Nomad Art in conjunction with Injalak Arts present

THE KUNWINJKU COUNTING BOOK SUITE
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Comprising 12 acrylic paintings on Arches paper by acclaimed Western Arnhem Land artist Gabriel Maralngurra. Price $11,950 unframed.

The set of 12 paintings are featured in a children’s book entitled The Kunwinjku Counting Book published by Injalak Arts and launched by Nomad Art in July 2016.

This book serves as a small window into the complex ecology of West Arnhem Land and the wholistic nature of Kunwinjku Aboriginal culture.

The Kunwinjku Counting Book Suite provides a cross-cultural dialogue, where traditions intersect in a spirit of respect and sharing. It involves the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next and from one cultural tradition to another, culminating in the preservation of our shared national heritage.

The Kunwinjku Counting Book Suite expresses the resilience and connections between people, stories, place, plants and animals that live and thrive in the Stone Country of Western Arnhem Land.

I really wanted to do this book to make children happy ... to share my culture in Kunwinjku and English and help children learn how to count. Gabriel Maralngurra, 2016.
Kinga - Crocodile, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralingurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16

Nakudji kinga kakarrme kunydkme - One crocodile with many sharp teeth
Ngalmangiyi - Long-Necked Turtle, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralngurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Ngalmangiyi bokenh kabenedjuhme kore kulabbarl - Two snake-necked turtles swimming in a billabong
Burarr - Water Goanna, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralngurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Danjbik burarr kabirri kukdayo - Three water goannas soaking up the sun
Kebbalhdjurri (Spoonbill), acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralingurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16

Kunkarrngbakmeng kebbalhdjurri kabirrhni kore kabbal - Four spoonbills standing on the floodplain
Nabarlek - Little Rock Wallaby, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralngurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Kunbidkudji kornobolo karbirringun kunworr - Five agile wallabies eating leaves
Ngarrbek - Echidna, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralngurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Kunbidkudji dja mankudji ngarrbek karribirrni kore kunboy - Six echidnas inside an anthill
Djalangkarridj-djalangkarridj - Dragonfly, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralngurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Kunbidkudji dja bokenh djalangarridj-djalangarridj kabirribarndi kore mannguy - Seven dragonflies resting on the flowers
Borlokko - Water Python, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralingurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16

Kunbirdkudji dja danjik borlokko karrbirri wake kukih - Eight water pythons slithering in the mud
Ngarderrhwo - Snapping/Shortneck Turtle, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralngurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Kunbidkudji dja kunkarrngbakseng ngarderrhwo kabirringun dumdu - Nine snapping turtles eating bugs
Boywek - Gecko, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralingurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Kunbidkudji bokenh boywek kabirriwake kore kungarre - Ten knob-tailed geckos crawling on the ground
Wakih - Freshwater Shrimp, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralingurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Kunbidkudji kunbidkudji dja mankudji wakih kabirri djuhme kore kubabo - Eleven freshwater prawns swimming in a creek
Djenj - Fish, acrylic on paper by Gabriel Maralingurra, 61 x 41 cm, 2015/16
Kunbidkudi kunbidkudi dja bokenh namarnkori kabirri djuhme kore mankabo - Twelve barramundi swimming upstream
The Stone Country of Western Arnhem Land is a unique, remote and richly diverse landscape. It encompasses a vast sandstone plateau escarpment, which rises out of low lying alluvial plains and wetlands. The plateau extends towards the coast in the northwest and gradually merges with the inland plains in the south. Over millions of years water has shaped the sandstone into a rugged mosaic of rivers, gorges, waterfalls and ravines. In contrast, wide valleys provide habitats for a vast array of plants and animals. According to Kunwinjku traditional knowledge, water from the nagudji andjeuk (one rain) arrives over a composite cycle of six seasons and not only sculpts the contours of the plateau, but forms the landscape of the lowlands. The six seasons are indicated by the presence of certain flora and fauna that respond to the changing conditions. This cycle is captured by the mythology and knowledge of the Kunwinjku culture.

Kurrung is the time when the clouds and humidity start to build and the first rains arrive. A new flush of green grass stirs insects into life and fruits like mankurndal (black plum) appear. As the rains increase namarnkol (barramundi) are flushed out of waterholes, streams are transformed from isolated bead-like pools into rapidly flowing waterways.

Kudjewk (the wet season) follows as the monsoon delivers relentless rain, cyclones, winds and lightning. The plateau is saturated and the water cascades off the escarpment into waterholes, swamps and waterways. As the lowlands fill, a massive inland reservoir is created with sandstone islands that stretch beyond the horizon. It is the appearance of karrbarda (long yam), manimunak (magpie geese) and the many fruits, that make this a season of plenty.

At the height of kudjewk these deeply mysterious wetlands erupt with life and become one of the most important tropical habitats in the world. Soon after ngalkordow (brolgas) and the djilikuybi (whistling ducks) hatch. The young chicks signal the beginning of the transition from turbulent water to the stillness of an inland freshwater sea. The water levels drop on the plains and rivers. It is the time to find ngalmangiyi (fresh water turtles) that live in the mud, feeding on the insects first stirred up by kurrung. This is bankerreng the last of the storms. The temperatures and the humidity are still high, while the water now trickles from the sandstone aquifer.

Slowly the nights become cooler, the winds swing to the south-east as yekke (the early dry season) approaches. It is a good time for hunting kunj (kangaroos), fat and easy to get to after the abundance of ‘The Wet’. The andjamko (grevilleas), mandjoh (acacias), manbidubidu (eucalypts flower) and mandem (water lilies) are everywhere. Western Arnhem Land burns as manwurrk (hunting fires) and mosaic burning spread across the drying land.

Wurrkeng is the heart of the dry season and there is still plenty of food around. Mankung (sugar bag) is abundant and the ankong (stringy bark) is harvested to make string bags. Slowly the wetlands become dry and cracked, the ngalmangiyi (turtles) dig deeper into the moist earth and the water birds flock around the remaining water holes. Later thunderclouds build again, signaling the cyclic return of kurrung.

Western Arnhem Land is also the home to the Mok Clan of the Kunwinjku people who have inhabited these lands for an uninterrupted period extending beyond 40,000 years. Their connection to the country is deeply ingrained in every aspect of life. Kunwinjku people believe ancestral beings travelled through the country creating landmarks and places in which they continue to dwell, known as Djjang (Dreaming). Accordingly the Kunwinjku people maintain a profound and ancient visual tradition. Paintings on rock, bark and (more recently) paper connect with ancient rituals, stories and spiritual associations. Rendered simply and directly with white and red ochre, these paintings narrate the soul and spirit of the Stone Country and its inhabitants.

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