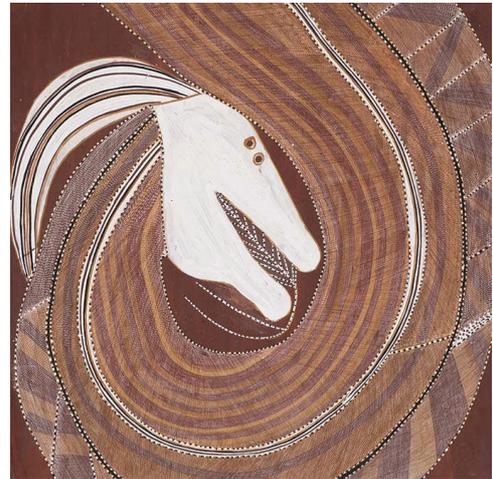


# TARNANTHI CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART

**MEDIA RELEASE** For immediate release



## **Art Gallery presents the most powerful and critical works of one of Australia's leading contemporary artists**

**The old ways of doing things have changed into the new ways. The new generation does things differently. But me, I have two ways. I am the old and the new** – John Mawurndjul

**Mawurndjul is not simply Australia's premier bark painter, he is one of our greatest artists of all time** – John McDonald, art critic

**Adelaide, Australia:** The Art Gallery of South Australia will present the first major survey of works by one of Australia's leading contemporary artists – master bark painter John Mawurndjul from 26 October 2018 to 28 January 2019. Developed and co-presented with the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), in association with Maningrida Arts & Culture, this exhibition includes over 160 works, spanning forty years of the artist's practice.

Since his first exhibition in 1982, Mawurndjul has honed his aesthetic to become one of this country's leading contemporary artists, renowned for his extraordinary prowess in the technique of *rarrk*, or cross-hatching marks painted on bark. The significant holdings of Mawurndjul's work from collections of the MCA and the Art Gallery of South Australia form the genesis of the exhibition, alongside bark paintings and sculpture from national and international collections.

Internationally celebrated, John Mawurndjul defies boundaries and containment. The master bark painter creates work that is traditional yet innovatively contemporary, located specifically in his homeland but relevant to the world, and founded on beliefs that are ancestral but transcend time. Exhibition co-curator and TARNANTHI: Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art, Artistic Director, Nici Cumpston explains 'John Mawurndjul is an artist who calls up centuries of art making to create contemporary art. Through this exhibition he has generously shared the bounty of his cultural inheritance while challenging the notions of old and new, and local and global.'

*John Mawurndjul: I am the old and the new* has been driven largely by the artist and his community, with Mawurndjul determining the most powerful and critical works of art from across his oeuvre for inclusion. Presented bilingually in English and Kuniŋjku (pronounced Goo-nin-goo), the exhibition illuminates Kuniŋjku culture and the dynamic connections between land and ancestral power in Mawurndjul's home in Western Arnhem Land. It also reveals the mastery of an artist who vividly provides a narrative thread linking the past to the present and beyond.

Presented as part of TARNANTHI in partnership with BHP, and with the valued support of the Government of South Australia, *John Mawurndjul: I am the old and the new* is the major offering for TARNANTHI in 2017.

Laura Tyler, Assent President, BHP Olympic Dam says 'BHP is honoured to partner with TARNANTHI to celebrate the work of master bark painter John Mawurndjul. As a global resource company, we seek to build enduring relationships with the traditional owners connected to our operations around the world. As Principal Partner of TARNANTHI, we are enormously proud to bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from around Australia to share their stories and culture through works of art.'

Born in 1952, John Mawurndjul lives and works in Milmilngkan in Western Arnhem Land and Maningrida in Central North Arnhem Land. Since his first exhibition in 1980, he has become one of Australia's most widely recognised artists. In 1989 his work was included in the ground-breaking exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Georges Pompidou and Grande Halle de la Villette in Paris, and his works have been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Australia, America, Germany and Japan. He was the recipient of the Clemenger Contemporary Art Award in 2003, has received the Bark Painting Award at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory four times, and in 2010 was awarded an Order of Australia. In 2018 he received the highly prestigious Red Ochre Award at the Australia Council for the Arts, National Indigenous Art Awards, for his outstanding lifetime achievement in the arts.

*John Mawurndjul: I am the old and the new* runs from 26 October 2018 to 28 January 2019 at the Art Gallery of South Australia. For further details including talks, performances and events, visit [tarnanthi.com.au](http://tarnanthi.com.au) or [johnmawurndjul.com](http://johnmawurndjul.com).

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Developed and co-presented by the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) and the Art Gallery of South Australia, in association with Maningrida Arts & Culture. Presented as part of TARNANTHI in partnership with BHP and with the support of the Government of South Australia.

Co-curated by Clothilde Bullen (Curator, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Collections & Exhibitions, MCA), Natasha Bullock (Senior Curator, MCA), Nici Cumpston (Artistic Director, TARNANTHI: Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art, Art Gallery of South Australia) and Dr Lisa Slade (Co-acting Director, Art Gallery of South Australia) with the support of Keith Munro (Curator, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Programs, MCA) as Lead Cultural Advisor.

**ABOUT TARNANTHI** TARNANTHI presents contemporary art of the oldest living culture on an unprecedented scale, in a national event held annually by the Art Gallery of South Australia. A platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from across the country, TARNANTHI presents an opportunity to share important stories.

TARNANTHI illuminates the diversity and depth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art by alternately staging an expansive city-wide festival in one year and a focus exhibition the following year. This year's feature artist is master bark painter John Mawurndjul. TARNANTHI also includes an annual Art Fair, artist talks, performances and events.

**MEDIA PREVIEW** Thursday 25 October at 11am

**OFFICIAL OPENING** Thursday 25 October at 6pm

**EXHIBITION SEASON** Friday 26 October 2018 to Monday 28 January 2019

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**IMAGES** Available for download from [www.tarnanthi.com.au/mediagallery](http://www.tarnanthi.com.au/mediagallery)

**MICROSITE** [johnmawurndjul.com](http://johnmawurndjul.com) featuring an exhibition guide, artist interviews, learning resources, audio recordings of linguist and anthropologist Murray Garde and a glossary, accompanied by recordings of Kuninjku language by John Mawurndjul and his family

image left: John Mawurndjul, 2016; photo: Tristan Derátz. image right detail: John Mawurndjul, Kuninjku people, Northern Territory, born 1952, Kubukkan near Marrkoldjban, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, *Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent*, at Milmilngkan, 1990, earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetrodonta*), 205.0 x 105.0 cm; Parliament House Art Collection, Department of Parliamentary Services, Canberra, © John Mawurndjul/Licensed by Copyright Agency, 2018.

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