkville campus landscape. It provides an experience of Country which Wurundjeri people continue to have both physically and spiritually. Billibellary wasn't just a leader; he was a guardian of stories, a keeper of sacred sites and a bridge between the spiritual world and everyday life. His life was woven into the land itself.

The walk invites you to move through Billibellary's land and to feel, know and imagine the six seasons, which are subtly reconstructed as a context for understanding place and belonging. In this sense, the walk aims to recognise and share the idea that the land is alive and supports the participants to reconcile this with the heavily built-up landscape. An important message for those who undertake the walk and experience the seasons is that even in a busy urban environment you are on Country, feeling its spirit.

Billibellary's Walk compels participants to understand the relationship between landscape and people, the nuance of which elevates mere space to place. Wurundjeri people have acquired deep knowledge of and connectedness with their extensive Country through songlines, trade routes, ceremony and seasonal cycles. Living according to the seasons, the stars and landscape, and imbuing these with memory, history and cultural value has created a continuum that nourishes generation after generation. Building a university on Aboriginal Country does not erase this; it may hide it under buildings or silence it with a different narrative, but Country still sings and those who are willing to listen will hear it.

The context of place and place-making are important, as they determine how communities will engage with a location and with each other. Multi-layered meaning and

Shawana Andrews on Billibellary's Walk, University of Melbourne. Photograph courtesy of Shawana Andrews.

different understandings of place influence the relationships held with it and within it; these are shaped by cultural, gendered and historical perception and experience. Such relationships, and their associated perception and experience, are how places are ‘practised’.

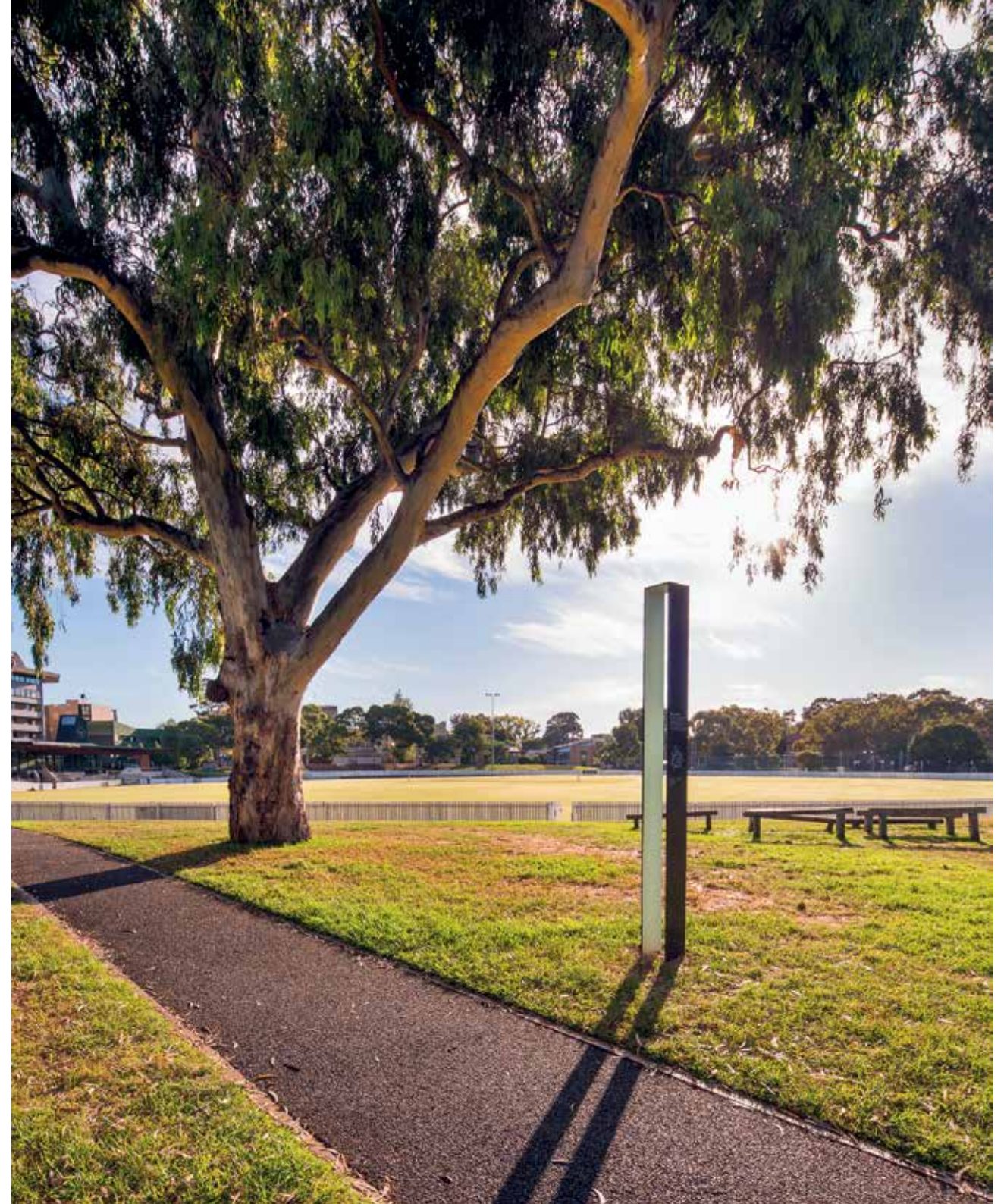
As a teaching tool, Billibellary’s Walk aims to build on the practice of place and, through important pedagogical functions, to support the truth-telling of the narrative. Storytelling, as a distinct Aboriginal way of knowing, is used as the primary mode of teaching. This includes metaphor; visual and symbolic learning; engagement of the senses; and concrete and abstract imagery as Aboriginal pedagogical practices. These become powerful mechanisms with which to ‘hold’ participants when discussing difficult and uncomfortable concepts, supporting safety and learning.

One of the important ways with which Australia’s landscape was brought under colonial control was through place naming. Centring Aboriginal identities in the narrative purposefully challenges such traditions of erasure. Naming and highlighting Wurundjeri Aboriginal leaders and knowledge-holders reinstates their roles as significant figures in Narrm. Positioning Billibellary as the primary figure in the narrative challenges the colonial control of the landscape and the people within it. In 1835, Billibellary was 34 years old and was a *ngurungaeta*. His leadership, preparedness for negotiation and vision for the future illustrate the important learnings bound within the walk itself. The detail of each stop offers the opportunity to build on the symbolism or metaphor of the factual narrative, with an emphasis on embodied learning as a process of understanding rather than an acquisition of skills.

Professor Shawana Andrews

- 1 Shawana Andrews, ‘Billibellary’s Walk: Unveiling Aboriginal Meaning of Place at a Sandstone University’, in Ross Jones, James Waghorne and Marcia Langton (eds), *Dhoombak Goobgoowana: A History of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne. Volume 1, Truth*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2024, p. 75.
- 2 Shawana Andrews and Ngarra Murray, Narrative for Billibellary’s Walk, University of Melbourne.

A majestic River Red Gum with signage along Billibellary’s Walk, at the north of the campus. Photograph by Peter Casamento.





ATOMIC TESTING: HEALING COUNTRY, HEALING THE WORLD

In the tsunami of harm inflicted on Indigenous peoples through the invasion and colonisation of Australia, the radioactive violence of British nuclear weapons testing is among the most egregious. Its indiscriminate and widely dispersed toxicity will persist over geological timeframes. The global suicide bombs that the tests helped develop portend indiscriminate nuclear violence to all humanity and our biosphere—unless they are ended before they end us.

Australia has a complicit history when it comes to the most hazardous materials on Earth. Under a January 1953 agreement, Australia became the only nation without nuclear weapons to mine uranium for production of nuclear weapons by another state (the United Kingdom),¹ and these were then exploded on its own territory. Australia is today the only member of a nuclear weapons-free zone, the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, which also claims protection from nuclear weapons (of the United States) through ‘extended nuclear deterrence’ and provides assistance for their possible use.

Following its early postwar exclusion from continuing US nuclear weapons development, the UK government was determined to develop its own nuclear weapons. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin stated: ‘We’ve got to have this thing over here whatever it costs ... We’ve got to have a bloody Union Jack flying on top of it.’² In possibly the worst decision ever made by an Australian leader, the nuclear tests were authorised by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, without formally consulting his Cabinet, many of whom were not even informed,³ let alone the Parliament. The 1985 royal commission into British nuclear tests in Australia concluded that the decision was taken ‘without the benefit of any scientific knowledge of the hazards that would be involved’.⁴ The two governments, on 18 February 1952, announced: ‘the test ... will be conducted in conditions which will ensure that there will be no danger whatever from radioactivity to the health of people or animals in the Commonwealth’.⁵ Menzies’ minister of supply, Howard Beale, gushed with antipodean subservience: ‘England has the bomb and the knowhow; we have the open spaces, and much technical skill and great willingness to help the Motherland’.⁶

As a result, the whole continent, except for the far south-west of Western Australia, was dusted by fallout at least once. In addition to 12 major nuclear explosions, the largest up to six times bigger than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, the British conducted 600 ‘minor trials’ of nuclear-weapon assemblies. These violated an international moratorium on nuclear test explosions that the British had agreed to, and they were

Cat. 17 Ned Grant, **Tjintir-Tjintirpa**, 2019, acrylic on linen, 137.0 × 200.0 cm, MHM2019.5, Medical History Museum.

conducted with what the royal commission described as ‘persistent deception and paranoid secrecy’. They also explosively dispersed more than 24 kilograms of plutonium (most with a half-life of 24,400 years) and other hazardous materials. They are responsible for the great majority of continuing long-lived radioactive contamination.

Noah Pearce, a British scientist prominent in the trials, later admitted during the royal commission that radioactive contamination was considered politically acceptable for Australia but not for Britain.⁷ When the counsel assisting the royal commission suggested to Lieutenant Colonel K Stewart, from the UK Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, that appropriate places for the minor trials might have been found in remote parts of Scotland, his response was: ‘I doubt if the people owning the estates in Scotland would look on that with very great favour. They are interested in pheasants and deer in Scotland.’⁸

The resulting contamination is extensive, persistent and difficult to remove. In the early 1990s, a \$108 million clean-up at Maralinga resulted in less than 2 per cent of the areas initially contaminated above the clean-up criteria at the most contaminated Taranaki ‘minor trials’ site meeting the clearance criteria after the clean-up,⁹ with 84 per cent of the total plutonium contamination still dispersed. Plutonium continues to leach into the environment. In the Montebello Islands, recent studies have shown residual plutonium in marine sediments 4500 times higher than in other Western Australian coastal areas. This is only three times lower than levels found in the Castle Bravo crater in the Marshall Islands, where the explosive yield of above-ground tests was 1000 times greater, and higher than those at Fangataufa Atoll in Maohi Nui (French Polynesia), where explosive yields were 26 times greater.

In evidence to the royal commission, Sir William Penney, the British nuclear physicist who led the UK’s development of the atomic bomb, was asked: ‘Did you or different people ever consider the prospect of Aborigines living on the north-west coast of Australia before firing the Mosaic explosion?’ He responded: ‘Not to my knowledge’.¹⁰ This approach, which could be described as colonial and radioactive racism, was also taken by the Australian government, one senior official criticising a ‘lamentable lack of balance’ in ‘apparently placing the affairs of a handful of natives above those of the British Commonwealth of Nations’.¹¹

Little was done to protect the more than 16,000 Australian nuclear-test workers, and even less to protect nearby Indigenous communities, which bore the brunt of this ongoing scourge. Aboriginal people suffered the most callous and brutal impacts of British nuclear testing, including neglect, irradiation at close range, displacement, loss of Country, culture and livelihoods, fear and starvation. Yami Lester was aged 10 when the ‘black mist’ from the Totem 1 test at Emu Field rolled over his northern South Australian community at Wallatinna Station, resulting in such high levels of radiation exposure that most of the community developed acute radiation sickness:

It was in the morning, around seven. I was just playing with the other kids. That’s when the bomb went off. I remember the noise, it was a strange noise, not like anything I’d ever heard before. The earth shook at the same time; we could feel the whole place move. We didn’t see anything, though. Us kids had no idea what it was ...

It wasn’t long after that a black smoke came through. A strange black smoke, it was shiny and oily. A few hours later, we all got crook, every one of us. We were all vomiting; we had diarrhoea, skin rashes and sore eyes. I had really sore eyes. They were so sore I couldn’t open them for two or three weeks. Some of the older people, they died. They were too weak to survive all of the sickness.¹²

Since 1945, survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings and of above-ground nuclear testing around the world have been calling for justice: recognition, apology, care, compensation, ongoing monitoring and clean-up of contaminated areas. With great courage, persistence and humanity, their most insistent, heartfelt call is that what happened to them must never happen to anyone, anywhere, ever again, and that nuclear weapons must be ended before they end us.

I have been immensely honoured and proud to work alongside Indigenous nuclear test survivors as part of Australia’s first Nobel Peace Prize laureate—the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)—to achieve and now implement the 2017 United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This the first international treaty to recognise the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on Indigenous peoples, women and girls, and to provide a categorical and comprehensive prohibition of nuclear weapons in international law. It contains the only framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons enshrined in an international agreement. It also provides the first obligations for joining states to assist victims of nuclear use and testing, and, where feasible, to help remediate areas contaminated by nuclear use and testing. Yami’s daughter Karina Lester has said:

Our loved ones died, our loved ones suffered, and we are the generations that continue to share those stories but also feel the impact on the generations to come. All Australians need to know these stories.¹³

Her sister Kunmanara ‘Rose’ Lester (deceased) stated: ‘We must all find our courage to say “no way, no nuclear on our land”. We must protect our people for generations to come. The children and their children. We must learn from the past.’¹⁴ Kokotha elder Sue Coleman-Haseldine, displaced from her birthplace at Koonibba Mission as a toddler by the nuclear tests in 1953, told the United Nations:

The nuclear ban treaty is an opportunity to assist countries to make amends to victims of nuclear weapons. It acknowledges the permanent damage done to people, land and culture across generations. By working together, life on Earth can continue into a safe nuclear-free future. The nuclear weapons ban treaty is a crucial step on the path to that future becoming a reality, as it must. I know that the future is not ours, it will forever belong to the next generation.¹⁵

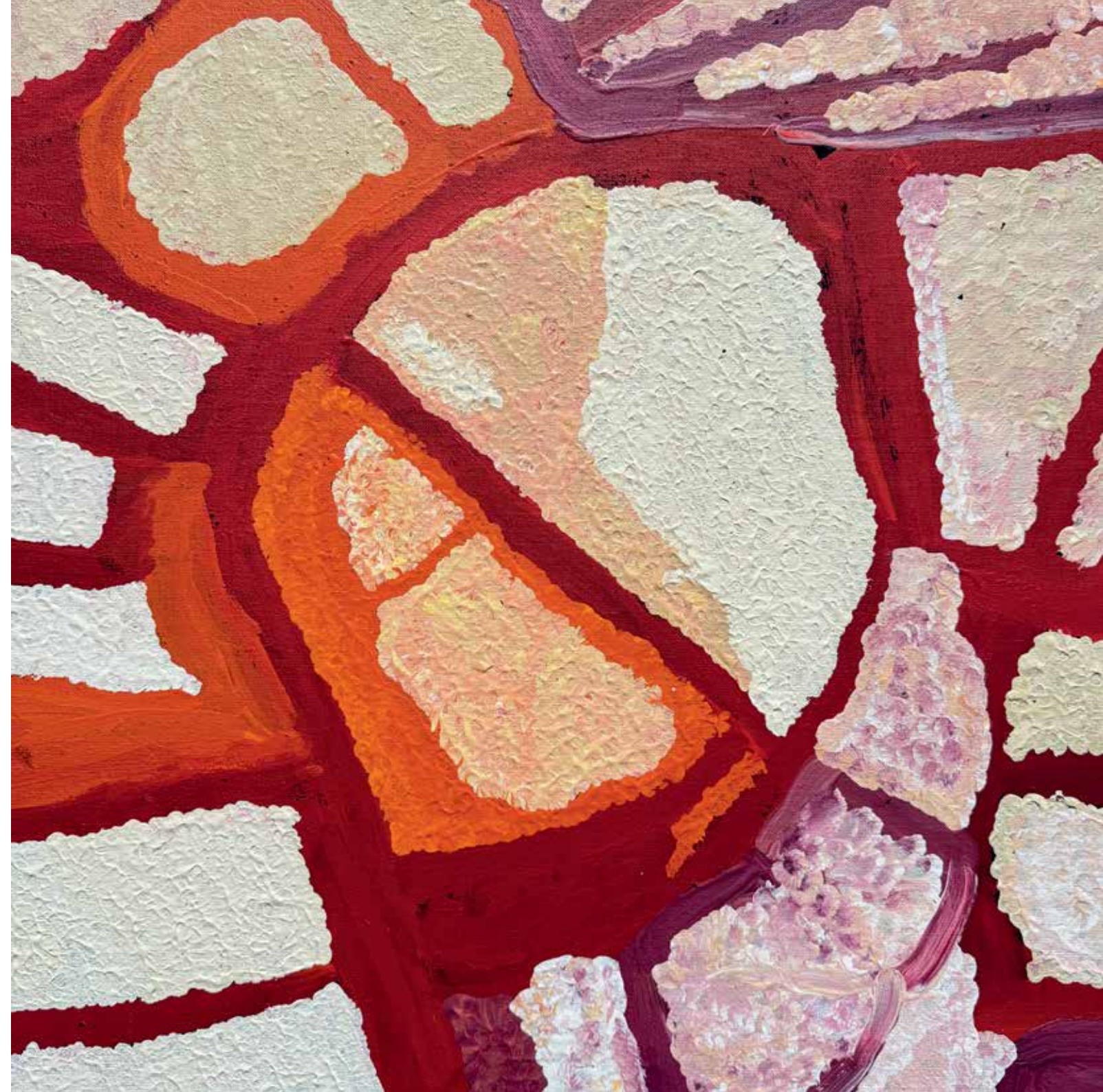
There is no healing feasible for much of the harm caused by nuclear weapons; prevention is the only cure. Justice remains unfinished business.

All Australians and the world benefit from Indigenous people's wisdom, foresight and generosity in caring for Country. We can be most grateful that Indigenous Australians put in harm's way under a mushroom cloud extend their horizon for healing to embrace the globe in the urgent imperative to free our world of the existential menace of nuclear weapons. We should join them.

Assoc. Professor Tilman Ruff

- 1 Elizabeth Tynan, *The Secret of Emu Field: Britain's Forgotten Atomic Tests in Australia*, Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2022, pp. 214, 233.
- 2 Paul Grace, *Operation Hurricane: The Story of Britain's First Atomic Test in Australia and the Legacy that Remains*, Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2023, p. 6; JL Symonds, *A History of British Atomic Tests in Australia*, Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1985, p. 31.
- 3 Justice J McClelland, *The Report of the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia*, vol. 1, Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1985, §2.1.12; Elizabeth Tynan, *Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story*, Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016, pp. 3, 68.
- 4 Justice J McClelland, *The Report of the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia: Conclusions and Recommendations*, Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1985, Conclusions 1, 2, p. 7.
- 5 McClelland, *The Report of the Royal Commission*, vol. 1, p. 449; Grace, pp. 63–4.
- 6 McClelland, *The Report of the Royal Commission*, vol. 1, p. 15.
- 7 McClelland, *The Report of the Royal Commission*, vol. 2, pp. 404–5; Tynan, *Atomic Thunder*, p. 117.
- 8 McClelland, *The Report of the Royal Commission*, vol. 2, p. 405.
- 9 Alan Parkinson, *Maralinga: Australia's Nuclear Waste Cover-up*, Sydney: ABC Books, 2007, p. 231.
- 10 McClelland, *The Report of the Royal Commission*, vol. 1, §7.5.2.
- 11 McClelland, *The Report of the Royal Commission*, vol. 2, §8.4.38.
- 12 ICAN Australia, *Black Mist*, Melbourne: International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Australia, June 2023, p. 9.
- 13 ICAN Australia, p. 12.
- 14 ICAN Australia, p. 14.
- 15 ICAN Australia, p. 31.

Cat. 50 Myrtle Pennington, **Kanpa** (detail), 2018, acrylic on linen, 90.0 × 137.0 cm, MHM2019.4, Medical History Museum.





MY JOURNEY THROUGH ELDER-GOVERNED CULTURAL THERAPY

The set-up

My muscles ache, back throbs, head rings as I push through the scrub, trying to find the old person's camp. I reckon these boots have trudged 3000 kilometres, visiting wise spiritual elders from all points of the compass in Country now called Victoria. Then a flicker of campfire light shows me my place. We yarn for a couple of hours, talking about the old ways and the power of the bush to heal—but with a warning to avoid the white ways at the fringes of our great culture. As the centre of power, economically and politically, you see, they could distort, twist and warp the old ways. Yes, go ahead, I will support you, but from the bush, in your dreams, in your practice of the old ways. And so, elder-governed cultural therapy is born.

Not another bloody counsellor

Yabba, yabba. Yes, yes. A neat young therapist drones on, full of the latest academic theory and politically correct terms that mean nothing to 14-year-old me, many years ago. Pay attention. Are you listening? Repeat after me. The drone of the bees, earning an honest living in the flowering gum outside, is much easier on the ears and mind.

My foster-carer mum has dragged me along to learn culture, whatever that is. And there is this old boy in a beanie and plumber's overalls and the old girl in an Aboriginal-design shirt, jeans and cowgirl boots. What a joke.

But they listen, not talk. They move slowly and seem assured in the bush, and with animals big and small. Wild bees come. Flocks of currawongs swoop in and hang around, singing a melody that picks me up off the ground, and I feel scared because something is creeping into me: an old rhythm and old song, an old dance, now remembered and not easily forgotten. This is not therapy for my mind—no one is talking at me. This is wrapping me up and cuddling me and taking me somewhere. What the hell is going on?

The siren call of Country

I go home with this rhythm inside me. I yearn to go back to be with old beanie dude and the cowgirl again next week. Trees feel different: one is like an old nan giving me orange quarters with sugar on top, in front of the telly, all snuggly warm and safe; others are like grand, stately kings ruling their domain, imparting energy, power, life-giving force as I draw

Cat. 62 Al Vance, **Bengadak dyareeka ngam ngam ngarra-weel weel ngeeyt-a baa ngarra goorrk goorrk ngeeyt-a (We are standing on the shoulders of our elders)** (detail), 2023, possum skin etched with pyrograph, 80.0 × 25.0 cm, MHM2024.1, Medical History Museum.

near. And others have low points and high points of energy when I walk around them. Weird but true.

The rhythm grows and I learn that different Country has different rhythms. Slow, three beat; faster, seven beat; faster still, eight beat. The plants, animals, birds and insects reflect that creative life force and live in it and through it. Wild birds and insects come closer and closer. A magpie hops on my leg as I sit yarning about frogs near a billabong. Crazy but true.

So this is what healing feels like

I practice every day at home, in my place, and it feels really good. I tell my mates about what I have learned, and I look up stuff on my phone. I find myself feeling the world differently, and I'm more comfortable in my skin. I notice the bats flying above me at night, the giant emu between the stars, the moon coming and going like the tides, and when a bush rat darts across my path. I am tuning in more and more to Country. More chilled: I am helping my mum more at home and fighting less with my sister. School is not pushing me to leave no more. Teachers seem more interested in helping me, rather than getting me out of class. Who knows what is happening? But it sure is good.

The academic bit

Elder-governed cultural therapy is a practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with mental-health conditions. It is delivered in Country, which centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing. It involves an Aboriginal cultural therapist—who is also a mental-health professional—working with a participant and their guardian under the guidance of a board of elders to explore a place-based cultural practice that takes various forms: walking in Country, art, music, dance and animal-assisted therapy. It occurs alongside Western mental-health care in a Western hospital but is separate from Western mental-health paradigms and the hospital.

Each young person receives approximately eight hours of elder-governed cultural therapy over six to eight sessions. It is particular to the therapist and participant, but its form can be generalised. Its hallmarks are reflective, narrative and dynamic interpersonal processes, mutual co-learning built on respect between the participant and therapist, and respect for Country. In addition, it is iterative, fostering internalisation of coping styles and interpersonal skills in young people. The specific practices, however, vary, reflecting the different perspectives, skills and priorities of each therapist.

Cat. 58 Louise Smith, **This Is My Home** (detail), 2023, Cherry Ballart sacred wood etched with pyrograph, 22.0 × 4.0 cm, MHM2024.3, Medical History Museum.



BUSH MEDICINE

A crucial element of elder-governed cultural therapy is an invitation to the young person and their guardian to participate in a cultural practice that is integral to the therapist's life, so the practice is an authentic and congruent expression of lived epistemologies and ontologies. The cultural therapist, the young person and their guardian engage in it together as a relational community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and with a broader environment of other-than-human entities. All expect revelations from Country, community and the spirit world regarding how to live connected and fulsome lives. Therapist, young person and guardian alike share what they have discerned, reflecting upon the revelations together and making meaning from it. At the conclusion of therapy, agreed themes particular to each young person are inscribed on a message stick. This message stick is gifted to the young person as a tangible reminder of their cultural connections and all they have learned.

The wrap-up

As a Western-trained psychiatrist, this leap into uncertainty, trusting the guidance of elders, has been transformative. Clinical files filled with diagnoses and warnings were reviewed only after the elder-governed therapy was finished. Despite multiple diagnoses and several code-grey warnings about dangerous and violent histories, each young person engaged and returned, session after session. I learned as much from them and from Country as they did from me. What a wonderful journey into health!

Assoc. Professor Al Vance, with Janet McGaw, Jo Winther and Uncle Herb Patten

Cat. 4 Ada Pula Beasley, **Bush Medicine** (detail), 2025, acrylic on canvas, 30.0 × 30.0 cm, MHM2025.9, Medical History Museum.





DURN DURN DARRAM MURRUP MURRUP

Durn durn darram murrup murrup (mind, body, spirit and soul): the chants and the clapsticks begin. The chants and the hands with emu oil work over the body's areas of pain or discomfort. The mind races to settle, the wisdom of my ancestors doesn't need to be passed on, as they are embedded in my spirit and I carry forward this practice quietly. For those who seek, the healing will come. I feel the energy of one's past and the soft whispers that guide me on this healing journey, weaving the healing mats that others will sit on, to be held in the warm sun's embrace—the song of language and the gifts of nature.

This is not what many do, but I connect in ways that sometimes make no sense until others witness the healing themselves. Healing is not just medical; it is spiritual. And it is not just physical but also emotional. Having a medical background, I have always wanted to heal and help others. Yet also on my healing journey, I have been blessed with helping wildlife and Country, which needs healing through more advocacy, as without Country, without biodiversity and without healthy ecosystems, we humans won't survive. We have to focus on healing the environment to keep ourselves alive.

Gum leaves taken when high winds blow them down that are then burnt into fine ash and rubbed over the body give a barrier of protection. So too does the smoke of burning gum leaves, which clears negative energy, and the water that runs in the rivers and creeks also washes away any negativity. So walking into the waters and cleansing returns your *murrup* (spirit) energy. In my work as a healer, I carry healing mats on my travels to sit and weave through the worries I have. Being in an isolated area to think and be at one with nature gives the spirit rest and healing time. Even in the rain, the cleansing and new beginnings start.

Healing begins when you understand the divine natural resources that Country gives us. Plants give me the medicines I need, and when you truly connect you will benefit from what my ancestors did for thousands of years. I am blessed to have the knowledge embedded in my spirit, to carry forward the old ways of healing.

Cassie Leatham

Cat. 35 Cassie Leatham, **Healing Mat** (detail), 2019, native grasses, assorted feathers, diam. 120.0 cm, MHM2020.21, Medical History Museum.



THE MAKING OF *NANYAK ITJAWUDIK YAPANHEYEPUK*

Cultural medicine, as we live and practice it on Yorta Yorta Country, extends beyond the limits of Western clinical frameworks. It is not simply a response to illness; it is a sovereign act of remembering, returning and cultural regeneration, rooted in Country and carried through our everyday lives. It holds space for our stories, our songs and our ways of being—practices that were never lost, only interrupted. As a living system of relational knowledge, cultural medicine nourishes spirit, sustains kin and reaffirms connection to land, community and self.

This body of work, titled *Nanyak Itjawudik Yapaneyepuk* (*Cultural Medicine Together*), including the accompanying banner *Nanyak Itjawudik*, is grounded in Aboriginal women's knowledge systems. It is intergenerational, embodied and culturally rooted. It brings together 14 Aboriginal women artists, who are either Yorta Yorta or living and creating on Yorta Yorta *Woka* (Country), and they span emerging voices to senior leaders. Each artist brings their own lived experience, shaped by different forms of healing, memory and care. For some, cultural medicine is a quiet reflection; for others, it is conversation, movement or creation. It means something different to each of us, but it connects us all.

Together, we have shaped a shared body of work through Kaiela Arts, our Aboriginal-led community art centre in Shepparton, Victoria, established in 2006. Kaiela Arts is located on Yorta Yorta Country—also known as River Country, straddling the New South Wales–Victoria border—and it is more than a space of making; it is a site of cultural authority and self-determination, where ancestral legacies guide future pathways through sovereign and collective creativity.

Cultural medicine lives within our Aboriginal continuum. Relational, experiential and always in motion, it flows like our rivers, rises like smoke and takes shape in clay formed by both child and elder. It is here. It is ours. It continues. Despite the ongoing impacts of colonisation, our communities have maintained art-making as a vital part of cultural life and healing. Kaiela Arts plays a central role in this and in reasserting south-eastern Aboriginal identity through a thriving intergenerational community grounded in connection to ancestors, Country and care.

For this body of work, we returned to the riverbanks of Yorta Yorta Country, including the Kaiela (Goulburn), Dhungala (Murray) and Broken Rivers, to gather clay. This was not simply a matter of collecting material; it was an act of cultural reconnection. With our

Cat. 19 Kaiela Arts collective, ***Nanyak Itjawudik Yapaneyepuk (Cultural Medicine Together)*** (details), 2025, riverbank clay from the Dhungala (Murray), Kaiela (Goulburn) and Broken Rivers, Yorta Yorta Country, dimensions variable, MHM2025.10, Medical History Museum.

hands sunk in the earth, we unearthed more than clay. We uncovered stories interwoven with Country, stories of the women before us, stories of practices once paused but never lost. Each handful of clay carries the memory of fire, water, kinship and survival.

Together, we shaped these memories into forms. Each artist created a clay piece grounded in personal experience and shared history. From native animals and bush plants to coolamons, canoes, woven baskets, teacups, traditional clay balls and healing vessels, these objects are both practical and sacred. For some of the artists, this process marked a return; for others, it was their first time working with clay. We gathered, listened, laughed and learned, our hands moving in rhythm, guided by our matriarchs and one another.

At the heart of the installation stands a large banner by senior artist and cultural leader Lyn Thorpe, a proud Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wemba and Wurundjeri woman. Her work is marked with Yorta Yorta language and cultural symbolism, grounding the space and holding it together, speaking across generations with quiet strength and authority. This project would not have come into being without the guidance and presence of Lyn and other senior Yorta Yorta artists Amy Briggs, Laurel Robinson and Belinda Briggs. These women always lead with care, clarity and cultural wisdom. They guide our space at Kaiela Arts, offering deep knowledge shaped by lived experience and a lifetime of creative and cultural practice.

The installation carries memory, spirit and story, and speaks to our individual and collective identity. Throughout the making process, we gathered around tables and fire pits, talking about what cultural medicine means to us. We came to realise that it can't be defined in rigid terms; it is something we practice, remember and live. It moves through our relationships with one another, with Country and with the creative spirit carried by our ancestors. Western definitions of health or knowledge do not bind cultural medicine. A fluid, experiential living system, it is always evolving. It is what sustains us. Amy and Laurel describe *Nanyak Itjawudik* as 'centred on the remembering of our childhoods', recalling life as young girls living on the Cummeragunja Mission or fishing along the riverbanks as they moulded their canoes. Fellow Yorta Yorta artist Tarli Dean-Atkinson says, 'Cultural medicine, to me, is when I'm having a cuppa and a yarn with my old people'.

Across generations, cultural medicine reveals itself not just in what is made, but also in how we come together to make. As Tarli gently moulded her teacups, and Auntie Amy and Auntie Laurel shaped their canoes and digging sticks with quiet precision, the spirit emerged in the space between: in the laughter shared between aunts and nieces; in the steady rhythm of hands dancing across clay; in the gathering of bush medicine, like Old Man Weed; and in the soft silence of listening by the riverbanks. These moments

are more than a process; they are a practice, a ceremony, a remembering. Our making is enacting an Indigenous feminist knowledge system rooted in reciprocity, ancestral presence and cultural self-determination. It is an ever-evolving medicine passed hand to hand, heart to heart.

We continued, once the forms were shaped by our hands, to honour the old ways and uphold our collective process by returning the clay to Country. We called on some of our men and allies, including ceramicist Kaye Poulton, to help dig a fire pit in the soil of Yorta Yorta *Woka*. The works were fired on the grounds of Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, a vital community space that carries the weight of our survival, struggle and strength. The firing wasn't only functional; it was ceremonial. The act, the fire and the site itself are part of the story, part of *Nanyak Itjawudik*.

Fired and assembled, our works come together as a map, a story in clay grounded in Yorta Yorta memory. Lyn's banner anchors the installation, charting the movement of our people, stories and creative practices. This sovereign map of Yorta Yorta Country is defined not by colonial borders but by spirit, memory and continuity. To the left is the past: native bush plants, animals and sites such as the *Biyula* (Red Gum) forest and the missions of Maloga and Cummeragunja, places of great importance in our collective memory. Moving right, the present and future: Tarli's teacups invite reflection and care; Ally Knight reimagines basket forms that thread ancestral knowledge into new shapes; Amy and Laurel's canoes, digging sticks and bush-medicine vessels speak to survival and traditional healing. Flowing through the installation are vessels by all the artists, symbolising the Kaiela and Dhungala Rivers and guiding the composition like a songline. These important waterways connect us, woman to woman, memory to Country. They remind us that cultural medicine begins when the land speaks and when we choose to listen.

As Aboriginal women and artists, we do not separate theory from practice. Our making is our thinking. Our curation is an act of care, holding space for stories, Country and sovereign expression. These works are not simply for display. They are offerings and refusals: offerings of continuity, connection and cultural medicine in its most whole form; refusals to be reduced by deficit or disappearance.

Chloe Jones



MAKING BUSH MEDICINE

Nestled in the hill country on the north-eastern edge of Iltwelepenty (the Davenport Ranges) is the small community of Wutunugurra (Epenarra). Each of the Barkly region artworks shown in the *Cultural Medicine* exhibition were made by artists from that community, which is home to approximately 200 people, predominantly belonging to the Alyawarr language group. Epenarra is made up of housing, an outback store, a church, health-care centre and school. At its nucleus sits the studio of the Epenarra artists, the most prolific studio in the Barkly region and of the Artists of the Barkly Collective.

The Epenarra artists are known for their use of stippling to blur the line between traditional, abstract dot painting and figurative landscape. Frequently favouring a brightly coloured palette, many of the artists depict their Country's vast landscapes through repeating motifs of bush tucker and bush medicines, featuring bright pops of green, red, purple, yellow and white, and snaking vines, bushes and trees.

For the Beasley and Peterson families, whose works are featured in this exhibition and catalogue, the search for bush medicine and tucker is a vital way of sharing culture, language, stories and connection with kin and Country. It is a manifold process for sustenance, language maintenance, intergenerational knowledge transfer and everyday health and wellbeing. As artist Jessie Beasley says:

I paint bush medicine. Bush medicine for kidney and flu, drinking that bush medicine. My paintings come from my mother's side. She taught us about bush tucker, bush medicine, stories, culture.

We boil that bush medicine for any sickness. Some bush medicine for rubbing, crushing them, boiling in fat. Some for drinking.

I paint water when the big rain comes, and the flowers come up after rain, and bush medicine.

As Kwaty (Rain Dreaming) women, they eagerly await the arrival of the rains for the proliferation of traditional plants that they know will appear. At that time, they will take

Cat. 2 Ada Pula Beasley, **My Country** (detail), 2024, acrylic on canvas, 140.0 × 240.0 cm, MHM2024.22, Medical History Museum.

the kids and go out searching for bush medicine. Jessie's niece and fellow artist Ada Beasley explains:

We teach them kids for bush medicine. We take them hunting, tell them which plant, teach our kids so they can know bush medicine. We leave it 'til after rain to go get that bush medicine, we keep some and dry 'em, keep for later.

All the different languages we still use that same bush medicine—all over Warumungu, Warlpiri, Anmatyerre, everyone use that same bush medicine. It's number one for us; we all use it, everyone.

Even when we got to go to the health clinic, we still use that bush medicine as well. When that COVID came, we all take bush medicine—steam one, rub one—we use it to keep that sickness away and we all good.

For this essay, Ada has given permission to share that she was diagnosed with late-stage kidney disease in early 2024. Since then, every time she has had access to a car she has gone with her family to gather *Alkwa* (Bush Plum, *Santalum lanceolatum*) so that she can treat herself and hopefully prolong the time before she needs to move permanently to Tennant Creek to access dialysis.

Alkwa is Bush Plum. We eat 'em in hot weather, December, January. Small one, purple one, sweet one. Find them up the hill. Small tree.

Later on those flowers come—yellow ones, white ones. We take 'em, boil 'em up, boil the roots, like tea. Good for kidney, kidney infection, wee infection. We boil 'em up every day, five days, make 'em tea, then we go to clinic and infection all gone.

As I write, almost 18 months after Ada's diagnosis, her bloods have remained consistent. Despite the doctors' desire to see her move to Tennant Creek immediately, so that she can be ready to access thrice-weekly dialysis if she shows further deterioration, Ada continues to live on Country, reading and recording its abundance in her paintings.

Harriet Gaffney

Cat. 6 Jessie Kemarr Beasley, **Bush Medicine** (detail), 2025, acrylic on canvas, 61.0 × 61.0 cm, MHM2025.6, Medical History Museum.





SHARING KNOWLEDGE: WESTERN ARANDA ARTISTS OF NTARIA

Bush medicine holds deep cultural, spiritual and practical significance for Aboriginal people across Australia. For the Western Aranda artists of Ntaria (Hermannsburg), it is much more than a healing practice; it is a way of life deeply connected to Country and community, and knowledge is passed down through generations. These artists grew up learning how to identify, gather and prepare bush medicine plants, and today they continue this tradition, not only as a source of healing but as a vital part of cultural preservation and care for each other.

The Western Aranda people learned from a young age to read the land. Their mothers, grandmothers and elders taught them which plants could be used to treat sickness, soothe pain or strengthen the body and spirit. These teachings were often passed on during long walks through the bush, where children watched and helped as their elders collected leaves, dug for roots and prepared ointments or teas. Plants such as *Eremophila* and wattle, and gum from the River Red Gum are just a few examples of natural remedies still used today.

For the Hermannsburg artists, these practices are deeply tied to their identity and art. Their paintings often reflect the land where bush medicine is found—rocky hills, dry riverbeds, spinifex grass and desert flowers—all painted with care and respect. Their art becomes a powerful tool for storytelling and sharing knowledge about the land and its gifts, including with younger generations and people outside the community. Through their creative expression, they ensure that cultural knowledge continues to live on.

Sharing knowledge is central to the artists' work. They are known not only for their painting skills but also for their strong sense of community. They care for each other in the same way they care for the land—by looking, listening and offering support. This deep sense of responsibility is reflected in their teaching, whether it's guiding children through Country, explaining the meaning behind a painting or demonstrating how to prepare bush medicine.

On 17 May 2023, the artists and staff drove out to Ntaria where we visited the historical Hermannsburg Mission as a way of connecting our stories and painting together. Selma Nunay Coulthard spoke of how she used to look for certain plants for healing. This is where the Western Aranda's strong cultural and spiritual ties to their land and traditions became immediately clear. It was here, among the old buildings and desert

Cat. 26 Delray Inkamala, **Rraatninga (Wild Passion Fruit)** (detail), 2023, watercolour on paper, 38.0 × 56.5 cm, MHM2024.19, Medical History Museum.

gardens, that the artists collected native specimens—plants, seeds and flowers—that they later sketched and painted. These activities are more than just artistic exercises; they are acts of cultural preservation and deep reflection on the healing power of Country. As we spoke, artists shared their deep knowledge of native plants found in and around Ntaria. Selma, one of the senior artists, explained the seasonal nature of bush medicine—how certain plants only appear at particular times of the year, and how timing, weather and traditional knowledge all play a role in harvesting them.

Leaving the old mission behind, we travelled down to the banks of the Lhere Pirnte (Finke River), one of the most ancient river systems in the world. Here, the artists collected native plants, flowers and seeds from their ancestral lands. As they gathered, they spoke in Western Aranda, naming each plant, describing its uses and telling stories of how these medicines were used by their elders. The riverbank was not just a place of natural beauty, but a living classroom—rich with knowledge, memory and cultural practice.

Many of the artists have a powerful connection to this land. Their stories, Dreaming and artistic expressions are drawn from the very soil, rocks and trees that surround them. This deep relationship with Country gives them a unique and grounded perspective on life, health and community. Sharing their culture, through both art and conversation, is a way of keeping that knowledge alive—not only within their own families but also for future generations and wider audiences open to learning.

For the Western Aranda artists, bush medicine is about cultural continuity, respect for the land and taking care of one another. These artists are known not only for their painting skills but for their generosity in teaching and guiding others. They speak openly, support each other and work together, just as they have been taught by their ancestors. This spirit of sharing knowledge is central to their identity and their art.

The journey from the old mission to the Lhere Pirnte riverbed demonstrated how bush medicine, art and storytelling are deeply interconnected for the Western Aranda people. Their commitment to caring for each other and for the land is evident in every sketch, every collected plant and every word spoken in their language. By continuing to share their knowledge and stories, the artists of Hermannsburg ensure that culture remains alive, strong and healing—for themselves, for their community and for all who are willing to listen and learn. Bush medicine is more than a remedy; it is a legacy. Through their art and daily practices, they pass on essential knowledge, maintain cultural connections and uphold the values of sharing, caring and healing. Their work is a living testament to the strength and wisdom of Aboriginal culture.

In the olden days, our people used the gum tree in many important ways—for medicine, food, and even for making bush tobacco. This knowledge was passed down through generations, by watching and learning from the elders. We carry this wisdom with us today.

We use the leaves of the gum tree to make bush medicine. We boil the leaves on the fire and breathe in the steam. The smell goes into our body and helps to heal illnesses like the flu, aching bones and infections.

Down by the creek, where the gum tree grows near running water, we wait for the water to dry. Then we pull out the soft, brown roots. Inside those roots, we find witchetty grubs—a good source of food, our bush tucker.

We peel the bark from the gum tree and burn it to make ashes. These ashes are mixed with *Pituri*, our bush tobacco, and then chewed. This mixture was used by our old people and is still respected today.

Our ancestors stayed healthy by living off bush tucker and bush medicine. Before Western medicine came along, they didn't need it—the land provided all they needed. They even used Bush Bananas to keep their tongue wet and to replace water.

Marisa Maher



BULL KELP WATER CARRIERS

Aboriginal kelp water carriers of Trouwerner/Lutruwita (Tasmania) are an important aspect of women's cultural practice, showcasing the deep connection between Country, people and culture. Traditionally made from Bull Kelp, they have been used by Aboriginal peoples of the Furneaux Islands and the west coast of Tasmania for thousands of years, as an essential item for storing and transporting water. The naturally occurring iodine in Bull Kelp has the benefit of disinfecting the water carried in the vessel and preventing thyroid-related conditions, making the container significant with regards to maintaining health.

Distinct to Trouwerner/Lutruwita, the Bull Kelp water carrier embodies a story of utility, but more importantly it also holds a story about women's knowledge, ancient ingenuity and contemporary cultural revitalisation efforts. Known as *rikawa*, the container gathers memories and is a vessel for knowledge-keeping; it holds *lowanna tunapry*, the knowledge of Aboriginal women. There, Sea Country is women's Country and the production of *rikawa* draws strongly on women's kinship with one another and with Country. Women's connection to place deeply influences their ways of knowing and the knowledge systems they are responsible for. When they gather, they are listening to and learning from Country, and Country in turn provides the knowledge needed to sustain their lives. As the women of Trouwerner/Lutruwita harvest the kelp, together they also gather intimate knowledge of Country that serves to provide for all.

To construct *rikawa*, the women mould the Bull Kelp into a container-like shape and secure this with Tea Tree skewers, and sometimes also with sinew and natural fibres. As the kelp hardens it becomes a durable non-porous material that is ideal for carrying liquids.

In recent years there has been a revitalisation of this cultural practice, with new knowledge coming to light about traditional techniques. Still, many questions are yet to be answered about this practice.¹ The late Aunty Eva Richardson (1936–2023), among others, has contributed to a growing recognition of the cultural significance of Bull Kelp water carriers, with the efforts of these women in reviving traditional practices occurring through contemporary art and craft.

Professor Shawana Andrews

¹ Stéphanie Leclerc-Caffarel, Gaye Sculthorpe, Zoe Rimmer and Céline Daher, '*rikawa*: Tasmanian Aboriginal Kelp Water Containers', *Artefact: Techniques, histoire et sciences humaines*, no. 20, 2024, pp. 167–95.

Bull Kelp (*Durvillaea potatorum*) in the saltwater shallows of Trouwerner/Lutruwita (Tasmania). Photograph by John Turnbull.



D-DAY AND THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF AN ABORIGINAL MEDICINE

D-Day, the Allied invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944, is widely recognised as one of the most decisive military operations of the 20th century. Before dawn, approximately 156,000 American, British and Canadian troops crossed the English Channel under cold sea-spray and grey cloud, advancing towards beaches heavily defended with fortifications and gunfire. Timing was everything—tides, moonlight, weather and an intricate choreography across air, sea and land. Yet in the lead-up to the operation, a seemingly mundane but potentially crippling problem threatened the entire plan: seasickness so severe that soldiers would be incapacitated before they could reach shore.

The remedy was sourced, remarkably, from an Australian Aboriginal medicine. In the 19th century, Victorian Government botanist Ferdinand von Mueller documented Aboriginal uses of plants in the *Duboisia* genus, particularly *Duboisia myoporoides*, commonly known as Corkwood. Aboriginal communities in eastern Australia had long understood and applied the plant's properties for specific purposes—this knowledge embedded in ceremony and medicine and requiring careful handling. Mueller's notes, along with specimens sent to Britain, drew scientific attention to an atropine-like substance once referred to as 'duboisine'. By the close of the century, chemists had identified the active compounds as scopolamine (hyoscine) and hyoscyamine, both tropane alkaloids related to those found in Henbane and Belladonna.

What Aboriginal people had long known through direct practice—that this tree had potent, targeted effects—was now described in Western pharmacological terms.

Solving a wartime problem

During rehearsal landings for the Normandy invasion, rough seas incapacitated large numbers of troops. Men were too nauseous to eat, too weak to carry their equipment and in no state to fight upon arrival. Allied medical officers urgently needed a reliable preventive for motion sickness, and existing supplies of scopolamine were insufficient.

Australia's wartime scientific networks mobilised to find a domestic source. Under what became the CSIR/MECC wartime program, Australian researchers trialled *Duboisia myoporoides* as a source plant, extracting scopolamine at scale. The resulting material entered Allied supply chains—chiefly those of Britain and, by agreement, America—well before June 1944.¹

Cat. 66 **Eli Lilly and Company** (est. 1876), **US Army Motion Sickness Preventative**, 1944, print on cardboard, foil, pills, 1.0 × 6.0 × 2.0 cm, MHM2025.17, Medical History Museum.

The *Duboisia*-derived scopolamine was formulated into motion-sickness preventive tablets issued to troops crossing the Channel by sea or air. Secrecy surrounded these pills to the point that many veterans referred to them simply as a ‘mystery pill’. Some soldiers found them invaluable, while others described pronounced side effects. Surviving US military wrappers from Operation Overlord are marked ‘Motion Sickness Preventive’.² In collated veteran accounts, the physiological trade-offs are clear: some men recalled being ‘sleepy and dizzy’ or having a mouth ‘so dry ... [one] couldn’t talk’, while others reported men ‘asleep on their feet’ in the Channel wind.³ Pharmacologically, the picture is consistent. Scopolamine suppresses vestibular activity and nausea, but it can also cause sedation, dry mouth and cognitive clouding. For commanders, the choice was stark and practical: a drowsy soldier was preferable to one incapacitated by vomiting.

From south-eastern New South Wales to northern Queensland, *Duboisia myoporoides* has had longstanding roles in Aboriginal cultural practices: as a sleeping draught, a fish poison, a ceremonial aid for spiritual connection, and other uses transmitted according to cultural protocols. Wartime secrecy meant there was no public acknowledgement that Indigenous knowledge had directly contributed to an operation of such scale and consequence. In the context of 1940s Australia, where Aboriginal people were denied many basic rights, that silence was compounded. Nevertheless, the knowledge—observed by colonial botanists, preserved in archives and repurposed as emergency pharmacology—proved instrumental.

This significant contribution of Aboriginal people and Australia to enabling the overthrow of Hitler is a part of history that should be embedded in the Australian school curriculum.

Postwar pharmaceutical legacy

The story did not end in 1944. The same alkaloids that steadied soldiers’ stomachs became essential in ophthalmology—used to dilate pupils and relax smooth muscle—and Queensland developed plantations and processing facilities to meet global demand. Australia became the primary world source of *Duboisia*-derived scopolamine and hyoscyamine, supplying the building blocks for medications used in eye clinics, operating theatres and beyond. The economic value persisted for decades. The origin story, however, less so.

In the decades following the war, this Aboriginal medicine remained in high demand internationally, becoming the world’s leading source of ophthalmic alkaloids for eye surgery. Its cultivation continued across Australia, driven by the same potent alkaloid content that had proven so vital in 1944. This enduring legacy underscores both the profound scientific value of Aboriginal knowledge and the global impact of its application.

Public recognition has grown in recent years. In 2018, the University of Melbourne’s Medical History Museum staged the exhibition *The Art of Healing: Australian Indigenous Bush Medicine*. In 2019, it toured to King’s College London, where the link between *Duboisia*-derived medicine and the D-Day seasickness problem was highlighted, drawing attention to this extraordinary intersection of Indigenous science and global history.

The *Duboisia* story illustrates a broader truth: Indigenous knowledge is not peripheral to world history; it is woven through it. The leaves of a small tree, prepared and used responsibly within Aboriginal communities, entered industrial wartime supply chains to make a pivotal military operation feasible. Yet recognition and reciprocity have lagged. Today, international agreements such as the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing have set out principles of prior informed consent and equitable benefit-sharing when traditional knowledge contributes to commercial products. While such policy cannot retroactively address historical omissions, institutions—especially museums and universities—can use their public trust to set the record straight.

There is also a modern legal coda. Between 2009 and 2017, Alkaloids of Australia Pty Ltd, a Queensland manufacturer of scopolamine N-butylbromide (SNBB) from *Duboisia*, engaged in criminal cartel conduct: fixing prices, rigging bids, restricting supply and allocating markets with overseas suppliers. In 2022, the Federal Court imposed penalties on the company and its former export manager, including a \$1.987 million fine and the longest imprisonment term to date under Australia’s criminal cartel laws (served by intensive corrections order).⁴ That a medicine rooted in Aboriginal knowledge—vital on D-Day and foundational to postwar pharmaceuticals—remains valuable enough to attract corporate collusion underscores its enduring significance.

‘Rematriation’ and a just future for Indigenous knowledge-sharing

In the USA, the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* imposes a statutory obligation for the return of certain tangible cultural property. In Australia, no comparable national law requires the rematriation⁵ (repatriation) of intangible property, such as Indigenous medical knowledge. Victoria, however, has created a state-based register for Aboriginal intangible heritage. Australia has also not ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003),⁶ leaving no binding national framework for its protection or return. In the absence of such a legal framework, I have undertaken voluntary rematriation by travelling to and sharing this story with multiple Indigenous communities across Australia over the past decade.⁷ For Aboriginal children and youth, hearing this story can foster pride in their cultural heritage and provide case studies illustrating why a statutory obligation for the return of intangible cultural heritage should be developed.

Duboisia myoporoides helped steady soldiers for an impossible crossing, but its deeper lesson is continuity: elders safeguarded knowledge, botanists recorded it, wartime scientists manufactured it, surgeons still rely on the same chemistry. That arc obliges us to ensure future uses of Indigenous knowledge proceed with respect, with free, prior and informed consent, and with fair benefit-sharing.

The story of *Duboisia* is one of resilience: knowledge that Aboriginal communities safeguarded for generations enabled a medical breakthrough when Western science needed it most. Today, the obligation is clear—to ensure such knowledge is protected, credited and shared on Indigenous terms. Moving forward, the test is simple: do our research, commercialisation and public storytelling return authority and benefits to the communities that first nurtured this medicine? If they do, this plant’s legacy—and the Indigenous knowledge that revealed its power—will be honoured not just in history but in justice.

Dr Chris Kavelin

- 1 Paul Foley, ‘*Duboisia myoporoides*: The Medical Career of a Native Australian Plant’, *Historical Records of Australian Science*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2006, pp. 31–69.
- 2 Motion Sickness Preventive, listed on *Vintage Productions*; described as ‘sealed [and] ... issued to the Paratroopers on D-Day’, www.vintageproductions.com/us-wwii-era-1941-1948/field-gear-and-equipment/motion-sickness-preventive-sealed-with-pills. See also, F Bertrand, ‘Motion Sickness Preventive Pills’, *La Petite Musette*, blog entry, 21 March 2017, www.lapetitemusette.com/project/motion-sickness-pills.
- 3 ‘Battle Relic #7’, veteran accounts published on *Battle Detective*, battledetective.com/battlerelic7.html.
- 4 Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), ‘Alkaloids of Australia and its former export manager sentenced in criminal price fixing cartel’, media release, 29 November 2022, www.accc.gov.au/media-release/alkaloids-of-australia-and-its-former-export-manager-sentenced-in-criminal-price-fixing-cartel.
- 5 In a personal communication with me in 2016, John Clarke (Gunditjmarra) explained that women preserve and nurture most medical knowledge, so suggested ‘rematriation’ is a more appropriate term than ‘repatriation’.
- 6 UNESCO, ‘Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage’, 2003, ich.unesco.org/en/convention.
- 7 For example, I travelled to share this with Wagan Guburu (Philip Obah Sr, the senior knowledge-holder of the Wadja people); elder Gudju Gudju (Seith Fourmile) (Yidinji); senior elder Uncle Bumi (Yidinji), who gave me a shield he made in recognition of supporting his people; and many other elders and Aboriginal community members. Some of those elders, such as Richard Franklin (Gunditjmarra), shared knowledge of additional uses and history of the medicine. As a lecturer in a range of community development units and in Indigenous studies at various universities, I have shared this knowledge with scores of Aboriginal people in those classes over the years.

Cat. 52 Triscilla Peterson, **Bush Flowers** (detail), 2025, acrylic on canvas, 61.0 × 61.0 cm, MHM2025.4, Medical History Museum.

THE EXHIBITION





THE ART OF INDIGENOUS HEALING: BUILDING A COLLECTION

Cultural medicine, as we live and practice it on Yorta Yorta Country, extends beyond the limits of Western clinical frameworks. It is not simply a response to illness but a sovereign act of remembering, returning and cultural regeneration, rooted in Country and carried through our everyday lives. It holds space for our stories, our songs and our ways of being—practices never lost, only interrupted. As a living system of relational knowledge, *Nanyak Itjawudik* [cultural medicine] nourishes spirit, sustains kin and reaffirms connection to land, community and self.

Lyn Thorpe, 2025

The faculty museums play an important role in exploring, acknowledging and understanding our history. The University of Melbourne has entered a new phase in recognising the knowledge and practices of First Nations Australians. Pivotal was the launch of the recent two-volume publication *Dhoombak Goobgoowana: A History of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne* (2024 and 2025). Edited by distinguished Professor Marcia Langton, Dr Ross Jones and Dr James Waghorne, the two volumes are part of the University of Melbourne's journey toward truth-telling and justice for First Peoples. The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences is committed to actively participating in this process, led by Professor Sandra Eades, Deputy Dean, Indigenous. The importance of this is outlined in essays by Marcia Langton and Shawana Andrews in this publication.

In volume 1 of *Dhoombak Goobgoowana*, subtitled Truth, there is a chapter on the exhibition *The Art of Healing: Australian Indigenous Bush Medicine*. This exhibition toured from the Medical History Museum in 2019 to King's College London and the Berlin Museum of Medical History. At the latter, Director Thomas Schnalke supported the production of a bilingual publication to accompany the exhibition. In 'The message from Australia', Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Duncan Maskell and Pro-Vice Chancellor (Indigenous) Professor Shaun Ewan underscored the importance of publicly acknowledging the knowledge systems of First Nations peoples.

The Art of Healing provides an example of Indigenous knowledge and how it sits comfortably side by side with other healing and artistic traditions. To reach our

Cat. 65 Mulku Wirrpanda, **Baby Teeth in the Gunga** (detail), 2019, earth pigments on Stringybark, 209.0 × 88.5 cm (bark painting), HFA3740, Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum.

aspiration of being a great Australian university, examples such as those presented in this catalogue should become visible across all intellectual disciplines, and in our teaching and learning, and research ... The University of Melbourne recognises the great knowledge gift expressed in *The Art of Healing* exhibition. We will continue to reform our institution to ensure that Indigenous knowledge is a visible, vibrant and integral part of our present and future work.¹

Cultural Medicine: The Art of Indigenous Healing builds on that exhibition and continues to capture and share the richness of First Nations healing practice in Australia.

For 65,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have occupied these lands, with distinct cultural boundaries defined by intimate relationships with Country. *Cultural Medicine: The Art of Indigenous Healing* follows the premise of *Tjukurpa*, a Pitjantjatjarra word that has many meanings, including the creation period, or Dreaming, and the foundation of Anangu life and society (and it has various equivalents in other Aboriginal languages). The exhibition looks at traditional Indigenous healing practice as simultaneously past, present and future. Through contemporary art and objects, it presents examples of healing practice and bush medicine from many distinct and varied Indigenous communities across Australia.

In 2017, the Medical History Museum expanded its collections policy to encompass contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Sharing bush medicine stories through art has become one of the ways elders maintain a strong knowledge and culture for their communities. The use of contemporary art underlines the continuing relevance of bush medicine, revealing it through a current lens. Various artworks have been directly commissioned for this exhibition, while some come from other projects. Artists were asked to create works that share healing practice and bush medicine from their Country.

Building on existing relationships, we have acquired works from artists and art centres that include Kaiela Arts, Shepparton; Warlayirti Artists, the Kimberley; Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands), Alice Springs; Hermannsburg Potters, Hermannsburg; Barkly Regional Arts, Tennant Creek; Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, Top End; and Jilamara Arts, Milikapiti, in the Tiwi Islands. Individual artists include Cassie Leatham, Deanne Gilson and Zena Cumpston from south-eastern Australia. The artworks demonstrate a range of techniques and mediums, from intimate pencil drawings of plants to large acrylic paintings and vivid ceramics. Together, their distinct artistic styles reveal remarkable regional diversity.

The key to this exhibition is understanding that traditional Indigenous healing is a vital practice that's informed by the past yet is intrinsic to the lives of Indigenous Australians today. Its title comes from a work commissioned from Kaiela Arts. An extraordinary work by 14 artists—guided by cultural leaders Belinda Briggs, Lyn Thorpe, Amy Briggs and Laurel Robinson—it shares the power of Country and knowledge. It is made from the river

clay from the banks of the Dhungala (Murray), Kaiela (Goulburn) and Broken Rivers, on Yorta Yorta Country, and titled *Nanyak Itjawudik Yapaneyepuk (Cultural Medicine Together)*. The artists range in age, from elders to the young. As Chloe Jones shares in her essay in this publication:

Each brings their own lived experience, shaped by different forms of healing, memory and care. For some, cultural medicine is a quiet reflection; for others, it is conversation, movement or creation. It means something different to each of us, but it connects us all.

Materials from Country empower works by various artists. Cassie Leatham uses native grasses and emu and other feathers to create a healing mat (pp. 52–3). Deanne Gilson embeds gold from Wadawurrung Country to infer ‘the people are the gold not the gold itself’ (pp. 62–3). Zena Cumpston includes *kopi* in her work on paper, which is gypsum from her Country (pp. 68–9), whereas Eva Richardson created a container from Bull Kelp, which has medicinal properties (pp. 70–1).

The power of the community is shown in the works from the Indigenous Cultural Practices project, part of a national program grant led by Professor Sandra Eades, in 2023. Al Vance, who works as a child and adolescent psychiatrist and healer, commented that: ‘Elders facilitate practices being passed down through generations and they govern the Aboriginal lore, so cultural practices heal community and Country and make both strong’ (p. 54). Three works from this program are shown in the exhibition: an etched possum skin by Al Vance (pp. 54–5), an etched possum skin by mother and daughter Erakye Hair and Ricki-lee Mumbler (pp. 56–7) and a message stick by Louise Smith (pp. 58–9).

The knowledge of the elders is passed to future generations in many ways. Judith Pungarta Inkamala has led a community commission of seven pots for the Medical History Museum (pp. 108–21), all on the theme of bush medicine. The pots share how the medicines are prepared and administered, and they highlight the importance of teaching future generations. Two pots, one by Judith (pp. 110–11) another by Andrea Pungarta Rontji (pp. 114–15), focus specifically on the care of infants.

From Balgo, Marie Mudgedell shares traditional practices in relation to birthing—how the community supported the mother through the skin system, ensuring she and the baby were looked after (pp. 78–9). Miriam Baadjo’s work tells of a scared site for the *maparn* (healers) (pp. 82–3). There is also a work by Helicopter Tjungurrayi, a *maparn* of his Country south-west of Balgo in the Great Sandy Desert (pp. 80–1). Maringka Burton, a *ngangkari* (traditional healer) who works with the NPY Women’s Council, shows her Country’s Dreaming story of the caterpillar (pp. 138–9). Janice Stanley’s ceramic piece depicts the leaves of the *Ilkuwara* tree, which the witchetty grubs eat—in turn considered a

good food to enhance human mental health (pp. 140–1). Betty Mula’s work shares the recovery of Country at Imanpa after big rains (pp. 136–7).

Broad stretches of Country are represented in a major work by Ada Pula Beasley, which includes bush medicine (pp. 124–5). The Medical History Museum then commissioned her and artists Jessie Kemarr Beasley, Daisy Ngwarreye Peterson and Triscilla Peterson, from Ada’s community in the Barkly Tablelands, to reveal the actual types of bush medicine in more detailed paintings (pp. 126–33). Harriet Gaffney discusses the process in her essay.

For a long time, it has been a practice of the Ampilatwatja community to depict bush medicine, and Kindy Kemarre Ross shares where her family gathers bush medicine (pp. 122–3). From Yuendumu, Cecilia Nampijinpa Martin too shows her experience of collecting bush medicines from Country (pp. 134–5).

The Spinifex Arts Project has brought together works by Ned Grant (pp. 74–5) and Myrtle Pennington (pp. 72–3) that depict their Country, which was impacted by the British nuclear testing in the 1950s. These works were purchased to acknowledge Australia’s first Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Tilman Ruff’s essay covers the extraordinary impact of the testing and its consequences.

Durning Tarnanthi 2023, a major exhibition, *Arrpmarnintja – Creation from the Beginning*, held at the Adelaide Botanic Garden focused on botanical drawings by artists from Il tj a Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre, Alice Springs. The Medical History Museum purchased many of these works for its collection (pp. 84–105). Artists include Mervyn Rubuntja, Vanessa Inkamala and Mandy Malbunka, representing artists across generations. Vanessa’s *Bush Vicks* (pp. 84–5) is the cover work for the exhibition and catalogue, showing at a glance the source of the bush medicine and cultural power of Country. In her essay, Marisa Maher comments:

By continuing to share their knowledge and stories, the artists of Hermannsburg ensure that culture remains alive, strong and healing—for themselves, for their community and for all who are willing to listen and learn. Bush medicine is more than a remedy; it is a legacy.

Another important series of botanical drawings comes from Yalmakany Marawili. Following in the footsteps of her mother, Mulkuṇ Wirrpanda (1946–2021), she has illustrated bush medicine from her Country (pp. 144–9). In 2019, the Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum commissioned a work by Mulkuṇ Wirrpanda. The stunning bark and pole housed in the dental school, titled *Baby Teeth in the Gunga* (pp. 142–3), tells the story of first teeth in Arnhem Land. This story was shared for the first time

outside the community when the work was commissioned in 2019; it was a response to the years of work carried out in the region by the dental school and is the outcome of an ongoing relationship.

This plant [*Gunga*] is sacred, and crucial in practical terms. All Dhuwa clans sing of the growth of the Pandanus, but for some there is a deeper connection. In some songs the teeth of this plant are equated with the reversed teeth of the shark ... The white stem part of each leaf can be pounded and used as an anaesthetic on sore teeth. When our kids lose their baby teeth, we throw them into the *Gunga* tree. This toothy tree will ensure that their new teeth will come back quickly and be strong and sharp.

This work is also part of the collection exhibited throughout the faculty, thereby sharing Indigenous knowledge through art to our staff, students and visitors.

Roy Burnyila’s work from Ramingining shows the freshwater totems from his Country (pp. 150–1). Other works from the Tiwi Islands by Mary Elizabeth Moreen (pp. 152–3) and Doriana Bush (pp. 154–5) convey the importance of the community, gathering and preparing bush medicine.

Finally, for all this cultural knowledge of bush medicine and healing practice, one must question why the lack of recognition of First Nations medical knowledge in Australia. Chris Kavelin’s essay covers the remarkable story of D-Day, the Allied invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944, delayed in order to find a remedy for motion sickness for the soldiers crossing the rough waters. It was sourced from an Australian Aboriginal medicine commonly known as Corkwood. It is puzzling that this story is not well known, nor celebrated.

All these works are linked by the strong connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country and the passing down of cultural knowledge to the next generation. We are privileged that these individuals and communities have chosen to share their rich repository of healing and knowledge with us through their art. The works are a significant addition to the Medical History Museum Collection and will continue to inform and engage students, staff and the broader community through their aesthetic and cultural impact. They also remind us of the value and benefit of cultural and social frameworks for the wellbeing of all communities.

Dr Jacqueline Healy

Director, Museums, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences,
University of Melbourne

¹ *The Art of Healing, Australian Indigenous Bush Medicine / Die Kunst Des Heilens, Australische Indigene buschmedizin*, Berlin: Medical History Museum, University of Melbourne, and Berliner Medizinhistorisches Museum der Charite, 2019, p. viii.

Cassie Leatham (b. 1974)

language: Taungurung

Country: Taungurung / Wurundjeri

artist location: Boisdale, Gippsland, Victoria

‘Healing is a journey of weaving, connecting the past to the present through significant healing mats. They were carried on the backs of my ancestors and laid down as floor mats to rest, sleep and heal, and to teach the young the techniques of processing native plants to connect them through the nurturing practice of weaving. These healing mats, with ochre and emu feathers, are used to show the depth of ceremony still embedded in our *murrup* (spirit), and they move us forward with acknowledgment of Country’s gifts. They pass tradition onto future generations and present insight to all—to nurture and enjoy.’

Cassie Leatham has created *Healing Mat* from locally sourced native grasses, feathers and feather flowers. It contains numerous bunches of feathers, adorning the edge of the mat.

Cassie’s biological grandfather, George Patterson Fisher, was a Taungurung man and her biological grandmother, Alice Biddy Stevens, was a Wurundjeri and Gunaikurnai woman. Cassie’s father, Ron, was adopted at a young age by George’s sister Jean and her husband, Jack Leatham. Ron grew up knowing his biological parents as his unc and aunt; Cassie did too, but she knew there was a stronger connection.

Cassie was born in Sale, Gippsland, on Gunaikurnai Country. She takes pride of place in the local community and has been a member of Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation, as she is of her Taungurung Country. Cassie knew her connection to her Country was strong, and it was a sad time when her grandfather passed, when she was 15 years old. Cassie started exploring her heritage, looking to elders to help with her journey and sense of belonging. Many assisted her, teaching her knowledge and skills in the art and traditional methods used by her ancestors. Cassie has worked in many schools across the country and continues mentoring Koorie youths in culture and identity. She facilitates workshops in several mediums and specialises in native bush plants. To Cassie, it is most important to nurture culture and heritage and to respect the land, elders and traditional ways. It is also vital to nurture youths, who will one day become the elders and teachers for the generations yet to come.

Cat. 35

Healing Mat, 2019

native grasses, assorted feathers

diam. 120.0 cm

MHM2020.21, Medical History Museum



Al Vance (b. 1965)

language: Northern Wathaurung / Wiradjuri

‘Elders know about the cultural practices that can lead to health and wellbeing. They enable, supervise and emplace Indigenous cultural practices in Country so that they can lead to health and wellbeing. Elders facilitate practices being passed down through generations and they govern the Aboriginal lore, so cultural practices heal community and Country and make both strong.’

This work was completed for the Indigenous Cultural Practices project, part of a national program grant led by Sandra Eades, in July 2023. Al Vance works as a child and adolescent psychiatrist and healer.

Cat. 62

Bengadak dyareeka ngam ngam ngarra-weel weel ngeeyt-a baa ngarra goorrk goorrk ngeeyt-a (We are standing on the shoulders of our elders), 2023

possum skin etched with pyrograph

80.0 × 25.0 cm

MHM2024.1, Medical History Museum



Erakye Hair
Ricki-lee Mumbler

language: Yuin Wiradjuri / Dhungatti

‘There are always just so many ways to heal ... Healing on Country is important through connection to land, nature and animals ... There are always new beginnings helped by smoking ceremonies that cleanse ... Nan is always with us on our healing journey.’

This possum skin was made by mother and daughter artists Erakye Hair and Ricki-lee Mumbler and completed for the Indigenous Cultural Practices project, a national program grant led by Sandra Eades, in August 2023. It was created at ‘Winhaven’, a rural place of healing 50 kilometres north-west of Melbourne. Winhaven is the base of AJ Psychology and home to equine and animal-assisted therapy guided by Dr Jo Winther. It is involved with a University of Melbourne research project exploring the contribution of Indigenous cultural practices to the health and wellbeing of young Indigenous people. The project is developing an elder-led model of health care that includes reclamation of cultural practices guided by Indigenous artists.

Cat. 18
Healing, 2023
possum skin etched with pyrograph
38.0 × 80.0 cm
MHM2024.2, Medical History Museum



Louise Smith

language: Yorta Yorta

‘We can never emphasise enough how important land is, how healing ... The power of Country.’

Louise Smith works as a local artist with her grandfather. This Cherry Ballart sacred wood was culturally prepared, and it was completed as part of the Indigenous Cultural Practices project, led by Sandra Eades, in July 2023.

Cat. 58

This Is My Home, 2023

Cherry Ballart sacred wood etched with pyrograph

22.0 × 4.0 cm

MHM2024.3, Medical History Museum



Deanne Gilson (b. 1967)

language: Wadawurrung
Country: Wadawurrung
artist location: Ballarat, Victoria

Deanne Gilson’s images are concerned with people and place, with living nature and with the practical use, sacred value and symbolic function of all entities. Her art is, above all, concerned with the spiritual beauty of Country. Here, flowers are contained in ancestral baskets, or dilly bags, a traditional holder of sacred knowledge. They emerge from a dark and engulfing background. The charcoal medium operates as a metonym for healing, cleansing, renewal and ceremony. Gilson’s visual narratives enliven the cultural significance of flowers, birds and trees, and bring to bear a symbolism directly related to the cosmic landscape of her Country and the people who inhabit it.

Ba-gurrk Yaluk Beenyak (Women Sitting Under the Night Sky and Making Camp by the River) challenges the erroneous concept of terra nullius, upon which the refusal to recognise Aboriginal existence on Country was based at the time of European settlement. In this painting, human figures inhabit the work by implication: the fire around which the women sit, the baskets and artefacts they make. The enjoyment of the land and the cherished bounty of nature is conveyed in the artist’s own poetic account of this work, which she shared in conversation with me (Estelle Barrett) in 2023:

With their baskets full, ready to prepare a meal for their family, the women share stories and go about their daily routines, under the night sky. The Southern Cross and Emu Constellation depict time and the changing seasons on *Dja*. An eel is caught in a hand-woven trap, made from flax and other grasses. Wattle seed is added to flavour food and crushed similarly to Kangaroo Grass to make damper. The Murnong Daisy tuber is crushed or roasted whole to eat. The Kangaroo Apple is eaten ripe and the Bogong moth was also eaten for a source of protein. The season is entering what we call spring in Western culture, just past the cool season; wattle is flowering and the banksias are at their end. Birds are mating and the eels are hatching. Evidence we were here first.



Cat. 15
Ba-gurrk Yaluk Beenyak (Women Sitting Under the Night Sky and Making Camp by the River), 2023
22-karat gold leaf, acrylic and charcoal (sourced from Marlene Gilson) on canvas
50.0 × 180.0 cm
MHM2023.43, Medical History Museum

Deanne Gilson (b. 1967)

language: Wadawurrung

Country: Wadawurrung

artist location: Ballarat, Victoria

‘The banksia tree was used to make spears, coolamons, water strainers and fire sticks. The sweet nectar can be placed onto cuts and wounds to aid healing and disinfect the area, and also used as a sweet drink and loved by children. The honeyeaters feed on the banksia nectar in my garden, and I love watching them. It has multiple uses and meanings as a healing and artefact-making tree, and we respect it for its sacred knowledge.

It’s shown here in a possum-skin dilly bag, hand sewn with a touch of gold added to reflect the colonial male and female gazes. In the goldfields of Ballarat, I use gold to infer that we “the people” are the real gold, not the gold itself. The figures from left to right are all ceramic kitsch objects I saw on eBay, mainly from the early 1950s to 1970s in Australia. I have taken the objects off their bases and “un-objectified” them, turning them into real people without the bases they once stood on. They represent the reality of who we are, as strong, resourceful people, who successfully lived off the land for thousands of years and who are not the object of the gaze.’

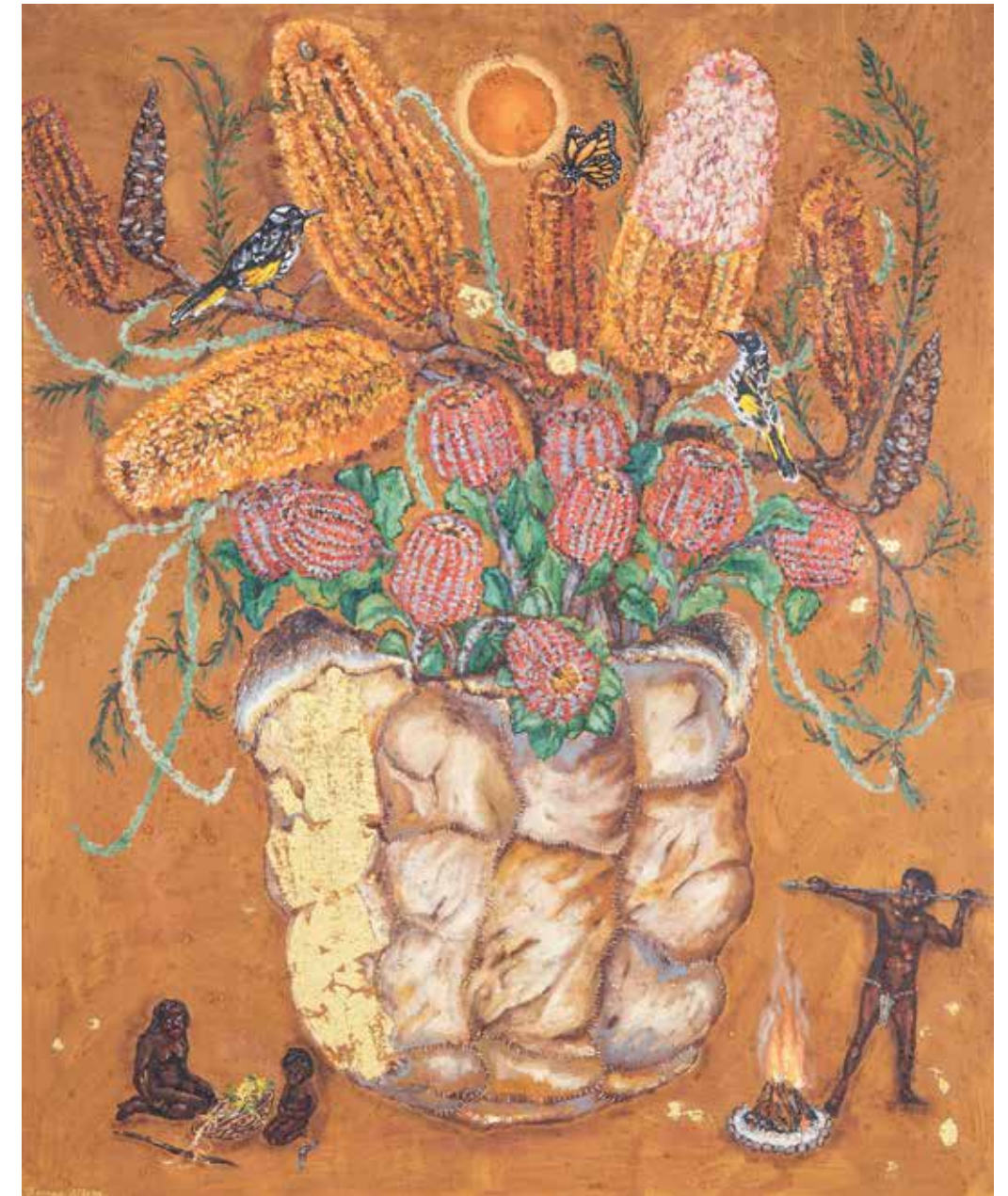
Cat. 16

The Wurrak (Banksia) Basket, 2023

22-karat gold leaf, acrylic and yellow ochre (sourced from Wadawurrung *Dja*) on canvas

110.0 × 90.0 cm

MHM2024.42, Medical History Museum



Cynthia Hardie (b. 1941)
language: Yorta Yorta

Laurel Robinson (b. 1948)
language: Yorta Yorta / Wurundjeri

Amy Briggs (b. 1950)
language: Yorta Yorta

Robyn Briggs (b. 1957)
language: Yorta Yorta / Gunai

Lyn Thorpe (b. 1957)
language: Yorta Yorta / Wamba Wemba / Wurundjeri

Sharyn Forrester (b. 1970)
language: Yorta Yorta

Ruth Langford (b. 1970)
language: Yorta Yorta / Dja Dja Wurrung

Belinda Briggs (b. 1979)
language: Yorta Yorta / Wamba Wamba

Tarli Dean-Atkinson (b. 1990)
language: Yorta Yorta / Moiraban / Wiradjuri

Tarn Parker (b. 1994)
language: Wiradjuri

Sam Forrester (b. 1997)
language: Yorta Yorta

Kaninna Langford (b. 1997)
language: Yorta Yorta / Dja Dja Wurrung / Kalkadoon / Yirendali

Ally Knight (b. 1998)
language: Yorta Yorta / Dja Dja Wurrung / Kamilaroi

Chloe Jones (b. 2000)
language: Wollithiga / Kalitheban / Yorta Yorta



Cultural medicine, as we live and practice it on Yorta Yorta Country, extends beyond the limits of Western clinical frameworks. It is not simply a response to illness but a sovereign act of remembering, returning and cultural regeneration, rooted in Country and carried through our everyday lives. It holds space for our stories, our songs and our ways of being—practices never lost, only interrupted. As a living system of relational knowledge, *Nanyak Itjawudik* nourishes spirit, sustains kin and reaffirms connection to land, community and self.

This body of work is grounded in Aboriginal women’s knowledge systems—intergenerational, embodied and culturally rooted. It brings together 14 Aboriginal women artists and is led by cultural leaders Belinda Briggs, Lyn Thorpe, Amy Briggs and Laurel Robinson. The artists are either Yorta Yorta or living and creating on Yorta Yorta *Woka* (Country) and they span emerging voices to senior leaders. Each brings their own lived experience, shaped by different forms of healing, memory and care. For some, cultural medicine is a quiet reflection; for others, it is conversation, movement or creation. It means something different to each of us, but it connects us all.

Cat. 19
Nanyak Itjawudik Yapaneyepuk (Cultural Medicine Together), 2025
river clay from the banks of the Dhungala (Murray), Kaiela (Goulburn) and Broken Rivers, on Yorta Yorta Country
dimensions variable
MHM2025.10, Medical History Museum

Lyn Thorpe (b. 1957)

language: Yorta Yorta / Wamba Wemba / Wurundjeri

Country: Yorta Yorta / Wamba Wemba / Wurundjeri

artist location: Shepparton, Victoria

‘My name is Lyn Thorpe (nee Atkinson), I’m a Yorta Yorta woman born and raised on Yorta Yorta Country. I pay homage, love and respect to my Ancestral connections through my grandparents’ Wamba Wemba, Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples and Country. Knowing who I am and where I come from has been a guiding path and purpose in my life. I have memories from my early childhood when Aboriginal ways of knowing and being were strongly practised, and I grew up with my family life, cared for by parents, grandparents and family of all generations. We lived and gathered on our rivers and our bushlands, where sharing stories and memories was a way of life. Creativity was used in multiple, differentiated ways to service different purposes, cultural and otherwise; it was a guiding path that nurtured strength, pride, curiosity and purpose to explore our histories, stories and cultural ways of being.

Over the years I have increasingly expressed, and related holistically to, cultural ways of being as different forms of cultural medicine. We can be restored through using culturally appropriate ways that are determined and shaped by and for our people. Key Yorta Yorta words authentically express the relational, historical and cultural significance of the meaning and ideas flowing through our cultural medicine collaborations: *Ngaikun* speaks to the importance of knowing who we are and where we come from; *Angurram* embodies a sense of being who we are; *Bamunga* expresses our ability to feel who we are; and *Gabra* tunes us into our innate senses, into the interconnected nature of Aboriginal cultural intelligence. *Nanyak* holds the essence of our Dreaming—our cultural medicine—where everything is connected to everything else.

Knowing who we are and where we come from is what connects us to our Ancestors, our Country and to each other. Healing comes in many shapes and forms, and cultural medicine reflects our holistic journey to explore, reset and heal together. Our cultural language, symbols and creations tell our Ancestors that we are still here, guided by their legacies and knowledge systems, practised since time immemorial.’

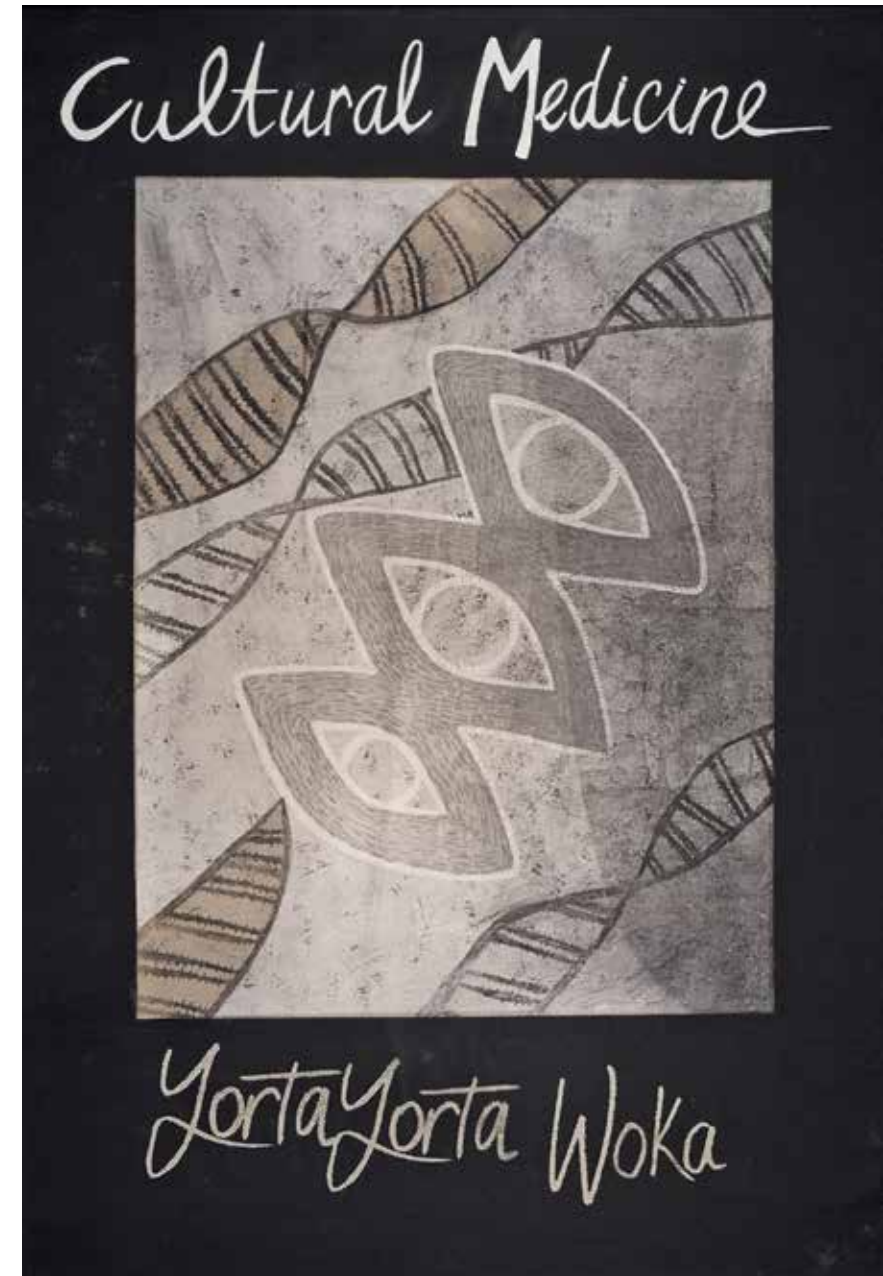
Cat. 60

Nanyak Itjawudik (Cultural Medicine) Banner, 2025

acrylic, ochre and mixed media on Belgian linen

200.0 × 125.0 cm

MHM2025.11, Medical History Museum



Zena Cumpston, 1979

language: Barkandji Kurnu

Country: Barkandji

artist location: Narrm (Melbourne), Victoria

‘My art practice explores the interrelationships between people, plants and animals on my Barkandji Country. Through each work I celebrate and signpost layered knowledge. For example, the emu footprint missing one toe encodes an ingenious lesson about how to find emu eggs when you are hungry, taught to me by my Barkandji elders. I have included *kopi*, which is gypsum from our Country, processed and used in traditional mourning practices but also, importantly, as part of celebrations and joyous occasions. The inclusion of *kopi* manifests my Country and culture as physically ever-present within me. Circles embody holistic knowledge and continuation. Through these works, I celebrate the many ways our people have kept Country and foodways strong, despite the many ongoing challenges we face as colonised peoples. I also mourn that it is still too rare that our deep knowledge and custodial responsibility as First Peoples is empowered.’

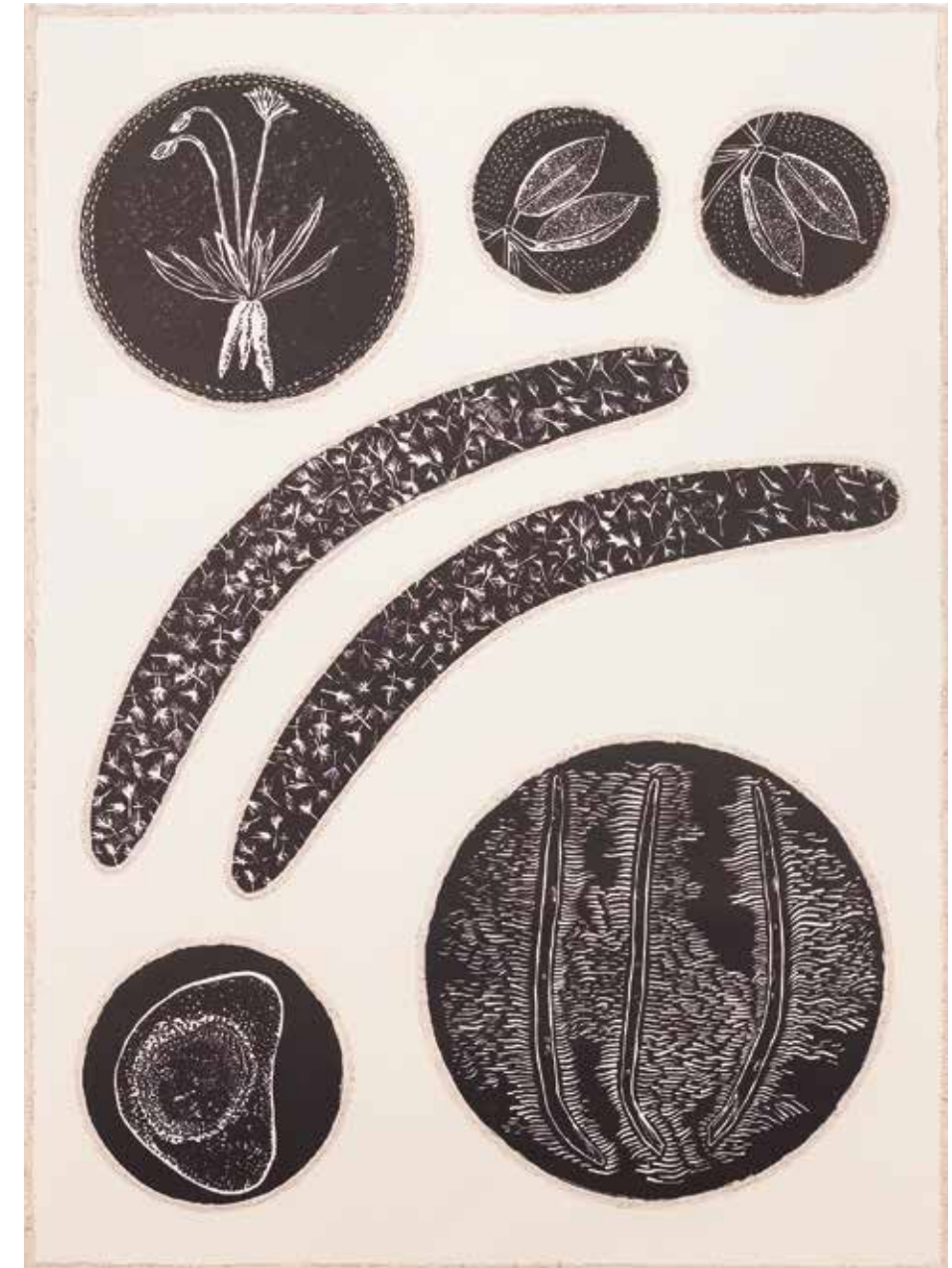
Cat. 14

ngarta-kiira (to return to country) #1, 2023

linocut collage with *kopi* on Fabriano paper

84.0 × 63.0 cm

MHM2023.45, Medical History Museum



Eva Richardson (1936–2023)

language: Trawlwoolway

Country: Moonah, Cape Portland, north-east Tasmania

artist location: Nipaluna (Hobart), Lutruwita (Tasmania)

This container has been made by gathering a strip of Bull Kelp frond into a bulbous cup form. The container is shaped with skewers made of Tea Tree. The making of Bull Kelp containers or water carriers is a tradition of the Aboriginal people of the Furneaux Islands group, off the north-east coast of Tasmania (including the main islands of Flinders and Cape Barren), and of the west coast of mainland Tasmania.

Kelp naturally contains iodine, so the containers also had the health-related benefits of disinfecting the water and preventing thyroid problems. Richardson was one of a small group of elder artists in Lutruwita maintaining Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural traditions through visual arts practice.



Cat. 53

Bull Kelp Water Carrier, 2017

Bull Kelp, Tea Tree sticks, oil

30.0 × 13.0 × 10.0 cm

MHM2021.42, Medical History Museum

Myrtle Pennington (circa 1939–2022)

language: Pitjantjatjara

Country: Kanpa, Great Victoria Desert, Central Australia

artist location: Tjuntjuntjara, Western Australia

The Spinifex people inhabited the Great Victoria Desert long before Europeans landed on this continent. They survived in an arid but beautiful environment, equipped with the necessary skills required for such a life. A spiritual people guided by cultural law, they were able to exist virtually unchallenged and unchanged until the 1950s, when the British atomic testing began at Emu Field, and later at Maralinga. These tests directly displaced the Spinifex people and it would be more than 30 years before their traditional lands were finally returned to them and they could access the Country that formed them from birth. The landscape holds their culture, and their daily interactions are governed by the moral compass of the first beings who created the physical realm. Country maps a tangible way forward for the people to reflect upon and learn from.

It is this Country, this spiritual landscape, that defines and permeates Myrtle Pennington's work. Each piece is part history, part ceremony and part Country. Myrtle assumes the vastness of the landscape, imbuing it with colourful light in profound yet simple compositions. She recalls the places that sustained her during her early years and gives rise to the sites of Mulpulya and Kanpa, surrounding them with sandhills and salt lakes or plains that lead to rocky escarpments. She reads the scene from a sense of belonging, of being interwoven into the fabric of the landscape she creates. All this Myrtle captures and conveys with ease, building a textural quality that prompts one to walk with her through this vast Country.

Cat. 50

Kanpa, 2018

acrylic on linen

137.0 × 90.0 cm

MHM2019.4, Medical History Museum



Ned Grant (b. circa 1941)

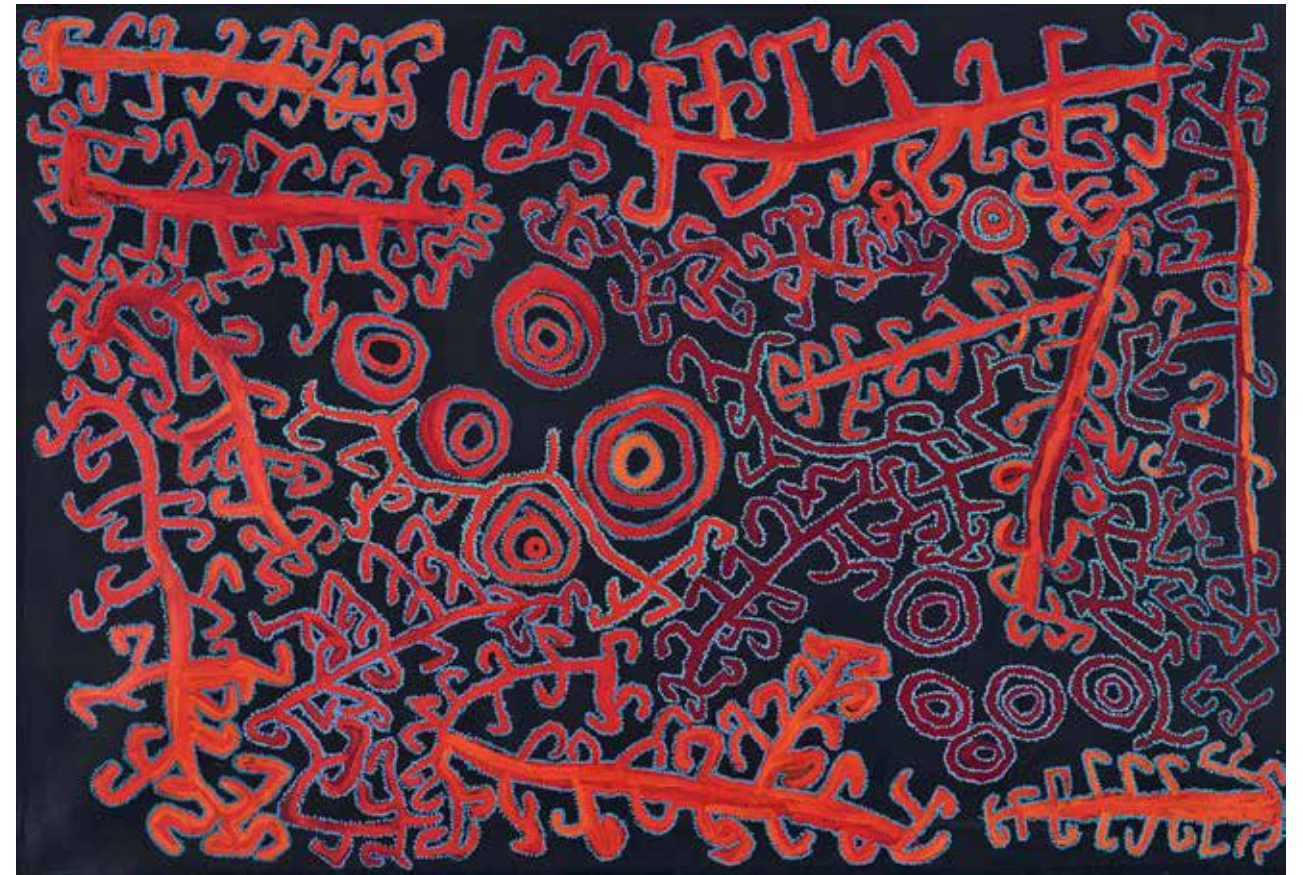
language: Pitjantjatjara

moiety: Tjintu (sun side)

Country: Papatatjara

artist location: Tjuntjuntjara, Western Australia

Ned Grant weaves the *wata* (root systems) from the *Ngalta* (Desert Kurrajong), *Katiya* (Western Myall) and *Kukara* (Sheoak) through the vast Country they inhabit, making them reach across the significant sites, linking the landscape together and giving the flora the powerful presence it commands. These trees are all part of the spiritual fabric that permeates the environment that Ned Grant depicts, a landscape formed by the first beings as they traversed it, leaving indelible physical reminders of their power and presence. In this composition, Ned places the sites holding the Tjintir-Tjintirpa *Tjukurpa* (Willy Wagtail creation line), a religious narrative that follows the unfolding events of Minyma Tjintir-Tjintirpa (Willy Wagtail Woman), whose name is Yina. She traverses the surrounding terrain, leaving behind the drama in the physical realm at the sites of Yawarnya, Munyul and Kukaratjara, and then farther still in Country connected by the flora Ned depicts, the sites of Tjutalatjara, Apalinya, Miratipi and Pirakara.



Cat. 17

Tjintir-Tjintirpa, 2019

acrylic on linen

137.0 × 200.0 cm

MHM2019.5, Medical History Museum

Anne Ovi (b. 1966)

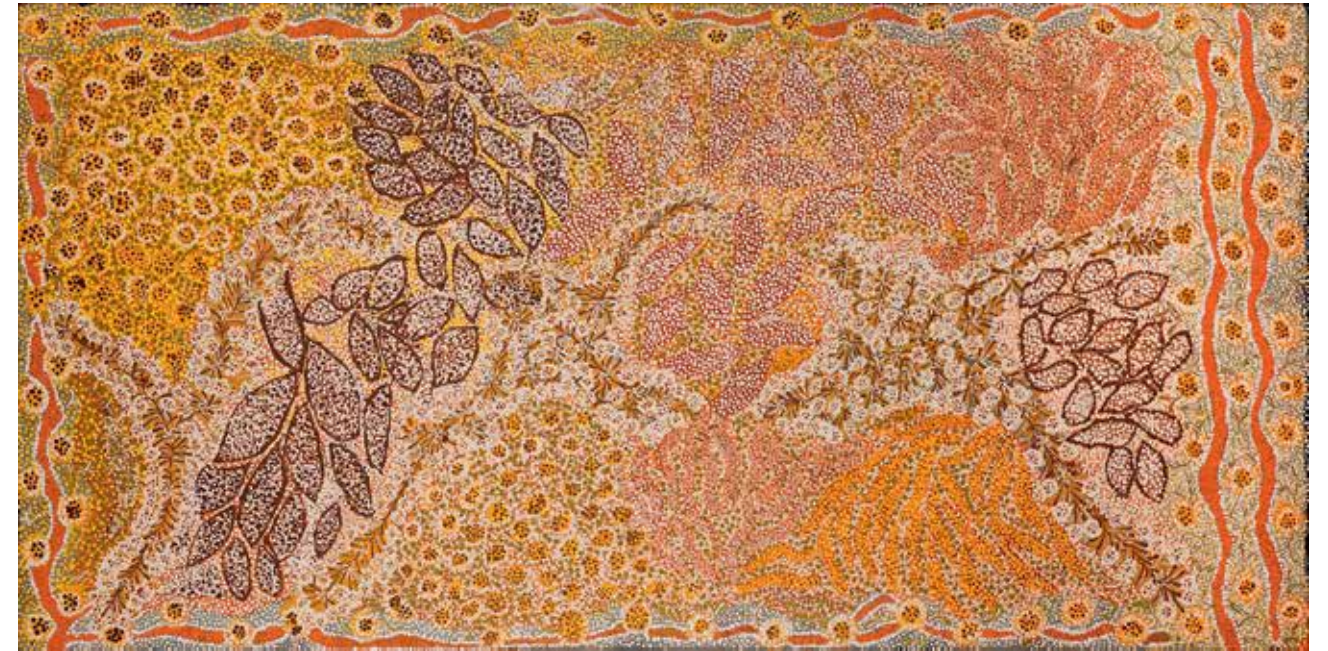
skin: Nangala

language: Kukatja Walmajarri

Country: Purkitji (Sturt Creek)

artist location: Mulan community, Western Australia

Anne Ovi has painted her traditional Country of Purkitji (Sturt Creek). There, a section of the stream flows first muddy, milky, and then splits to a stream that runs clear and blue. It is sweet water, good for drinking. There are many bush medicines growing around the waterways, and the ground undulates with hills.



Cat. 49

Purkitji, 2022

acrylic on linen

75.0 × 150.0 cm

MHM2023.26, Medical History Museum

Marie Mudgedell (b. 1952)

skin: Nakamarra

language: Jaru / Kukatja / Ngarti

Country: Purkitji (Sturt Creek) / Nakarra Nakarra

artist location: Wirrimanu (Balgo), Western Australia

‘The right way for a baby to be born is this way. Birth was sacred. The mother and the women with the right skin would go away from the main camp. They would make a windbreak for the mother and for the baby to be born. No man was allowed anywhere near where the baby was being born. The men went away from the main camp too. They went hunting for food. The other women, with the wrong skin names for that new baby, would stay somewhere in the middle—not in the main camp, not with the birthing camp. They would look after the other children and also go hunting for bush food. When the baby was born, then the father might be able to see that new one.’

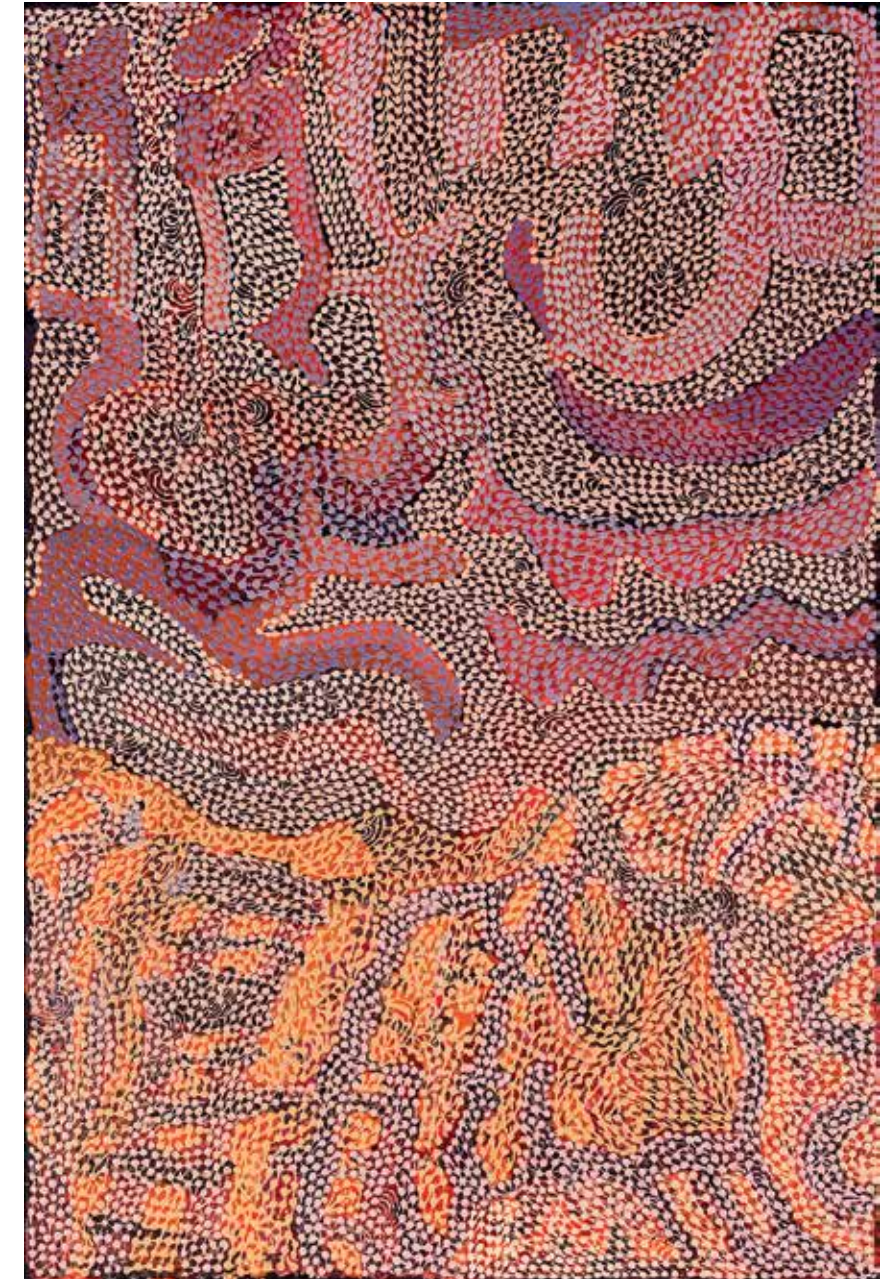
Cat. 47

Bush Baby Story, 2020

acrylic on canvas

90.0 × 60.0 cm

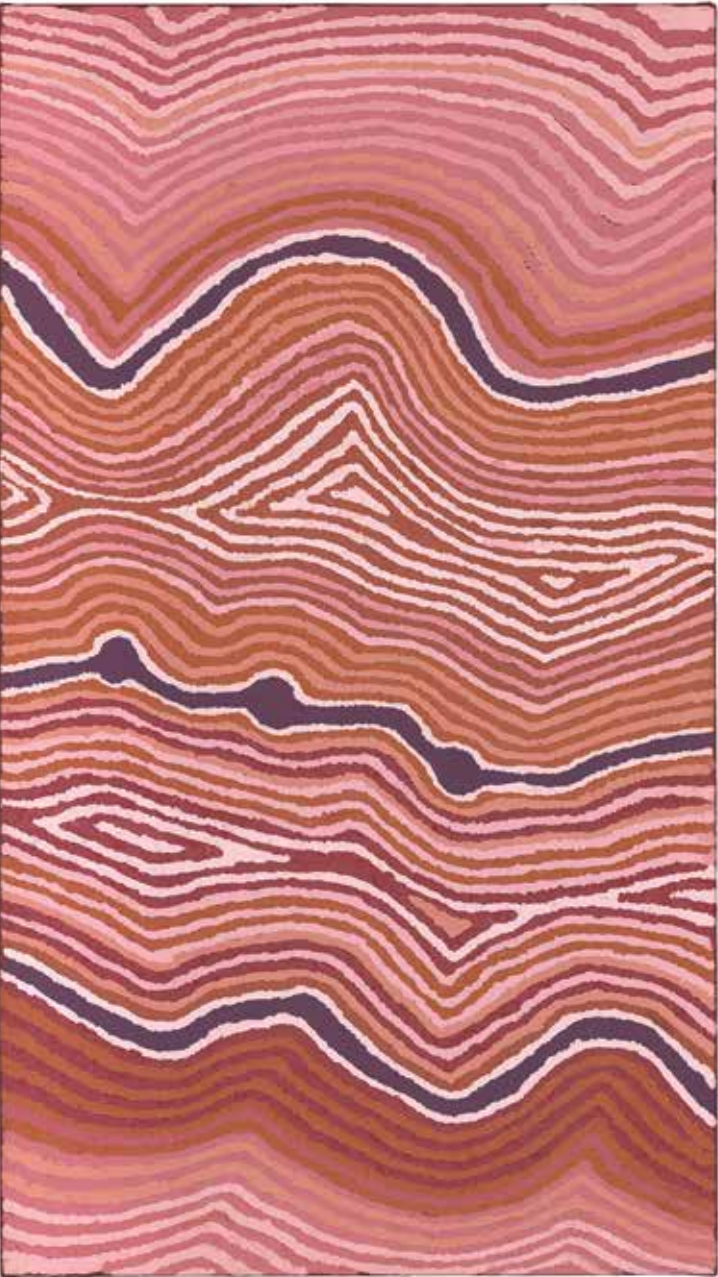
MHM2021.9, Medical History Museum



Helicopter (Joey) Tjungurrayi (b. 1947)
skin: Tjungurrayi
language: Kukatja / Manyilyjarra
Country: Wangkartu
artist location: Wirrimanu (Balgo), Western Australia

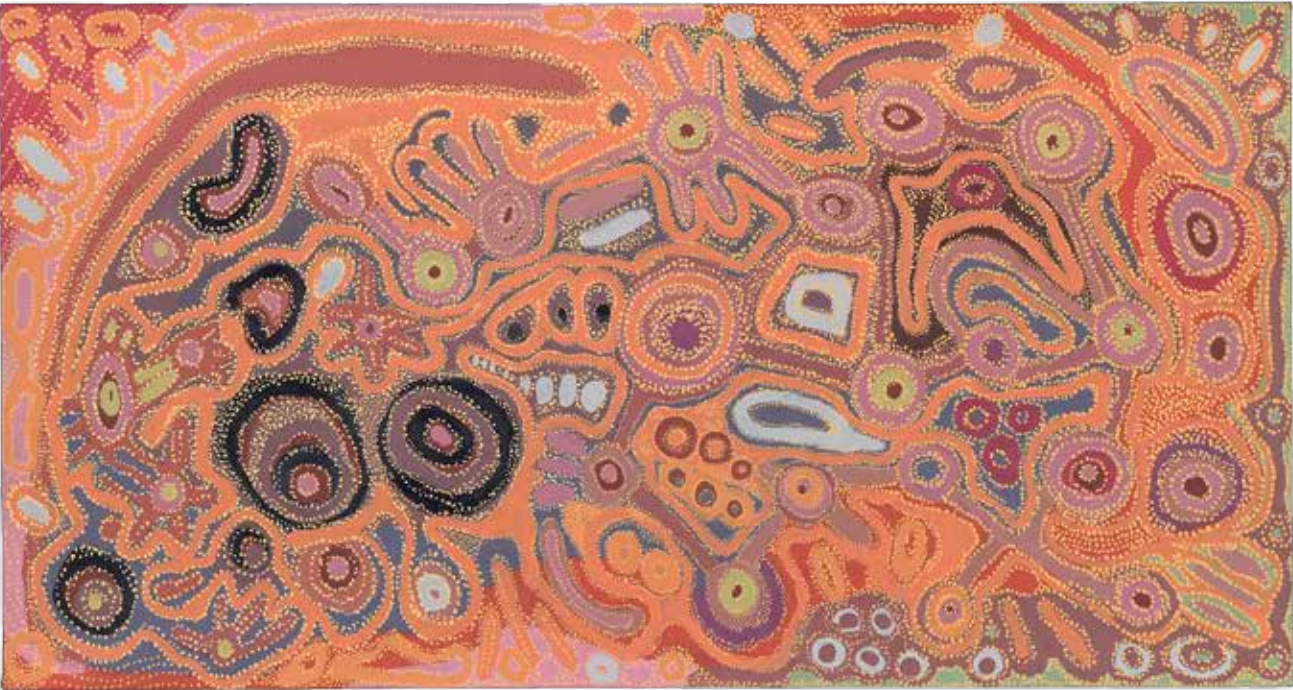
Helicopter Tjungurrayi has depicted his traditional Country, located far to the south-west of Balgo, in the Great Sandy Desert. This Country is near Nynmi and is known as Wangkartu, named for the *tjurnnu* (soakwater), which was the life source for Helicopter when he was a young man travelling and hunting across the land with his family. The many parallel lines in the painting represent the *tali* (sand dunes) that dominate the landscape of the area. Helicopter is a *maparn* (traditional healer) and an active law man.

Cat. 61
Wangkartu, 2020
acrylic on canvas
120.0 × 60.0 cm
MHM2024.6, Medical History Museum



Miriam Baadjo (b. 1957)
skin: Nangala
language: Kukatja
Country: Tjatjati
artist location: Wirrimanu (Balgo), Western Australia

Miriam has depicted a story told by her Uncle Wimmitji. It took place in Tjatjati, north of Jupiter Well. In the work’s centre are two eggs that were sung by *maparn* men (healers) in a big Tingarri Dreaming ceremony. The men called on the native cat spirit near a sacred rock hole—also depicted centrally—and two babies were born from the eggs. The oval shapes surrounding the eggs are the *maparn*.



Cat. 1
Tjatjati, 2023
acrylic on linen
75.0 × 150.0 cm
MHM2024.7, Medical History Museum

Vanessa Inkamala (b. 1968)

skin: Nangala

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘It is Bush Vicks, you know, in the Country. That’s what I painted, the landscape [of Tjurtiju, or West MacDonnell Ranges]. Gum tree leaves, we called that one Bush Vicks. When we get sick, we use that one, Bush Vicks, for medicine—for cough, for flu and all that. When we catch a cold, we boil that one with water, make them steam, the steam comes out smell like Vicks. That is why we called it Bush Vicks.’



Cat. 32

Bush Vicks, 2023

watercolour on paper

51.5 × 71.5 cm

MHM2024.11, Medical History Museum

Mervyn Rubuntja (b. 1959)

skin: Japanangka

language: Arrernte, Western Aranda

Country: Maduthara (father's side), Ntaria (Hermannsburg, mother's side)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘We use the leaves to make bush medicine. We boil the leaves in the fire, and inhale the smells. It goes into the body and heals us from illnesses like the flu, bone ache and other infections.’

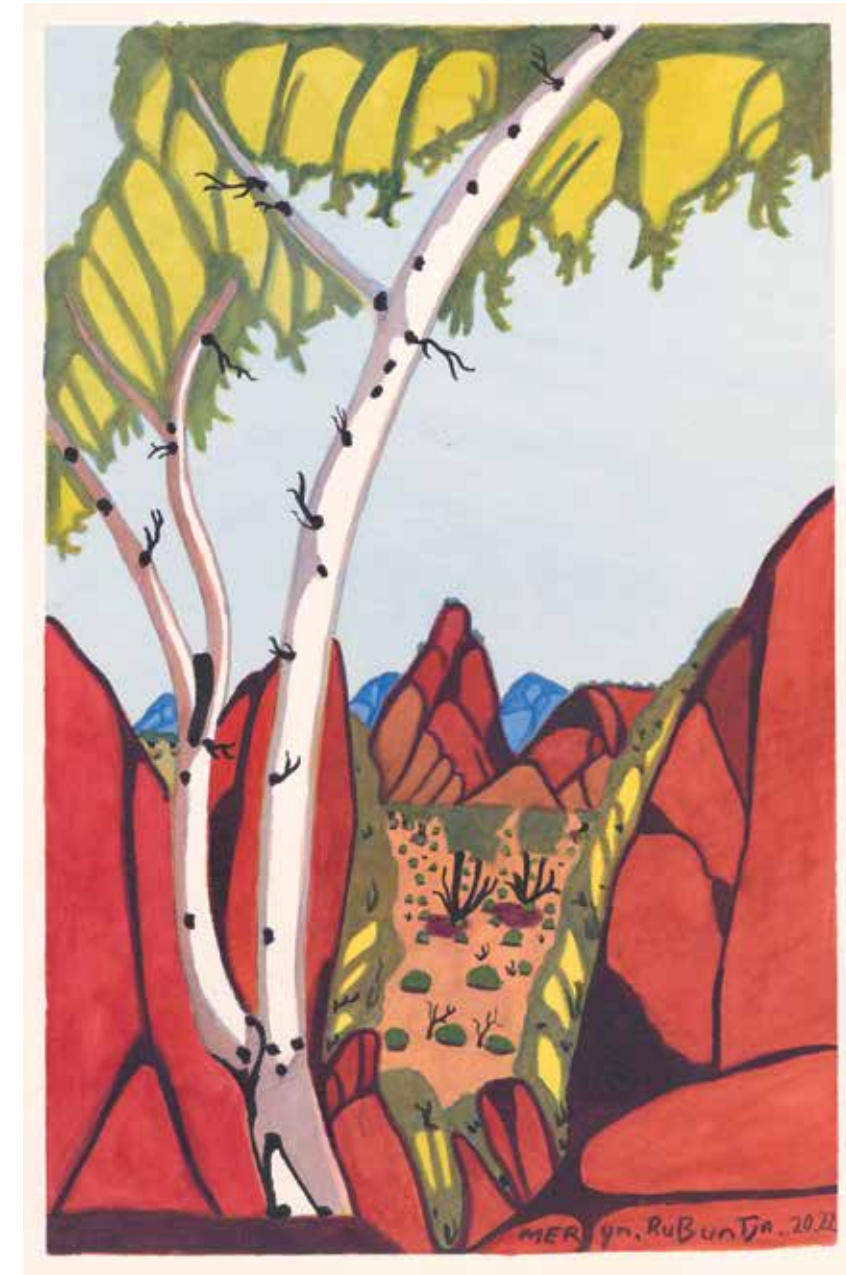
Cat. 57

Mt Hay, NT, 2022

watercolour on paper

52.0 × 34.0 cm

MHM2024.15, Medical History Museum



Vanessa Inkamala (b. 1968)

skin: Nangala

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘The leaves of this tree are like Bush Vicks. When we get sick, we use that one, Bush Vicks, for medicine for cough, for flu and all that. When we catch a cold, we boil that one with water—make them steam, the steam comes out, smell like Vicks. That is why we called it Bush Vicks.

The orange flowers are eaten and used as bush medicine for general health. The inside of the mature gum nuts [in the top half of the painting] are used as cotton wool. When the wind was blowing, we used to catch it [the fibre] and hold it in our hands. It was fluffy and pleasant to touch.’



Cat. 31

Arrkarnka (Gum Nuts), 2023

watercolour on paper

36.0 × 54.0 cm

MHM2024.21, Medical History Museum

Delray Inkamala (b. 1970)

skin: Nangala

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘I painted the gum trees in our traditional land, the West MacDonnell Ranges. They give us everything we need. We use the leaves to make bush medicine, we boil the leaves in the fire and inhale the smells. It goes into the body and heals us from illnesses like the flu, bone aches and other infections. When the gum tree is near running creek water, we wait for the water to dry and pull out the small, brown, soft roots. We peel those and find inside them witchetty grubs—that is our tucker. We use the skin that peels off the bark to make ashes and mix them with *Pituri* [Bush Tobacco], and we chew this mixture.

This is wisdom we got from people who used to live in the olden days. We grew up watching how they used the gum tree, its leaves, roots and bark. They left us this important legacy.’

Cat. 25

Ilumpa (White Gum Tree), 2023

watercolour on paper

54.0 × 36.0 cm

MHM2024.8, Medical History Museum





Delray Inkamala (b. 1970)

skin: Nangala

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘We would chew the yellow part and throw the seeds away. It’s good for your body, like vitamins. People in the olden days kept healthy by eating bush tucker. This was before medicine was available. They didn’t need medicine back then.’

Cat. 26

Rraatninga (Wild Passion Fruit), 2023

watercolour on paper

38.0 × 56.5 cm

MHM2024.19, Medical History Museum



Delray Inkamala (b. 1970)

skin: Nangala

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘Makes the tongue sweet. This plant grows in the desert. It is a sweet one and makes the tongue sweet. It makes you mentally happy. This plant is called, in Luritja, *Karlilipa*.’

Cat. 24

Erralunga (Honey Grevillea), 2023

watercolour on paper

54.0 × 38.0 cm

MHM2024.16, Medical History Museum



Dianne Inkamala (b. 1971)

skin: Nangala

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘Coconut seeds grow out of the *Arrkanka*, which you can break open. People used to eat them to obtain moist[ure]. It was used for survival. When people travelled along they consumed it as medicine for the throat. They would also rub it on dry and crackling lips.’

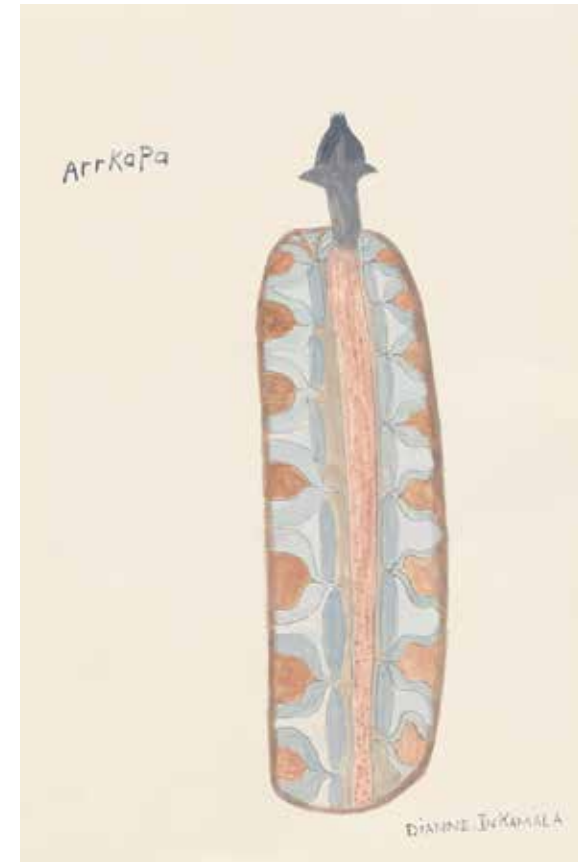
Cat. 27

Arrkanka (Coolamon Seed), 2023

watercolour on paper

38.0 × 54.0 cm

MHM2024.23, Medical History Museum



Dianne Inkamala (b. 1971)

skin: Nangala

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘Bean Wood [Desert Oak] tree was used to make shields for fighting. The wood is light and easy to lift up. People used to eat the white root of young Bean Wood trees as an alternative for water.’

Cat. 28

Arrkapa (Desert Oak Seed), 2023

watercolour on paper

54.5 × 38.0 cm

MHM2024.24, Medical History Museum



Dellina Inkamala (b. 1984)

skin: Napaljarri

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘We insert into the fire *Elpungka* branches. The smoke is used as medicine for babies. We lift up the naked baby and let them inhale this smoke. This helps them with their breathing and general health.’

Cat. 21

Elpungka, 2023

watercolour on paper

51.5 × 36.0 cm

MHM2024.17, Medical History Museum



Dellina Inkamala (b. 1984)

skin: Napaljarri

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘Kids would pop it and play around with it. Fun and play is good for their happiness and mental health.’

Cat. 23

Ratte Pod (Rattlepod), 2023

watercolour on paper

54.0 × 38.0 cm

MHM2024.18, Medical History Museum



Dellina Inkamala (b. 1984)

skin: Napaljarri

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘People used to grab those Bush Bananas and eat them as replacement for water, to keep your tongue wet.’

Cat. 22

Langkwa (Bush Banana), 2023

watercolour on paper

54.0 × 37.0 cm

MHM2024.20, Medical History Museum



Vanessa Inkamala (b. 1968)

skin: Nangala

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘This tree grows little round seeds. We pick them up and eat them when they are still green. This is a healthy food for old people, like taking vitamins.’

Cat. 34

Itija (Mulga Tree) with Some Yellow Flowers, 2023

watercolour on paper

38.5 × 54.0 cm

MHM2024.13, Medical History Museum



Vanessa Inkamala (b. 1968)
 skin: Nangala
 language: Western Aranda
 Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)
 artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘This tree grows little round seeds. We pick them up and eat them when they are still green. This is a healthy food for old people, like taking vitamins.’

Cat. 33
Itija (Mulga Tree) Leaves and Flowers, 2023
 watercolour on paper
 35.0 × 51.5 cm
 MHM2024.27, Medical History Museum



Mervyn Rubuntja (b. 1959)
 skin: Japanangka
 language: Arrernte, Western Aranda
 Country: Maduthara (father’s side), Ntaria (mother’s side)
 artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘I have painted the *Rraatninga* [Wild Passion Fruit]. I know that it used to grow east of Mparntwe, around Emily Gap. The elders showed me, and I used to go there and collect them. We would eat it to help stop coughing. Unfortunately, you can’t find it there anymore.’

Cat. 56
Rraatninga (Wild Passion Fruit), 2019
 watercolour on paper
 150.0 × 75.0 cm
 MHM2024.12, Medical History Museum



Mandy Malbunka (b. 1989)

skin: Nakamarra

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘In October, this tree produces “white lollies”. They are sweet and make people happy. As kids, we would shake the tree and get a blanket of bush lollies.’

Cat. 36

Ilpapa (Red Gum), 2023

watercolour on paper

54.0 × 34.0 cm

MHM2024.14, Medical History Museum



Mandy Malbunka (b. 1989)

skin: Nakamarra

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘*Irnmaara* [Mistletoe] grows on different trees, such as the Mulga and gum trees. We used to eat the little red parts of the flowers. They are good for general health.’

Cat. 37

Irnmaara (Mistletoe), 2023

watercolour on paper

54.0 × 38.0 cm

MHM2024.25, Medical History Museum

Selma Nunay Coulthard (b. 1954)
skin: Kemarra
language: Luritja / Arrernte / Western Aranda
Country: Ntaria, Urrampinyi (Tempe Downs)
artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘It’s important for me to paint the *Lyerpa* because, with this painting of the *Lyerpa* flower, I remind the young generation how the story of the Serpent Snake and the *Lyerpa* are connected to our culture and people. Paintings help transfer important knowledge to the next generation.

The *Lyerpa* is the mother-in-law of the Rainbow Serpent Snake. The snake will avoid mothers-in-law; it won’t have any contact with them. The snake will chase and attack people, but once people get close to the tree they will be saved, as the snake will not go anywhere near the *Lyerpa*. This story is ... connected to Dreamtime and the old people. The message from this story was used as a method to protect oneself: if you saw a snake you would know that you can hide under the *Lyerpa* tree.’

Cat. 13
Lyerpa, 2023
watercolour on paper
38.0 × 54.0 cm
MHM2024.26, Medical History Museum

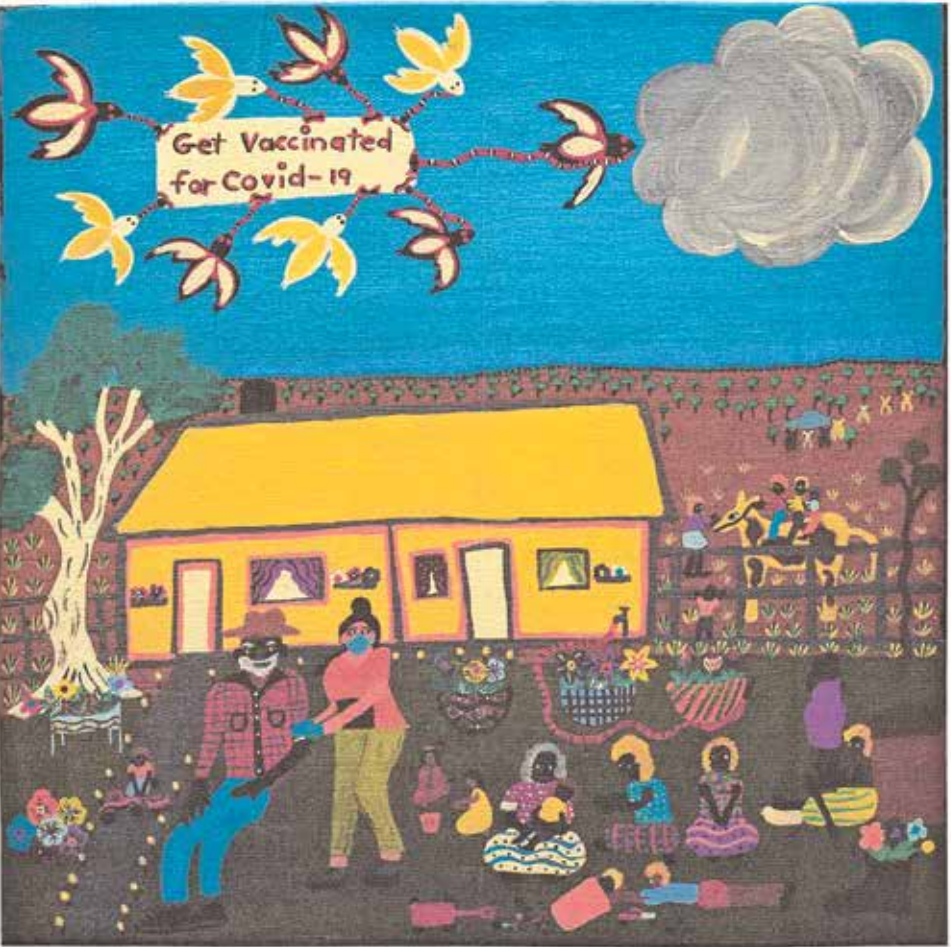


Marjorie Williams (b. 1953)

skin: Nungarrayi
language: Western Aranda / Pintupi
Country: Western Aranda
Mother’s Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)
artist location: Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

‘Family Outstation, Yuwalki. The nurse went to Yuwalki, that’s family outstation, to give that old man vaccine. Yuwalki south of Kintore. Family all outside together. Pregnant one standing up. Beside her, that one lady crippled with plaster. Broke her ankle. Kids riding horse. Bullocks in the paddock standing and watching them. And the garden, the kids’ toys, and playing toys. They got solar lights around the house and the path, light up after dark. Hose there for watering the garden. Old man happy to get needle. The bird is taking the sign, showing the sign to get vaccine. *Marra inthurra*. It’s really nice.’

Cat. 64
Get Vaccinated for Covid-19, 2021
print on linen
72.0 × 50.0 cm
printer: Territory Tea Towel Collective
MHM2022.2, Medical History Museum



Family outstation Yuwalki
The nurse went to Yuwalki, That's family outstation to give that old man vaccine. Yuwalki south of Kintore. Family all outside together. Pregnant one standing up. Beside her, that one lady crippled with plaster. Broken her ankle. Kids riding horse. Bullocks in the paddock standing and watching them. And the garden, the kids toys, and playing toys. They got solar lights around the house and the path, light up after dark. Hose there for watering the garden. Old man happy to get the needle. The bird is taking the sign, showing the sign to get vaccine. *Marra inthurra*. It's really nice.

Judith Pungarta Inkamala (b. 1948)

skin: Pungarta

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Ntaria, Northern Territory

‘This one is making *Errpmangk-errpmangk* [bush medicine made from Native Fuchsia, *Eremophila alternifolia*]. They boiling wild camel fat in billy on the fire. On the lid, she is mixing up *Errpmangk-errpmangk* leaves with wild camel fat in *taarna* [coolamon]. That’s long time, old people, in mission days before I was born. When I was young girl I saw at market old people selling *Errpmangk-errpmangk*. People get *Errpmangk-errpmangk* from the market, but when baby get sore they go out bush and get and *Ntjwia errkngalha* [bark of the Corkwood tree]. This one bit different, they get *Ntjwia* and boil it with fat, then they mix with *Arratha* [Hill Fuchsia leaf, *Eremophila freelingii*]. You can put *Ntjwia* on the sore.

Sometimes they get *Para tjalka* [River Red Gum bark] and they smash ’em, smash ’em, smash ’em and boil in the water and give it to drink. *Tnurranga* [Emu Bush, *Eremophila longifolia*] they put leaf on the fire for smoking the baby. *Wurrpa* [stomach juice] from kangaroo; when they hunt kangaroo they get *wurrpa* and drink. All this mob bush medicine.’

Cat. 30

Errpmangk-errpmangk Laanghama (Mixing Bush Medicine Made from Native Fuchsia), 2024

terracotta and underglaze

35.0 × 20.0 cm (variable)

MHM2024.34, Medical History Museum



Judith Pungarta Inkamala (b. 1948)

skin: Pungarta

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Ntaria, Northern Territory

‘They making bush medicine out of *Errpmangk-errpmangk* [Native Fuchsia leaves] with wild camel fat. They put it rubbing on all the kids, because some kids got itchy—scratching too much. And on the sore, when they have sore.

They also get *Ntjwia errkngalha* [bark of the Corkwood tree] and they cook it on the fire, make it *ilpminya* [charred, ashes] and put it in a cool place. When it’s cooler they mix it with the *Errpmangk-errpmangk*, then *urlpa-ilama* [grind to powder]. After, they mix it with camel fat, then take a little bit and put it on mother’s nipples so baby can drink it with mother’s milk. When he cry, they put more. So baby can get better, help him sleep.

After that, when baby is bigger, they can take off all the clothes, make him naked and put him in the *ura kwaarta* [fire smoke], smoking the baby. Then they rub him with *errpmangk-errpmangk*. That’s why the kids get strong, from smoking and bush medicine.

Sometimes when skin get dry, they put it on like oil.’

Cat. 29

Errpmangk-errpmangk (Bush Medicine Made from Native Fuchsia), 2024

terracotta and underglaze

40.0 × 30.0 cm (variable)

MHM2024.35, Medical History Museum



Shirley Wheeler (b. 1971)

language: Western Aranda

artist location: Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory

‘That’s out at Lilla, my grandfather’s Country, near Kings Canyon. That’s my mum, my grandmother and my mum’s big sister. And my sister’s grandchildren—another family. We all used to stay there, long time. And my grandfather and my grandmother. Used to stay at the old house, that tin shed. And there, the water tank.

On top, that’s the bush medicine there. That’s *Ntjwia*, bark from Corkwood tree. Like, they pick ’em when they little bit dark and they take it in coolamon. After put it in the water, like boiling, and smash it and with *Errpmangk-errpmangk* [Native Fuchsia leaf] and put it in the tin or plastic. For rubbing medicine, for kids or old people. It help them with pain.’

Cat. 63

Rubbing Medicine, 2024

terracotta and underglaze

18.0 × 12.0 cm (variable)

MHM2024.36, Medical History Museum



Andrea Pungarta Rontji

skin: Pungarta

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Ntaria, Northern Territory

‘This is where ladies, or anyone, can collect the *Ntjwia errkngalha* [bark of the Corkwood, species *Hakea lorea*]. You get bark from the old *Ntjwia* when the babies got sore throat or even when the big kids got skin rash. When there’s a little baby, mum always paint it on her nipple so when baby drinks her milk they’re also drinking that *Ntjwia* bush medicine.

When you collect *Ntjwia errkngalha* from tree, you put it on the fire until it becomes like coals. Then take those *Ntjwia* coals out and put ’em in coolamon and grind ’em.’

Cat. 54

Ntjwia (Corkwood), 2024

terracotta and underglaze

20.0 × 17.0 cm (variable)

MHM2024.37, Medical History Museum



Dalissa Brown (b. 1997)

skin: Nungarrayi

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Ntaria, Northern Territory

‘Some people, they go out to find *Errpmangk-errpmangk* [Native Fuchsia, *Eremophila freelingii*], for bush medicine. They went out from Ntaria to look for *Errpmangk-errpmangk* and other bush medicine trees. You can see ladies going to pick up bush medicine leaves from the trees and put it in the Toyota. Then make it medicine when they go back home. *Relha ngkuwarlknga-kartala Errpmangk-errpmangk Ntjuma*. [People with colds and flu drink this Native Fuchsia mixture.] Western Aranda people cut the Native Fuchsia leaves from the *Ntjuma* tree. They used to bring them to camp and boil them up with wild camel fat in the old days. Today, people still making bush medicine with *Errpmangk-errpmangk*, but instead of camel fat they using olive oil and other oils. You use for muscle pain and arthritis.

And they also collecting *Ntjwia errkngalha* [Corkwood tree bark, species *Hakea lorea*]. You grind with olive oil and use on sores. When you got little sore, or boil, you can use this.’

Cat. 8

Errpmangk-errpmangk (Native Fuchsia), 2024

terracotta and underglaze

20.0 × 17.0 cm (variable)

MHM2024.38, Medical History Museum



Hayley Panangka Coulthard (b. 1967)

skin: Panangka

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ipalala

artist location: Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory

‘This one is my granddaughters, they helping. This one is story of *Errpmangk-errpmangk* [Native Fuchsia] bush medicine and all the family from Ipalala, our outstation. Friday, after work, we go camping out to Rutna [another family outstation]. And we cross the Finke River, foot-walking to other side with my grandchildren and my mum. Other side we look for this *Errpmangk-errpmangk* near the mountain. It grows mountainside—and teaching my grandchildren to look for other bush tucker too.

After we get *Errpmangk-errpmangk*, first I get a pot and put it on fire and put beef fat to boil. I rub *Errpmangk-errpmangk* with a round rock, grind it, make it really smooth and put powder in the pot and stir it with wooden spoon. After that, my grandchildren, mum and cousin-sisters we have lunch after doing bush medicine. We was having kangaroo tail with sweet potato.

Because my mum is getting old, I want to look after my grandchildren, teaching bush tucker and bush medicine. *Kaltjinthintja* means teaching.’

Cat. 12

Kaltjinthintja (Teaching My Grandchildren), 2024

terracotta and underglaze

20.0 × 17.0 cm

MHM2024.39, Medical History Museum



Beth Mbitjana Inkamala (b. 1977)

skin: Mbitjana

language: Western Aranda

Country: Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

artist location: Ntaria, Northern Territory

‘This is us, me and my little family and friends and other ladies going out for camping. We’re getting ready for camping and making fire, putting all the swags out from the trailer. And putting the little tents around, putting the swags lined up, making the beds.

And then we go out to the bushes and get one of each of the old ladies to tell us which plant. Because the plants, the trees, the leaf, they have names and we ask the old ladies. And the smell—we all smell it—which things is good for collecting for bush medicine. And then we get them, break them branches and leaves from the trees, and put it on the blanket. Some of them we boil in the billy, some of them we grind on a rock. You can boil it in water, and its good for you to drink that bush medicine if you have cough or sore throat. Some we grind it and then put it aside and tell somebody to put it on the fire in the billy and cook it with beeswax and olive oil, or some fat. You stir that thing around until it boils, boils, boils and bubbles, and then you leave it cooling until it gets hard. Then you put in a milk tin or Milo tin or in a container. You try it rubbing on your body, from head to toe. Then you feel everything is healing up, your skin getting smooth and soft.

Then you feel it’s ready to take back home and you rub it on each old lady, and on the young ones that went with you, and learning them how to collect bush medicine altogether. We got taught by them old ladies how to collect bush medicine, and one day, maybe in the future, our little ones will be teaching from us, the same.’

Cat. 20

Going Out Country Collecting Bush Medicine, 2024

terracotta and underglaze

25.0 × 20.0 cm (variable)

MHM2024.40, Medical History Museum



Kindy Kemarre Ross (b. 1983)

skin: Kemarre

language: Alyawarr

Country: Irrultja

artist location: Ampilatwatja, Northern Territory

‘My Country is called Irrultja. It’s past the hill and the dried up creek from here. It’s a nice place, my dad’s Country too; my mum’s Country is here in Ampilatwatja. When we go to see my Country, we always gather bush medicine. We always climb up the hill that’s in the south, we always go there. We like to look out over the land, and there are lots of flowers and bush medicine up there. I love my countryside. I see the nice flowers and gather bush medicine for me and my family. I like to paint a mix of wildflowers and bush medicines in all my paintings because it reminds me of my favourite part of my Country, and when it rains the flowers come out. Yeah, my countryside.’

Cat. 55

My Country Is Irrultja, 2024

acrylic on linen

122.0 × 152.0 cm

MHM2024.41, Medical History Museum

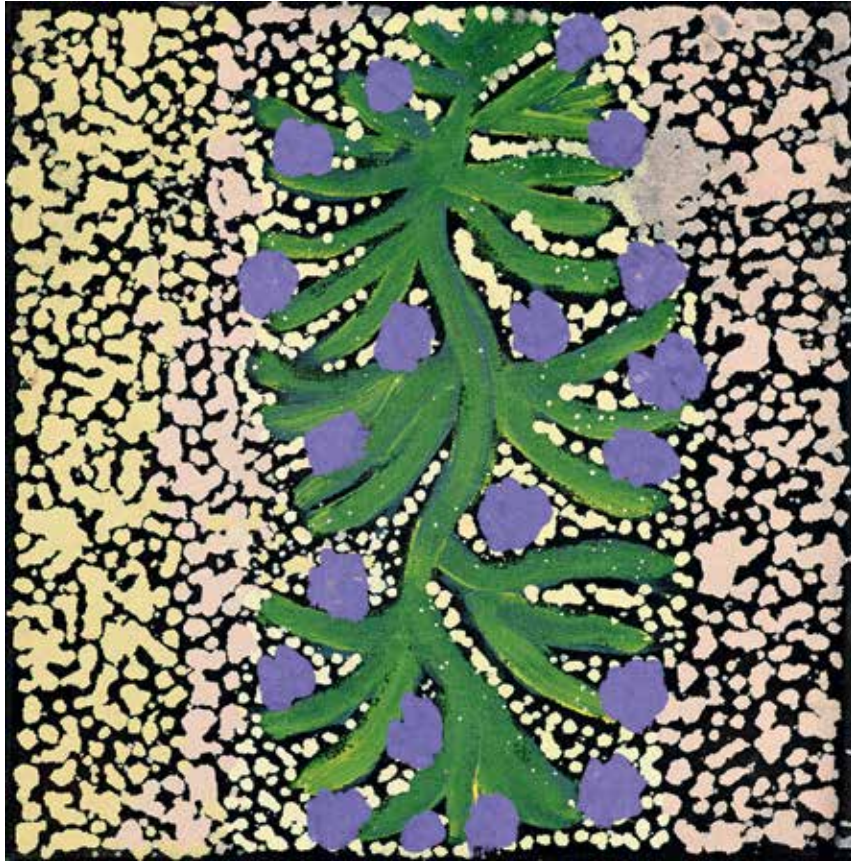


Ada Pula Beasley (b. circa 1959)
skin: Pula
language: Alyawarr
Country: Alyawarr (mother's Country, Ampilatwatja)
artist location: Wutunugurra (Epenarra), Northern Territory

‘I’m gonna tell story about my Country. After the bushfires, when the rain comes and brings back all the bush flowers and bush medicine back again and make it green, this is why I do this painting. It reminds me of when we go hunting after the bush fire and see just black, then it rains and brings flowers back and the trees and the blue skies, and the Snappy Gum trees up the hill.’



Cat. 2
My Country, 2024
acrylic on canvas
140.0 × 240.0 cm
MHM2024.22, Medical History Museum



Ada Pula Beasley (b. circa 1959)

skin: Pula

language: Alyawarr

Country: Alyawarr (mother's Country, Ampilatwatja)

artist location: Wutunugurra (Epenarra), Northern Territory

'*Alkwa* is Bush Plum. We eat 'em—this one good for kidney, kidney infection, wee infection. We eat the plums then we take the leaves, boil 'em up, boil the leaves like tea. We boil 'em up every day, five days, make 'em tea, then we go to clinic and infection all gone.'

Cat. 3

Bush Medicine, 2025

acrylic on canvas

30.0 × 30.0 cm

MHM2025.8, Medical History Museum



Ada Pula Beasley (b. circa 1959)

skin: Pula

language: Alyawarr

Country: Alyawarr (mother's Country, Ampilatwatja)

artist location: Wutunugurra (Epenarra), Northern Territory

'That one *Gungara*. Small flat one for sore throat, flu. We boil it, drink it, bath in it for four days, two times a day. All around the bush that one.'

Cat. 4

Bush Medicine, 2025

acrylic on canvas

30.0 × 30.0 cm

MHM2025.9, Medical History Museum



Jessie Kemarr Beasley (b. circa 1958)

skin: Kemarr

language: Alyawarr

Country: Alyawarr

artist location: Wutunugurra (Epenarra), Northern Territory

‘Hunting. See those flowers, bush medicine. All different bush medicine, all up them hills, good for everything flu, sore throat, fever, infection ...

My paintings come from my mother’s side. She taught us about the bush tucker, bush medicine, landscape and cultural stories.’

Cat. 5

Bush Flowers and Bush Medicine, 2024

acrylic on canvas

30.0 × 30.0 cm

MHM2025.5, Medical History Museum



Jessie Kemarr Beasley (b. circa 1958)

skin: Kemarr

language: Alyawarr

Country: Alyawarr

artist location: Wutunugurra (Epenarra), Northern Territory

‘Other side station, we always go pick up flowers for the bush medicine. Some we boil, drink ’em. Some we use the leaves, some the roots, plenty bush medicine. We always looking, watching, waiting for that bush medicine.’

Cat. 7

Bush Medicine, 2024

acrylic on canvas

30.0 × 30.0 cm

MHM2025.7, Medical History Museum



Jessie Kemarr Beasley (b. circa 1958)

skin: Kemarr

language: Alyawarr

Country: Alyawarr

artist location: Wutunugurra (Epenarra), Northern Territory

‘When the rain comes the bush medicines grow. When it’s green we collect it—before it gets dry.’

Cat. 6

Bush Medicine, 2025

acrylic on canvas

61.0 × 61.0 cm

MHM2025.6, Medical History Museum



Daisy Ngwarreye Peterson (b. circa 1954)

skin: Ngwarreye

language: Alyawarr

Country: Alyawarr

artist location: Tennant Creek, Northern Territory

‘This is the flowers, bush flowers, going up along the roadside in Epenarra. We can go and see them there. Right in the Country. We use these flowers for bush medicine—sore throat, virus—boil them up, drink it. Give it with milk to the babies.’

Cat. 51

Bush Flowers, 2025

acrylic on canvas

61.0 × 61.0 cm

MHM2025.3, Medical History Museum

Triscilla Peterson (b. 1986)

skin: Petyarr

language: Alyawarr

Country: Alyawarr

artist location: Wutunugurra (Epenarra), Northern Territory

‘Dots represent flowers and bush medicine, when it’s green, when it starts to get dry. Boil the leaves, wrap them all over body. Good for flu, fever.’

Cat. 52

Bush Medicine Leaf, 2023

acrylic on canvas

61.0 × 61.0 cm

MHM2025.4, Medical History Museum



Cecilia Nampijinpa Martin (b. 1989)

skin: Nampijinpa

language: Warlpiri

Country: Warlpiri

artist location: Yuendumu, Northern Territory

‘These medicines are still collected by our community today. The whole family is involved in collecting them. Once gathered, the leaves are often boiled, then used to make hair lovely and long, and also for colds and skin rashes, to stop itching.’

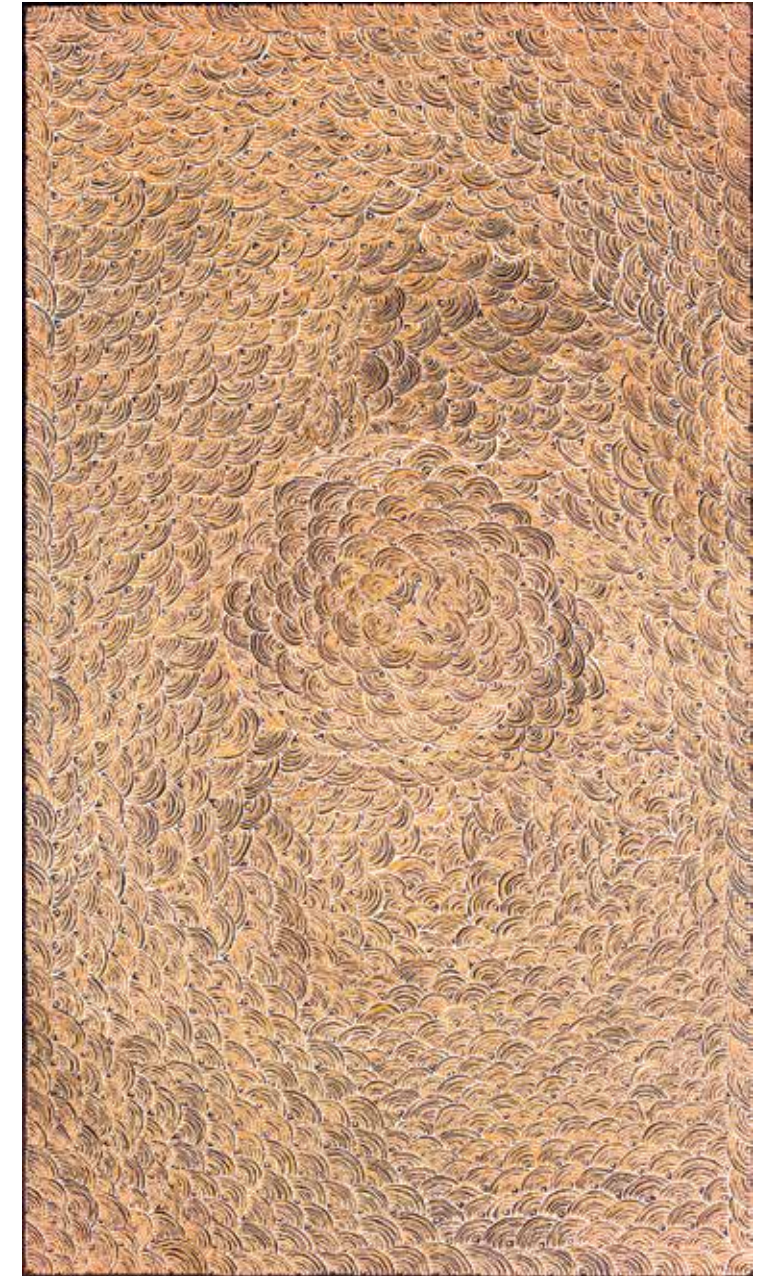
Cat. 45

Bush Medicines, 2022

acrylic on linen

106.0 × 61.0 cm

HFA4268, Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum



Betty Mula (b. 1973)

language: Pitjantjatjara

Country: Imanpa

artist location: Imanpa, South Australia

‘My painting is about the many different trees I have grown up with. Each tree, bush and flower has its own story. In recent years we’ve had big rains and many trees that we hadn’t seen [flowering] in many years were flowering again. With it came many birds we haven’t heard here in many years. Whenever I travel away from Country, I miss the trees and flowers the most. They show us the changes in seasons, show us where there are soakages, river beds, foods—we can read those signs from far away. It’s like my Country’s own language that I’m sharing in my painting.’



Cat. 48

Punu Tjuta (Many Trees), 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen

122.0 × 152.0 cm

Purchased by Carl de Gruchy Medical History Museum Fund, 2023

MHM2023.42, Medical History Museum

Maringka Burton (b. 1950)
language: Pitjantjatjara
Country: Anumara Piti, near Irrunytju (Wingellina)
community: Pukatja (Ernabella)
artist location: Indulkana, South Australia

‘My father was a special *ngangkari* (traditional healer) and he taught me about healing; now I am *ngangkari* too. I do lots of work for the NYP women’s council; I’m always helping at their big meetings and supporting Anangu women. As artists and as a community, we should always do more work with the young people, making things together and teaching them about the old ways, too, always remembering Country. This is a good way.’

Maringka’s Country, Anumara Piti, is in the far west region of the APY Lands (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara), close to the West Australian border. The Dreaming story of the caterpillar is special to that area, and Maringka paints threads of this story onto her canvas. The small green and white caterpillars burrow tunnels and holes into the earth, which leave behind patterns on the surface of the desert sands. This intricate repetition of detailed twists and curls in the red dirt is portrayed in Maringka’s painting.



Cat. 10
Anamaruku Tjuta (Many Caterpillars), 2018
acrylic on canvas
122.0 × 152.5 cm
MHM2018.86, Medical History Museum

Janice Stanley (b. 1987)

language: Pitjantjatjara

Country: Pukatja

artist location: Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia

Bush foods of Anangu Pitjantjatjara include *maku* (witchetty grub). Eating *maku* is considered good for the brain and mental health. *Maku* live in the *Ilkuwara* tree, the leaves of which this design depicts. Janice is the third generation of Stanley women to create artwork at Ernabella Arts. Her grandmother, Tjariya Stanley, is a founding artist and traditional healer, and her aunts Alison Milyika Carroll and Renita and Inawinytji Stanley are senior artists.

Cat. 59

Nyalpi Punu Ilkuwara (Leaf of Ilkuwara Tree), 2022

stoneware

26.0 × 14.5 cm

MHM2023.41, Medical History Museum



Mulkun Wirrpanda (1946–2021)

language: Dhuḍi-Djapu

clan: Dhuḍi-Djapu / Dha-Malamirr

moiety: Dhuwa

artist location: Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

‘This plant [*Gunga*] is sacred, and crucial in practical terms. All Dhuwa clans sing of the growth of the Pandanus, but for some there is a deeper connection. In some songs the teeth of this plant are equated with the reversed teeth of the shark. The Dhuḍi-Djapu have a sacred site associated with the Morning Star, at which the songs connect the passage of that star with a Pandanus tree on the floodplain. Galpuṇjiny is the name of a special crook, up to three metres long and cut on site or carried to the scene, which allows a woman to capture the few young upright leaves at the centre of the plant. These are the only leaves that can be used for weaving; the older bent ones are of no use. The white stem part of each leaf can be pounded and used as an anaesthetic on sore teeth. When our kids lose their baby teeth, we throw them into the *Gunga* tree. This toothy tree will ensure that their new teeth will come back quickly and be strong and sharp.

Läluk, the orangey nuts, are a vital part of the bush sauna and of women’s ceremonies following birth; it smells beautiful after it has fallen to the ground. The *boḍuk* [bush cockroach], which can almost always be found in this tree, is a vital antiseptic for serious wounds, like from stingray barbs. The flammability of the tree’s leaves and trunk made this a natural torch in the old days.

The travels of Mäna the shark in ancestral past–present–future time are sung by various Dhuwa clans, including my Dhuḍi-Djapu. The cycle by the Gapudäyindimirri starts from Barparra through to the island Yirrinyyarra. The pigeon Ḍapalawal in the coastal mangroves sings *guguk*, the incoming tide, the sound itself of the shark rushing through the water. Mäna rested here, leaving his sacred spear, Warrṅgul—made with many long stingray barbs and symbolic of his powerful, sharp teeth—under the shade of the *Wupularri* (a sacred Pandanus palm) site before moving on. On inspecting the leaf of *Wupularri*, the sharp barbs of Mäna’s teeth are felt.’

Cat. 65

Baby Teeth in the Gunga, 2019

earth pigments on Stringybark

251.0 cm (length) (hollow pole)

209.0 × 88.5 cm (bark painting)

HFA3739 and HFA3740, Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum



Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)

language: Yolŋu

clan: Madarrpa, Yithuwa group

moiety: Yirritja

Country: Bäniyala

artist location: Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

This work is an example of the influence of Yalmakany's mother, Mulkuṇ Wirrpanda, on her work. Of her own volition, Mulkuṇ had explored lesser-known plant species that she feared were being forgotten by younger generations. This coincided with artist John Wolseley's return to Yilpara (after he had met Mulkuṇ during the Djalkiri project in 2010) and the two spent an extended period exploring the botany of Blue Mud Bay. These plants were the foods on which Mulkuṇ grew up, and she wanted to renew knowledge of them. In those years, the old people lived long lives without illness.

Yalmakany went with Mulkuṇ, Wolseley and her sister Gurrundul on many botanical discovery tours from May 2012, and she continued to advocate plant knowledge as a senior ranger with Yirralka Rangers. She has maintained her mother's crusade with equal passion in the years since Mulkuṇ's death, in February 2021. In early 2023, she began painting at Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka.

This work is in the botanical theme of that period. One of the most potent medicinal plants in the Yolŋu world is *Burukpili* (*Morinda citrifolia*), also known as Noni or Rotten Cheese fruit. Rirratjinu ethnobotany describes it as:

A tree that grows in coastal habitats, especially monsoon vine forests. The fruit is eaten when ripe (whitish). Whilst the fruit has a strong offensive odour and powerful taste, it is considered excellent food and a strong medicine ... to treat coughs and colds. The bark of the root is used to dye Pandanus fibre yellow.

Cat. 38

Burukpili, 2023

earth pigment on paper

150.0 × 75.0 cm

MHM2024.9, Medical History Museum



Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)

language: Yolŋu
clan: Madarrpa, Yithuwa group
moiety: Yirritja
Country: Bäniyala
artist location: Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

Cat. 39
Dangapa, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
39.2 × 32.7 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 1 of 6
MHM2024.28, Medical History Museum

The pounded fruit of *Dangapa* (*Persoonia falcata*) mixed with water or breast milk is useful as a treatment for earache and eye infections. Artist Yalmakany Marawili, who has made this series, holds knowledge of Yolŋu plant medicine and strives to promote and sustain it.

Cat. 40
Lujiny, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
46.2 × 39.5 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 2 of 6
MHM2024.29, Medical History Museum

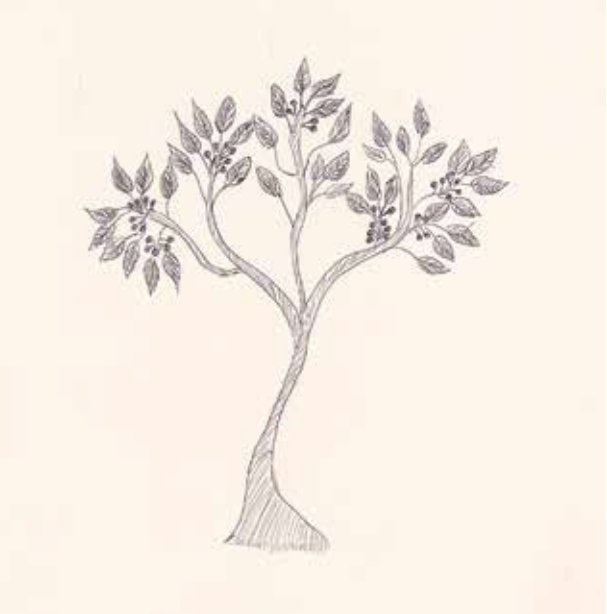
The white fruit of *Lujiny* (*Scaevola taccada*) is squeezed directly into an irritated eye, just like eyedrops.

Cat. 42
Lujiny, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
45.0 × 35.0 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 4 of 6
MHM2024.31, Medical History Museum

The white fruit *Lujiny* (*Scaevola taccada*) is used to treat an irritated eye, squeezed directly into it, just like eyedrops.

Cat. 44
Burrukpili, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
48.8 × 33.0 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 6 of 6
MHM2024.33, Medical History Museum

Also known as Noni, the fruit of *Burrukpili* (*Morinda citrifolia*) is in demand globally. It is used to treat colds and coughs.





Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)

language: Yolŋu

clan: Madarrpa, Yithuwa group

moiety: Yirritja

Country: Bäniyala

artist location: Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

The purplish fruit of the *Lingarr* (*Ampelocissus acetosa*) vine is squeezed directly onto the skin to treat rashes and ringworm.

Cat. 41

Lingarr, 2023

pen and pencil on paper

46.4 × 35.2 cm

series of medicinal-plant drawings, 3 of 6
MHM2024.30, Medical History Museum



Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)

language: Yolŋu

clan: Madarrpa, Yithuwa group

moiety: Yirritja

Country: Bäniyala

artist location: Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

The bark of the root of *Murrjtjmun* (*Grewia retusifolia*) is stripped, pounded and boiled in a billy to produce a jelly-like substance. This is applied to draw out infection and heal boils.

Cat. 43

Murrjtjmun, 2023

pen and pencil on paper

55.7 × 38.4 cm

series of medicinal-plant drawings, 5 of 6
MHM2024.32, Medical History Museum

Roy Burnyila (b. 1954)

language: Ganalbingu

clan: Gurrumba Gurrumba

moiety: Bangadi

Country: Gurruwiling (Arafura Swamp)

artist location: Ramingining, Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

Artist Roy Burnyila has depicted freshwater totems in this artwork. The totems include *ginginy* (catfish), *baru* (crocodile), *bapi* (file snake), *dakawa* (Darwin prawns), *ratjuk* (barramundi) and *yalman* (Waterlily).

Cat. 9

Raypiny Dhawu (Freshwater Story), 2018

acrylic on canvas

92.0 × 66.0 cm

HFA3798, Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum



Mary Elizabeth Moreen (b. 1946)

skin: Wantaringuwi (Sun)

language: Tiwi

Country: Milikapiti and the surrounds known as Wulirankuwu Country

dance: Yirrikapayi (Crocodile)

artist location: Milikapiti, Melville Island, Northern Territory

‘I was born in the bush. I’m a bush baby. They put me on warm coals covered with paper bark.

That’s a *tunga* [bark basket] down the bottom [in the painting]. We use the *tunga* to collect the *mirrijini* [bush medicine], leaves and nuts. In the middle, that’s *yikwani* [fire]. In the middle of that fire is a *minta* [palm nut]. When its dry season, we go out camping and the children bring the *miyaringa* [Pandanus nuts] to me. The heart-shaped leaves are from the *muranga* [yam]. We dig a big hole to find the *muranga* in the ground. That’s the water running where the *minta* are. We put the palm leaves on the edge of water and after three days we cover up with paperbark to keep fresh—it tastes sweet. That’s *mirrijini*. Put ’em away, cover and use for colds, diarrhoea. In this story I have painted *Parntirringa* [White Currant], *Murunyini* [Acacia], *Miparri* [Fan Palm] good for everyone when they have a *jikipirti* [cough]. *Yankumwani* [Green Plum] and *Malakini* [Bush Peanut] are *pumpuni yingkiti* [good tucker] from the bush—here long before the shops came. The bark of *Munkarajingi* [Casuarina] is boiled up; the water treats our skin sores.’



Cat. 46

Ningarti Mirrijini Kapiwarta, 2018

natural ochres on canvas

120.0 × 150.0 cm

MHM2018.85, Medical History Museum

Doriana Bush (b. 1952)
skin: Takaringuwi (Scaly Mullet)
language: Tiwi
Country: Paluwiyanganga / Andranangoo (Goose Creek)
dance: Narringari (Magpie Goose)
artist location: Milikapiti, Melville Island, Northern Territory

Mirningatinga is the long neck turtle, found in the freshwater wetlands of Melville Island. These spring-fed waterways form rich ecosystems that run out into saltwater estuaries and the iconic coastline of the Tiwi Islands. Paluwiyanganga (Goose Creek) is an area east of Milikapiti that is the homelands of the Bush, Brown and Wonaeamirri families. It is a popular hunting and camping ground for people living in Milikapiti, and it forms one of the biggest wetlands of the region.

Purnarrika is Tiwi for Waterlily. Its tuberous roots are dug up out of the mud, cleaned, peeled and then eaten. The round fruit are also collected and the seeds, oily in taste, are eaten. The flowers too can be eaten, without any preparation. A long time ago, the Tiwi would collect the flower of the fruit. The heart of the flower was eaten to cure sore throats and colds.

Cat. 11
Mirningatinga (Long Neck Turtle), 2023
locally sourced ochre on canvas
120.0 × 90.0 cm
MHM2024.10, Medical History Museum



WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

ARTWORKS

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- 1

Miriam Baadjo (b. 1957)
Tjatjati, 2023
acrylic on linen
75.0 × 150.0 cm
MHM2024.7, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for artwork and text remains with Warlayirti Artists.
(see pp. 82–3)
- 2

Ada Pula Beasley (b. circa 1959)
My Country, 2024
acrylic on canvas
140.0 × 240.0 cm
MHM2024.22, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork remains with the artist, for the text with Barkly Regional Arts.
(see pp. 30, 124–5)
- 3

Ada Pula Beasley (b. circa 1959)
Bush Medicine, 2018
acrylic on canvas
30.0 × 30.0 cm
MHM2025.8, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork remains with the artist, for the text with Barkly Regional Arts.
(see p. 126)
- 4

Ada Pula Beasley (b. circa 1959)
Bush Medicine, 2025
acrylic on canvas
30.0 × 30.0 cm
MHM2025.9, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork remains with the artist, for the text with Barkly Regional Arts.
(see pp. 23, 127)
- 5

Jessie Kemarr Beasley (b. circa 1958)
Bush Flowers and Bush Medicine, 2025
acrylic on canvas
30.0 × 30.0 cm
MHM2025.5, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 128)

- 6

Jessie Kemarr Beasley (b. circa 1958)
Bush Medicine, 2025
acrylic on canvas
61.0 × 61.0 cm
MHM2025.6, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork remains with the artist, for the text with Barkly Regional Arts.
(see pp. 33, 130)
- 7

Jessie Kemarr Beasley (b. circa 1958)
Bush Medicine, 2025
acrylic on canvas
30.0 × 30.0 cm
MHM2025.7, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork remains with the artist, for the text with Barkly Regional Arts
(see p. 129)
- 8

Dalissa Brown (b. 1997)
Errpmangk-errpmangk (Native Fuchsia), 2024
terracotta and underglaze
20.0 × 17.0 cm (variable)
MHM2024.38, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with Hermannsburg Potters Aboriginal Corporation.
(see pp. 116–17)
- 9

Roy Burnyila (b. 1954)
Raypiny Dhawu (Freshwater Story), 2018
acrylic on canvas
92.0 × 66.0 cm
HFA3798, Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum
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(see pp. 150–1)
- 10

Maringka Burton (b. 1950)
Anamaruku Tjuta (Many Caterpillars), 2018
acrylic on canvas
122.0 × 152.5 cm
MHM2018.86, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 7, 138–9)

- 11

Doriana Bush (b. 1952)
Mirningatinga (Long Neck Turtle), 2023
locally sourced ochre on canvas
120.0 × 90.0 cm
MHM2024.10, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork remains with the artist.
(see pp. 154–5)
- 12

Hayley Panangka Coulthard (b. 1967)
Kaltjinthintja (Teaching My Grandchildren), 2024
terracotta and underglaze
20.0 × 17.0 cm
MHM2024.39, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with Hermannsburg Potters Aboriginal Corporation.
(see pp. 118–19)
- 13

Selma Nunay Coulthard (b. 1954)
Lyerpa, 2023
watercolour on paper
38.0 × 54.0 cm
MHM2024.26, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for artwork and text remains with the artist and Ngurratjuta Itlja Ntjarra.
(see pp. 104–5)
- 14

Zena Cumpston (b. 1974)
ngarta-kiira (to return to country) #1, 2023
linocut collage with *kopi* on Fabriano paper
84.0 × 63.0 cm
MHM2023.45, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with the artist.
(see pp. 68–9)
- 15

Deanne Gilson (b. 1967)
Ba-gurrk Yaluk Beenyak (Women Sitting Under the Night Sky and Making Camp by the River), 2023
22-karat gold leaf, acrylic, charcoal (sourced from Marlene Gilson) on canvas
50.0 × 180.0 cm
MHM2023.43, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and image remains with the artist, for the text with Estelle Barrett.
(see pp. x, 60–1)
- 16

Deanne Gilson (b. 1967)
The Wurrak (Banksia) Basket, 2023
22-karat gold leaf, acrylic, yellow ochre (sourced from Wadawurrung *Dja*) on canvas
110.0 × 90.0 cm
MHM2024.42, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork, image and writing remains with the artist.
(see pp. 62–3)

- 17

Ned Grant (b. circa 1941)
Tjintir-Tjintirpa, 2019
acrylic on linen
137.0 × 200.0 cm
MHM2019.5, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork remains with the artist, for the text with Spinifex Arts Project.
(see pp. 12, 74–5)
- 18

Erakye Hair, Ricki-lee Mumbler
Healing, 2023
possum skin etched with pyrograph
38.0 × 80.0 cm
MHM2024.2, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 56–7)
- 19

Cynthia Hardie (b. 1941), Laurel Robinson (b. 1948), Amy Briggs (b. 1950), Robyn Briggs (b. 1957), Lyn Thorpe (b. 1957), Sharyn Forrester (b. 1970), Ruth Langford (b. 1970), Belinda Briggs (b. 1979), Tarli Dean-Atkinson (b. 1990), Tarn Parker (b. 1994), Sam Forrester (b. 1997), Kaninna Langford (b. 1997), Ally Knight (b. 1998), Chloe Jones (b. 2000)
Nanyak Itjawudik Yapaneyepuk (Cultural Medicine Together), 2025
clay from the banks of the Dhungala (Murray), Kaiela (Goulburn) and Broken Rivers on Yorta Yorta Country
dimensions variable
MHM2025.10, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with Kaiela Arts.
(see pp. 26, 64–5)
- 20

Beth Mbitjana Inkamala (b. 1977)
Going Out Country Collecting Bush Medicine, 2024
terracotta and underglaze
25.0 × 20.0 cm (variable)
MHM2024.40, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 120–1)
- 21

Dellina Inkamala (b. 1984)
Elpungka, 2023
watercolour on paper
51.5 × 36.0 cm
MHM2024.17, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 96)

22

Dellina Inkamala (b. 1984)
Langkwa (Bush Banana), 2023
watercolour on paper
54.0 × 37.0 cm
MHM2024.20, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with the artist and Ngurratjuta Ittja Ntjarra.
(see p. 98)

23

Dellina Inkamala (b. 1984)
Ratte Pod (Rattlepod), 2023
watercolour on paper
54.0 × 38.0 cm
MHM2024.18, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with the artist and Ngurratjuta Ittja Ntjarra.
(see p. 97)

24

Delray Inkamala (b. 1970)
Erralunga (Honey Grevillea), 2023
watercolour on paper
54.0 × 38.0 cm
MHM2024.16, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 93)

25

Delray Inkamala (b. 1970)
Ilumpa (White Gum Tree), 2023
watercolour on paper
54.0 × 36.0 cm
MHM2024.8, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 90–1)

26

Delray Inkamala (b. 1970)
Rraatninga (Wild Passion Fruit), 2023
watercolour on paper
38.0 × 56.5 cm
MHM2024.19, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 34, 92)

27

Dianne Inkamala (b. 1971)
Arrkanka (Coolamon Seed), 2023
watercolour on paper
38.0 × 54.0 cm
MHM2024.23, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with the artist and Ngurratjuta Ittja Ntjarra.
(see p. 94)

28

Dianne Inkamala (b. 1971)
Arrkapa (Desert Oak Seed), 2023
watercolour on paper
54.5 × 38.0 cm
MHM2024.24, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 95)

29

Judith Pungarta Inkamala (b. 1948)
Errpmangk-errpmangk (Bush Medicine Made from Native Fuchsia), 2024
terracotta and underglaze
40.0 × 30.0 cm (variable)
MHM2024.35, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 110–11)

30

Judith Pungarta Inkamala (b. 1948)
Errpmangk-errpmangk Laanghama (Mixing Bush Medicine Made from Native Fuchsia), 2024
terracotta and underglaze
35.0 × 20.0 cm (variable)
MHM2024.34, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 108–9)

31

Vanessa Inkamala (b. 1968)
Arrkarka (Gum Nuts), 2023
watercolour on paper
54.0 × 36.0 cm
MHM2024.21, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 88–9)

32

Vanessa Inkamala (b. 1968)
Bush Vicks, 2023
watercolour on paper
51.5 × 71.5 cm
MHM2024.11, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with the artist and Ngurratjuta Ittja Ntjarra.
(see pp. 84–5, front cover)

33

Vanessa Inkamala (b. 1968)
Ittja (Mulga Tree) Leaves and Flowers, 2023
watercolour on paper
35.0 × 51.5 cm
MHM2024.27, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with the artist and Ngurratjuta Ittja Ntjarra.
(see p. 100)

34

Vanessa Inkamala (b. 1968)
Ittja (Mulga Tree) with Some Yellow Flowers, 2023
watercolour on paper
38.5 × 54.0 cm
MHM2024.13, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 99)

35

Cassie Leatham (b. 1974)
Healing Mat, 2019
native grasses, assorted feathers
diam. 120.0 cm
MHM2020.21, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork, image and text remains with the artist and Baluk Arts.
(see pp. 24, 52–3)

36

Mandy Malbunka (b. 1989)
Ilpopa (Red Gum), 2023
watercolour on paper
54.0 × 34.0 cm
MHM2024.14, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 102)

37

Mandy Malbunka (b. 1989)
Irnmaara (Mistletoe), 2023
watercolour on paper
54.0 × 38.0 cm
MHM2024.25, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork and text remains with the artist and Ngurratjuta Ittja Ntjarra.
(see p. 103)

38

Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)
Burukpili, 2023
earth pigment on paper
75.5 × 56.5 cm
MHM2024.9, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. viii, 144–5)

39

Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)
Dangapa, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
39.2 × 32.7 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 1 of 6
MHM2024.28, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 146–7)

40

Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)
Lunjiny, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
46.2 × 39.5 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 2 of 6
MHM2024.29, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 146–7)

41

Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)
Lingarr, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
46.4 × 35.2 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 3 of 6
MHM2024.30, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 148)

42

Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)
Lunjiny, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
45.0 × 35.0 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 4 of 6
MHM2024.31, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 146–7)

43

Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)
Murrjtjmun, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
55.7 × 38.4 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 5 of 6
MHM2024.32, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 149)

44

Yalmakany Marawili (b. 1957)
Burrukpili, 2023
pen and pencil on paper
48.8 × 33.0 cm
series of medicinal-plant drawings, 6 of 6
MHM2024.33, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 146–7)

158

159

- 45

Cecilia Nampijinpa Martin (b. 1989)
Bush Medicines, 2022
acrylic on linen
106.0 × 61.0 cm
HFA4268, Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum
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(see pp. 134–5)

46

Mary Elizabeth Moreen (b. 1946)
Ningarti Mirrijini Kapiwarta, 2018
natural ochres on canvas
120.0 × 150.0 cm
MHM2018.85, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. vi, 152–3)

47

Marie Mudgedell (b. 1952)
Bush Baby Story, 2020
acrylic on canvas
90.0 × 60.0 cm
MHM2021.9, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 78–9)

48

Betty Mula (b. 1973)
Punu Tjuta (Many Trees), 2023
synthetic polymer paint on linen
122.0 × 152.0 cm
MHM2023.42, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 136–7)

49

Anne Ovi (b. 1966)
Purkitji, 2022
acrylic on linen
75.0 × 150.0 cm
MHM2023.26, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 76–7, 169)

50

Myrtle Pennington (circa 1939–2022)
Kanpa, 2018
acrylic on linen
90.0 × 137.0 cm
MHM2019.4, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 17, 72–3)

51

Daisy Ngwarreye Peterson (b. circa 1954)
Bush Flowers, 2025
acrylic on canvas
61.0 × 61.0 cm
MHM2025.3, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 131)

52

Triscilla Peterson (b. 1986)
Bush Flowers, 2025
acrylic on canvas
61.0 × 61.0 cm
MHM2025.4, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 45, 132–3)

53

Eva Richardson (1936–2023)
Bull Kelp Water Carrier, 2017
Bull Kelp, Tea Tree sticks, oil
30.0 × 13.0 × 10.0 cm
MHM2021.42, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 70–1)

54

Andrea Pungarta Rontji
Ntjwia (Corkwood), 2024
terracotta and underglaze
20.0 × 17.0 cm (variable)
MHM2024.37, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 114–15, back cover)

55

Kindy Kemarre Ross (b. 1983)
My Country Is Irrultja, 2024
acrylic on linen
122.0 × 152.0 cm
MHM2024.41, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 122–3, endpapers)

56

Mervyn Rubuntja (b. 1959)
Rraatninga (Wild Passion Fruit), 2019
watercolour on paper
50.0 × 32.0 cm
MHM2024.12, Medical History Museum
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(see p. 101)

57

Mervyn Rubuntja (b. 1959)
Mt Hay, NT, 2022
watercolour on paper
52.0 × 34.0 cm
MHM2024.15, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 86–7)

58

Louise Smith
This Is My Home, 2023
Cherry Ballart sacred wood etched with pyrograph
22.0 × 4.0 cm
MHM2024.3, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 21, 58–9)

59

Janice Stanley (b. 1987)
Nyalpi Punu Ilkuwara (Leaf of Ilkuwara Tree), 2022
stoneware
26.0 × 14.5 cm
MHM2023.41, Medical History Museum
© Copyright for the artwork remains with the artist and with Ernabella Arts Inc.
(see pp. 140–1)

60

Lyn Thorpe (b. 1957)
Nanyak Itjawudik (Cultural Medicine) Banner, 2025
acrylic, ochre and mixed media on Belgian linen
200.0 × 125.0 cm
MHM2025.11, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 66–7)

61

Helicopter (Joey) Tjungurrayi (b. 1947)
Wangkartu, 2020
acrylic on canvas
120.0 × 60.0 cm
MHM2024.6, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 80–1)

62

Al Vance (b. 1965)
Bengadak dyareeka ngam ngam ngarra-weel weel ngeeyt-a baa ngarra goorrk goorrk ngeeyt-a (We are standing on the shoulders of our elders), 2023
possum skin etched with pyrograph
80.0 × 25.0 cm
MHM2024.1, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 18, 54–5)

63

Shirley Wheeler (b. 1971)
Rubbing Medicine, 2024
terracotta and underglaze
18.0 × 12.0 cm (variable)
MHM2024.36, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 112–13)

64

Marjorie Williams (b. 1953)
Get Vaccinated for Covid-19, 2021
print on linen
72.0 × 50.0 cm
printer: Territory Tea Towel Collective
MHM2022.2, Medical History Museum
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(see pp. 106–7)

65

Mulkug Wirrpanda (1946–2021)
Baby Teeth in the Gunga, 2019
earth pigments on Stringybark
251.0 cm (length) (hollow pole)
209.0 × 88.5 cm (bark painting)
HFA3739 and HFA3740, Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum
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(see pp. 46, 142–3)
- OBJECT
- 66

Eli Lilly and Company (est. 1876)
US Army Motion Sickness Preventative, 1944
print on cardboard, foil, pills
1.0 × 2.0 × 6.0 cm
MHM2025.17, Medical History Museum
(see p. 40)
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CONTRIBUTORS

Professor Shawana Andrews is a Trawlwoolway/ Pairrebenne woman of the Tasmanian Coastal Plains Nation and Director of the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, at the University of Melbourne. Her work as a social worker, public health educator and researcher and an artist has focused on Aboriginal health, Aboriginal mothering practices and family violence, cultural practice-based methodologies and Aboriginal health leadership.

Miriam Baadjo explored, in the early stages of her artistic career, the expression of her *Tjukurpa* through glasswork and screen printing. When she was granted permission to paint, she began painting the Dreaming of her Uncle Wimmitji Tjapangarti. Her paintings are infused with the spirituality he taught her. Miriam combines her commitment to expressing her cultural stories with her love of colour mixing and refining her technical abilities. She has exhibited widely, both nationally and internationally, and been a finalist in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA). Her glasswork is held by the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Ada Pula Beasley began her career with the Artists of Ampilatwatja before she moved to Wutunugurra, where she continues to paint with Epenarra Artists. She is a senior member of the Artists of the Barkly collective and an important artist of the Barkly region.

Jessie Kemarr Beasley was born in and lives in Wutunugurra (Epenarra). She is known for her detailed illustrations of the diverse botanical life of the region, including of bush medicines, and her practice is informed by deep cultural knowledge. Jessie has developed her practice over several decades. Her work is influenced by her mother, whose stories formed the basis of her comprehensive cultural knowledge.

Dalissa Brown was born in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and grew up in Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory. She started working at the pottery in 2020, at 23 years of age, alongside her grandmother and artist Dawn Wheeler, who has been teaching her stories and how to make pots.

Roy Burnyila was born in the bush, on the mainland opposite Milingimbi. His people, the Ganalbingu, are associated with the Arafura Swamp and its creatures; Roy’s swirling cross-hatching beautifully captures this environment. An intermittent artist, he paints the traditional subject matter of his group in a distinctive, individual style. Roy contributed several burial poles to the *Aboriginal Memorial* (1988) at the National Gallery of Australia, the 200 painted hollow logs symbolising 200 years of white occupation of Australia.

Maringka Burton was born near the site of the Anumar *Tjukurpa* (Caterpillar Dreaming), south of Irrunytju (Wingellina) in Western Australia. She lived a traditional Anangu existence with her family before settling in Ernabella, where she attended school. Maringka is a highly regarded *ngangkari* (healer), guided in this practice by her father, Charlie Tjalkuriny. This involves extensive travel and working alongside doctors and nurses to support Anangu in hospitals and clinics. A respected senior artist, Maringka maintains a prolific practice in painting and *tjanpi* (native grass) weaving.

Doriana Bush was born on Country ‘over the other side’ (of the bay) from Milikapiti, where she grew up. Doriana trained as a health worker in Darwin in the 1960s and worked at the Milikapiti clinic. She later joined Jilamara Arts to paint, telling stories for exhibition publications and teaching culture classes to local schoolchildren. She is one of the few community elders who still recalls and can sing the old songs for ceremony and storytelling.

Professor Mark Cook, AO, MBBS, MD, FRACP, FRCP, FAHMS is the Sir John Eccles Chair of Medicine in the Department of Medicine, at the University of Melbourne, and Director of Clinical Neurosciences at St Vincent’s Hospital. He also chairs the advisory committee of the Medical History Museum.

Hayley Panangka Coulthard joined Hermannsburg Potters in 2009. She developed her natural talent under the mentorship of senior potters Judith Inkamala, Kumantjayi Ungwanaka and her mother, Anita Ratara. Now a mid-career artist, Hayley is known for work of high technical standard and artistic merit. She has participated in more than 50 group exhibitions, and her work is held in many collections.

Selma Nunay Coulthard belongs to the Pertama Maduthara Luritja tribe from Urrampinyi (Tempe Downs Station), south-west of Mparntwe (Alice Springs). She is an accomplished acrylic and watercolour painter, who grew up in Ntaria (Hermannsburg), where she went to school with fellow artist Ivy Pareroutja. Selma states she ‘grew up at Tempe Downs until the government started to remove half-caste kids from their families and put them in mission boarding homes. I was taken to Ntaria ... [where] my love for art started when I saw Ivy Pareroutja painting Mt Hermannsburg.’

Zena Cumpston is a Barkandji woman with Afghan, Irish and English heritage. She works as an artist, writer, researcher, curator and consultant, and is a member of the Birrarung Council in Narm. Zena began making visual art in late 2022. In 2024, her artworks were included in the NETS national tour *ngaratya (together, us group, all in it together)*, *The Soils Project* (Van Abbemuseum, Netherlands), *Lightscape* (Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria), *DISH* (Town Hall Gallery, Hawthorn) and *bíal gwiýúŋo (the fire is not yet lit)* (Art Gallery of NSW). She also presented her first solo show, *Return* (Darebin FUSE Festival).

Harriet Gaffney BA (Hons), MA is the CEO of Barkly Regional Arts, in Tennant Creek. Barkly Regional Arts works across the Barkly region, which covers more than 322,000 square kilometres.

Its programs focus on supporting artists as they develop their creative practice, and the centre provides a platform for artists to showcase their work, creating avenues for their recognition and a safe space for telling unique stories of Country.

Deanne Gilson PhD is a Wadawurrung woman, also with Australian-English heritage, who has an art practice spanning nearly 40 years. She moved from Melbourne to her ancestral Country around Ballarat at seven years of age. There she developed a deep appreciation of indigenous flora, which features prominently in her work. ‘For me’, she says, ‘art is ceremony. Ceremony begins the moment I step onto Country and walk. When gathering [flora], multiple images, which vary according to seasons and weather, fill my head.’ Deanne has exhibited extensively, and her work is held in public and private collections in Australia and overseas.

Ned Grant was born near Papatatjara, in north-eastern Spinifex Country, in the Great Victoria Desert. During the late 1950s, he was taken to Cundeelee Mission with his brothers Ted and Fred. Ned was a *nyiingka* (segregated bush boy) and inducted into men’s law in the Ranges Country. A senior man by the early 1980s, Ned helped drive the return to Spinifex Country. Today, he is the main ceremonial leader of the Tjintu (sun side) of Spinifex society. Ned has painted with the Spinifex Art Project since it began, in 1997, and was one of 17 men who collaboratively painted their specific estates to form the painting *Men’s Native Title*. While not prolific, Ned continues to paint his ‘run’, the area around where he was born and subsequently lost his umbilical cord, and he has been integral to various men’s collaborative works.

Erakye Hair participated in the Indigenous Cultural Practices project in 2023.

Dr Jacqueline Healy BA(Hons), MBA, PhD is Director of Museums, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Melbourne. Previously, she was the inaugural director of Bundoora Homestead (the public art gallery of the City of Darebin), director of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and director of public programs at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Beth Mbitjana Inkamala was born in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and she then grew up in Ntaria (Hermannsburg), where she observed her aunties working with pottery in the 1990s. She is the niece of prominent potter Clara Inkamala, and Judith Inkamala is her nanny. As an adult, Beth moved to Papunya, where she worked at the local council while painting at the art centre. In 2014, she began making ceramics and she is now one of the more ambitious potters. She is disciplined in her work, using hand coil and a distinctive contemporary approach to painting.

Dellina Inkamala was born in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and grew up in Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Wallace Rockhole and Papunya. She began drawing in school, which led to her experimenting with dot painting on canvas. She has been painting Dreaming stories at Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre since 2008 and became interested in watercolour after watching her aunt and uncle paint. Since 2016, she has been studying watercolour technique: ‘I like using watercolour as I can see the view of my Country come alive in my paintings. It’s challenging for me, but I’m getting better with the help of my aunty, Kathy Inkamala, and uncle, Hubert Pareroultja.’

Delray Inkamala was born and grew up at Ntaria (Hermannsburg). She is the third child of Edmund Inkamala and Barbara Pareroultja’s (Ivy Pareroultja’s sister) five children. Her grandmother, Clara Inkamala, was the sister of Albert Namatjira. Delray is an emerging watercolourist. Her sister Vanessa and brother Reinhold have been painting at the art centre for many years and encouraged Delray to paint with them. She is a current board member for Iltja Ntjarra Corporation.

Dianne Inkamala is a promising new watercolour artist at Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre. Dianne paints alongside sibling watercolour artists Vanessa, Delray and Reinhold. She says: ‘My [siblings] Vanessa Inkamala and Reinhold Inkamala are both painters at the art centre. A long time ago I used to do dot painting, and I used to paint on silk. I like learning to paint with watercolours, and I will try to become a professional artist.’

Judith Pungarta Inkamala is the chair and a senior member of Hermannsburg Potters Aboriginal Corporation, and a former member of the renowned Hermannsburg Choir. One of the founding group of artists in 1993, she is an inspiring, respected leader dedicated to intergenerational sharing of cultural and ceramic knowledge. Judith depicts her histories and distinct Western Aranda Country on her works, speaking to her cultural beliefs, traditions and values.

Vanessa Inkamala was born in Ntaria (Hermannsburg) into a family with rich artistic heritage: Albert Namatjira was her great-uncle, the late Ivy Pareroultja was her aunt, and her younger brother Reinhold is also an established landscape painter. Vanessa married Eastern Arrernte man Fabian Conway, from Santa Teresa, east of Mparntwe (Alice Springs). Immersed in its vibrant artistic community, Vanessa there honed her craft. She is now based in Mparntwe and practises her art at Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre.

Chloe Jones is a Yorta Yorta artist and freelance creative, and more recently an emerging writer and curator. Based in Naarm (Melbourne), she is currently completing a Bachelor of Arts at Monash University, which has allowed her to expand her knowledge and opportunities in the contemporary Indigenous Australian arts sector. Chloe has been a member of Kaiela Arts since 2020 and is currently a board member and the treasurer.

Kaiela Arts collective is based on Yorta Yorta Country and comprises Cynthia Hardie, Laurel Robinson, Amy Briggs, Robyn Briggs, Lyn Thorpe, Sharyn Forrester, Ruth Langford, Belinda Briggs, Tarli Dean-Atkinson, Tarn Parker, Sam Forrester, Kaninna Langford, Ally Knight and Chloe Jones.

Dr Chris Kavelin PhD lived on the Wind River Reservation (Arapaho and Shoshone Tribes) before moving to Australia more than 30 years ago. His PhD in law is titled ‘The Protection of Indigenous Medical Knowledge: Transforming Law to Engage Indigenous Spiritual Concerns’. He has taught intellectual property law for many years and convened the Globalisation of Indigenous Medical

Knowledge unit at Macquarie University for more than a decade. He has been commissioned by heads of state and various Indigenous nations to assist in projects that revive national Indigenous medical systems and customary law systems.

Professor Marcia Langton AO, BA(Hons), PhD is an anthropologist and geographer, and the Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is also Associate Provost of the university and a Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor. She has produced a large body of knowledge in the areas of political and legal anthropology, Indigenous agreements, involvement with the minerals industry, and Indigenous culture and art.

Cassie Leatham belongs to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung people from the Kulin Nation. A multidisciplinary Indigenous artist, her skills are in weaving, fashion and jewellery design, painting, ceramics, bush tucker and cultural education. Her works have a deep connection to Country, biodiversity and traditional sustainable lifeways of the past. They enable present and future generations to witness and learn. She is passionate about teaching Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about Aboriginal culture and history.

Marisa Maher is a Western Aranda woman based in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). She has been a curator and assistant manager of Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre for the past 10 years and is a recipient of the Wesfarmers National Gallery of Australia’s Indigenous Arts Leadership Program. She is a representative at the Tarnanthi festival of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, in Adelaide, and provided advice and expertise for the delivery of the National Aboriginal Art Gallery, a major gallery in Alice Springs for national First Nations art.

Mandy Malbunka was born in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), from where her mother comes. Her father is from Hermannsburg. Mandy spent her early years at her father’s place, at an outstation named Lyiltjarra, near Gilbert Springs. Her first experience of art was watching Rona Panangka Rubuntja at

Hermannsburg Potters. She came to Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands) to learn about watercolours. Selma Coulthard has been a strong influence, inspiring her to develop a landscape theme.

Yalmakany Marawili is the daughter of legendary leader Wakuthi Marawili, who established the homeland for Maḏarrpa people at Yilpara, on Blue Mud Bay, in the 1970s. She belongs to a family of great artistic renown, which includes her brother Djambawa Marawili AM, husband Waninya Marika OAM and son Ishmael Marika. Yalmakany has been a prolific painter of bark and memorial poles and a successful protagonist of variations on a theme, painting the saltwater estate of Baraltja. In 2022, Yalmakany moved from her remote homeland of Baniyala to Yirrkala and began painting full time at Buku-Larrngay Mulka. Her recent works follow her late mother’s focus on seasonal fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants of north-east Arnhem Land. Her paintings are both beautiful and knowledgeable and capture essential knowledge. In 2023, her work was selected for the NATSIAA and shown at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. Her first solo show took place in Sydney in 2024.

Cecilia Nampijinpa Martin is a Warlpiri woman who has painted with Arlpwe Art and Culture Centre.

Professor Mike McGuckin BSc, PhD is a biomedical researcher and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. As dean, Mike leads a diverse faculty comprising six schools and numerous departments and centres. The faculty is renowned for global leadership in health research, policy and practice.

Mary Elizabeth Moreen was born in the bush between Mudlow and Karslake, on her father’s Wulirankuwu Country. Her parents were strong cultural elders and leaders of ceremony. Mary was taken to the mission on Bathurst Island at a very young age for education. She returned to Milikapiti, Melville Island, aged 18, where she is a traditional landowner. She paints with locally sourced ochres on paper, canvas and bark, and weaves with the island’s Pandanus. She draws inspiration from memories of her father’s paintings and from the

rich natural harvest of the island. Mary is a strong culture woman, who can speak hard Tiwi and takes pride in handing down Tiwi culture and knowledge to the youth of the Tiwi Islands.

Marie Mudgedell is the eldest daughter of artist Mati (Bridget) Mudgedell (c. 1935–2002). Born at Sturt Creek Station, she later moved to Ruby Plains with her family. Marie attended the school at Old Balgo Mission, and then worked in the laundry of Billiluna Station, where she met her husband, fellow artist Patrick (Jupiter) Smith. They moved to Balgo so their children could attend school. At Balgo, Marie started painting her *Tjukurrpa* and the Country around Purkitji (Sturt Creek). She has been involved with the local school’s Wakala Language Centre, producing *Tjukurpa* stories for the children in language. Marie is a highly talented linguist in both Ngardi and Kukatja languages, and one of the last speakers of Ngardi; she and her husband have completed a Ngardi dictionary. A church leader and strong law woman, Marie takes young girls through ceremony and is a respected storyteller and knowledgeable about bush medicines.

Betty Mula was born in Imanpa, a small community east of Uluru. Her first language is Pitjantjatjara, but she grew up among Luritja, Warlpiri and Yakunytjatjara people around Mt Ebenezer Station. Betty attended secondary school in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) before moving to the Mimili community as a young woman. There she met her husband, traditional owner Teddy Wangin. Betty is renowned for her knowledge of where to gather bushtucker, find *tinka* (goanna) and make *irmangka-irmangka* (healing balm).

Ricki-Lee Mumbler participated in the Indigenous Cultural Practices project in 2023.

Mandy Nicholson BA(Hons), PhD is a Wurundjeri-willam (Wurundjeri-baluk patriline) artist and traditional custodian of Melbourne and its surrounds. For 25 years she has worked in various media, and today specialises in acrylic painting and digital work. She combines traditional

motifs of south-eastern Australia with her own contemporary interpretation. Mandy has a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Aboriginal archaeology, has worked for the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages for six years. She also mentors young Indigenous girls.

Anne Ovi was born in Derby, Western Australia, and lives and works on her traditional Walmajarri Country, around Mulan community. She has been painting since 2015, developing a recognisable style that is intricate, organic and detailed. She typically paints the story of bush medicines and bush foods found on her Country, representing the plants, their growth cycles and related cultural knowledge. Anne is working as part of a team of women art workers assisting with the reopening of Mulan Arts Centre.

Myrtle Pennington (c. 1939–2022) was born in the vicinity of a rock hole called Kanpa, in central Spinifex Country. The rock hole is along a highly sensitive senior men’s *Tjukurpa*, so Myrtle would not have seen or drawn water from it. Her journey out of Spinifex to Cundeelee Mission in the late 1950s was tragic, as her husband and a son perished. Myrtle and her surviving son and daughter were eventually located, staying at the army base at Neale’s Junction until mission staff arrived to take them to Cundeelee. The story of Myrtle’s flight from the British atomic testing range at Maralinga became key evidence tendered to the royal commission into the British nuclear tests in Australia in 1984, when she sadly had to relive the tragic events. Myrtle and her surviving son and daughter were awarded individual compensation from the Australian government. Myrtle’s artwork is held in major collections around Australia and internationally.

Daisy Ngwarreye Peterson started painting in 2005 in her hometown of Epenarra. Having watched her talented and well-known aunts Jessie, Rita and Topsy practise their art, Daisy developed a passion for painting. She paints the landscapes of her ancestors, medicinal flowers and bush tucker. Today, Daisy cares for her elderly Aunt Topsy and helps her family. She paints with Topsy at the Barkly Art Centre in Tennant Creek, where she lives.

Triscilla Peterson is the daughter of Anne Peterson, a well-known Epenarra artist painting with Barkly Regional Arts. Triscilla began painting consistently in 2018, progressing rapidly to large canvases and more experimental works. Depicting the local natural environment and everyday activities, Triscilla’s paintings are filled with whimsical and imaginative details.

Eva Richardson (1936–2023) was born in Hobart and belonged to the Trawlwoolway people of the Cape Portland / Ben Lomond region, north-east Tasmania. Her early childhood was spent around the Hobart area, which afforded almost unlimited access to the sea’s natural resources. Her father possessed a great knowledge of the local bush and was a storyteller of note (a talent Eva herself had). It was through her father that Eva began to learn the skills she employed as a visual artist.

Andrea Pungarta Rontji joined Hermannsburg Potters in 2017. She comes from a big family of potters; she is the niece of prominent potters Lindy and Carol Rontji and the granddaughter of Virginia Rontji and Irene Entata. Andrea draws inspiration from the landscape, flora, fauna and community of Hermannsburg. Her brushwork has fine attention to detail and she is a skilled hand-builder with clay. Andrea is also a director and art worker for Hermannsburg Potters.

Kindy Kemarre Ross comes from Irrultja Country, in the Northern Territory. The dominant theme of her practice is ‘strong bush medicine’, and her paintings recognise the significance and use of traditional bush medicine, which is still used daily. She says, ‘I paint the flowers to keep the knowledge alive’.

Mervyn Rubuntja was born at the Telegraph Station in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). His mother was a Western Aranda woman and his father, the late Mr Wenten Rubuntja Pengarte, a famous artist. Mervyn’s father was a senior law man and respected community member, who fought for Aboriginal rights and protection of land. When Mervyn was 13, his family moved to Ntaria (Hermannsburg), where he first saw watercolour paintings, watching his uncles, Maurice, Oscar and Keith Namatjira,

painting like their father, Albert. There, Mervyn’s Uncle Arnulf Ebatarinja kindled his painting talent. After returning to Mparntwe in 1975, Mervyn began to paint with Basil Rantji, who taught him how to mix colours. In 2018, Mervyn’s artwork was featured in the Badu Gili projection onto the sails of the Sydney Opera House. In 2021, he won a NATSIAA in Darwin (3D category) in a collaborative work with Hubert Pareroultja.

Assoc. Professor Tilman Ruff AO is a physician, immediate-past co-president and board member of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (Nobel Peace Prize 1985); co-founder, founding chair and Australian board member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Nobel Peace Prize 2017); and Honorary Principal Fellow, School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne.

Louise Smith participated in the Indigenous Cultural Practices project in 2023.

Janice Stanley, an early career painter and ceramic artist, is the third generation of Stanley women to create art at Ernabella Arts. Her grandmother is founding artist and traditional healer Tjariya Stanley and her aunts are senior artists Alison Milyika Carroll and Renita and Inawinytji Stanley. While still at school, Janet would watch her grandmother and aunts create artworks. Janice lives in Pukatja with her husband and has two children.

Lyn Thorpe is a Yorta Yorta artist, educator and community cultural development worker. Art has always been a part of Lyn’s life, from hand-sewing her own clothes as a teenager to experimenting with digital media, blending photos, paintings and craft to tell stories in new formats. Her work has been shown at Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Melbourne Museum, Kaiela Arts, Koorie Heritage Trust, Shepparton Art Museum and Monash University Museum of Art. In 2007, Lyn was highly commended at the Victorian Indigenous Art Awards for her emu-feather skirt. She is the strategic cultural projects lead at Kaiela Arts, facilitating programs that foster cultural exchange and intergenerational wellbeing.

Helicopter Tjungurrayi is one of Warlayirti Artists' leading practitioners. As a young boy, he became very sick and was brought into the Old Balgo Mission in a helicopter that had been doing mining exploration work. The first helicopter many of the people had seen, it was how he got his name. Helicopter is a *maparn* (traditional healer) and an active law man. Since 1994 he has painted in his distinctive linear style that emanates from the central feature of a soakwater. He has travelled interstate and overseas for exhibitions of his paintings.

Assoc. Professor Al Vance PhD has northern Wathaurung and southern Wiradjuri heritage on both sides of his family. He trained as a consultant psychiatrist and thankfully learned much about the old ways of healing from elders in the East and West Kimberley, Central and Western Deserts and Victoria.

Shirley Wheeler joined Hermannsburg Potters in 2022. Since then, she has been learning from and working with her mother, senior artist Dawn Wheeler, almost every day.

Marjorie Nungarrayi Williams was born at Mparntwe (Alice Springs). She is a senior Aranda woman who is heavily involved and respected in the community. She first practised in dot painting, murals and batik in Ntaria (Hermannsburg), and also painted with Itja Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre in the early 2000s. Since joining Tangentyere Artists in 2017, she has developed a style of figurative landscape painting, depicting her early years on Country. She is a proud grandmother, Western Aranda language teacher and member of the Central Australian Women's Choir.

Mulkuṇ Wirrpanda (1946–2021) was a senior female artist of the Dhugḍi-Djapu clan, from Dhuruputjpi. She was a daughter of the late Dhākiyarr Wirrpanda and widow of Maḍarrpa clan leader Wakuthi Marawili. She was also mother (by kinship) to senior artist and clan leader Djambawa Marawili. Mulkuṇ was one of the few acknowledged Yolṇu women leaders. She painted Dhugḍi-Djapu *miny'tji* (sacred design) depicting her land and was an early practitioner of works without figurative imagery within the *miny'tji*. Mulkuṇ used natural ochres and paints on bark, *larrakitj* (memorial poles) and *yidaki* (didjeridus). She was also was a talented carver, weaver and printmaker. Her work has been exhibited throughout Australia and in Asia.



Cat. 49 Anne Ovi, **Purkitji** (detail), 2022, acrylic on linen, 75.0 × 150.0 cm, MHM2023.26, Medical History Museum.



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Dental Museum) for the benefit of the community and
the generations of University of Melbourne students and
alumni, many of whom contribute their own cultural
treasures to the collections.

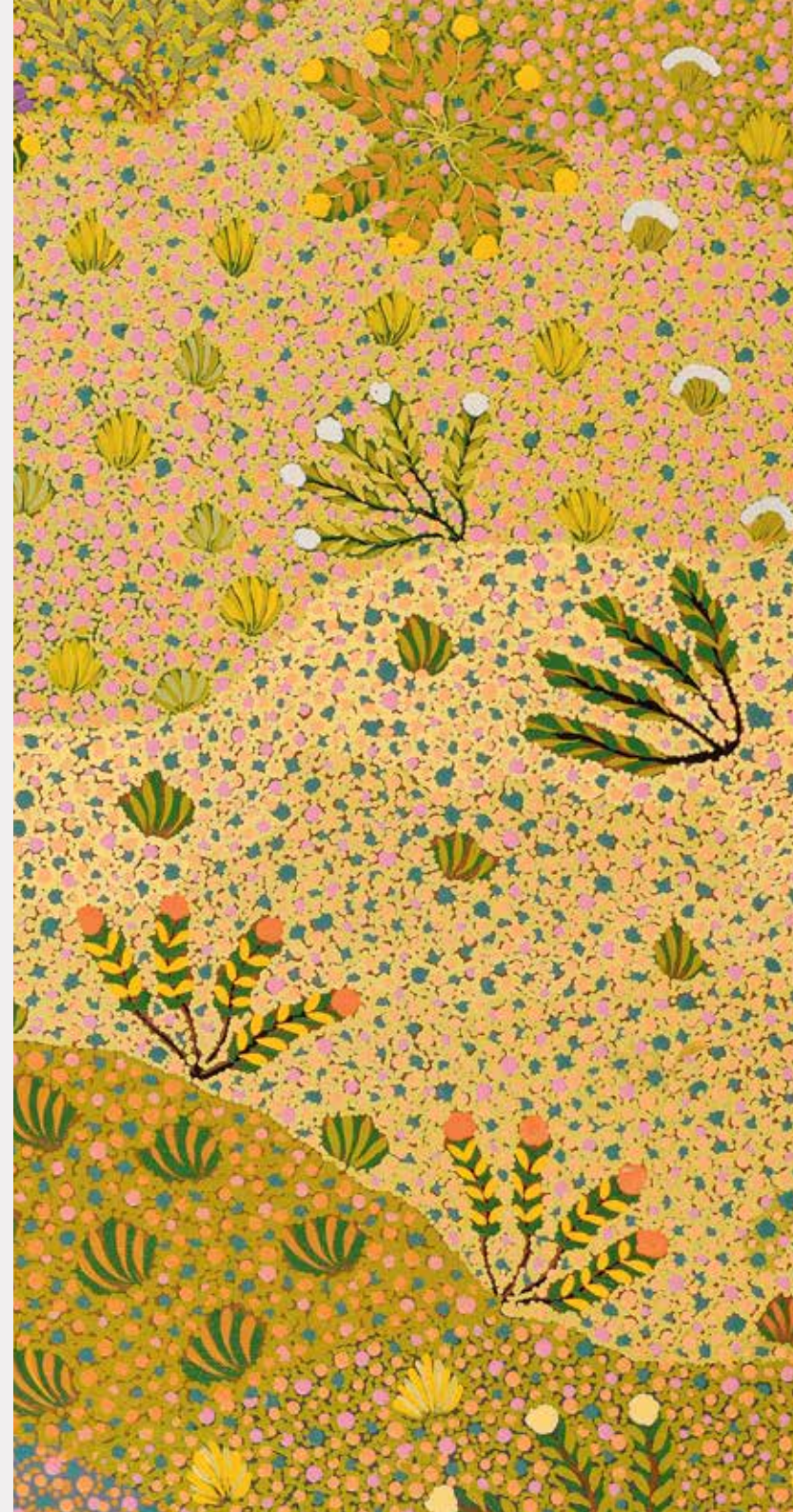
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features contemporary works by Aboriginal
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printmakers, ceramicists and weavers from
across Australia. These works are held
in the collections of the Medical History
Museum and the Henry Forman Atkinson
Dental Museum.

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Front cover:
Cat. 32
Vanessa Inkamala
Bush Vicks, 2023
watercolour on paper
51.5 × 71.5 cm
MHM2024.11, Medical History Museum

Back cover:
Cat. 54
Andrea Pungarta Rontji
Ntjwia (Corkwood), 2024
terracotta and underglaze
20.0 × 17.0 cm (variable)
MHM2024.37, Medical History Museum

Endpapers:
Cat. 55
Kindy Kemarre Ross
My Country Is Irrultja (detail), 2024
acrylic on linen
122.0 × 152.0 cm
MHM2024.41, Medical History Museum

