

Nomad Art in conjunction with Buku Larrnggay Mulka presents

MIDAWARR -HARVEST SERIES

By Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley



Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley at Buku Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre

The Midawarr – Harvest Series is a unique printmaking collaboration between two of Australia's most distinguished senior artists. It explores the remarkable world of edible plants that survive and prosper in the monsoon rain forests and floodplains of East Arnhem Land.

These large scale coloured woodblock prints, barks and larrakitj of plants and trees are seen through the different lenses of Wirrpanda, a Yolngu artist and clan leader, and Wolseley a European trained artist known for his mixed media paintings of desert landscapes.



The Midawarr – Harvest Series

is the outcome of collaboration between Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley. Wirrpanda is a senior female artist for the *Dhudi-Djapu* clan from *Dhuruputjpi*. She is a descendant of the late Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda and widow to Wakuthi Marawili, a *Madarrpa* clan leader who lived at Yilpara until his death in mid-2005. She is also mother (by kinship) to senior artist and clan leader Djambawa Marawili.

Wolseley has lived and worked all over the continent and is known for his large scale works on paper which relate the minutiae of plant, bird and insect to the greater movements of the earth's geological and ecological systems.

Wolseley and Wirrpanda first met in 2009 in Baniyala, east Arnhem Land. Both artists were part of a group of Yolngu and visiting artists working on the cross-cultural project and touring exhibition *Djalkiri: we are standing on the their names – Blue Mud Bay* organised by Nomad Art Productions in Darwin.

Mulkun Wirrpanda is an acknowledged leader of her clan and has a lifetime's knowledge of her country. This vast knowledge is distilled into her works. One of many lasting legacies of her recent body of works dealing with food plants is the preservation of knowledge for the future generations. It is particularly important for those plants that are no longer collected or valued in the way they had been in the past, for example wild orange or bunjunu, which was an important food in her youth. She has often spoken in a heartfelt way about how this is one of the main purposes of her art.

John Wolseley is a contemporary Australian artist whose work is represented in all major Australian public art galleries. His work over the last thirty years has been a search to discover how we dwell and move within landscape. The energy and beauty of his works highlights the critical state of the natural world, the lack of understanding and appreciation of the natural environment and the resulting threats of changing climate.

Wirrpanda has been making a comprehensive series of barks and *larrakitj* about the poorly recognised food plants of northeast Arnhem Land. They figure plants and trees of various kinds that live in the Yirrkala region. Her mission is to renew the knowledge of these plants. When she was young this was the food that she grew up on, and in those days old people lived for a long time without illness. It was shortly after this statement that she and Wolseley came together over this joint undertaking. Later Mulkun adopted John as her *wãwa* (brother), and gave him the name *Langgurrk* (a type of beetle grub which lives in mud and yams).

In the following years; 2012 – 2016 they have spent at least one or two weeks per year together in the *Miwatj* region during *Midawarr*, the harvest season, when many of the little known root foods are ripe. The two have hunted rare plants, painted them; and eaten the unique tropical yams and tubers. Since 2009 Wolseley has also been making drawings, woodcuts and large works on paper about the same plants and landscape.

Innovation occurred when Wolseley sent Wirrpanda some slabs of ancient Huon pine. She began to carve the rare plants into the wood - the nature of which with its textural grains and nuances lent itself to her topic. Later these large planks of wood were taken by Wolseley to his studio in Victoria where he acted as her printmaker.

All the works are printed by John Wolseley with Gibson & Gill Printers except *Bundjungu*, printed at Yirrkala Print space. The woodblocks are printed onto either mulberry paper or handmade stringy bark paper made by Winsome Jobling.

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Midawarr - Harvest Series

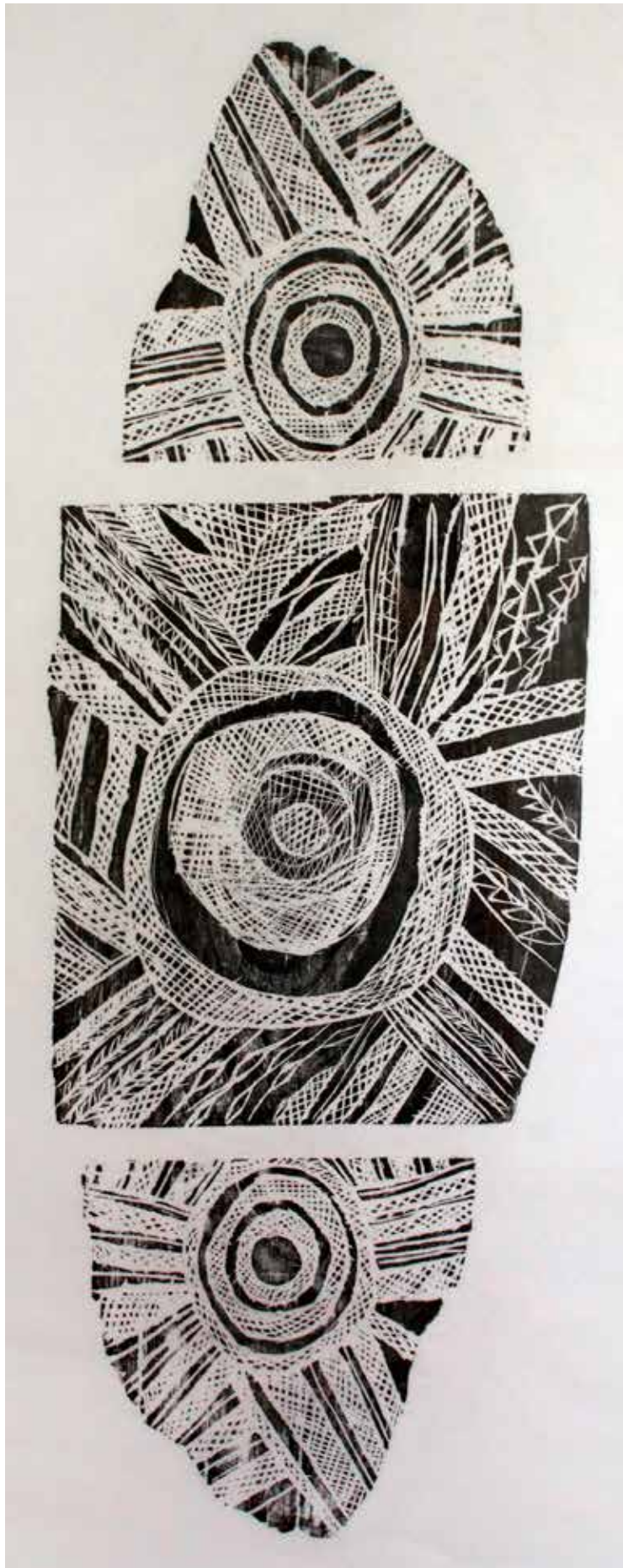
Mulkun Wirrpanda



Mulkun Wirrpanda *Dilminyir*, 2015, relief print on mulberry paper, edition of 25, 33 × 63.5 cm
\$900 unframed.



Mulkun Wirrpanda *Bunjunu (Wild Orange Tree)*, 2015, relief print on mulberry paper, edition of 25, 57 x 81 cm
\$900 unframed.



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Buwakul*, 2015, relief print on mulberry paper, edition of 25, 140 x 50 cm, \$2250 unframed.



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Rakay #1 (Water reed)*, 2015. relief print on mulberry paper, edition of 25, 92 x 47 cm, \$1,250 unframed.



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Rakay #2 (Water reed)*, 2015. relief print on stringybark paper, made by Winsome Jobling, edition of 30, 54 × 28 cm, \$595 unframed.



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Rakay #3 (Water reed)*, 2015. relief print on stringybark paper, made by Winsome Jobling, edition of 30, 54.5 x 28.5 cm, \$595 unframed.



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Rakay #4 (Water reed)*, 2015, relief print on mulberry paper, edition of 30
102 x 38 cm, \$1,850 unframed.

Midawarr - Harvest Series

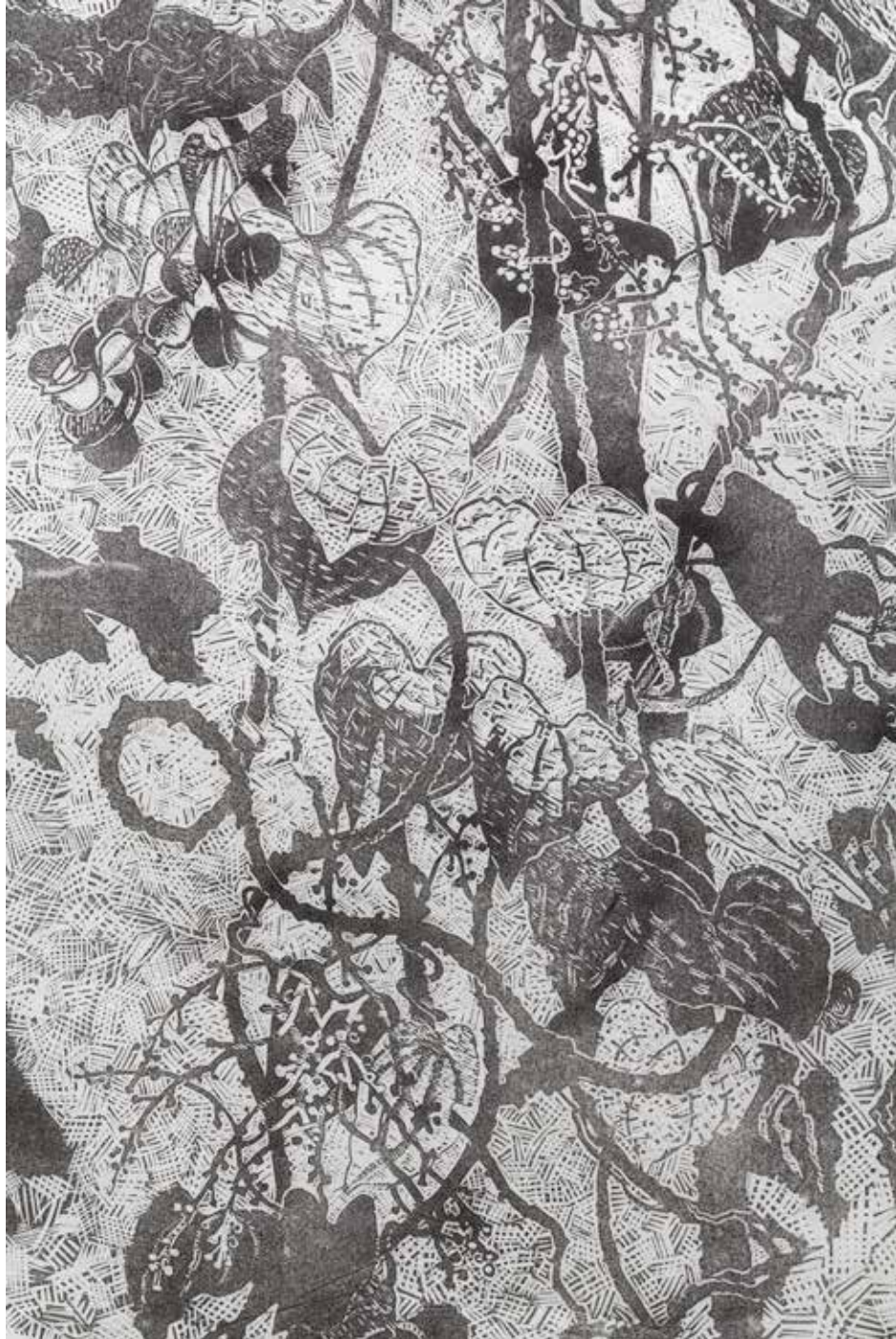
John Wolseley



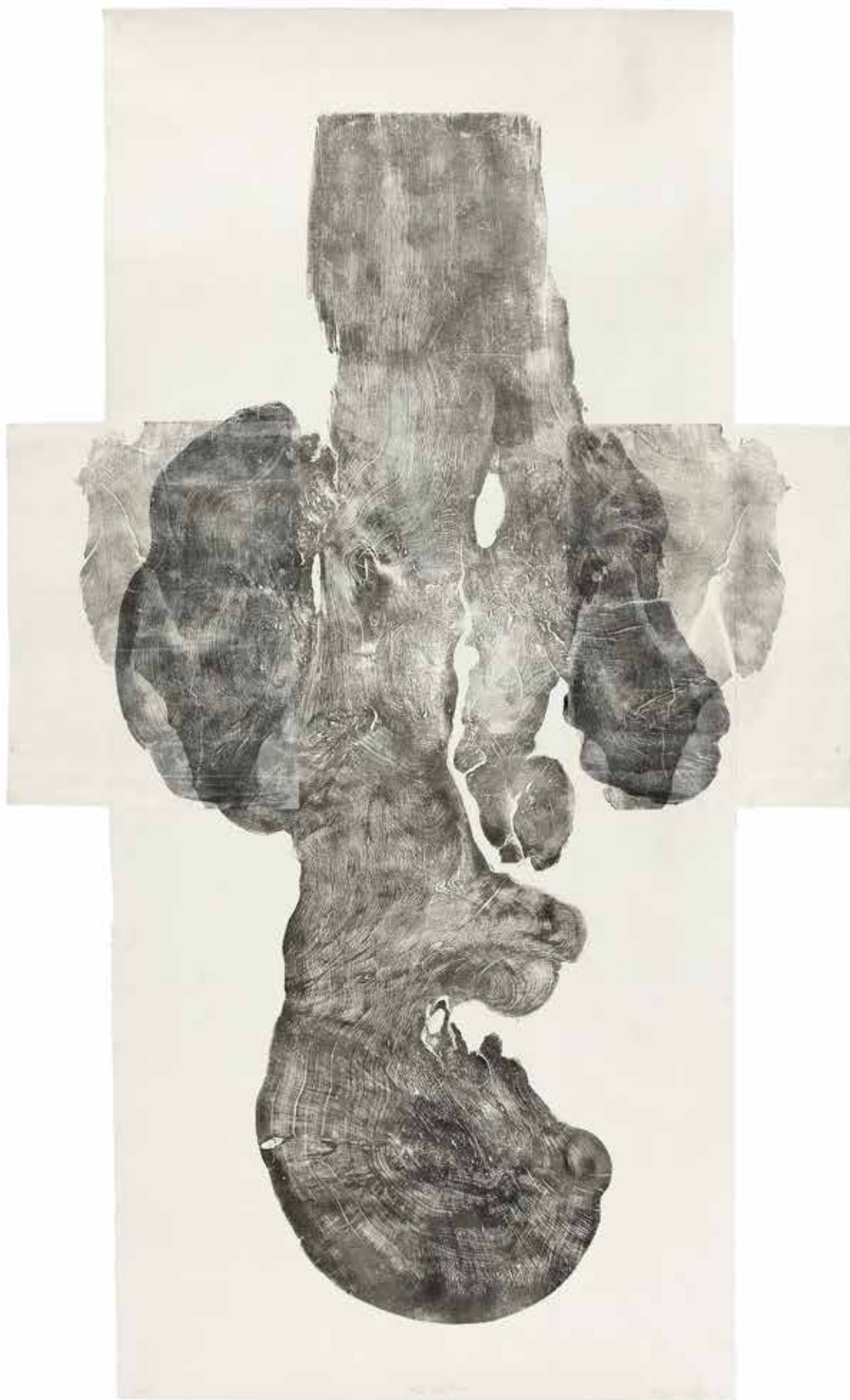
John Wolseley, *Yirringaning, Muwuka and Buwukul*, 2015, wood cut from three blocks, 94 × 118 cm, edition of 20, \$3,500 unframed.



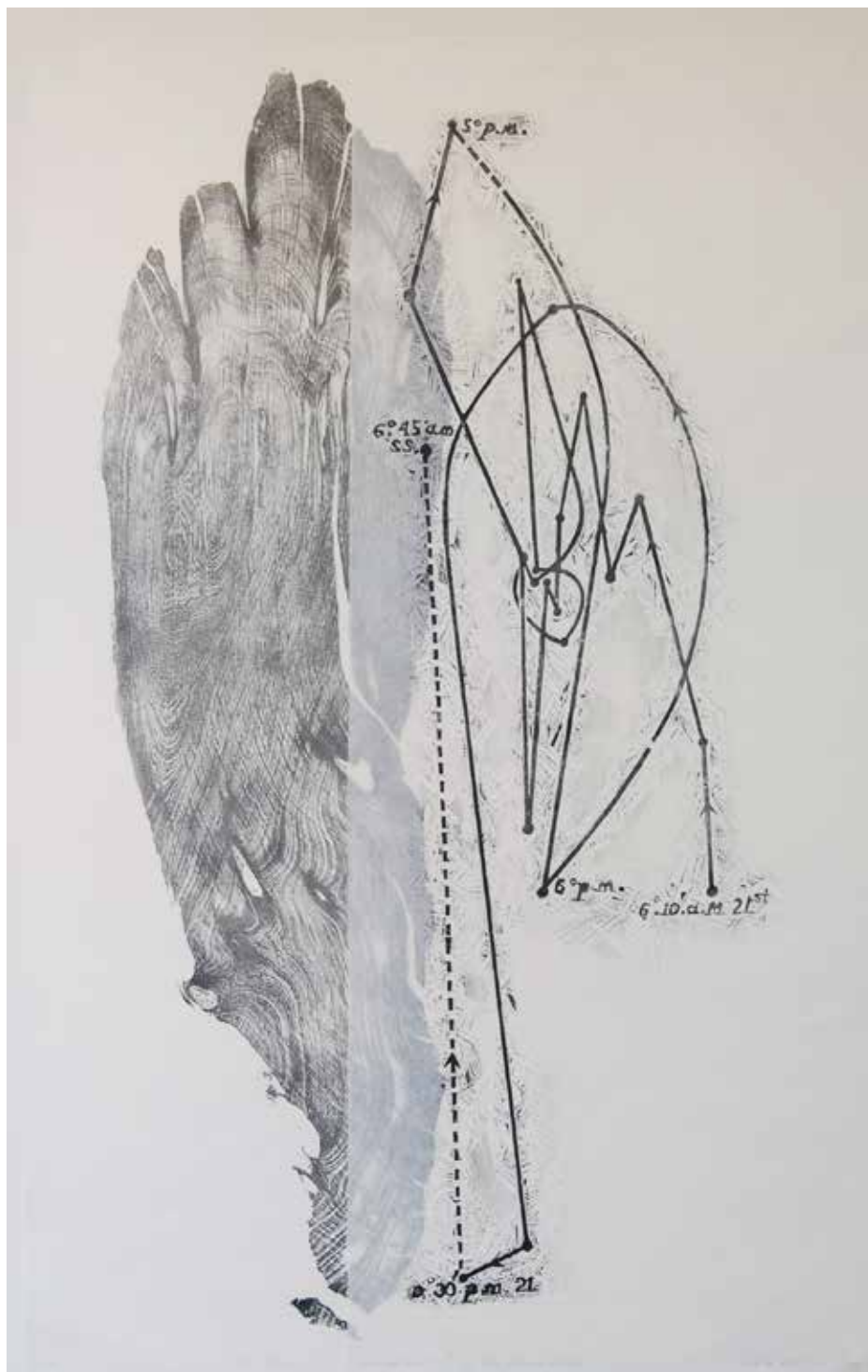
John Wolseley, *Ganguri, Vine and Yam*, 2015. lino cut and wood cut on mulberry paper, 161 × 61 cm, edition of 40, \$2,000 unframed.



John Wolseley, *Ganguri, Vine and Yam*, detail.



John Wolseley, *Ur-Yam*, 2015, relief print, 220 × 125 cm, edition of 5, \$5,000 unframed.



John Wolseley, *The power and movement of the long yam*, 2015, relief print, 103 × 71 cm, edition of 30, \$2,000 unframed.

Found woodblock prints

John Wolseley



John Wolseley, *101 Insect Life Stories - no 3 - Grey Box longicorn Beetle*, 2016, found wood relief, chine-collé over coloured pencil, 15.5 x 24 cm, edition 10, \$800 unframed.



John Wolseley, *101 Insect Life Stories - no 4 - Ironbark Cerambycid Beetle*, 2016, found wood relief, chine-collé over coloured pencil, 16.5 x 35.5 cm, edition 10, \$800 unframed.



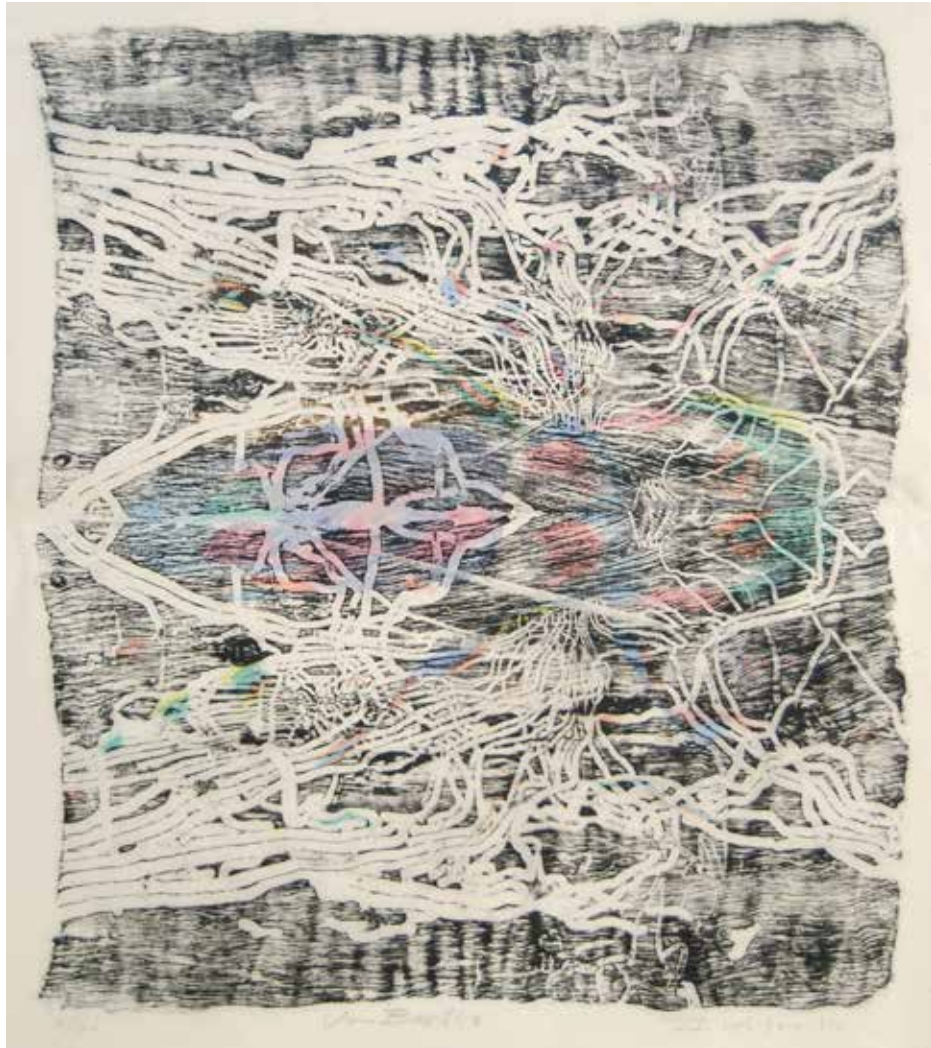
John Wolseley, *101 Insect Life Stories - no 5 - Wood boring Weevil*, 2016, found wood relief chine-collé over coloured pencil, 21.5 x 30 cm, edition 10, \$800 unframed.



John Wolseley, *101 Insect Life Stories - no 6 - Whipstick Cockroach*, 2016, found wood relief print, chine-collé over watercolour, 29 x 36 cm, edition 20, **\$800 unframed**.



John Wolseley, *101 Insect Life Stories - no 7 - Whipstick Cerambycid Beetle*, 2016, found wood relief print, chine-collé over watercolour, 18.5 x 26.5 cm, edition 10, \$800 unframed.



John Wolseley, *101 Insect Life Stories no 13 - The Ur Beetle*, 2016, found wood relief print, chine-collé over watercolour, 38.5 x 34 cm, edition 20, \$1,500 unframed.



John Wolseley, *Life World of the Cerambycid Beetle*, 2016, found wood relief print, chine-collé over watercolour, 42 x 35 cm, edition 20, \$1,775 framed.

Bark paintings

Mulkun Wirrpanda



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Yukuwa* (4767J), 92 x 42 cm,
ochre on bark, \$750



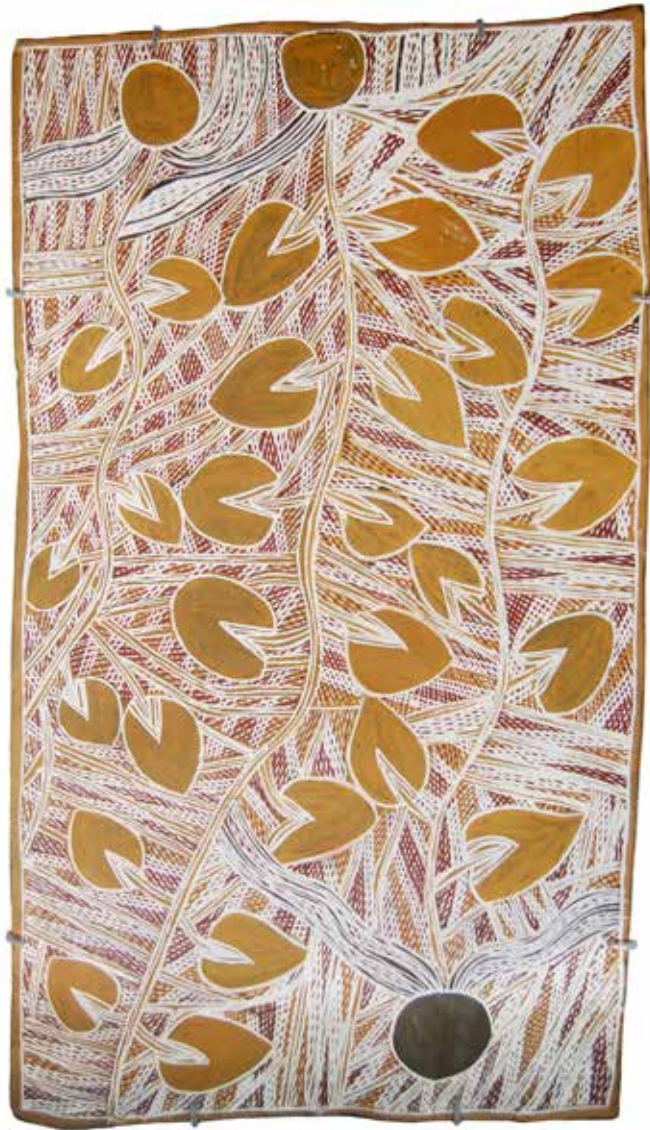
Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Dilminyir* (4786G), 70 x 24 cm,
ochre on bark, \$450



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Dilminyin* (4816Q), 94 x 45 cm,
ochre on bark, \$900



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Dilminyin* (4816R), 100 x 36 cm,
ochre on bark, \$900



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Djitama* (4797Z), 90 x 51 cm,
ochre on bark, \$900



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Galurra* (4743U), 101 x 34 cm,
ochre on bark, \$1500



Mul kun Wirrpanda, *Galurra* (4945Q), 97 x 56 cm,
ochre on bark, \$1,350



Mul kun Wirrpanda, *Balkpalk* (620-16), 127 x 56 cm,
ochre on bark, \$2,300



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Djitama* (4996M), 110 x 51 cm, ochre on bark, \$3,000



Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Gurrumu* (1067-16), 127 x 67 cm, ochre on bark, \$4,450

Mulkun Wirrpanda

Mulkun Wirrpanda is a senior female artist for the *Dhudi-Djapu* clan from *Dhuruputjpi*. She is an acknowledged leader of her clan and has a lifetime's knowledge of her country. This vast knowledge is being distilled into these new and important works. One of many lasting legacies of this particular body of work is that this information will be preserved for the future generations. This is particularly important for those plants which are no longer collected or valued in the way they had been in the past.

Wirrpanda's desire to pass on knowledge is something she often mentions. As she did recently for example when painting *Bunydjunga* - Wild Orange (*Capparis Umbonata*) which was an important food in her youth.

The paintings show the physical appearance of yam, water chestnut, and so on, but also geographies and underlying forms and which lie behind the phenomena. Certain symbolic *miny'tji* link the plant to a wider web of forces and connections

The wood cut of *Buwakul* (*Cayratia maritima*) is an example where different elements of the nature and habit of this little known and fascinating plant are imaged underground in ways far removed from any Western conventions of scientific drawing. Some of the paintings show the growth of the plant as it emerges into the air. Others image the abstract dynamic of its essential growth 'shape' underground

The works taken collectively describe many of the important food plants of the *Yolngu* savannah, floodplains and monsoon rainforest and as such can be described as a *Yolngu* ecology and cosmology.

As Howard Morphy puts it: *the relation between the visible and the invisible is a central trope of Yolgnu art...in part this reflects the fact that paintings are connected to a revelatory system of knowledge about the world in which people learn deeper meanings as they pass through life...In harmony with this is the belief that surface forms of things derive from underlying structures and relationships.*

John Wolseley

John Wolseley is a senior artist based in Bendigo, Victoria. Since emigrating from the United Kingdom in 1976 he has travelled and painted all over this continent and is regarded, as one of Australia's foremost painters of landscape. His large scale works on paper, watercolours and installations are often based around scientific themes like the movement of tides or sand-dunes and even the forces of continental drift and evolution.

Wolseley has often included systems of scientific knowledge including botany in his work and he has very much valued the opportunity to learn something of the intricate connections between plant, country, season, language and of course food which underpin Wirrpanda's works. This has profoundly affected the way that he now thinks about landscape.

Much of his work in this exhibition includes the same species and ecosystems which appear in Mulkun's work and the impact of his time spent in the company of this amazing artist and educator is clear. But inevitably his works will also remain part of the European visual and scientific traditions which have shaped his practice. He writes – 'In my paintings I have tried to show how landscape for me is made up of energy fields rendered as passages of living plant shapes; in which the individual plants move or dance with different rhythms. Taken individually each plant has evolved its particular dynamic form to live in its particular environment. So that the passages in a work where I have drawn a number of Monocharia species of plants constitute an energy field which morphs into a stream of water covered with water lily leaves and the ribbony leaves of Bulwutja – Triglochin dubium. My intention is to show how these rafts of different species weave in and out of one another, across the surface of my painting – rather as a passage of a symphony changes key and mood.

As well as painting and making woodcuts about these plants John has been researching and drawing the insect life of Arnhem Land and around his home in the Mallee. He has begun an ambitious series of 'found woodblock prints' called - 101 Insect life stories. Many of these stories are the ones he has found engraved by beetle and moth larvae under the bark of trees, and within the body of yams and tubers. He has explained that he experienced a strong compulsion to make these works after Mulkun adopted him as her *Wawa* or brother and gave him the name - *llangurrk* - a kind of beetle grub.

He was further inspired by reading Baron von Uexküll the great Baltic German biologist. His book *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans, with A Theory of Meaning* discusses how in order to study and understand animals birds and insects it is necessary to try to think and see like them - to try and enter their *life world* or what he called their *umwelt*. In these beetle *umwelt* prints, the viewer is invited to be part of this life cycle from the point where the beetle lays its egg which hatches into tiny larvae which then carve their way up and round the tree branch. After turning into a chrysalis they hatch into a beetle, which then flies off to another branch and starts the whole life story off again.