

Launch of the art exhibition

'Yalangbara: art of the Djang'kawu'

Speech by Her Honour the Honourable Sally Thomas AM

Administrator of the Northern Territory

Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

24 November 2011

- Mr Jim Grant, Chief Executive, Department Natural Resources Environment the Arts and Sport.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen welcome to the launch of yet another outstanding exhibition here at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

I acknowledge the Larrakia people, traditional owners of the land on which we stand. I thank Robbie Mills for his welcome to country. I acknowledge and pay my respects to members of the Marika family who are here with us today.

“The Marika family are inheritors of a hugely important dynastic line, fundamental to the creation of the Dhuwa moiety of eastern Arnhem Land. They are the primary caretakers of the coast, sea, rocks and beach, the dunes, trees and waterholes that mark.....ancestral places of Yalangbara.¹

The concept of this exhibition as well as the substantial publication of the same name was initiated and driven by Banduk Marika and other members of the Rirratjingu clan from North East Arnhem Land, who are the land owners at Yalangbara.

“Yalangbara is a place of great natural abundance and beauty, pristine white beaches, crystal clear seas, diverse flora and fauna”. It is in Northeast Arnhem Land a few hours drive south of Nhulunbuy. “Rare examples of Rock art exist alongside an important Macassan archaeological site at Wapilina Island”.²

¹ Yalangbara: Art of the Djang'kawu, produced in partnership with Banduk Marika and other members of the Rirratjingu clan, Northeast Arnhem Land. Edited by Margie West, pg 23

² Ibid, pg 10

Yalangbara is the place where the ancestral Djang'kawu, a brother and two sisters, began their creative journey across Arnhemland. Many of the artworks in this exhibition depict that journey.

“The Yolgnu people here regard the Yalangbara as the site of origin where humanity, its laws and the environment first came into being.

In recognising its cultural and environmental significance, the Federal Government's Australian Heritage Commission Registered Yalangbara, an area of 210 square kilometres, on the National Estate in 2003. This exhibition is consolidating and further promoting these cultural and environmental values”.³

This touring exhibition is presented by the National Museum of Australia, developed by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in partnership with the Marika family and brings together for the first time, master artwork by three generations of Rirratjingu artists.

³ Speech notes provided by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.
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The artworks have been drawn from major institutions across Australia.

Yesterday I had the benefit of a preview. There are so many stunning and exciting works. I cannot mention them all. A few I found of particular interest were the Yalangbara Suite 2000, six linoprints on paper, each print represents episodes of the Djang'kawu's journey.⁴

Yalangbara 2005 which is a Rirratjingu clan sacred design is a work that was awarded the Telstra Bark Painting Award to the artist Banduk Marika.⁵

The vibrant colours and detail in the crayon drawings by Mawalan (1) Marika and other members of the Marika family.⁶ The counterfeit carpet case involves an artwork the subject of a breach of copyright action in court⁷.

⁴ Yalangbara: Art of the Djang'kawu, produced in partnership with Banduk Marika and other members of the Rirratjingu clan, Northeast Arnhem Land. Edited by Margie West, pg 20-21

⁵ Ibid pg 108

⁶ Ibid pg 123-137

⁷ Ibid pg 158-161

The feathered ceremonial basket, the symbolism of the digging stick and much more. Shortly you will have the opportunity to view and enjoy these wonderful works of art as I did yesterday.

It is an honour and a privilege to now officially open this exhibition “Yalangbara: Art of the Djang’Kawu”.

Thank you.