

Basic Detail Report

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Title

Ngalyod (rainbow serpent) from Kururkkurduk

Date

2003

Primary Maker

Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerrek

Medium

Natural earth pigments on paper

Dimensions

Overall: 1055 × 378 × 15 mm, 660 g Image: 380 × 1055 mm

Name

Painting

History

Throughout Indigenous Australia, there are various representations of the rainbow serpent, who is a powerful creature of both creation and destruction, and is almost always associated with water. In this painting Nadjamerrek depicts one of the many representations of Ngalyod - the rainbow serpent of western Arnhem Land. Depicted as a complex creature with the body of a snake, head of a crocodile and the tail of a fish, Ngalyod's status as the mother of all animals is shown. Ngalyod also assumes a range of different animal forms, transforming from one to another. Just as Ngalyod changes, so too does the landscape annually, as she brings the rains of the wet season and transforms the land and waterways. In this painting Ngalyod is shown with water lilies growing from her back, symbolising her presence resting under water. Of this painting the artist writes: 'This is the rainbow serpent which lies beneath billabongs when they dry up. The water can be gone but we say 'she is still there'. The waterlilies die but the rainbow serpent is still alive under the ground. She has water and she watches over her food. The protusion on her chest is her breastbone. This is the rainbow serpent from Kururkkurduk'. Kururkkurduk is a site on the Upper Liverpool River downstream from Lofty's residence at Kabulwarnamyo on the Arnhem Land plateau.