

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Nōṇu Ganambarr



Date of Birth: 2/8/1967
Homeland: Rorruwuy
Clan: Daṯiwuy
Moiety: Dhuwa

"I am the son of Manydjarri Ganambarr (father) and Gudaltji Munyarryun (mother). My father is an elder or clan leader for the Daṯiwuy mala (clan) after Mowarra. Manydjarri has taught me how to make yiḍaki, singing songs and dancing. I stay at Dhalinybuy outstation (my wife's land) where I make yiḍaki to sell. We go into the bush to find yiḍaki and use a wheelbarrow to bring them, it's hard work but manymak (good). There is a large river at Dhalinybuy where we go hunting for Balin (Barramundi). I also stay at Rorruwuy outstation and like to go hunting there as well."

Nōṇu is respected as a law-man for the Daṯiwuy clan and is gradually assuming more leadership responsibilities from his father, Manydjarri Ganambarr, a highly respected ceremonial expert. Manydjarri is the eldest son of Mowarra Ganambarr who was born in 1917 and lived through the full range of changes in North East Arnhem land from pre-European contact, the Second World War, missionary times and the mining era. During WWII, Mowarra was a member of the N.T. special reconnaissance unit of traditional Yolṇu men. His work was collected by the anthropologists Berndt in 1947. His work is also held in the Australian National Gallery, the National Museum of Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria. He died in 2005.

As part of this lineage and responsibilities, in 2015, Nōṇu began to produce sculpted larrakitj in his family's style under the watchful direction of his djungaya (manager) from the Yirritja moiety, Buwathay Munyarryun. These larrakitj are intricately painted with sacred clan designs.

In addition to painting, Nōṇu has also inherited the right and responsibility from his father to sing sacred songs in ceremony, which is one of the most important roles in Yolṇu society as the history, law, kinship and sacred meanings are held within song. His singing features alongside his father on the recording 'Rorruwuy,' produced by the Mulka Project. He is also featured in many other recordings, both as a song-man and as a dancer, having represented Yolṇu culture within Australia, England, Japan and Iceland.

Within his home environment, Nōṇu is a hard working family man who shares the important management role of djungaya for the community of Dhalinybuy, alongside Gurumin Marika and Yali Mununggurr. This involves various cultural responsibilities and also includes facilitating visitors access to the community, which at times are non-Aboriginal workers and fishermen. Nōṇu has a reputation as a gentle and humble man, with a willingness to share his culture with non-Aboriginal people.

EVERYWHEN ART

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Norju makes consistently excellent yidaki. He is well known for selecting specific trees that often have completely natural bores and narrow chambers through the top section, producing instruments that have acoustics reminiscent of older style yidaki, ie. prior to modern tools; what some would call more 'traditional.'

His yidaki are often painted with sacred designs depicting the freshwater system of Dhalinybuy, his mother's country. More recently, Norju has been painting his yidaki with sacred designs from his father's country that sometimes refer to the saltwater regions off the coast of Rorruwuy community, where the actions of Mana the ancestral shark intimated relationships to the Datiwuy clan.

Mediums

Wood Sculpture
Earth pigments on Stringybark hollow pole
Acrylic on eucalyptus
Earth pigments on Stringybark

Group Exhibitions

2019 Top End Ochre - Everywhen Artspace, Mornington Peninsula VIC
2017 Legends and Lore - Artitja Fine Art, Perth WA
2016 Aboriginal Signature - Aboriginal Signature Gallery Brussels, Belgium
2004 Yidaki workshops, performance and exhibition, cultural exchange - BAMAN - Reyjavik, Iceland
2004 Yidaki workshops, performance and exhibition, cultural exchange - BAMAN - Norfolk, England
2003 Yidaki workshops, performance and exhibition, cultural exchange - Yidaki Festa 2003 - Tokyo, Japan

Collections

Yidaki acquired by the British Museum, 2015
Yidaki in numerous private collections world-wide
Larrakitj in private collections

Awards

2002 Accepted first prize at the 2002 NT export awards (art and entertainment category) in Darwin on behalf of Buku-Larrngay Mulka and all Yolngu yidaki craftsmen in recognition of yidaki export growth.