

DEFINING FIGURES

THREE MASTER ARTISTS
FROM ARNHEM LAND

FRIDAY 20 FEBURARY, 2026

4 LANGRIDGE STREET

X

A SECONDARY EYE



Defining Figures celebrates the three leading artists from three leading artistic communities in Arnhem Land:

Djambawa Marawili AM - Yirrkala

Bardayal "Lofty" Nadjamerrek AO - Gunbalunya

Balang John Mawurndjul AM - Maningrida

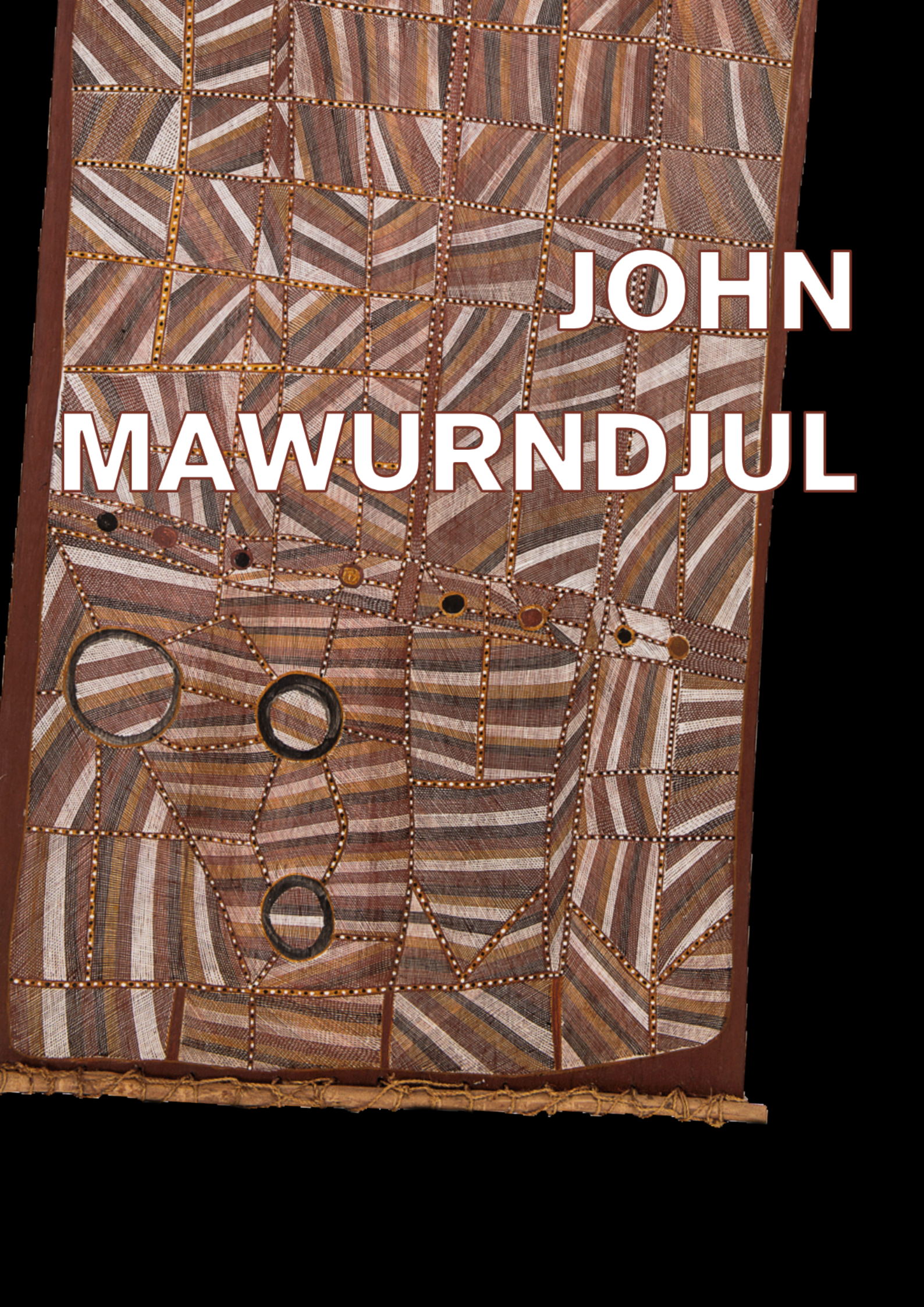
Each artist demonstrates how Indigenous art can uphold tradition while innovating and asserting cultural identity locally and resonating internationally. As 'Defining Figures' these artists are not only masters of their respective artistic traditions but also visionaries within their communities, creating works that speaks across generations, combining ceremonial fidelity with broader cultural education.

Marawili's luminous bark paintings carry the law of his Madarrpa clan, transforming ancestral stories into works that articulate Yolŋu ownership of land and sea.

Bardayal's rock carvings and paintings convey the spiritual presence of his Yidaki moiety while reflecting an awareness of the wider art world, guiding new generations in ceremonial and aesthetic practice.

Mawurndjul's rarrk paintings distill the sacred Mardayin ceremonies of western Arnhem Land into intricate fields of cross-hatching, where figures, water, ancestral beings, and sacred sites emerge in shimmering, almost hypnotic layers. His work demonstrates a deep understanding of visual dynamics and where ancient mark-making transcends into global artistic discourse.

Together, these artists exemplify what it means to be a defining figure: shaping the cultural and artistic landscape, carrying the responsibilities of custodianship, and inspiring new generations to navigate the balance between tradition, innovation, and cultural leadership. Their art is visually compelling and reflects a profound engagement and assertion of identity, authority, and the enduring vitality of Aboriginal cultural systems that should be continually celebrated.



**JOHN
MAWURNDJUL**



JOHN MAWURNDJUL AM
(b.1952 d.2024)

Ancestors at Milmilngkan, 1993

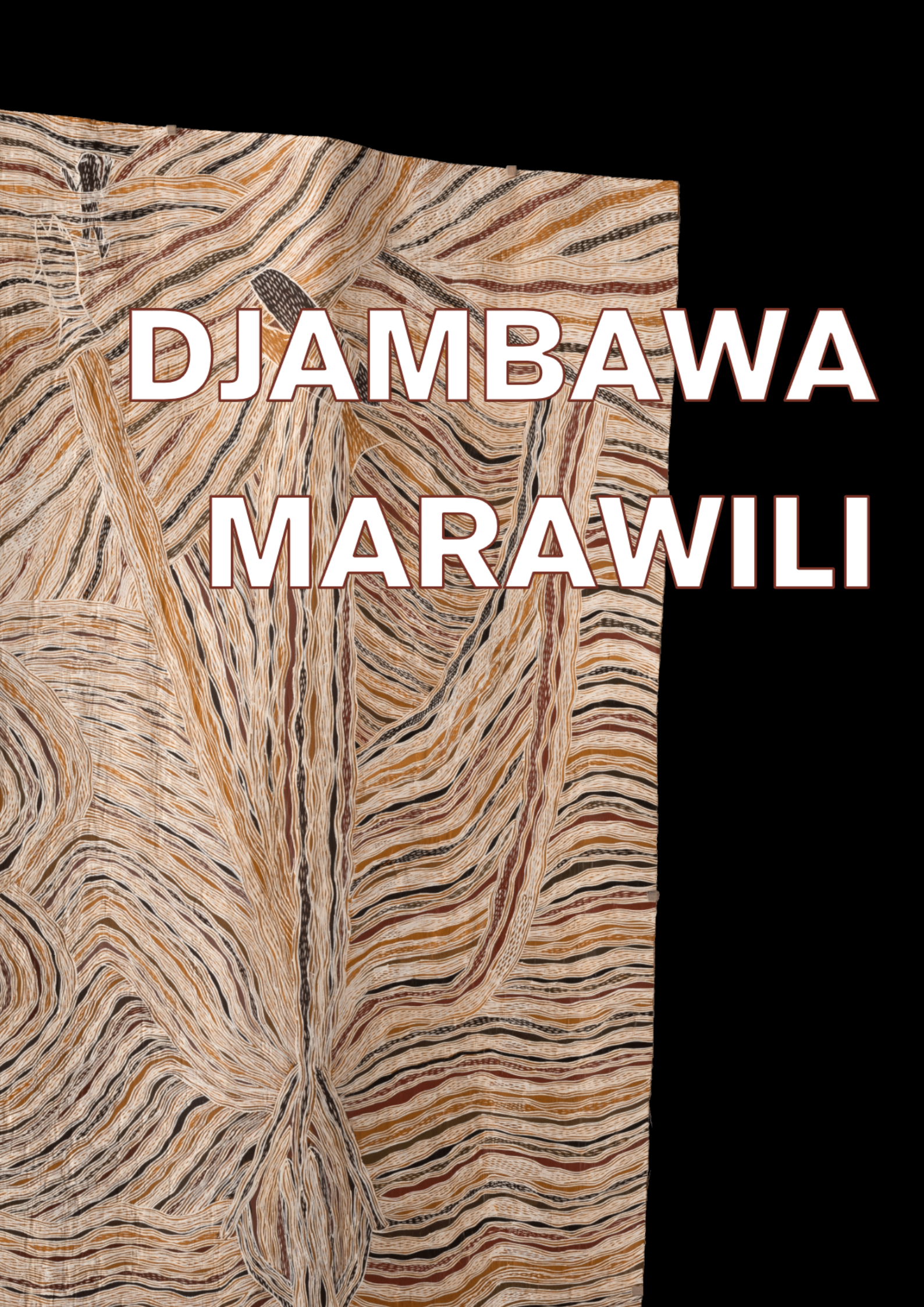
natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
212 x 77 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted for Maningrida Arts & Culture,
Northern Territory
Private Collection, Queensland

EXHIBITED

*JOHN MAWURNDJUL: I Am The Old and The
New*, Museum of Contemporary Art
Australia, Sydney 6 July - 23 September
2018; Art Gallery of South Australia, 26
October 2018 - 28 January 2019



DJAMBAWA
MARAWILI



DJAMBAWA MARAWILI AO
c.1953

Metamorphosis / Yathikpa, 2006

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark
203 x 87 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted for Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre,
Northern Territory (cat.no.BLA 356)
Annandale Galleries, Sydney
Private Corporate Collection, Hong Kong,
Private Collection, Sydney



BARDAYAL
"LOFTY"
NADJAMERREK



BARDAYAL "LOFTY" NADJAMERREK

b. 1926 d.2009

Crocodile with Fish

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark

200 x 77 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted for Injalak Arts, Gunbalunya,

Northern Territory

Dorothy Bennett, Darwin

Private Collection, Queensland

for enquiries

jesse-jack de deyne

jessejack@asecondaryeye.com

+

kade mcdonald

kadepmcdonald@gmail.com

4 LANGRIDGE STREET

X

A SECONDARY EYE