Aboriginal bark paintings as "religious heritage"? Sharing responsibility over legacy collections in museum exhibitions

Jessica de Largy Healy

Aboriginal bark paintings as "religious heritage"? Sharing responsibility over legacy collections in museum exhibitions

Jessica DE LARGY HEALY
CNRS/Université Paris Nanterre (France)

Abstract

Since the late 1920s, Arnhem Land bark paintings have found their way into the most prestigious museums in the world. Referred to as "the backbone of the land and sea" by Yolŋu scholar Joe Neparrŋa Gumbula (2010), these historical paintings materialise the religious knowledge, authority, and agency of the Old people. In the past two decades, contemporary communities have instigated new forms of collaborations to reconnect with their collections. Drawing on long-term research in the region, and a recent experience in co-curation with the Milingimbi Art and Culture Centre and the Musée du quai Branly, this paper questions our understanding of historical bark paintings as religious heritage. Far from being a one-way movement from the centres to the periphery, built solely upon sentiments of post-colonial redress, exhibitions can be seen as a Yolŋu-led two-way processes of sharing that aim for a deeper appreciation of the value of their collections. By enabling the collections to be re-embedded in meaningful relations, these processes invite us to reconsider the epistemological and ethical stakes of displaying sacred Aboriginal images in public places. They also invite us to think practically about the curatorial responsibilities entailed by such a posture of respect.

Keywords: Bark paintings, co-curation, exhibition, moral responsibility, respect, Milingimbi

Résumé

Depuis la fin des années 1920, les peintures sur écorce de Terre d' Arnhem ont trouvé leur place dans les musées les plus prestigieux. Qualifiées de « colonne vertébrale de la terre et de la mer » par le chercheur yolŋu Joe Neparrŋa Gumbula (2010), ces peintures historiques matérialisent le savoir religieux, l'autorité et l'agentivité du peuple ancestral. Au cours des deux dernières décennies, les descendants de leurs créateurs ont suscité de nouvelles formes de collaborations pour renouer avec leurs collections dispersées. S'appuyant sur l'expérience récente du co-commissariat de l'exposition *Guḻarri gapu yothu yindi. Paysages de l'eau au nord de l'Australie* avec le Centre d'art et de culture de Milingimbi et le musée du quai Branly, cet article interroge notre compréhension des peintures sur écorce historiques en tant que patrimoine religieux. Loin d'être un mouvement à sens unique des centres vers la périphérie, strictement conçu dans un esprit de réparation postcolonial, les expositions artistiques peuvent être considérées comme des processus bidirectionnels de partage mis en œuvre par les Yolŋu qui visent à une appréciation approfondie de la valeur de leurs collections. En permettant de réinscrire les collections dans des relations signifiantes, ces processus invitent à reconsidérer les enjeux épistémologiques et éthiques de l'exposition d'images sacrées aborigènes dans l'espace public. Ils nous invitent aussi à réfléchir concrètement aux responsabilités curatoriales qu'implique une telle posture de respect.

Mots-clés : peintures sur écorce, co-commissariat, exposition, responsabilité morale, respect, Milingimbi

Introduction

When in August 2020 I received an invitation to participate in a forthcoming event on "Religious heritage in public museums", the central theme of the workshop was very much on my mind and resonated in serendipitous ways with rather profound practical questions with which I was grappling at the time. As part of a broader research project, I had recently started working on an exhibition of 'old paintings' from Arnhem Land, a creative experiment in remote co-curatorship that was due to open, amidst much uncertainty, ten months later at the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac (MQB-JC), in Paris. Creatively borne out of the pandemic situation, the exhibition was conceived as a formal collaboration between the museum in Paris and the Milingimbi Art and Culture centre (thereafter, the Art Centre), the local organisation representing the 'source community'. The selection of 26 bark paintings and sculptures agreed upon by the descendants of the artists, was drawn from a historical collection which was assembled sixty years earlier in Milingimbi by Karel Kupka (1918-1993), an anthropologist and collector driven by a personal artistic quest (Kupka 1962; McMillan 2005; Kaufmann & McMillan 2009). Made with the master-painters of the former mission settlement, the fathers and uncles of today's senior women and men, the Milingimbi collection of some 122 artworks is of great significance and value to the community (De Largy Healy 2010). The exhibition was presented at the MQB-JC in the Atelier Martine Aublet from 22 June to 26 September 2021.

The exhibition *Gu̲larri gapu yothu yindi. Waterscapes from Northern Australia* originated as an anthropological research project on bark paintings, the transmission of environmental memory, and attachments to place.[1] International travel restrictions and cultural diplomacy provided the unexpected – and accelerated – possibility to translate this research project into an exhibition.[2]

Shaped by the running theme of water, the exhibition progressively took form through a collection of stories about the works shared by senior knowledge-holders, men and women who have inherited the rights 'to speak for' the paintings, and who, in many cases, pursue this artistic tradition today. Two respected artists and elders, from both Yolŋu moieties, were appointed by the Art Centre's board of directors to make up the curatorial team, with Nicolas Garnier and myself, in order to represent the painters' descendants' perspectives more broadly. They were Ruth Nalmakarra Garrawura, of the Liyagawumirr clan, from the Dhuwa moiety, renowned weaver, painter, and art worker, and Joe Dhämanydji, of the Gupapuyŋu clan, from the

1 The prefiguration project, "CARTOCOLL. Cartographie d'une collection : les peintures sur écorce de la collection Karel Kupka (Terre d'Arnhem, Australie)" (2020-2021), received seed funding from the Labex *Les Passés dans le Présent* (Investissements d'avenir, réf. ANR-11-LABX-0026-01) in December 2019, weeks before the global pandemic was declared. It was led by Nicolas Garnier, head of the Pacific collections at the MQB-JC, and Jessica De Largy Healy, anthropologist at the Laboratoire d'ethnologie et de sociologie comparative (Lesc UMR 7186, CNRS-Université Paris Nanterre). Other supporting institutions included the National Museum of Australia, in Canberra, the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève, the Museum der Kulturen in Basel, and the CREDO (UMR 7308, CNRS-EHESS-AMU) in Marseille.

2 The exhibition was scheduled as part of *Osez l'Australie* ! ('Australia Now!'), an Australian cultural season programmed in 2021-2022 in a number of French cultural institutions and venues, with the support of the Australian embassy and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Yirritja moiety, great artist and ceremonial leader. My own position, as a French-Australian researcher-curator with long-standing relationships in the Yolŋu community, afforded me a unique, deeply rewarding, and at times challenging perspective on the processes at play. While I was contracted by the museum on this project, I saw it as my role to ensure that the Yolŋu values and agency transpired throughout the making of the exhibition.[3]

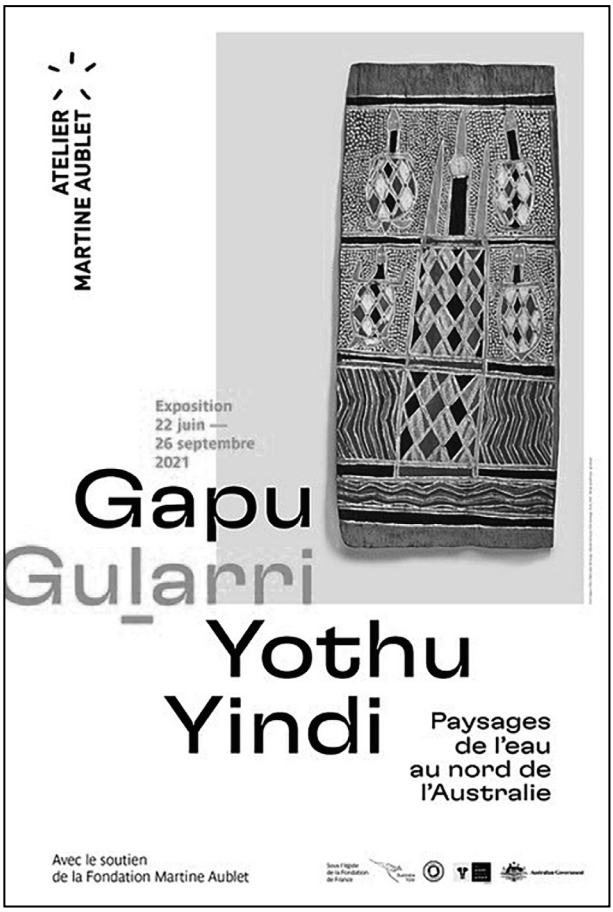

Figure 1. Poster of the Guḻarri Exhibition, 2021

© Musée du quai Branly & Milingimbi Art and Culture centre

The poster features the painting Birrkuḍa (Honeybee), made by Tom Djäwa, Gupapuyŋu (Yirritja moiety), collected by Karel Kupka in 1963.

3 My work mostly consisted of offering anthropological insights to explain the significance of each Yolŋu curatorial decision to the museum staff; this mediating role also involved, for instance, the settlement of a short-lived controversy which arose a few weeks before the opening. An analysis of this controversy, which stemmed from conflicting values around one of the films produced by the Art Centre for the exhibition, far exceeds the scope of this article and will be the subject of another publication.

With increasingly slim prospects of the Australian borders reopening in time for face-to-face consultations to take place in Paris or Milingimbi, the issue of how to convey *in absentia* the all-encompassing and deeply spiritual artworld of the Yolŋu to the French public became a central concern to me. Having long been engaged in Yolŋu-led research on collections and museum collaborations in Arnhem Land, including in the form of art exhibitions and digital repatriation projects, I was particularly aware of the "curatorial responsibility" which arises out of the "nexus of interests" between a community and a public museum (Harrison 2013: 5). Beyond the obvious ethical qualms over the conditions of remote collaboration, the question of how to translate the meanings and values of ancestral imagery in appropriate terms framed many of our early thoughts. Unsurprisingly, it rapidly transpired from the preliminary community consultations undertaken by the Art Centre that the paintings under consideration, like religious objects, possessed a set of qualities and attributes of spiritual, moral and jural natures, that required special curatorial attention, wording, and care.

The posture of "respect" towards religious objects, identified by Crispin Paine (2013) in post-colonial museum settings, carries both theoretical and practical implications that are relevant in relation to Australian Aboriginal museum collections. When applied to museum artefacts, Paine writes, respect is a "highly elusive concept", most usefully defined as the need "to pay attention to, in a culturally appropriate way" (Paine 2013: 57). Demonstrated through a series of practices around material collections (storing, handling, accessing, displaying, discoursing on) and upheld by growing numbers of national and international policy frameworks, the respect shown by museum practitioners to other people's religious objects, he concludes, "is really directed towards the object's original and present-day stakeholders and to our relationship to them" (Paine 2013: 62). In the Australian post-colonial context, where museum collaborations with Indigenous communities have gradually become the norm since the 1990s, this conclusion is particularly relevant.[4] Importantly, for many Yolŋu engaged in the museum sector, such as the members of the Milingimbi curatorial team, this relationship and the show of respect extends back as a moral responsibility to their ancestors and towards the objects themselves. Throughout this article, I use the compelling quality of *depth* to translate my understanding of the nature of the connections revealed in the paintings. My use of the adjective "deep" echoes the recent emergence of this term as a temporal marker in archaeology, anthropology, history, and environmental studies, and its success in qualifying time scales in Aboriginal Australia where one now speaks of "deep history" and "deep time" (McGrath & Jebb 2015; Griffiths 2018). In the Australian context, "deep" means 70,000 years old occupation histories, environmental knowledge that goes back thousands of generations, and art traditions that have evolved over centuries on rock, skin, sand, bark and more recently on a range of introduced media. "Deep" characterises stories that tell of rising sea levels during the late Pleistocene, celestial motions in the sky, and the eruption of long dead volcanos. In Yolŋu arts, "deep"

4 See, for example, the seminal museum policy framework *Previous possessions, new obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* (Council of Australian Museums Associations, 1993) and its latest update *First peoples: A roadmap for enhancing indigenous engagement in museums and galleries: Indigenous roadmap* (Janke et al. 2018).

evokes the sense of the sacred, the invisible foundations made present through the aesthetic qualities of a painting, or the resonance of a power-name in a song. These *deep* connections are what ground people, places, and ancestors together across time and space.

Thinking of Aboriginal bark paintings as 'religious objects' provides a stimulating analytical framework to reflect on some of the shared responsibilities at stake in exhibiting Yolŋu historical collections in museums today. My analysis draws on my two decades of ethnographic research undertaken in northeast Arnhem Land with ceremonial leaders, artists, and museum workers, highlighting some of these issues and illustrating how, through formal collaborations entered into by different parties, paintings become re-embedded in meaningful relations to people, places, ancestors, and narratives. After a discussion of the ambiguous status of bark paintings, through a brief history of this art movement in Milingimbi, I return to moral responsibility in curatorship to show how the idea has been taken up by Yolŋu and museums in Australia with regards to their historical or 'legacy' collections. I suggest that Yolŋu art centres' long-term engagement with museums and cumulative experience in curation through their active participation in dozens of exhibitions of old and new barks in Australia and overseas[5] has resulted in a broader appreciation of the *spiralling depth*[6] of Arnhem Land's art historical collections. Rather than being a one-way movement from the centres (the museums) to the periphery (the source communities), built solely upon sentiments of historical redress and post-colonial moral intent, restitution practices in north-east Arnhem Land, of which exhibitions are arguably a singular form, can be seen as Yolŋu-led 'two-way' processes, of sharing in and sharing out, which museums are invited to partake in and benefit from. Building on my recent experience in the co-curation of the *Guḻarri gapu yothu yindi* exhibition, this moral turn and its scenographic implications are explored in the final part of the article.

5 To name some of the major museum exhibitions and accompanying scholarly catalogues featuring historical collections of bark paintings undertaken in collaboration with Arnhem Land communities: *The Native Born. Objects and representations from Ramingining*, Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney, 1996); *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters story, 1937-1997*, National Gallery of Australia (Canberra; 1997); *They are meditating. Bark paintings from the MCA's Arnott's collection*, Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney, 2008); *Yalangbara: Art of the Djang'kawu*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (Darwin, 2008); *Makarr-Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective*, Macleay Museum (Sydney, 2009); *Traces de rêves. Peintures sur écorce des Aborigènes d'Australie*, Musée d'ethnographie de Genève (Geneva, 2010); *Old masters: Australia's great bark artists*, National Museum of Australia (Canberra, 2013); *Art from Milingimbi. Taking memories back*, Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney, 2016); *Djalkiri: Yolŋu art, collaborations and collections*, Chau Chak Wing Museum (Sydney, 2021); *Madayin: Eight decades of Aboriginal Australian bark paintings from Yirrkala*, Kluge-Ruhe Museum (Charlottesville, USA, 2022).

6 I borrow the term "spirals" from a collective of Yolŋu and non-Aboriginal authors who recently published a book called *Song spirals* (Gay'wu group of women 2019). They propose "spirals" as more a befitting term than the popular use of "lines" to translate the intricate convolutions of relations across the living environment and the perpetual making and remaking of these connections through ceremonial practice and experience. The revolving image of spirals is resorted to here as a poetic figure to convey the Yolŋu sense of social relatedness, or if I may say so, of cosmic connectivity.

The making of Yolŋu historical collections

The idea of apprehending Aboriginal paintings as 'religious objects' is, of course, not new, and indeed represents an enduring trope in the study of Australian Indigenous arts including in its most contemporary forms. The sacred/ancestral/dreamtime/ritual foundations of Aboriginal art have long been the subject of learned commentary by anthropologists, archaeologists, art historians, and curators and they hold a central place in the discourse that has become institutionalised in museum and art galleries in Australia and elsewhere, as well as on the international art and tourist markets.[7]

Closely following missionary settlement during the 1920s and the arrival of the first collectors and anthropologists in the East Arnhem region, bark paintings have found their way into some of the most prestigious museum collections. "Becoming art" (Morphy 2007) in complex and art-historically thick movements that extend vibrantly to this day, historical works are held in major institutions in Australia, Europe, and the United States. I will not dwell here on the lengthy disciplinary debates about whether bark paintings (and non-Western material culture more widely) should be regarded as art objects deserving of aesthetic appraisal or as artefacts of mere ethnographic interest (but see Coote & Shelton 1992; Myers 1998; Kaufman 2005; Morphy 1996, 2007). Karel Kupka (1957, 1964, 1972) himself was a relentless advocate for the recognition of the artists' individual talents and creativity. The fact that in recent decades Yolŋu bark paintings have been displayed in cutting-edge contemporary art spaces as well as in post-colonial ethnographic museums speaks for itself. That some of today's most celebrated contemporary Australian artists such as Djambawa Marawili, Gunybi Ganambarr, Noŋgirrŋa Marawili or John Mawurndjul are Arnhem Land bark painters further blurs the boundaries between these binary categories.

'Historical collections' in the Yolŋu context refers to museum collections and anthropological archives dating from the mission era. Broadly spanning from the 1920s to the 1960s, the mission era predates the federal policy of Aboriginal self-determination and the creation of government structures which established the making of "high Aboriginal art" and the modern arts industry in Australia (Myers 2002). Yolŋu expert and scholar Joe Neparrŋa Gumbula, who studied and documented the major museum collections and ethnographic archives from the East Arnhem region, labelled these "Legacy collections" (Hamby & Gumbula 2015: 189–190).[8] Throughout his academic career researching these collections dispersed in several countries, his use of the English term 'legacy', rather than the more common and institutionalised appellation 'heritage' is telling. The *Cambridge Dictionary* offers a two-fold definition of 'legacy': 1) money or property that you

7 An exhaustive bibliography of publications dealing with the ancestral aspects of Australian Indigenous arts would far exceed the space allotted for this article, let alone trying to mention the dozens of exhibitions that have featured the root word "dream" in their title as an efficient attractor of public attention and fantasies. See, for instance, Flood 1983; Sutton 1989; Morphy 1991; Glowczewski & De Largy Healy 2005.

8 Dr. Joe Neparrŋa Gumbula (1954-2015) was a ceremonial leader (*liyaŋärramirri*), university lecturer, and pioneering museum researcher whose own intellectual legacy was celebrated in a collective tribute in Corn, De Largy Healy & Ormond-Parker 2019.

receive from someone after they die; 2) something that is a part of your history or that remains from an earlier time. This definition calls attention to two significant aspects of the term and explains its appeal in the Yolŋu context: it emphasises *social relatedness* (a legacy is attributed by someone specific, in this case, members of the ascending generation within the Yolŋu kinship system or *gurruṯu*); and it stresses the *enduring nature* of what is endowed (the collections actively remain, they are integral to people's lives today).

Historical or legacy collections comprise paintings, sculptures, and objects made by the fathers, maternal uncles, grandfathers, and other known male relatives of today's Yolŋu clan leaders.[9] Their makers belonged to the first generation of ceremonial leaders to join the three missionary settlements which were established throughout the region – Milingimbi 1923; Yirrkala 1935; and Galiwin'ku 1942 – and to paint for visiting anthropologists and museum collectors on a scale never experienced before. Encouraged by individual missionaries who set up shop and international sale circuits, this period of artistic effervescence reached a "golden age" during the 1950s and 1960s (Mundine 1996: 69), with the creative transposition of sacred ritual expressions into the public domain, as permanent, portable, and exchangeable artefacts, and the experimentation with new techniques and representational forms.

Following the major changes that transformed their modes of life in less than three decades, from the centralisation of previously dispersed clan groups to the introduction of new regimes of value such as Christianity, many Milingimbi leaders such as Tom Djäwa (1905-1980), Johnny Dayngangan (c. 1892-1959) or Dawidi (1921-1970) regarded the emergence of an international demand for their paintings as an opportunity to engage in cross-cultural transactions, for economic and pedagogical as well as political purposes. From the beginning of mission collecting, the painters themselves have been important exegetes of their works for the outside world, providing mythical and other narratives to the collectors in order to educate them about the power and beauty of the ancestral Law (*rom*) imaged in their designs, as well as the system of rights in which they partook. Interviewed in Milingimbi in 2009, Colin Dhämarrandji, an old man himself, thus remembered the exchanges between Karel Kupka and his father and other past leaders in terms of an asymmetrical teaching relationship.

> Karel Kupka, he studied the arts with the old men Dhuwa and Yirritja. They helped each other like that. The old men told him the stories of the paintings, where they came from, whose Dreamings they were, what the *maḏayin* was about. Kupka didn't know anything so they explained so that he could understand the meaning of the Dreamings. They helped him, told him stories, who they belonged to. (Colin Dhämarrandji 2009, cited in De Largy Healy 2010: 208).[10]

9 While since the 1980s some of the most well-known contemporary artists have been women (see for instance the recent landmark exhibition *Bark Ladies. Eleven artists from Yirrkala* at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 17 December 21-25 April 2022), the makers of the historical collections of paintings were all men. In a society marked by a clear gender division of roles, especially but not only in the religious domain, the master painters were recognised clan leaders who had inherited the rights and responsibilities to execute specific sets of sacred designs in ceremonial contexts, whether on skin, sand sculptures, woven or wooden ritual objects.

10 This quote was reproduced at the end of the exhibition in a small space dedicated to Karel Kupka, who was mainly presented through the memories of living Yolŋu. Colin Dhämarrandji, who sadly passed away

Although not universal among Yolŋu-matha speakers, the use of the English term Dreaming is now quite frequent when speaking with *balanda* (non-Indigenous people). It refers to a loose category of sacred things, such as ancestral beings and lands, ceremonial songs, sacred designs etc. It is often used interchangeably with the term *ma̲d̲ayin*, defined in the CDU *Yolŋu-matha dictionary* as 'sacred, secret, holy, taboo, sacred object(s), an important sacred ceremony'.[11]

In addition to procuring rations and later monetary revenue, painting as a mission activity notably provided a *locus* for the transmission and recording of *deep* ceremonial knowledge in the new settlement context. As journeys to distant sites of significance on various clan estates became fewer and farther between, many of today's adult Milingimbi residents recall watching their relatives paint for the outsiders, often humming the ceremonial songs associated with the places and ancestral beings depicted. This knowledge of a religious nature from a 'long time ago' (*bamanpuy*) is mediated in the designs themselves, as well as in the documentary records produced alongside these historical collections by missionaries, anthropologists, and other early collectors. In establishing connections between the spiritual and the physical dimensions of the Yolŋu world, by interlocking the ancestral, the social, and the jural domains in painted form, their narratives became central to conveying the various clans' relations to their land and water estates. In this region, as would later become common in other parts of Australia following the *Native Title Act* (1993), paintings have been likened to ancestral title deeds to lands and have been presented as such as evidence in Yolŋu land claims since the 1960s.[12]

A wealth of recent studies in Australia and elsewhere (Byrne et. al 2011; Gibson 2020a; Harrison et al. 2013; Peers & Brown 2003; Thomas 1991) have shed light on the myriad ways in which Indigenous groups and individuals have been active agents both in the making of ethnographic collections and, to some extent, of their own museum representations. Indigenous researchers such as Shaun Angeles Penangke (Kungarakany/Arrernte) have acknowledged their ancestors' "vision and foresight to record […] for the benefit of their future generations" (Angeles 2016); or in Paul Tapsell's (Māori /Ngāti Whakaue and Ngāti Raukawa) words, "the foresight of agency that elders have quietly carried when engaging, or not engaging with museums" (Tapsell 2003: 244). From Joe Gumbula's perspective, the legacy collections which he researched indeed materialised the transformation of ancestral knowledge from the past to the present. Gumbula regarded paintings as evidence of the authority and agency of the old people, the first to intentionally 'present themselves to the public'. While historical paintings are cherished as

during the preparation of the *Gu̲l̲arri* exhibition, contributed a story relating to one of his father's Shark paintings. Out of respect for the cultural restrictions applying to the name of recently deceased Yolŋu, only his English name was used in the exhibition as well as in this article.

11 The term "dreaming", which is widely used in Australian anthropology and Aboriginal English across the continent, derives from the translation of an Arrernte concept by colonial ethnographers Spencer and Gillen. For a post-colonial critique of this term and its continued usage, see Wolfe 1991.

12 The Yirrkala bark petitions (1963), an iconic piece of Aboriginal political art which hang in the Federal Parliament in Canberra, led to the first native title litigation in Australia and paved the way for the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*; the Saltwater collection (Buku Larrnggay Mulka 2014), now housed at the National Maritime Museum, was presented as evidence in support of the Blue Mud Bay sea claim which secured Aboriginal Sea rights over 80% of the Northern Territory's coastline in 2008.

tangible expressions of ancestral presences and powers, individual barks are also seen as learned interpretations of *Rom*, the ancestral Law, by past ceremonial leaders who are remembered for the breadth of their ritual knowledge and artistry. These material traces provide invaluable sources of ancestral knowledge, a knowledge that was specifically imparted for the record by the artists themselves. As such, legacy collections are seen less to be the result of colonial dispossession than of a deliberate effort to record and preserve important dimensions of their clans' culture. The reception of their 'message' by the appropriate relatives of the following generations is a strong drive for the repatriation and curation of digital collections on local archives (Wanambi & Marika 2016: 84; De Largy Healy 2022a; Gibson 2020b).

Through their rich history of engagement with various anthropologists and collectors such as Karel Kupka, Yolŋu have long come to envisage museums as "sites of persuasion" which, as Howard Morphy has described, could be used "to get their version of history and their regime of value acknowledged and disseminated to wider audiences" (2006: 471–472). These active forms of participation carry specific rules of engagement with the collections as I will now illustrate.

The ambiguous status of bark paintings: A religious object?

Thinking of bark paintings as a kind of religious object is useful in grasping the nature and practical implications of the 'respect' they command in post-colonial museum settings. While bark paintings are not ritual objects *per se*, and thus were not normally produced for use in ceremonial contexts, prior to the development of the painting movement in Arnhem Land, they could sometimes be created to reveal sacred patterns to initiands during certain ritual sequences. Barks could also be utilised as draft surfaces to practice with particularly potent designs before applying them on the body or on the most powerful and secret ritual objects called *raŋga* (bones). Karel Kupka noted this latter usage of barks which he likened to that of an artist's sketch book. During his fieldwork in Milingimbi in 1963, Kupka documented the case of a young painter named Badaltja, of the Wangurri clan, who sketched several studies of a *raŋga* ritual object on paper so that his elders could choose the appropriate model for a ceremony that was to take place in his absence (1972: 73, fig.26). Prior to the introduction of paper sheets, bark could arguably have been utilised for this purpose. While paintings of this restricted nature are rare in museum collections, as the models would have been destroyed after the completion of the actual ritual object, it is worth mentioning the case of another known example collected by Karel Kupka. This elongated triangular bark, now part of the collection of the musée d'ethnographie de Genève, stands out specifically because of its uncommon shape. Resembling a ceremonial object more than a regular bark panel, it indeed calls for special consideration in its exhibition requirements (De Largy Healy 2022b: 251–252).

Other than these rare instances, historical bark paintings were usually made to be sold at the mission store and are nowadays generally considered to be 'outside' (*warraŋul*) or public (*garma*) works. These terms are also glossed in Yolŋu English as 'open', despite the sacred and highly valued nature of the painted content. Interestingly, though, these 'outside' bark paintings can temporarily change status over time, acquiring an 'inside' (*djinaga*), or 'restricted' (*dhuni*), 'closed' status. Joe Gumbula (2010) conceived a graphic model reproducing a traffic light colour-scheme to illustrate the three Yolŋu knowledge domains: green for garma, public, open, outside; orange for dhuni, semi-restricted, accessible with cautionary measures; and red for *ŋärra*, restricted, secret, closed and inside.[13] The movement of sacred forms from the outside to the inside and *vice versa* closely follows contemporary Yolŋu socioreligious dynamics (see Keen 1994). A painting formerly classified as 'inside', which may for instance reveal the outline of one of the clan's restricted ritual objects, can become 'open' after the release of this particular design during a young boy's initiation (*dhapi*) ceremony, a public event of the *garma* genre during which the designs are painted on the initiand's torso, upper thighs, and shoulders (De Largy Healy 2012).

When curating an exhibition, past and present socio-religious dynamics come to play a defining part in the selection and display of the works, and the textual information which will be made available about them. Paintings associated with recently deceased ceremonial leaders can become momentarily restricted in the context of mourning, following a local dispute or a lack of consensus between clans. Temporary restrictions on discussing particular paintings may also occur, for example, when an important ceremony associated with a powerful ancestral being is taking place in the community. A situation of this kind occurred in the first few months of the *Guḻarri* exhibition preparation, at a stage when we were collating information about the artworks for the purpose of labelling and preparing the wall texts: the team in Paris had to wait a couple of months for a Gunapipi ceremony held in Milingimbi to end before they received documentation about a set of paintings relating to the well-known myth of the Wagilag Sisters, the ancestral beings who established this major regional initiation, funerary, and commemorative ritual (see Berndt 1951; Caruana & Lendon 1997). The Art Centre notified us that people felt uncomfortable speaking about this ancestral narrative in contexts outside of the ceremony which was taking place at the same time. Justified on religious grounds, this delay – which ran counter to the museum's reverse planning, with time relentlessly ticking away – was one of a number of adjustments which were necessary due the very nature of the exhibits.

The painting I had initially flagged for the exhibition poster, itself related to the Wagilag Sisters' story, was eventually excluded from the final selection despite having been classed as 'open' and available for anyone to see during a prior consultation I had undertaken on the Karel Kupka collection a decade earlier. At that moment in time however, in late 2020, there was no one in Milingimbi who had the legitimate authority to make the decision to include the piece or 'speak for it'. In this particular

13 For more on the use of the Knowledge Constitution model to determine access in the academy, see Corn & Gumbula 2006; in digital archives see De Largy Healy 2011a; and in the museum space, De Largy Healy 2022b.

instance, it was explained that the original painter had received a special mandate to paint Wititj, the ancestral serpent, belonging to his MM[B]'s group, but that this permission did not necessarily extend to his descendants. Instead, Joe Dhämanydji chose for the exhibition poster a painting of Birrkuḏa, the Ancestral Honeybee closely identified with his Gupapuyŋu clan, a bark made by his father Djäwa, for which he could confidently vouch through his own position of authority (see **Figure 1**). This dynamic set of rules that can afford temporary restrictions on bark paintings otherwise regarded as public is considerably different from the strict secrecy that characterises other Australian Indigenous objects such as the Central Australian *tjurunga* which, as a general principle, can neither be openly displayed nor universally accessed.[14]

Rather than "representations of deities",[15] historical bark paintings are better conceived of as "figurations" (Descola 2021) of the ancestral beings themselves (*waŋarr*), who under various shapes (animal, human, plants, winds, and rains etc.) created the cosmos and society and instigated the Law (*rom*) which governs the organisation of society and the living world. The designs (*miny'tji*) inscribed on various surfaces result from these ancestral actions throughout the landscape, recalling places where they shaped a river, dug a waterhole, or bled an ochre pit, where they interacted with other beings and elements, deposited objects, or delineated linguistic boundaries. The *rapprochement* between bark paintings and ancestral remains is enlightening in this respect. Yolŋu scholar Joe Gumbula (2010: 9) drew a comparison between paintings and bones. In his introductory essay to a bark painting exhibition catalogue which we both worked on in 2010, Gumbula explained the *deep* significance of this artform as follows: "Paintings are the backbone of the land and sea, the bones of the landscape and of the people. Like bones, they hold the country."[16] In his words, the designs on the paintings are *l̪uku* (foot, footprint) foundational: not only do they make visible the sacred connections between ancestral beings, sites throughout the region and interrelated groups of people, but they are part of these beings themselves. The *l̪uku miny'tji* are the geometrical scars the ancestral beings wore on their bodies after being burnt on a particular shore, the elongated marks appearing on their skin as they stepped

14 *Tjurunga*, also known as *churinga* amongst collectors' circles, are incised stone or wooden elongated objects from Central Australia seen to be ancestral transformations. Associated with specific ancestral beings, people, and places, these highly restricted and powerful objects are kept hidden from women and uninitiated men and children. In Australia, and increasingly elsewhere, these access restrictions of a cultural or religious nature have been extended to museum settings where such objects are no longer displayed, or where they are stored in particular ways, and open to repatriation claims. In France, where museums like other public institutions are regarded as temples of *laïcité* (secularism), this evolution has and continues to generate some doubts; see for example, Derlon & Jeudy-Ballini 2001 (and the Debate section of this same issue of the French anthropology journal *Gradhiva*), as well as an updated version of their argument in Derlon & Jeudy-Ballini 2015.

15 The ULB workshop convenors originally proposed the following working definition: "'Religious objects' will be understood here in the broadest sense. They are a heterogeneous group of religious artifacts (representations of deities, supports of shamanic spirits, liturgical objects, dangerous/protective/secret magical objects, etc.). Some human remains assimilated to the ancestors are part of this group insofar as they carry moral and spiritual qualities and call for a special museum treatment."

16 *Traces de rêve. Peintures sur écorce des Aborigènes d'Australie*, musée d'ethnographie de Genève, MEG Conches (17 Sept. 2010-27 Feb. 2011). The exhibition brought together paintings from several Swiss collections spanning five decades from the 1950s to the 2000s.

out of a named watercourse dripping with weeds, the striped patterns left on their limbs by the froth coming in with the tide at a specific beach. These designs 'hold' the country in that they signify and reveal the 'inside' and everlasting foundations of each place.

Howard Morphy, who has worked in northeast Arnhem Land for over half a century, has shown that the relationship between the visible (the landscape features, the skin) and the invisible (the ancestral, the bone) is a central trope of Yolŋu art. In painting, as in other ritual expressions such as dance and song, "events that happened in the ancestral past are made part of the present, simultaneously reflecting and creating an ancestral presence in the world" (Morphy 2007: 109). Raymattja Marika, a renowned educator and translator from Yirrkala, described this revelatory process beautifully, comparing painting, as a practice and activity, to meditation:

> When old people paint, it is as if they are meditating; it is not just a man painting a design, but the design is a real meaningful and alive totem, which somehow communicates with the painter. When a person does a painting, it actually increases their knowledge of Yolŋu law. There is a communication going on (Marika 2008: 7).

Painting, whether in ceremonial context or on barks, conveys the nature of the world as the artists see it, or more accurately, as they experience it, as an animated, sentient landscape. Beyond a religious sentiment of contemplation, this quote suggests that painting and seeing *through* art is akin an active participation in the world. When Joe Dhämanydji speaks of his father's Birrkuḏa painting mentioned above, these different modes of engagement come to light. Birrkuḏa is a big name (*yindi yaku*) of the Gupapuyŋu clan's ancestral Honeybee. Grounded in one of the clan's named freshwater estates, the story Dhämanydji recorded for the exhibition describes the hive in some detail, with the different states of honey it contains and the movements of the bees to and from various plants and locations. It conveys simultaneously the perspectives of the ancestral Bee, who during its journey at sea encounters an ancestral Whale being, of the swarm of insects' behaviour and flight across various habitats, and of the Gupapuyŋu gatherers in search for honey. The diamond pattern (*miny'tji*) visible on the oblong-shaped hive, which also adorns the shells of four small long-neck turtles depicted in the freshwater on either side of this central figure, is Gupapuyŋu honey. Part of the broader cultural complex (Fijn 2014) of what Rose (2005) has coined an "indigenous philosophical ecology", the same honey motif appears on this clan's ritual objects and is painted on the bodies of Gupapuyŋu men during life-cycle ceremonies such as initiations and funerals. It is assimilated to this clan's knowledge and to what I would call its *deep* ecology.

Each clan like the Gupapuyŋu owns a unique set of designs (but also a dialect, sacred names, chanted song-spirals, ceremonies, dances, and ritual objects) pertaining to the ancestral events which happened on their land and sea countries, and which continue to permeate all its life forms. Belonging to the *maḏayin* class, deemed to possess great power and beauty, the paintings are part of a "sacred endowment" from the ancestors (Williams 1986: 1-36). They are powerful images that may still be released guardedly in ceremonial settings and in the contemporary art practices, however their circulation and use are determined by relations of kinship (*gurruṯu*) and rules of Law (*rom*). Interpretative responsibilities are managed and transmitted within the various clan groups; as Morphy (2007: 149) suggests, these principles

form the basis of Yolŋu art connoisseurship in the region:

> Paintings form a complex framework of interlocking genealogies to which people can relate on the basis of kinship and mythical connections. The Yolŋu "art historian" is able to place paintings on the basis of their form in relation to this grid of connectivity and to state precisely who the painting belongs to, what his or her own relationship to it is, which country it belongs to and which ancestral track.

Legacy collections find their place back into this 'grid of connectivity' of ancestral reach, their return to their community of origin reinforcing social connections between past, present, and future generations.[17] The paintings and the 'big' stories they hold, and the profound knowledge of Yolŋu land and sea countries they carry, are owned, cared for, and controlled by related clan groups across the region. Differential rights and responsibilities in this ancestral heritage are transmitted following prescribed lines (or spirals) of kinship (*gurruṯu*) that connect paintings to specific sets of relatives, ancestral and spirit beings, fresh and saltwater countries, songs, and bodies of sacra.

The enduring significance of this web of relatedness in people's lives explains why research and other collaborations on Yolŋu historical collections, whether material or digital, like elsewhere in Indigenous Australia (Carty 2015; Myers 2014; Barwick, Green & Vaarzon-Morel 2020), invariably begin with a formal identification process: is a work of Dhuwa or Yirritja moiety, which clan does it belong to, who are its rightful owners at present? Indeed, shortly after an agreement was reached over the terms of the *Guḻarri* exhibition, the Milingimbi Art Centre's first critical initiative and responsibility was to conduct a series of consultation sessions with different clan groups within the community (see **Figure 2**). Over a period of several weeks, the Centre's staff invited families to view and comment on a pre-selection of paintings and sculptures in order to establish the final list of works. Two photographs showing groups of people seated and bent over the printed reproductions of the artworks spread out on the Art Centre floor, were included on the first panel in the exhibition space, to inform the public about local protocols and research methodology. At the end of the process, the consulted families settled on a selection of 26 works, further organised in eight clan bundles.

17 De Largy Healy 2017 shows how *gurruṯu* determines the ways in which ethnographic film records become re-embedded in social relations and effectively reinvested in contemporary filmmaking practice.

Figure 2. Clan consultation at the Art Centre

Yolŋu viewers work out their own relationship to a painting or an object according to kinship (*gurruṯu*). They will relate the most to works that are from their own clan, their Mother's clan (*ŋändi* M[B]) or Grand-mother's clan (*märi* MM[B]).[18] This set of people, respectively of the opposite and of the same moiety, will have the highest claim over particular designs and the authority to make decisions with regards to their public release in exhibitions and other forms. Senior men and women from these groups, people recognised as knowledgeable, will be further consulted about the discourse that should be attached to the exhibited works, and the level of information that can be shared about their meaning. When a person is unable to 'speak for' a painting because they are not closely related to the work, or if they feel they are not senior enough to make decisions, they will usually consult with the relevant people in the community to fill in this information. Ideally, these are descendants of the same patrilineal land-owning group (*wäŋa wataŋu*) and senior members of their 'child' group (M[B]/[Z]c), of the opposite moiety, who act as managers (*djuŋgaya*) for their Mothers. In a context where '*gurruṯu* (kinship) is everywhere' as one often hears, museum consultation work is necessarily a lengthy

18 Following the standard kinship notation system: M mother, B brother, Z sister, D daughter, c male or female child. The two main Yolŋu reciprocal relations considered here are: the *yothu yindi* (child mother) relation – between Mother (*ŋändi*) and child (*waku*) or Mother's Brother (*ŋapipi*) and Sister's child (*waku*) from a male perspective – rendered as M[B] / [Z]c; and the *märi-gutharra* (grand-parent-grandchild) relation – between Mother's Mother (*märi*) and Daughter's child (*gutharra*) or Mother's Mother's Brother (*märi*) and Sister's Daughter's child (*gutharra*) from a male perspective – rendered as MM[B] / (Z)Dc.

and complex procedure with high ethical stakes. Factoring in this consultation time is an essential requirement to warrant the appropriateness of the collaboration process on Yolŋu terms.

Yolŋu museum collaborations: The responsibility of sharing

Nowadays in Australia, most if not all public exhibitions of Indigenous art are made in collaboration with members of the concerned source communities (Pickering 2019). The recognition of 'the rights of communities to dispose of their sacred objects or to recontextualise them according to spiritual conceptions', as it was formulated by the workshop convenors, has entrenched the voice of the source communities in the museum and led to 'the re-actualisation of spiritual meanings and moral values of the objects'. This re-actualisation runs at odds with the tendency of museums to freeze objects in the past, a process Dan Hicks (2020) has recently coined "necrography" or "death writing". Increasingly, in recent decades, the participation of Indigenous researchers, curators, and knowledge holders in the museum sector has raised awareness of the epistemological subtleties and ethical imperatives of exhibiting sacred Aboriginal art in public places. Beyond the decolonising of museums, Indigenous curators such as Stephen Gilchrist (Yamatji) are calling for their indigenisation through novel forms of curation where "the objects become re-animated with an unending ancestral signification of the past, gesturing emphatically towards the future" (Gilchrist 2021: 24). In practical terms, this re-animation proceeds from the re-establishment of the objects' "authentic cultural biography" (*ibid*.), of which the contemporary identification process referred to above is both a prerequisite and cornerstone.

The need to reconnect works with their makers, proper names, and creation stories was expressed with some urgency by Joe Dhämanydji in the *Guḻarri gapu yothu yindi* exhibition:

> Many of my father's and other old people's paintings have been kept in the museum for a long, long time. We need to find these paintings because many have been mixed up with different names. I worry if we don't put the right name and clan, the connections between the people and stories won't make sense in the future (Dhämanydji 2021).

The restoration of their full identity, the re-naming of paintings and objects with vernacular terms and titles, and their attribution to specific people and lands is part of the respect due to these objects. Identification and reintegration in *gurruṯu* (kinship) enables the works to feed back into artistic creativity (De Largy Healy 2022a) and into ceremonial performance (De Largy Healy 2011b). It was precisely in terms of 'respect' that Joe Gumbula justified the importance of these naming processes in his museum research.

Yolŋu ceremonial leaders and artists have instigated a range of measures to reconnect with their legacy collections, collaborating with museums in Australia and elsewhere on exhibitions, curatorial and documentary projects, and organising their digital repatriation in community archives, under various conditions of access and use. To my knowledge, there have not been any claims emanating from a Yolŋu community or collective for the physical repatriation of historical collections of bark

painting from museums.[19] Yolŋu are often grateful for the conservation conditions in museums, which can only be replicated locally at relatively high cost.[20] When interviewed on a national radio about exhibition collaborations with European museums, Ruth Nalmakarra Garrawura, *Guḻarri gapu yothu yindi* co-curator, unequivocally insisted on the importance of bringing the old collections out of storage rooms so that they can in a way fulfil their purpose, be seen and spoken about.

> That collection that was there a long time, it's better that these artworks are now in the open area […]. We were happy to see all those artworks and at the same time we were sad because they were in that area, in the storeroom for many years. And we felt that, it is better to have an exhibition. We will have an exhibition and carry on; we can do it and we can do it from here […] (Garrawura 2021).

Institutional collaborations have proven an effective means to publicly acknowledge Yolŋu authority over their sacred objects and paintings in museum collections and in recent exhibitions.[21] As famed Yolŋu artist and ceremonial leader Djambawa Marawili (2021: 19) recently stated in his foreword to an exhibition of historical bark paintings catalogue, "We are the archaeologists and anthropologists", thereby firmly asserting the expertise of the current Indigenous knowledge-holders.

The recognition of this expertise and of ongoing ownership rights over their cultural heritage was the driving force behind the historic Makarrata peace-making event, which was organised in Milingimbi in 2016, with representatives of some thirty institutions holding legacy collections (Hamby & Allen 2016, 2020; Voirol 2019).[22] Bringing the museums onto their own Yolŋu ceremonial ground, as participants in a conflict resolution ritual to renegotiate responsibilities of custodianship over the collections, was a powerful way of transforming relations and acknowledging the shared value of these materials. At the end of the four-day event, which alternated formal presentations, hunting, and other collective activities as well as ceremonial performances on the makarrata ground, the participants drafted the *Makarrata Resolution*, a document intended to set a blueprint for future museum collaborations in Arnhem Land and Aboriginal Australia more widely.

---

19 The status of human remains held in museum collections is outside the scope of this paper. Research on the provenance of two painted skulls from Milingimbi in the collections of the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève is currently underway in collaboration with the Milingimbi Art Centre. It is not specified whether there is a Yolŋu repatriation claim on these skulls first identified by Joe Gumbula in 2007; see Colombo Dougoud 2021.

20 In 1988, the Mulka museum, an air-conditioned, high standard local museum facility, opened in the Buku Larrnggay Mulka centre, one of the most famous Aboriginal art centres located in Yirrkala, on the Gove Peninsula. The Milingimbi Art and Culture centre has recently started collating their Djalkiri (footprint) community collection, comprising highly significant works destined to be kept locally for education purposes.

21 See, for instance, *Art from Milingimbi. Taking memories back*, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2016, curated by Cara Pinchbeck in collaboration with the Milingimbi Art Centre; *Gululu dhuwala djalkiri. Welcome to the Yolŋu Foundations* exhibition at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, Sydney; and its beautiful catalogue *Djalkiri. Yolŋu art, collaborations and collections*, R. Conway 2021, curated with the art centres in Milingimbi, Ramingining, and Yirrkala.

22 At the time, the musée du quai Branly declined the invitation to participate in the event. In addition to my personal connections to the organisers, I was able to participate more formally as a representative of the Centre de recherche et de Documentation sur l'Océanie (CREDO CNRS-EHESS-AMU) which holds the Karel Kupka personal archives.

> The Makarrata has planted a seed of mutual hope for the establishment and strengthening of our relationships as joint custodians of these precious things. We are committed to continue this dialogue and, through the deep listening that has begun, work towards important and shared outcomes. It is with mutual trust, integrity, and responsibility that we resolve to commit to this common future, acknowledging the need for a focused process respectful of the need for unhurried time.[23]

The Makarrata resolution established new terms and standards for museum collaborations in Milingimbi.[24] Notably, the wording of the resolution drew on the idea of 'unhurried time' as mandatory for engaging in meaningful working relations between museums and communities. 'Deep listening' was instituted as another core principle of respectful collaborations, to grasp the significance of the artworks in Yolŋu lives and to devise appropriate ways of displaying them in museum settings. Because paintings are *dhawumirr*, pregnant with stories, Yolŋu voices and narratives (*dhawu*) must be heard and made to 'come up' with the exhibits. Nalmakarra Garrawura thus conceived of museum collaborations as a way of sharing in and sharing out the stories, within and outside of the community (see **Figure 3**).

> We are happy when somebody from there calls us here and we talk, *yo*. So, looks like we are sharing, we are sharing those collections and artworks. Sharing and talking about it. Like making us feel *manymak*, good, better. Bringing our spirit and life back and sharing it to the other different people […]. Like exhibitions, because before it didn't happen like that. Today it's starting to come up, all this *mala*, collections *mala*, *dhawu mala*, story. Because it was there, only little *dhawu*, only little story in it. But we want to make it a bigger and a louder for everybody to know and to learn (Garrawura 2021).

If we accept Widlok's (2013) basic definition of sharing as allowing others to access what is valued, the social implications of Yolŋu concepts of sharing are far-reaching and call for new forms of responsibility. Nalmakarra's commitment to sharing the "spirit" of the paintings, by making their stories known, lies at the heart of Yolŋu experiments in curation and museology.

23 For a full version of the Makarrata resolution, see the Milingimbi Art & Culture website: <https://tinyurl.com/makarratareso>

24 In 2019, the Art Centre's board of directors developed and released "Guidelines for collaboration. Collecting institutions, academics and private collectors working together with Milingimbi Art and Culture". This document, which is sent for endorsement to collaborating institutions, outlines four main points: communication, digital repatriation, project design, and budgetary obligations.

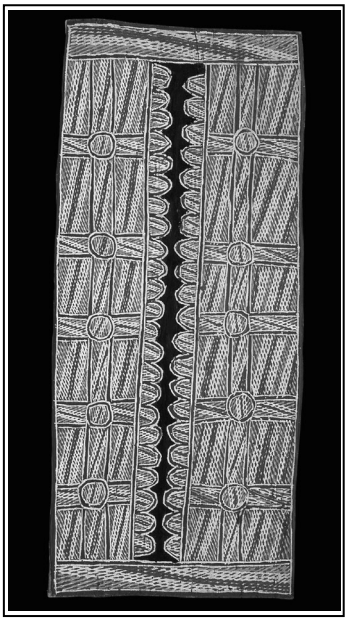

Fig. 3a. © Musée du quai Branly (MQB-JC), 1963

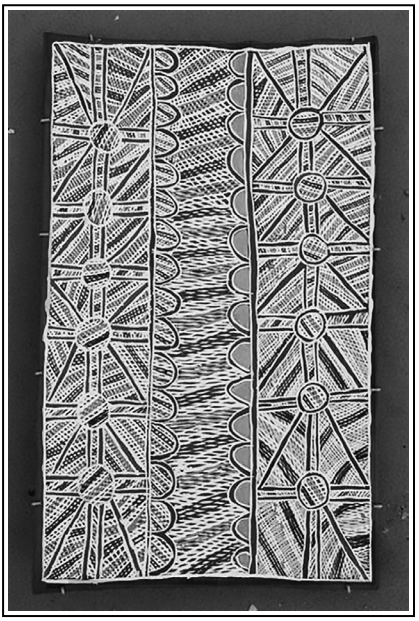

Fig. 3b. © Milingimbi Art and Culture centre, 2022

Figure 3. *Gapu Milminydjarrk ga Wayanaka*, Sacred waterholes and oysters

Figure 3a. Painting attributed to Djunmal, of the Liyagawumirr clan (Dhuwa moiety), that was collected by Karel Kupka in 1963. Formerly untitled, it was named by the Yolŋu curators [photography 72.1964.9.12]. **Figure 3b.** Painting by Susan Yirrawurr, of the Liyagawumirr clan (Dhuwa moiety), and Nalmakarra's grand-daughter (*gutharra* or Daughter's child), that is a contemporary interpretation of the same story.

Guḻarrimirr: Connections through the water

In the final part of this article, I review some of the curatorial choices that were made in the *Guḻarri gapu yothu yindi. Waterscapes from Northern Australia* exhibition to translate Yolŋu forms of attachment to their aquatic territories and sense of inter-relatedness. Owing to the global pandemic context in 2020-2021, our capacity to engage in *deep listening* at the Art Centre, around a campfire or during a visit to a particular site, was obviously limited. The question of how to conceive an exhibition in these circumstances that would reveal the bark paintings' multiple entanglements diachronically, both from the perspective of their makers and of their descendants and, to some extent, of Karel Kupka, their collector, offered a stimulating museological challenge.[25] Paradoxically, this unfavourable context resulted in an innovative experiment in remote co-curatorship which, out of necessity at first, progressively evolved around the stories which were told, transcribed, and translated in Milingimbi and sent to Paris as textual documents. Like poetic artworks themselves rather than mere informative labels, these stories were designed to feature alongside the paintings and not subordinated to them. In order to understand the role of wor(l)ding agencies in the exhibition, it is

25 For information, please refer to the podcast 'Affaires en cours' on France Culture website: <https://tinyurl.com/PodcastFC-250621>

useful to return to how the project was initially formulated through the prism of environmental memory.

When the idea of a new research project on the Karel Kupka collection arose in late 2019 around a seed funding opportunity,[26] I began informal discussions with Michael Mungula, a senior artist and Gupapuyŋu ceremonial singer with whom I have worked closely for two decades. In 2009, he had already facilitated a series of consultation sessions around printed and digital copies of the Parisian Kupka collection I had brought back to the island for the first time (De Largy Healy 2010). Now part of the Milingimbi Crocodile Island rangers, responsible for the junior rangers' group, Mungula was interested in the cartographic premises of the 'Cartocoll project', which considered bark paintings as repositories of *deep* ecological knowledge about significant sites across Arnhem Land. The general idea was to travel to these places in small groups for *in situ* record and transmission of environmental wisdom through the paintings. Such a cultural and research activity would be envisaged as a long-term collaboration between the museum, the Art Centre, and the rangers through the Learning on Country programme (LoC programme).[27]

When Nicolas Garnier and I had the fortuitous opportunity six months later to turn this research project into an exhibition proposal, we were immediately caught in a different temporality to comply with the museum's production calendar. In addition to the exhibition synopsis, I was given only a few days to include an indicative list of works and a working title for our proposal. We made clear, however, that this pre-proposal, if approved by the museum, would need to be put together in close collaboration with the Art Centre in Milingimbi. Prior to entering a formal agreement with our partner institution several weeks later, I had to make two preliminary decisions: delineating the broad theme of the exhibition and making a pre-selection of bark paintings and sculptures from the Karel Kupka collection associated with this theme. I chose water (*gapu*) as the main theme and some 60 objects representing different freshwater, coastal, and maritime environments.

As I was pressed for a title, I had recourse to Michael Mungula's guidance again and, after a series of phone-calls over the following weeks, which also involved his older brother George Milaypuma, the name Gu̲larri was eventually suggested as suitable. *Gu̲larri* is the name of a riverine system which flows through the lands of several groups of the Yirritja moiety in central northeast Arnhem Land. As the freshwaters run to the sea, they continue their journey as saltwater, breaking on the shores of Milingimbi island (see **Figure 4**). This name was retained for its connecting properties: different lands and clan groups share ownership over portions of Gu̲larri, they sing Gu̲larri, they paint Gu̲larri: they are *Gu̲larri-mirr*, connected through the Gu̲larri waters. While each group detains its own sets of localised toponyms related to this water as it flows through various sites in their country, the generic name

26 Our submission to the Labex *Les Passés dans le Présent* responded to the first theme of the call, "Mémoire des milieux: traces, territoires, intraçables".

27 The LoC programme is a pilot 'two-way' educative initiative ran by local schools and ranger groups in Arnhem Land communities, see on their website: <https://www.nlc.org.au/building-the-bush/learning-on-country>

Gu̲larri is shared by all. This water also connects the mainland to the island of Milingimbi where the original artists lived and painted. Moreover, and not without consequence for a public museum context, Gu̲larri is easy to pronounce and rather catchy for a French audience. The title *Gu̲larri: Waterscapes from Northern Australia* was thus registered by the museum and inscribed as such in its exhibition program.

Figure 4. Gu̲larri story by George Milaypuma

Gapu Gularri, by George Milaypuma, translated by Salome Harris

Gu̱larri ŋayi Yirritja gapu. D̲amurruŋ' ŋayi, ga raypiny.
Gu̱larri are Yirritja waters. They are saltwater, and freshwater.

Yäna dhiyak Gu̱larriwa dhäwuw ga ŋorra.
This is a story about Gu̱larri.

Ga dhiyak ŋarrany marŋgi.
And this is what I know.

Ganba̱ṯjiŋur waṉḏin ga gapu Gu̱larri waṉḏin gaaaan, dhiyal ŋayi bunan Miliway.
The Gu̱larri waters travelled all the way from Ganba̱ltji to Miliway.

Ga wiripu dhuwali bäpurru Gu̱larrimirr mala Bangi dhuwal Bariŋur,
And other Gu̱larri clans are Bangi at Bariŋur,

ga Guyamirrilil dhuwal Warrawurrŋur
and Guyamirrilil at Warrawurrŋur

ga ŋunha bala nhawiŋur Ganalbiŋu mala,
and over there, the Ganalbiŋu people

bili gapu Gu̱larri waṉḏin ŋula̱ŋur Ganalbiŋu
because the water ran from Ganalbiŋu [country]

ga dju̱ḵthurr ŋayi Ritharrŋuwal,
and passed through Ritharrŋu [country]

ga djutjtjutj bala ŋayi waṉḏiny Gu̱larriny
and the Gu̱larri kept going

ga ŋayathaŋal ŋayi wäŋa Bariŋur Bandji Ṉawurrmirri.
and reached the place Bariŋur Bandji Ṉawurrmirri.

Ga dhiyal ŋayi ga ŋunhili ŋayi Bandji yurrupthurrnha bala Mururrku gapu ŋayi ŋupar.
And here it travelled down from Bandji to Mururrku (Miliway), following the songline.

Ga dhiyalidhi ŋayi gapu dhawaṯthurr Mururrku Binyinmarra,
Here the water comes out, at Mururrku Binyinmarra,

Wobulukarra yolŋu L̲aŋarraŋur. Wobulkarra gapu ŋunhi.
[of] the Wobulkarra people at L̲aŋarra. It is Wobulkarra water there.

Ga ŋunhi Gu̱larri ŋayi dhuwalidhi nhawikala Mururrku walalaŋgu warrpam'ku dhuwali Gu̱larrimirri mala walalaŋ Gu̱larrimirriw malawdja.
And the Gu̱larri there at Mururrku is everyone's water, all the Gu̱larri people – the people who belong to Gu̱larri.

Dhiyali ŋayi rrambaŋiny waṉḏin gapu ga ḏamurruṉdhinan.
The waters run together there and become salty.

Bala ŋayi ḏamurruŋ' dhawaṯthurrdja, ḏamurruŋnha ŋayi.
Then it flows out [into the sea] as saltwater.

Bili walalanydja ŋunhi ga walalaŋ raypinybuy Gu̱larri.
Because their Gu̱larri is freshwater.

Dhuwali ŋunhi Gu̱larripuy dhäwu dhuwalaŋuwuy.
That's the Gu̱larri story from here [from this side].

Several months after the official collaboration had started, though, a change was requested by the Art Centre in Milingimbi as the chosen title was deemed 'too weak' by several people of authority in the community. Joe Dhämanydji recorded a short video (see **Figure 5**) statement in English to explain his decision to expand the original title to *Gapu Guḻarri Yothu Yindi*. Filmed in the Art Centre office, the video starts with the bold assertion "So this exhibition will be titled *Gapu yothu yindi*", before pursuing, "So *yothu yindi* means like the two waters is divided into two, Dhuwa *gapu* or Yirritja, saltwater or freshwater, it's what we call mother and child". The addition of the concept of *yothu yindi*, glossed in English as mother and child, was regarded as fundamental to encompass the Dhuwa component of Yolŋu society which would have been left out if only the Yirritja name Guḻarri had been retained. This augmented title was thought to better resonate with the subject matters of the works selected which concerned both moieties and the relationships between them. Despite the late change in terms of museum production, the revised title was successfully included on all the as-yet unpublished exhibition material, either in its full form or as a subtitle.

Figure 5. Joe Dhämanydji video screen capture

The importance of incorporating Yolŋu worldviews into the actual design of the exhibition was brought to bear during another defining exchange with Dhämanydji some weeks later, when we received by email the first 'text' from the Art Centre. This written document, presented as Dhämanydji's initial thoughts about water, began as follows:

> We have two kinds of water, Dhuwa, and Yirritja, freshwater and saltwater, in every place. There are two kinds of saltwater, Dhuwa and Yirritja, and two kinds of freshwater, Dhuwa and Yirritja. In Dhuwa places, two bodies of saltwater might relate as mother-child. In this way, Dhuwa and Yirritja waters meet as mother-child. Waters can relate as grandparent-grandchild as well. Or you might see mother-child waters (Dhämanydji 2020).

Recorded in the Djambarrpuyŋu dialect, transcribed, and translated into English by the Art Centre linguist, this declaration fundamentally shaped the exhibition as we came to conceive it.[28] It made clear that the representation of the moiety system, Dhuwa and Yirritja, and of the relationships between the clans and various bodies of water were at the centre of Yolŋu curatorial concerns. The organisation of the artworks in sets further reinforced this concept of social relatedness: rather than grouping the works according to the different aquatic environments to which they related, an option that would have been too lengthy in view of the mounting time pressure, the consulted group of senior Yolŋu decided to group the works by clans. This was considered an efficient way to foster public understanding of the complex relationships that are represented in different bodies of water: relationships between animals, plants and other beings within a specific environment, relationships between an individual and different types of water, and relationships of clans to various aquatic territories.

As the exhibition project evolved, discussions took place during regular Zoom meetings and near daily email exchanges between the Museum teams, myself, and the Art centre workers in the community. The collaboration took the form of a co-curation, a '*co-commissariat*' in French, in the truest sense, involving much more than a distant validation of choices and decisions made in Paris. When our co-curators were not available, for personal or ceremonial reasons, our questions and textual documents were relayed by the Art Centre for consideration, amendment, and approval. Nicolas Garnier and I only wrote three panel texts to contextualise the exhibition, on three topics: the making of the exhibition, the history of the Milingimbi art movement, and the work of Karel Kupka in the region. All the remaining texts were produced by the Art Centre, reflecting different voices in the community. The experience that the Milingimbi art workers have developed over the past decade in working with museum collections shaped the process, their input extending from the selection of works to the scenography with the subgroupings of paintings in display cases and the dual colour scheme used throughout the exhibition space, red for the Dhuwa moiety, yellow for the Yirritja moiety (**see Figure 6**). All the works were renamed in Yolŋu-matha and where possible, attributed to individual artists.

The stories which were recorded in Milingimbi offered a rare insight into the *spiralling depth* of these historical paintings. They were ancestral narratives as well as assertions of authority over the designs and associated knowledge. They poetically conveyed the ways in which individual Yolŋu relate to the waterscapes of their territories, from maritime spaces and open sea to coastal wetlands, intertidal mangrove areas, and freshwater ecosystems. Through the testimonies from the descendants of the artists, the exhibition brought to the fore the ecological relationality of these aquatic environments where human and non-human activities have coexisted for thousands of years. The paintings revealed these waterscapes as a concept grounded in Yolŋu experience of kinship.

28 As one of the reviewers noted, Australian Indigenous art centres are themselves premised on ideas of collaboration. The linguist Salome Harris carried out invaluable work with the descendants of the artists whose paintings were selected, enabling the public to read the stories as formulated by the speakers. I used the original versions, as well as her expert English translations, to create the French versions of the texts.

As we sought to translate complex cultural concepts without impoverishing Yolŋu thought, the Yolŋu voice remained privileged in the exhibition itinerary, through the use of concepts expressed in Yolŋu-matha throughout. These Yolŋu words and concepts, marked by an asterisk whenever they appeared in text, were defined, and interpreted in a glossary made available to the visitors who were thereby literally invited to immerse themselves in the Yolŋu aquatic imaginary. Our attempt to translate the *depth* of these connections and their spiritual value without interfering in the narratives resulted in a fairly demanding exhibition, with a certain degree of opacity which we deliberately maintained and valued.

Figure 6. Entrance to the Gul̲arri Exhibition

(Courtesy of Milingimbi Art & Culture Centre & Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac)

Conclusion

While Yolŋu bark paintings are not religious objects in the more canonic senses, neither as ritual artefacts nor as objects of devotion, they are of undeniable religious significance to the descendants of their makers. Beyond the ethical ethos that has concerned Australian museums within their particular post-colonial context, the attention/respect given to Aboriginal historical collections in exhibitions through display, discourse and Indigenous interventions nowadays plays a considerable part in conveying more broadly the enduring beauty of Yolŋu religious sentiment and experience. With the renewed sense of wonder occasioned through exhibition collaborations by a finer understanding of the paintings and of their entanglements in past and present social and religious dynamics, museum mediation practices can turn, decisively, into a moral responsibility. Such responsibility requires a

certain number of practical adjustments to be made, on a case-by-case basis, to accommodate the introduction of spiritual values into the secular museum space. In the making of the *Guḻarri gapu yothu yindi* exhibition, these museum adjustments were particularly reflected by the way in which, in several potentially critical instances (delays in labelling for ceremonial reasons, late change of the 'poster' painting to satisfy local socio-ritual dynamics, last minute revision of the exhibition title to refer specifically to both moieties), the Yolŋu principle of *slow time* came to bear on the standard production calendar.

The recent appointment as head of the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac of Emmanuel Kasarhérou, the former director of the Centre Culturel Tjibaou in New Caledonia and expert on Pacific collections and communities, has revitalised the much criticised 'dialogic' motto of this Parisian institution: "*Là où dialoguent les cultures*". Kasarhérou's commitment to the inclusion of multiple voices within the museum space and to a vision of heritage "as living material, invested and re-invested continuously, and on which museum professionals can no longer claim a form of exclusivity" (Kasarhérou 2021) was echoed in the way the museum staff entered and responded to the *Guḻarri gapu yothu yindi* collaboration as it was set up by the curatorial team.

The experimental edge of the exhibition space, the Atelier Martine Aublet, importantly has allowed for concessions to be made in terms of public mediation: foregoing the conventional discourse on the Aboriginal Dreamtime and its symbols, the space made it possible to render the complex processes of cultural representation and linguistic translation through concerted curatorial choices. Rather than being restrictive, the *mise en scène* of these connections enables the public to perceive the objects differently, within the broader 'religious' frame in which they continue to exist. Through the chosen display of paintings and their stories expressed in Yolŋu terms, conveying unique combinations of seasonal and place-bound observations, of hunting, gathering, and fishing wisdom with historical and ancestral narratives, the viewers were also invited to expand their understanding of the 'religious' to encompass the *deep* relational ecology that binds humans and other-than-humans in these saltwater and freshwater environments.

Museum collaborations, I believe, when entered into respectfully, can be seen as an alternative form of restitution. Without entering into a highly charged political debate here –especially with regards to the recent upheaval in the French museum world which followed President Macron's now famous University of Ouagadougou's declaration in 2017 on the repatriation of African cultural heritage to France's former colonies[29]– I would argue that collaborations such as the co-curatorship experiment described in this paper lead to the recognition of continuing Indigenous authority over their collections. As Yolŋu-led two-way processes, these processes enrich the museums as much if not even more than they do the communities by restoring the full significance to the collections and myriad possibilities for their display, interpretation, and reception. In this sense, this approach activates the "new relational ethics" (Sarr & Savoy 2018) that are called for today in post-colonial museum contexts.

29 The "Ouagadougou speech", 28 November 2017 can be read on: <https://tinyurl.com/discoursMacron>.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Ksenia Pimenova and Pierre Petit for the opportunity to participate in the international workshop "Religious heritage in public museums: Post-colonial and post-socialist perspectives" held online by the University of Brussels (ULB) from 5-6 May 2021. Despite the general fatigue that many participants were experiencing by then in relation to virtually hosted events, the hosts successfully created a collegial, lively, and most stimulating intellectual forum. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their generous comments.

In addition to the leading roles played by my mukul bäpa *(paternal aunt) and my* ŋäpipi *(uterine uncle), the exhibition would not have been possible without the dedication and professionalism of Rosita Holmes, Art Centre manager, Salome Harris, Art Centre linguist, Philippa Jahn, Collections manager, and Max Moon, who took up this latter role in 2021. I also acknowledge Leon Milmurru, Matthew Djipurrtjun, Paul Gotjirri, and Susan Balbunga who led the exhibition's experimental film-making program. I am most grateful to my two* dhuways*, Michael Mungula and George Milaypuma, two senior artists and ceremonial leaders who offered preliminary counsel around the exhibition proposal. The musée du quai Branly teams agreed to engage in this collaboration on what were mostly Yolŋu terms, and I thank Nicolas Garnier in particular for his unwavering commitment to this co-curatorship at all stages of its development. This article reflects my personal views and considerations on this collective initiative.*

Bibliographical references

Angeles, Shaun, 2016. "This beautiful body of knowledge at the Strehlow Centre," *Alice Springs News Online* 23 (8), ‹https://tinyurl.com/Alicesprings-Shaun2016›

Barwick, Linda, Jennifer Green & Petronella Vaarzon-Morel (eds), 2020. *Archival returns: Central Australia and beyond*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Berndt, Ronald, 1951. *Kunapipi*. Melbourne: Cheshire.

Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre (ed.), 2014. *Saltwater. Yirrkala bark paintings of sea country: The recognition of Indigenous sea rights*. Neutral Bay, NSW: Jennifer Isaacs Pub.

Byrne, Sarah, Anne Clarke, Rodney Harrison & Robin Torrence (eds), 2011. *Unpacking the collection: Networks of material and social agency in the museum*. New York: Springer.

Carty, John, 2015. "Yiwarra Kuju, ou comment l'espace a été transformé en lieu au National Museum of Australia," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 38 (3), pp. 207–230.

Caruana, Wally & Nigel Lendon, 1997. *The painters of the Wagilag sisters story, 1937-1997*. Canberra: National Gallery of Australia.

Colombo Dougoud, Roberta, 2021. "Anciennes collections, nouvelles collaborations au MEG. Recherche sur la provenance de deux crânes peints de Milingimbi (Australie)," *in* Thomas Beaufils & Chang Ming Peng (eds), *Histoire d'objets extra-européens : collecte, appropriation, médiation*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Publications de l'IRHiS. [Online], ‹https://books.openedition.org/irhis/6544›.

Coote, Jeremy & Anthony Shelton (eds), 1992. *Anthropology, art, and aesthetics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Corn, Aaron & Joseph Gumbula, 2006. "Rom and the academy re-positioned. Binary models in Yolngu intellectual traditions and their application to wider inter-cultural dialogues," *in*

Lynette Russell (ed.), *Boundary writing. An exploration of race, culture and gender binaries in contemporary Australia*, pp. 170–197. Honolulu: The University of Hawai'i Press.

Corn, Aaron, Jessica De Largy Healy & Lyndon Ormond-Parker (eds), 2019. Special issue: A reflection of the day: Essays in honour of Joseph Neparrŋa Gumbula, *Preservation, digital technology & culture* 47 (3-4). Berlin: De Gruyter Publishing.

Council of Australian Museums Associations, 1993. *Previous possessions, new obligations: Policies for museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Melbourne: The Council Press.

De Largy Healy, Jessica, 2007. "'Yolngu wunguli': Au-delà de l'image. L'esprit et la projection ancestrale dans l'art contemporain yolngu," *in* Lucienne Strivay & Géraldine Le Roux (eds), *La revanche des genres. Art contemporain australien*, pp. 64–79. Paris: Aïnu production.

De Largy Healy, Jessica, 2010. "Karel Kupka et les maîtres-peintres de la Terre d'Arnhem. La biographie d'une collection d'art aborigène," *Gradhiva* 12, pp. 198–217.

De Largy Healy, Jessica, 2011a. "Pour une anthropologie de la restitution. Archives culturelles et transmissions des savoirs en Australie", *Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie* 24, pp. 43–63.

De Largy Healy, Jessica, 2011b. "'Murayana va à Garma cette année !' Cérémonies publiques et rituels contemporains du nord-est de la Terre d'Arnhem, Australie," *Journal de la société des océanistes* 132 (1), pp. 123–134.

De Largy Healy, Jessica, 2012. "La restitution des savoirs et ses enjeux locaux : les droits à l'image dans le nord de l'Australie," *in* Stéphane Pessina Dassonville (ed.), *Le statut des peuples autochtones. A la croisée des savoirs*, pp. 307–325. Paris : Karthala.

De Largy Healy, Jessica, 2017 "Retours sur images. Nouveaux média et transmission du secret dans les rituels du nord de l'Australie," *ethnographiques.org,* 33 [online], ‹https://www.ethnographiques.org/2016/De-Largy-Healy›.

De Largy Healy, Jessica, 2022a. "Archives numériques aborigènes, parenté et création. De la restitution à la réappropriation relationnelle des savoirs en Terre d'Arnhem (Australie)," *Ateliers d'anthropologie* 51, [online], ‹https://doi.org/10.4000/ateliers.15632›.

De Largy Healy, Jessica, 2022b. "Yolŋu pathways to value creation in museum and archival collections. The work and journey of Joseph Gumbula," *in* Howard Morphy & Robyn McKenzie (eds), *Museums, societies and the creation of value*, pp. 240–259. London: Routledge.

Derlon, Brigitte & Monique Jeudy-Ballini, 2001. "Le culte muséal de l'objet sacré, " *Gradhiva* 30-31, pp. 203–212.

Derlon, Brigitte & Monique Jeudy-Ballini, 2015. "Les musées aux prises avec le sacré des autres," *Raison présente* 195 (3), pp. 83–90.

Descola, Philippe, 2021. *Les formes du visible*. Paris : Seuil.

Fijn, Natasha, 2014. "Sugarbag Dreaming: The significance of bees to Yolngu in Arnhem Land, Australia," *Humanimalia* 6 (1), pp. 41–61.

Flood, Josephine, 1983. *Archaeology of the dreamtime: The story of Aboriginal Australia and its people*. Sydney & London: Collins.

Garrawura, Nalmakarra, 2021. "Interview", *News First – The French Community*, SBS NITV podcast series, [online], ‹https://tinyurl.com/Garrawura2021›.

Gay'wu group of women, 2019. *Songspirals. Sharing women's wisdom of country through songlines*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin

Gibson, Jason, 2020a. *Ceremony men: Making ethnography and the return of the Strehlow collection*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Gibson, Jason, 2020b. "Returning recordings of songs that persist: The Anmatyerr traditions of akiw and anmanty," *in* Linda Barwick, Jennifer Green & Petronella Vaarzon-Morel (eds), *Archival returns: Central Australia and beyond*, pp. 65-89. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Gilchrist, Steven, 2021. "Indigenous curation now and into the future," *in* Rebecca Conway (ed.) *Djalkiri: Yolŋu art, collaborations and collections*, pp. 22–29. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Glowczewski, Barbara & Jessica De Largy Healy, 2005. *Pistes de rêves. Voyage en terres aborigènes*. Paris : éditions du Chêne.

Griffiths, Billy, 2018. *Deep time dreaming. Uncovering ancient Australia*. Melbourne: Black Inc.

Gumbula, Joseph, 2010. "'Miny'tji waŋawuy Ŋarakawuy'. Paintings are the backbone of the land and sea," *in* Roberta Colombo Dougoud & Barbara Müller (eds), *Dream traces. Australian Aboriginal bark paintings*, pp. 9–11. Geneva: Infolio/MEG.

Hamby, Louise & Lindy Allen (eds), 2016. *Makarrata: Bringing the past into the future, 11–14 August 2016, Milingimbi*. Canberra: ANU, Museum Victoria & East Arnhem Regional Council.

Hamby, Louise & Lindy Allen (eds), 2020. *The Milingimbi Makarrata: Resolution, signing, outcomes*. Canberra: Australian National University & Museum Victoria.

Hamby, Louise & Joseph Gumbula, 2015. "Development of collecting at the Milingimbi mission," *in* Peter Toner (ed.), S*trings of connectedness: Essays in honour of Ian Keen*, pp. 187–214. Canberra: ANU Press.

Harrison, Rodney, 2013. "Reassembling ethnographic museum collections," *in* Rodney Harrison, Sarah Byrne & Anne Clarke (eds), *Reassembling the collection: Ethnographic museums and indigenous agency*, pp. 3–35. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press.

Harrison, Rodney, Sarah Byrne &Anne Clarke (eds), 2013. *Reassembling the collection: Ethnographic museums and indigenous agency*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press.

Hicks, Dan, 2020. *The brutish museums. The Benin bronzes, colonial violence, and cultural restitution*. London: Pluto Press.

Janke, Terri, Sarah Grant, Gabriela Dounis & Amity Raymont, 2018. *First peoples: A roadmap for enhancing indigenous engagement in museums and galleries: Indigenous roadmap*. Canberra: Warralang Projects/ Australian Museums and Galleries Association, ‹https://tinyurl.com/roadmap2018›.

Kasarhérou, Emmanuel, 2021. "Avant-propos", *Rapport d'activités 2021: Arts et civilisations d'Afrique, d'Asie, d'Océanie, et des Amériques*, pp. 4–5. Paris : Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac. Available online, ‹https://tinyurl.com/RA2021MQBJC›.

Kaufmann, Christian, 2005. "Aboriginal art from Arnhem Land: Why in Basel?", *in* Christian Kaufmann (ed.), *'Rarrk'. John Mawurndjul. Journey through time in Northern Australia*, pp. 222–226. Basel: Schwabe.

Kaufmann, Christian & Richard McMillan, 2009. "From bark to art: Karel Kupka between Arnhem Land and Basel," *in* Christian Kaufmann & Claus Volkenandt (eds), *John Mawurndjul: Between indigenous Australia and Europe*, pp. 137–159. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Keen, Ian 1994. *Knowledge and secrecy in an aboriginal religion. Yolngu of Northeast Arnhem Land*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kupka, Karel, 1957. "Australian aboriginal bark paintings," *Oceania* 27, pp. 266–267.

Kupka, Karel, 1962. *Un art à l'état brut: peintures et sculptures des Aborigènes d'Australie*. Lausanne: la Guilde du Livre & Editions Clairefontaine.

Kupka, Karel, 1964. "Dainganngan, artiste de la Terre d'Arnhem," *Journal de la société des Océanistes* 20, pp. 45–55.

Kupka, Karel, 1972. *Peintres aborigènes d'Australie*. Paris: Publications de la Société des Océanistes.

Marawili, Djambawa, 2021. "Yolŋu Foreword. We are the archaeologists and the anthropologists," *in* Rebecca Conway (ed.), *Djalkiri: Yolŋu art, collaborations and collections*, pp. 18–19. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Marika, Raymattja, 2008. "Totems and clan design," *in* Djon Mundine & Munro Keith (eds), *They are meditating. Bark paintings from the MCA's Arnott's collection*, p. 7. Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art.

McGrath, Ann & Mary Anne Jebb (eds), 2015. *Long history, deep time. Deepening histories of place*. Canberra: ANU press.

McMillan, Richard, 2005. "Karel Kupka in Australia: Artist, collector, writer, anthropologist," *in* Christian Kaufmann (ed.), *'Rarrk'. John Mawurndjul— Journey through time in Northern Australia*, pp. 193–197. Basel: Schwabe.

Morphy, Howard, 1991. *Ancestral connections: Art and an aboriginal system of knowledge*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Morphy, Howard, 1996. "Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category," *in* Tim Ingold (ed.), *Key debates in anthropology*, pp. 255–260. London & New York: Routledge.

Morphy, Howard, 2006. "Sites of persuasion: Yingapungapu at the National Museum of Australia," *in* Ivan Karp, Corinne Kratz, Lynn Szwaja & Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (eds), *Museum frictions. Public cultures/global transformations*, pp. 469–499. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Morphy, Howard, 2007. *Becoming art: Exploring cross-cultural categories*. Oxford & New York: Berg.

Mundine, Djon (ed.), 1996. *The native born. Objects and representations from Ramingining*. Sydney: Museum of contemporary art.

Myers, Fred, 1998. "Question de regard. Les expositions d'art aborigène australien en France", *Terrain* 30, pp. 95–111.

Myers, Fred, 2002. *Painting culture: The making of an Aboriginal high art*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Myers, Fred, 2014. "Paintings, publics, and protocols: The early paintings from Papunya," *Les actes de colloques du musée du quai Branly* 4, [Online], ‹https://doi.org/10.4000/actesbranly.524›

Paine, Crispin, 2013. *Religious objects in museums: Private lives and public duties*. London & New York: Berg Publishers.

Peers, Laura & Alison Brown (eds), 2003. *Museums and source communities. A Routledge reader*. London: Routledge.

Pickering, Michael, 2019. "'Call me!' Museums liaising with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the 21st century," Unpublished paper.

Rose, Deborah, 2005. "An Indigenous philosophical ecology: Situating the human," *The Australian journal of anthropology* 16 (3), pp. 294–305.

Sarr, Felwine & Bénédicte Savoy, 2018. *Restituer le patrimoine africain: vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle*. Paris: Seuil.

Sutton, Peter (ed.) 1989. *Dreamings. The art of Aboriginal Australia*. New York: Viking.

Tapsell, Paul, 2003. "Afterword. Beyond the frame," *in* Laura Peers & Alison Brown (eds), *Museums and source communities. A Routledge reader*, pp. 242–273. London: Routledge.

Thomas, Nicolas, 1991. *Entangled objects: Exchange, material culture, and colonialism in the Pacific*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Voirol, Beatrice, 2019. "Decolonization in the field? Basel – Milingimbi back and forth" *Tsantsa* 24, pp. 48–57.

Wanambi, Wukun & Ishmael Marika, 2016. "The Mulka Project", *Artlink* 36 (2), pp. 82–84.

Widlok, Thomas, 2013. "Sharing: Allowing others to take what is valued," *HAU: Journal of ethnographic theory* 3 (2), pp. 11–31.

Williams, Nancy, 1986. *The Yolngu and their Land: A system of land tenure and the fight for its recognition*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

Wolfe, Patrick, 1991. "On being woken up: The dreamtime in anthropology and in Australian settler culture" *Comparative studies in society and history* 33 (2), pp. 197–224.