

Bob's works in this exhibition are painted in Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), his place of residence for many years. Bob, now in his 70s, is now immobilized by several strokes and has not painted for over a year. Today his only travels are to Darwin for respite care. Don roves somewhat, usually painting at Gunbalanya in the wet and at Bardayal's country in the dry. Don is a demure and unassuming bush man in his 50s. This is his first visit to Sydney. The brothers' marvelous images restore our sense of wonder at the natural world.

*Andrew Blake, Curator*

### BOB WANUR NAMUNDJA (BORN C. 1933)



Bob grew up in the bush around the Mankorlod region of western Arnhem Land. He spent much of his life traveling, participating in ceremonies and maintaining his extended kin network. In addition to this, he worked for three decades as a

stockman, "seemed more like one hundred years". He and his wife Dianne settled with their 4 children in Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) over two decades ago and he took up painting as a career. (Notes from Injalak Arts, Gunbalanya.)

### DON NAKADILINJ NAMUNDJA (BORN 1954)



Immediate acclaim greeted Don's painting. Writing in 2004, The Australian newspaper's Nicholas Rothwell said: "By any standards this debut exhibition is worthy of sustained attention in the national media." The freshness

of his work prompted the National Gallery of Australia to acquire two works from the RAFT Artspace in Darwin. He was selected for the prestigious National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards in Darwin in 2003 and 2005. His etchings, produced by Basil Hall Editions, were shown at Sydney's Art on Paper Fair in 2005.

### MARRAUDDI GALLERY

Marrawuddi Gallery, because of its central location in Kakadu National Park, showcases good practice in the fine arts, promoting artists residing within Kakadu and also those of Western Arnhem Land and ANKAAA member Art Centres of the Top End. Marrawuddi Gallery is operated by Djabulukgu Association Incorporated, a non-profit Aboriginal Organization.



Nakadilinj Namundja, *Possum*, 38 x 53cm.

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# THE ART OF TWO BROTHERS

A TRIBUTE TO  
BOB WANUR NAMUNDJA  
AND  
DON NAKADILINJ NAMUNDJA



Wanur Namundja, *Mandem*, 61 x 41cm.

Presented by The Cross Art Projects  
in association with Marrawuddi Gallery

Curated by Andrew Blake

#### EXHIBITION DATES

24 November–17 December 2005

# THE ART OF TWO BROTHERS

## A TRIBUTE TO BOB WANUR NAMUNDJA AND DON NAKADILINJ NAMUNDJA

Presented by The Cross Art Projects  
in association with Marrawuddi Gallery



Wanur Namundja, *Karrdbarra*, 52 x 38cm.

### OPENING

**Thursday 24 November, 6–8PM**

By Dr Murray Garde  
Linguistic Anthropologist  
In the presence of Don Namundja

### THE CROSS ART PROJECTS

33 Roslyn Street Kings Cross  
(opposite St Luke's hospital entry gates)

### THE ART OF TWO BROTHERS

The paintings of Bob Wanur Namundja and Don Nakadilinj Namundja share unique qualities of character and presence and a 'left field' design sense. The brothers play homage to a bush life in their place called Mankorlod, a place spiritually focal to the Kardbam clan. Their stylized paintings depict the beauty and mystique of the plants, animals, ancestors and creator beings, totems and myths associated with Mankorlod. Both men are Kunwinjku speakers of Nawakaji skin.

Although Bob's career has spanned several decades and his art is held in major public collections and reproduced in important publications, this is his first solo exhibition. On the other hand Don, the younger brother, had a rapid rise



Nakadilinj Namundja, *Palms at Mankorlod*, 38 x 53cm.

to national prominence after his 'discovery' a few years ago when painting alongside his mentor Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerrek AO, one of the regions most important artists. This tribute is the first to recognise the brothers' quiet but substantial contribution to Arnhem Land culture.

The genesis of the 'Don n' Bob Show' happened more than 3 years ago when, as the new manager of Marrawuddi Gallery, I visited the annual Gunbalanya Open Day in West Arnhem Land and once again was captivated by the uniqueness of Bob's paintings. Not long after, I encountered Bob's work.

Don and I excitedly planned a 250km detour to visit Mankorlod. The brothers' paintings and my conversations with Don about his oddly metaphysical work, led me to imagine cool waters surrounded by a rich monsoonal forest pocket: livistona palms, noisy fruit bats and birds, possums in the rock ledges, snakes and echidnas, long yams and fruit and, on the waters made sacred by the Rainbow Serpent, lilies, fish and freshwater prawns. But, after all my years working in the remote Top End, including many years as coordinator of Buku-Larrngay Mulka Art Centre at Yirkalla, I should have known to expect the unexpected.



Nakadilinj Namundja, *Mandem Dikkala*, 75 x 51cm.

First we visited Bob, the formal authority to Mankorlod, to advise him of our intent. Don had not visited Mankorlod for thirty years. I hoped to meet a younger brother Samuel, the bark painter, who lived at Mankorlod. When we finally found the small outstation no one was there. It was dry and hot. The bare ground was spiked with the

charred grass, burnt to safeguard the buildings comprising some small shelters, school, airstrip, water tank and communications tower. There was no sign of verdant forest and sacred spring, the Kardbam's Eden. Don was ecstatic—he was home. Don told me that there is no road to his sacred site: it was too far away and too hot to walk. Next time, Don said, we'll bring your wife and show Dianne this place, my country. "Good country eh, big country." We went back on our tracks along the flat and set off to Bardayal Nadjamerrek's camp driving up to Kabulwarnamyo on the upper Liverpool River on the Arnhem stone plateau.