



Object number:
00033840
Title: Bamurrungu
Date: 1991



Object number:
00033818
Title: Bamurunu from
Date: 1991



Object number:
00033814
Title: Gathulmakarr
Date: 1991



Date: 2001

Primary Maker: Wukun
Waṇambi

Medium: Natural pigments
on bark

Name: Bark painting

History: The Yolṟu people of Arnhem Land inhabit a landscape that was formed by the actions of ancestral beings, who can take both human and animal form. For instance water now flows where these creatures walked and hills have formed where they died. Ancestral time is not just in the past but also the present and future. In light of this the sacred landscape and stories of East Arnhem Land are central to the Yolṟu people's way of life and prominent themes in their bark paintings. The Saltwater Project began in 1996 when an illegal fishing camp was discovered at Garranali, a sacred Aboriginal site in East Arnhem Land. This sacred area is home to the ancestral crocodile Bāru and found among the litter of the illegal camp was the severed head of a crocodile. This discovery prompted the local Yolnu people to produce a series of bark paintings that expressed the rules, philosophies and stories of their region. The project culminated in the production of 80 barks and allowed the Indigenous community to educate



manyḋaiaia

Date: 1998

Primary Maker: Wukun
Waṇambi

Medium: Natural pigments
on bark

Name: Bark painting

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community to educate others about the social history, geography and personal stories of their traditional homeland. They stressed the importance of Yolngu land ownership, laws and codes of behaviour for those who interacted with the landscape and sacred Indigenous places. The Yolngu have been involved in the land rights struggle since the 1960s. They currently are recognised as the traditional owners of northeast Arnhem Land under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. This act was passed in the Northern Territory in 1976 and is seen as the benchmark in the recognition of Aboriginal land ownership in Australia. Despite this the issues of Indigenous land ownership, rights, customs and law continue to be contentious in the Australian legal system and wider community.

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Object number:

00033752

Title: Marrakulu Monuk

Date: 1999



Date: 1998

Primary Maker: Wukun
Waḡambi

Medium: Natural pigments
on bark

Name: Bark painting

History: The Yolḡu people are intrinsically linked to the land and the saltwater coastline. They inhabit a landscape that was formed by the actions of ancestral beings. In 1996 an illegal fishing camp was discovered at Garranali, a sacred Aboriginal area in East Arnhem Land. It instigated the local Yolnu people to begin painting a series of barks that demonstrated the rules, philosophies and stories of their region. The end result was the production of 80 barks portraying the Saltwater Country of East Arnhem Land. In 1963 a Swiss mining company began plans to build a mine on sacred Yolnu lands. In opposition the Aboriginal community organised a petition that was signed on bark and sent to Parliament. The proposed development by the mining company and Australian Government was challenged by the Yolḡu in court. However their claims of land ownership were dismissed. This historic event

highlighted the issue of Aboriginal land rights in Australia. In 1976 the Aboriginal Land Rights Act

was passed in the Northern Territory, now seen as the benchmark in the recognition of Aboriginal land rights. The Yolngu were decreed the legal owners of northeast Arnhem Land, however their ownership did not extend into the Saltwater coastline. Only in July 2008 have Indigenous rights and use of the Arnhem Land coast been given precedence over commercial interests and fishing. The issue of Aboriginal land rights, customs and laws continues to be contentious in the Australian legal system and wider community.