

EVERYWHEN ART

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Jack Yurrulbbirri Nawilil



Born: 1945
Skin Name: Kamarrang
Language: Rembarrnga, Mayali
Clan: Balngarra
Moiety: Duwa
Country: Bolkjam

Mayali and Rembarrnga artist Kamarrang Jack Nawilil is a senior member of the Balngarra clan, who lives and works at Bolkjdam, an outstation located near Maningrida community in central Arnhem Land. A song man and cultural leader, he works across painting on bark, carved sculpture and ceremonial objects such as mularra (morning star poles), mako (didgeridoo), lorrkkon (hollow logs) and body adornments using feathers, native beeswax and hand-spun bark fibre string. Common subjects of his work include representations of significant spirit beings, such as wyarra (skeleton), wurum (fish-increasing) and namorrodo (profane) spirits, and important ancestors, including the female creator ancestor Ngalkodjek who travelled from Elcho Island in the East.

The narratives represented in Nawilil's artworks are extremely complex and often antithetical to Western knowledge systems. His artworks reference and manifest multiple places, clans and events that span vast distances and timeframes. To audiences who are not initiated and socialised in bininj (Aboriginal) cultural practices and history, the true and complete meanings of these artworks cannot be fully grasped. His artworks challenge the viewer to grapple with a different way of being in, and understanding, the world.

Nawilil's work is held in public and private collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, the Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. He has exhibited with commercial galleries around Australia and overseas for nearly four decades.

Group Exhibitions

2021 Summer Collectors Show – Everywhen Artspace, Flinders VIC
2021 The 66th Blake Prize - Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre
2020 Tarnanthi Art Fair - Lot Fourteen, Adelaide SA
2020 Connected: MCA Collection - Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW
2020 Maningrida Arts & Culture - Michael Reid, Sydney, NSW

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- 2020** RESILIENCE: The power of the past today - Maningrida - Aboriginal Signature Estrangin Fine Art, Brussels, BELGUIM
- 2018** From Coast to Escarpment: Spirit Worlds of Maningrida - Michael Reid, Sydney, NSW
- 2016** Owen Yalandja, Bob Burruwal, Jack Nawilil: New Yawkyawk Spirits and Sculptures - Annandale Gallery, Sydney, Australia
- 2012** 29th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award Exhibition - Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory, Darwin, NT
- 2012** First Life - Unwordly Encounters - Chan Contemporary art space, Darwin, NT
- 2009** Ochre - A Study in Materiality - Short Street Gallery, Broome, WA
- 2009** Maningrida Group Show - Maningrida Arts & Culture Gallery, Darwin, NT
- 2008** Palya Art at Mary Place - Mary Place, Sydney, NSW
- 2006** Bangu Yilbara: Works from the MCA Collection - Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW
- 2002** Barks in the spotlight - Utrecht, The Netherlands
- 1999** My Country: Australische Aboriginal Kunst - Brandweer Kazerne, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 1996** Maningrida Exhibition - Indigenart, Subiaco, WA
- 1996** Dreaming: Aboriginal Art from Australia - Galerie Kouwenhoven, Delft, Netherlands
- 1994** Maningrida Collection - Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW
- 1994** Gemaltes Land: Kunst der Aborigines aus Arnhem Land Australien - Linden Museum, Stuttgart, Germany
- 1989** Masterpiece - Fine Art Gallery, Hobart, TAS
- 1982** Aboriginal Art at the Top - Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT

Collections

Aimee Proost private collection, Qld
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT
Museum of Contemporary Art, Maningrida Collection, Sydney, NSW
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, VIC
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
Walonia Aboriginal Art, Netherlands

Awards

2012 Wandjuk Marika 3D Memorial Award, 29th Telstra NATSIAA