



MEDIA RELEASE



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# YIRRKALA DRAWINGS

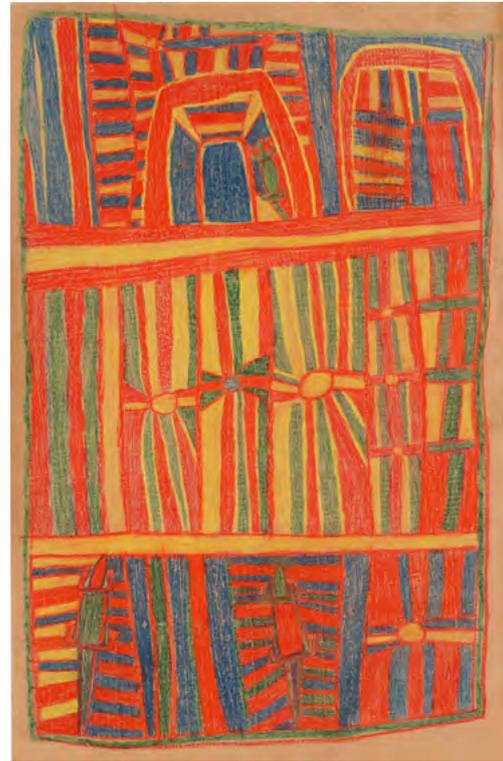
**BERNDT MUSEUM &  
LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY  
7 FEBRUARY – 11 APRIL 2015**

*Yirrkala Drawings* is a stunning visual articulation of Yolngu stories, history, culture and knowledge boldly told through hundreds of crayon drawings on brown paper.

It is rare that the community of Perth, and visitors to our city, are given the opportunity to gaze into the creative world of a north-east Arnhem Land Indigenous community's cultural life. The Berndt Museum's *Yirrkala Drawings* exhibition, which will include 100 vibrant crayon drawings and parallel bark paintings created by 1940s Yolngu artists, presents such an opportunity. Set to transform the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery as part of the Perth International Arts Festival, Visiting Curator Fiona Gavino has conceptualised a rich homeland design featuring selections from more than three hundred drawings, and a range of related cultural material items from the area.

The 2015 exhibition expands on a 1995 Berndt Museum exhibition, *Djalkiri Wanga*, when a small selection of the *Yirrkala* artwork was first publicly displayed, and a recent touring exhibition of the *Yirrkala Drawings* exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Queensland Gallery and Charles Darwin University's Gallery. Audiences in Perth will benefit markedly from an expanded display of the artworks throughout the entire Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery space. Design innovations will include digital display and phonic innovation.

Yolngu from several clan groups were involved in creating the crayon on brown paper drawings (many of which were inspired by designs evident on traditional bark paintings), and the work of noted artists such as Mawalan and Wandjuk Marika, Munggurawuy Yunupingu, Narritjin Maymuru and Wonggu Mununggurr are represented in the 2015 exhibition. A key dimension to the exhibition story is that the drawings were first collected and documented by renowned anthropologists, Catherine and Ronald Berndt, whose ethnographic work facilitated



establishment of the Berndt Museum. The Berndts worked with the Yolngu Community in 1946 and 1947 and, when it was believed that bark paintings with original designs would not survive local conditions and travel from a remote setting to an urban one, rolls of brown paper and packets of crayons were called on to execute the designs in another medium.

Sandy Toussaint, Associate Director of the Berndt Museum said:

“One of the distinctive qualities of the 2015 *Yirrkala Drawings* exhibition is that it builds on years of creatively depicting Yolngu intellectual and cultural life, aesthetics, daily living, and relationships to land, family, and religion. In an exhibition brimming with stories through the artwork, *Yirrkala Drawings* also shows the contact between coastal-living Yolngu and visiting Macassans before European colonisation.”

The *Yirrkala Drawings* Collection was successfully nominated for inclusion on UNESCO’s International Asia-Pacific and Australian Memory of the World Register. Such recognition honours the original Yolngu artists and the wondrous artwork they produced; it also adds a rich layer to seeing this exhibition, and taking the visual, memorable stories it tells with you long after you leave.

Presented by the Berndt Museum and Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery as a part of the Perth International Arts Festival, this exhibition is the first major presentation of these works in Western Australia and has been developed through careful communication with the descendants of the artists and the Yirrkala Community’s Art Centre, Buku-Larmggay Mulka. A full public program of talks, tours and workshops will accompany the exhibition. *Yirrkala Drawings* will continue as a stand-alone exhibition in the Janet Holmes à Court Gallery space from 7 February through to 20 June.

**For further information, interviews and images, please contact Renae Coles, Marketing Officer, Cultural Precinct, The University of Western Australia, on +61 8 6488 3709, or mobile +61 423 846 099 or at [renae.coles@uwa.edu.au](mailto:renae.coles@uwa.edu.au)**

Cover image: Munggurawuy Yunupingu, *Port of Macassar*, 1947, crayon on brown paper, 114 x 74 cm. Berndt Museum, The University of Western Australia.  
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Image left: Mawalan Marika, *Macassan swords and long knives*, 1947, crayon and graphite on brown paper, 95 x 58 cm. Berndt Museum, The University of Western Australia.  
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Image right: Bangaliwuy Marrawungu, *Rirratjingu goannas and fish trap*, 1947, crayon on brown paper, 115 x 74 cm. Berndt Museum, The University of Western Australia.  
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