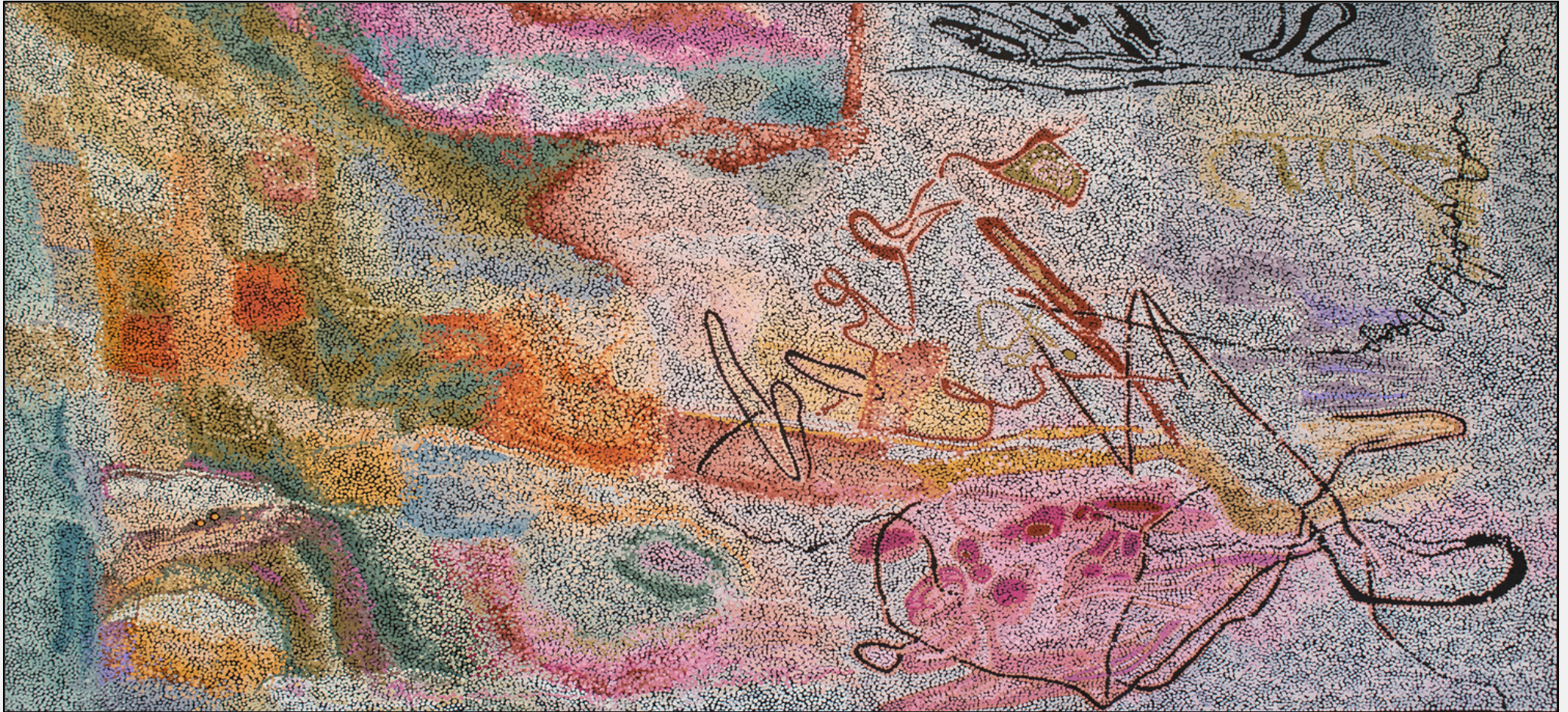


Helen McCarthy Tyalmuty

GROUNDED + GROWING IN COUNTRY

2026



WWW.KATEOWENGALLERY.COM



WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE
TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND THEIR
CUSTODIANSHIP OF THE LANDS ON WHICH
THIS COLLABORATION ORIGINATED.

We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants,
who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.





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FOREWORD

Following the glittering success of her recent Alice Art Prize win, we are thrilled to celebrate Helen McCarthy Tyalmuty with this major solo exhibition. Over a distinguished career spanning more than three decades, Helen has received countless accolades, yet she has remained constantly grounded and growing - both in her art and in her commitment to family, Country, and culture.

This exhibition brings together significant recent works alongside pieces connected to major prizes and milestones, offering a vivid insight into an artist whose practice is shaped by Ancestral stories, lived experience, and deep intuition. Through her distinctive visual language, Helen carries forward the histories of her people while inviting each viewer to connect with the landscapes, narratives, and memories of her homeland, Bulgul.

We invite you to explore this latest body of work and experience the rich tapestry of stories, culture, and connection that continues to define Helen's extraordinary journey as an artist.

COUNTRY: BULGUL, NT

Bulgul is a small coastal community on the Wagait Reserve, southwest of Darwin, rich in Wadjigan culture. Life remains closely tied to traditional practices - hunting, fishing, crabbing, and gathering - while the land holds childhood memories, cultural teachings, and stories of resilience.

For Helen, Bulgul is far more than a place of origin; it is a living presence within her work. The coastline, creeks, and bushland carry generations of family stories. Stories of survival, movement across Country, ceremonies, and life lived in deep connection with the land. Memories passed down through Aunties and Elders remain central to her practice, preserving histories that are both deeply personal and culturally significant. Through bold colour, expressive brushwork, and layered patterning, Helen transforms these stories of family, Country, and continuity into powerful contemporary paintings that honour the enduring spirit of Bulgul.



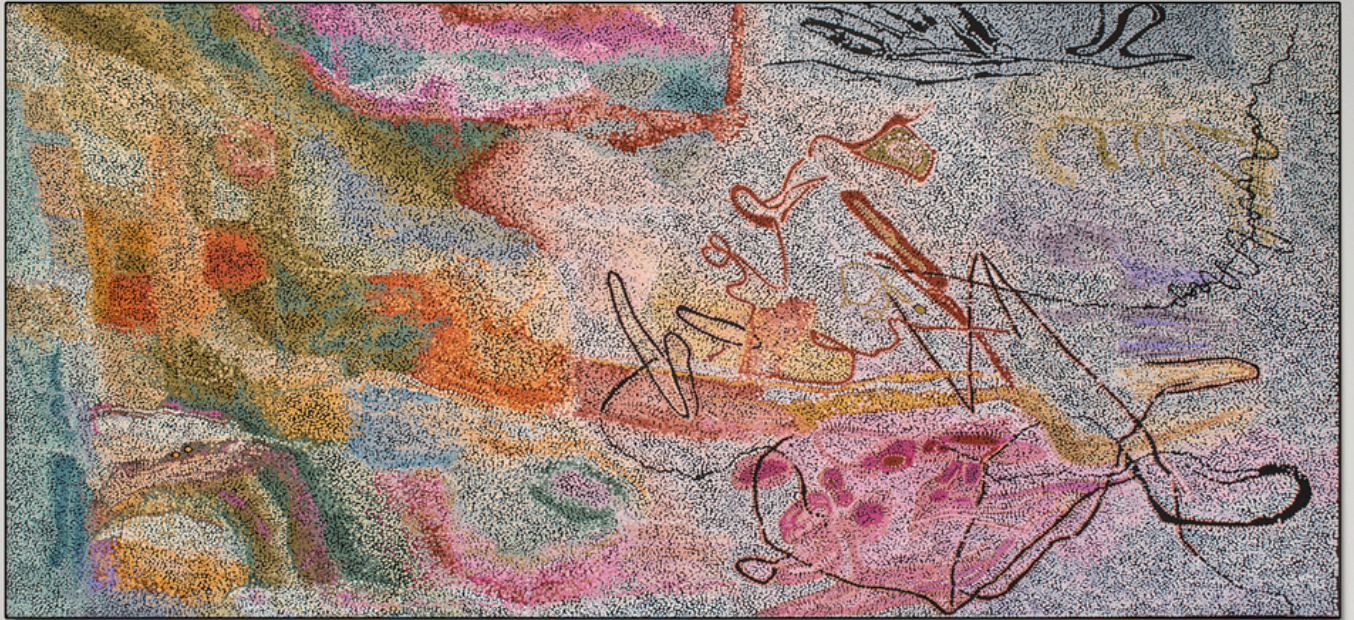
Bush Tracks explores the signs written into Country - tracks that lead to food, water, or danger.

When you're hunting, you look for clues in the land: bent grass, disturbed soil, turtle marks in the mud. These subtle signs guide you. But the same tracks can also warn you — of snakes, wild animals, or unsafe ground.

This painting maps those moments of reading the land, of knowing when to follow and when to turn back. It's a tribute to the old ways of seeing, where knowledge, survival, and deep respect for Country go hand in hand.

Bush Tracks (2024)
92 x 182cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$19,995
HMCG0324

Finalist – Calleen Art Award 2025





At the start of the Dry, we care for
Country by performing Burn Offs.

When termite mounds are burned,
we gather bush honey, a simpler task
than collecting from trees, no axes
needed. The men also collect wax
from inside the mounds, used around
didgeridoo mouthpieces.

The white in the painting represents
the ash from the Dry, while the
orange symbolizes the internal
patterns of the mounds, where both
honey and wax are found.

Funggli (2024)
180 x 90cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$22,000
HMCG0320

Finalist – Muswellbrook Art Prize 2025



Funggli - Pattern of Bush Honey (2025)

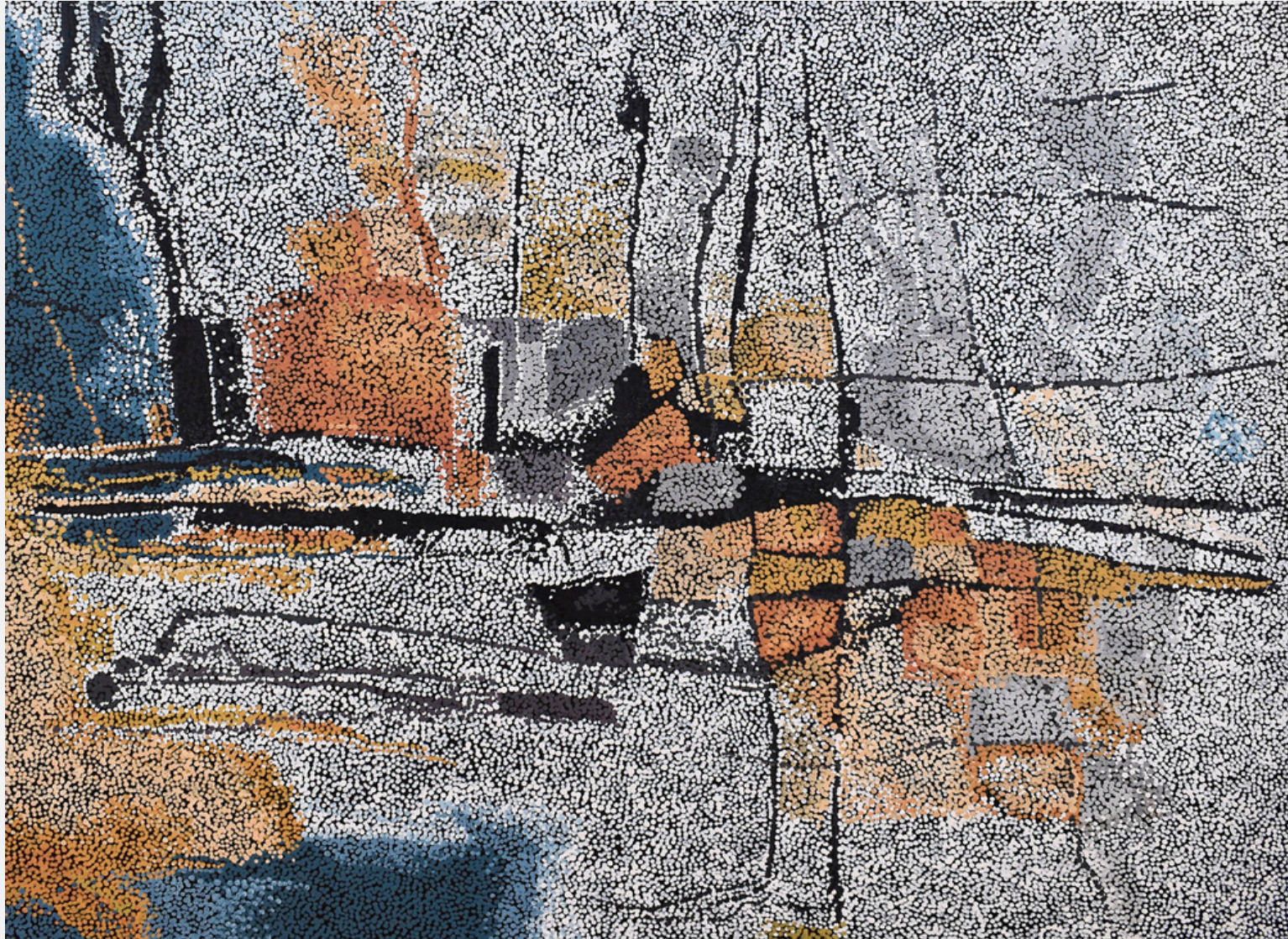
120 x 150cm Acrylic on Belgian Linen

\$19,995

HMCG0354



Bush Honey (2025)
92 x 212cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$24,995
HMCG0369



Funggli - Pattern of Bush Honey (2025)

90 x 120cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen

\$12,500

HMCG0360



Last Canoe (2025)
90 x 178cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$19,995
HMCG0356

Tyemeny Liman was born at Mandjimamany in 1916. He was the senior lawman of the Wadjigan tribe. His country was Bulgul, which is on the coastal area south west of Darwin, towards the Daly River mouth.

Grandpa Harry was the best canoe maker in his country. He made canoes out of kapok trees. He and his male relatives would cut down the trunk of a kapok tree, roll it down the beach and into the sea to figure out which side of the tree floated the best. He then dug out the other side constantly rolling back into the sea to make sure it floated and was stable.

My nana traveled with Tyemeny and their other relatives by walking and paddling around the coast. They moved a lot depending on ceremonies they attended, the weather and where different types of food was readily available to hunt and gather.

Tyemeny Liman heard about Aboriginal children starting school and how the importance of education would help his children in the future pathways. He told my nana the children were to start going to school at Delissaville and they were not going to travel around anymore.

One day he took his children for a ride in the canoe, he paddled right back to Banakula but he didn't tell them that that was going to be their last trip.

They arrived back at Delissaville where my nana was waiting happily on the beach. Tyemeny dropped his children off and walked the canoe into the sea.

He stood chest deep, gave the canoe a nudge and set it free. A tear fell as his children watched it fade away across the white rushes. My nana standing tall wailed as she struggled to grip her younger baby (I'm sure her heart sank into the sand beneath her feet) as they both slowly crouched to the ground.

Grandpa Harry and Nana have passed on but I'm sure Tyemeny found the last canoe he made and now on a ride with Nana that lasts forever.

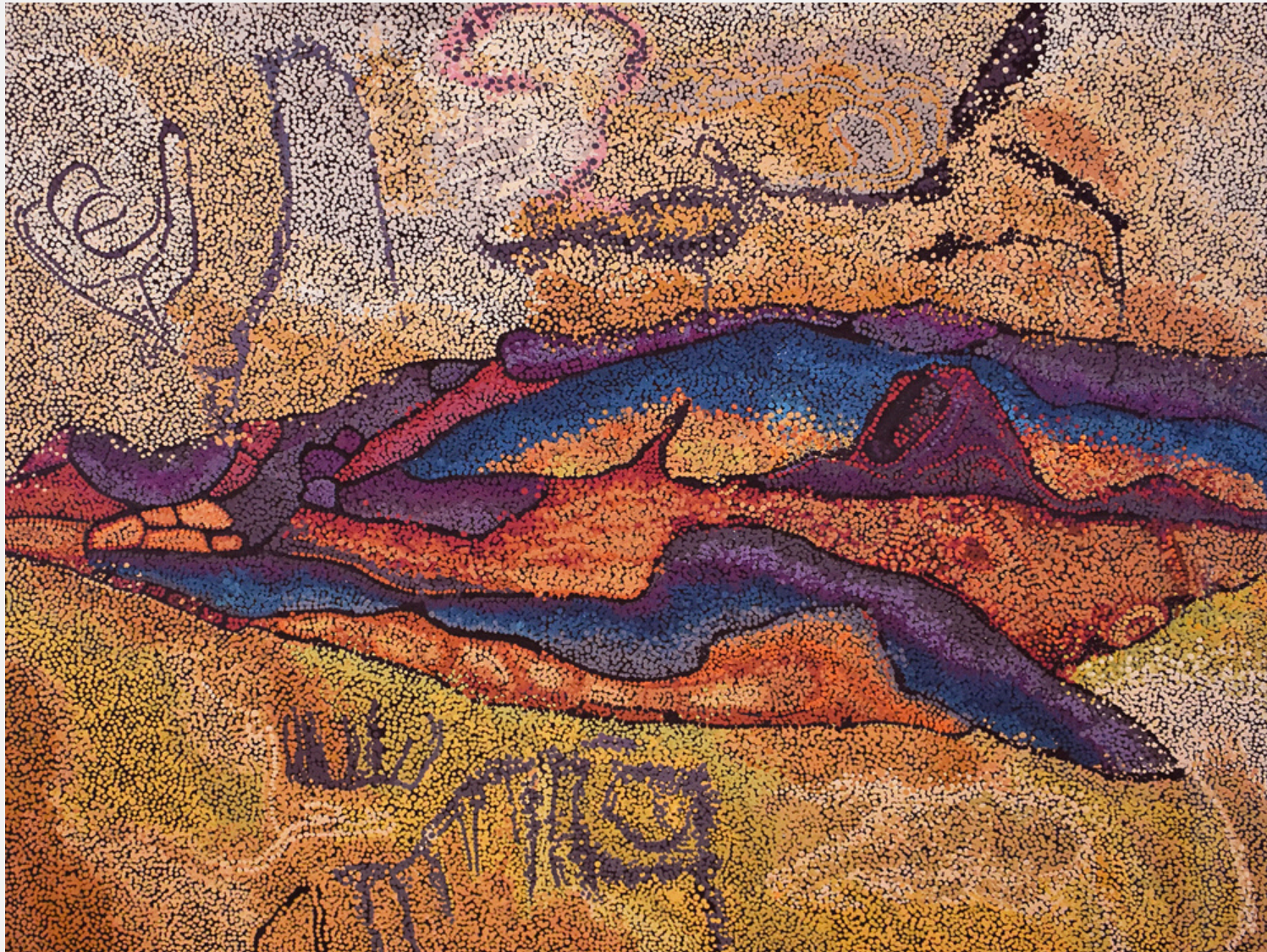


Tyemeny Liman's Wutinggi (Grandpa Harry's Canoe) 2023

119 x 187cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen

\$24,995

HMCG0278



Rotten Canoes (2025)

90 x 120cm Acrylic on Belgian Linen

\$3,995

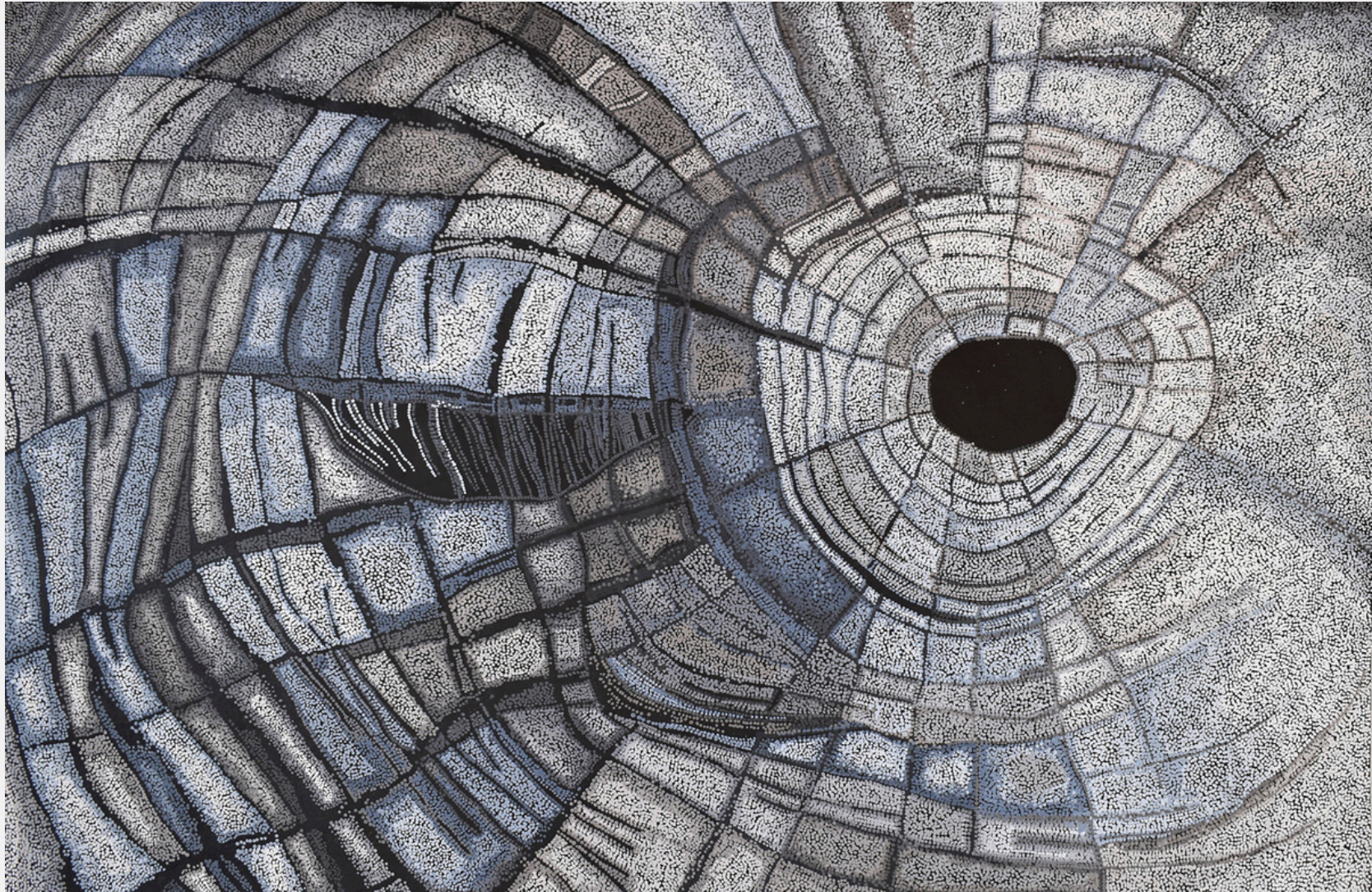
HMCG0359

This painting is of a salt plain, a natural part of my Country. In the dry season, when the water doesn't reach this far, the salt builds up, killing the trees. Nothing can grow there, but while the land appears lifeless, the salt itself is a gift, used for preserving food.

As a Wadjigan woman, I paint these landscapes to share their beauty and resilience - the way we survive, adapt, and stay connected to Country.

Salt Plains (2024)
91 x 184cm, Acrylic on Belgain Linen
\$22,000
HMCG0323



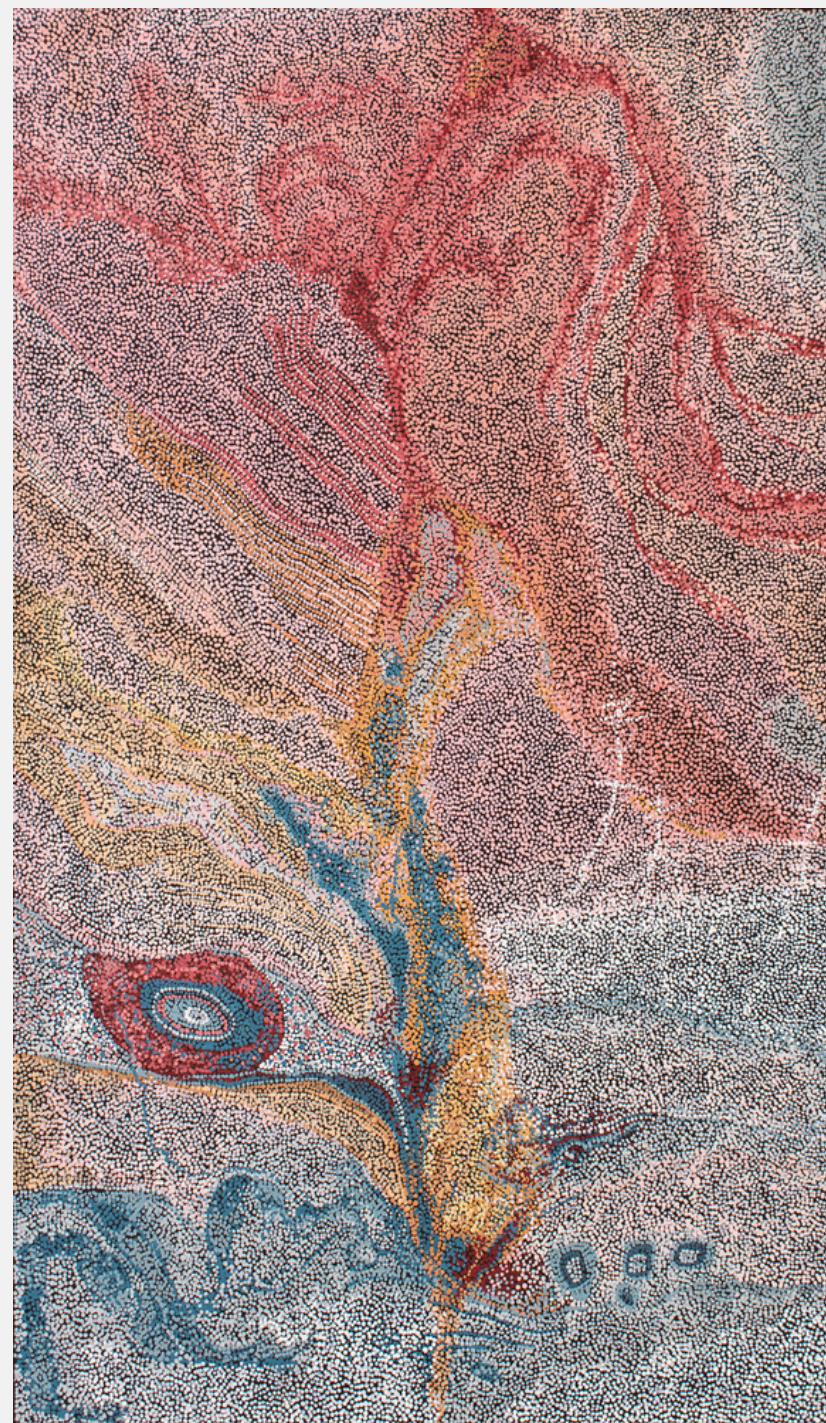


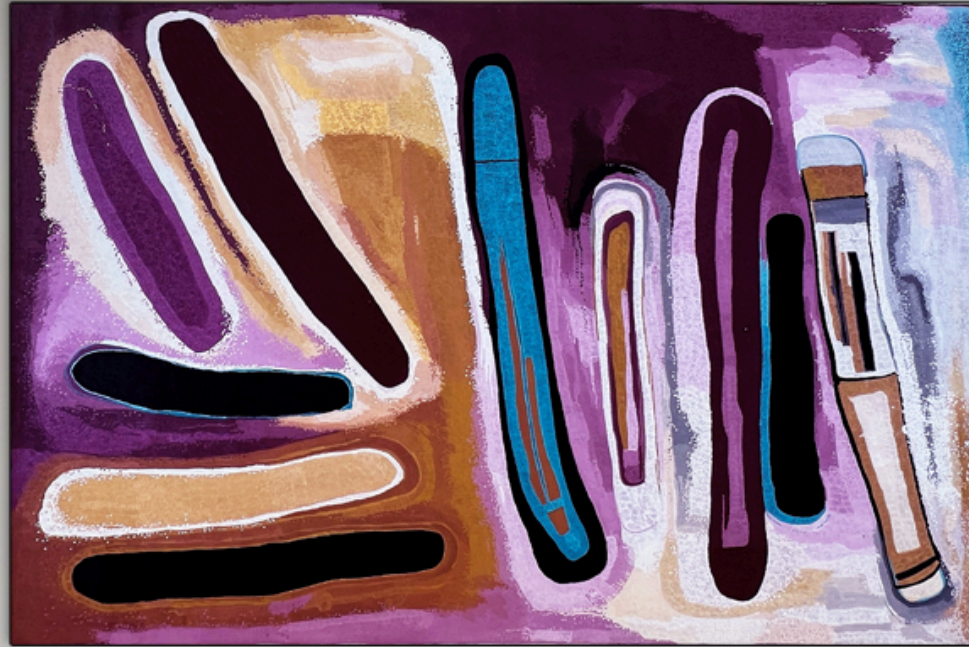
Stories from the Salt Water (2025)
120 x 180cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$24,995
HMCG0346

This painting is my response to a place I know is important – though its story is not mine to tell. In Aboriginal culture, some places are known only to men, others only to women. Sacred Sites. Secret Places. While I may know the general area where some of these sites lie, I do not hold the right to know their stories.

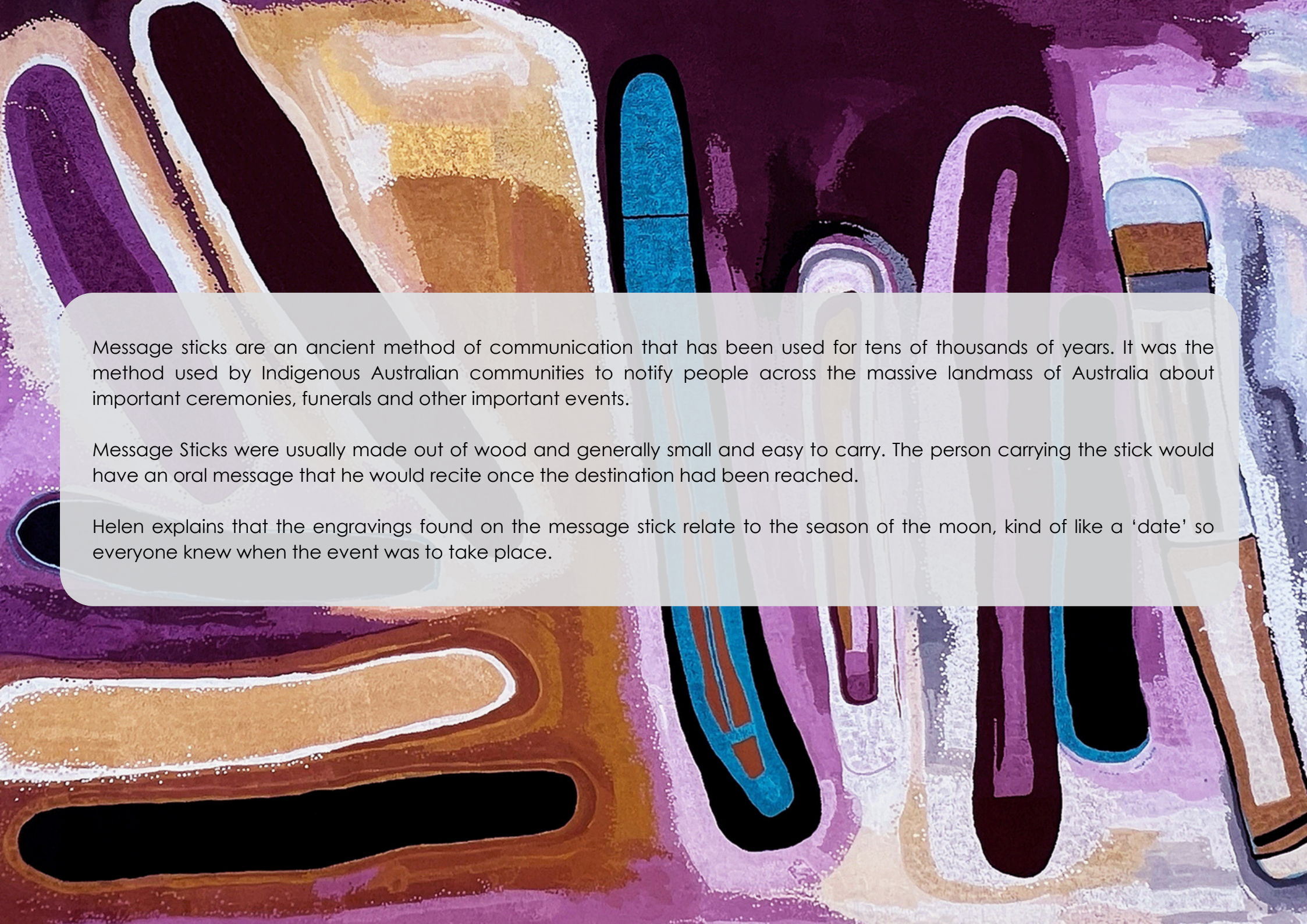
I've mapped an impression of one such place. The circle marks the site - not as a literal depiction, but as a tribute. A visual acknowledgement of Country's unseen stories.

Secret Place (2024)
150 x 89cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$17,500
HMCG0339





Message Sticks (2010)
199 x 299cm, Acrylic on Linen
\$85,000
HMCS0001



Message sticks are an ancient method of communication that has been used for tens of thousands of years. It was the method used by Indigenous Australian communities to notify people across the massive landmass of Australia about important ceremonies, funerals and other important events.

Message Sticks were usually made out of wood and generally small and easy to carry. The person carrying the stick would have an oral message that he would recite once the destination had been reached.

Helen explains that the engravings found on the message stick relate to the season of the moon, kind of like a 'date' so everyone knew when the event was to take place.

Right at the end of the dry, we do a burn off to prepare the country for regeneration during the wet. Before the wet comes, the mornings are foggy and the dew from it results in green shoots all over the country.

Animals come out to feed, especially in the morning time. It is a good time for hunting all sorts of animals, including goannas - they come looking for animals trapped by the fire.

Regrowth (2024)

150 x 223cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen

\$39,995

HMCG0307





Wet Season (2023)
91 x 150cm, Acrylic on Linen
\$17,500
HMCG0290

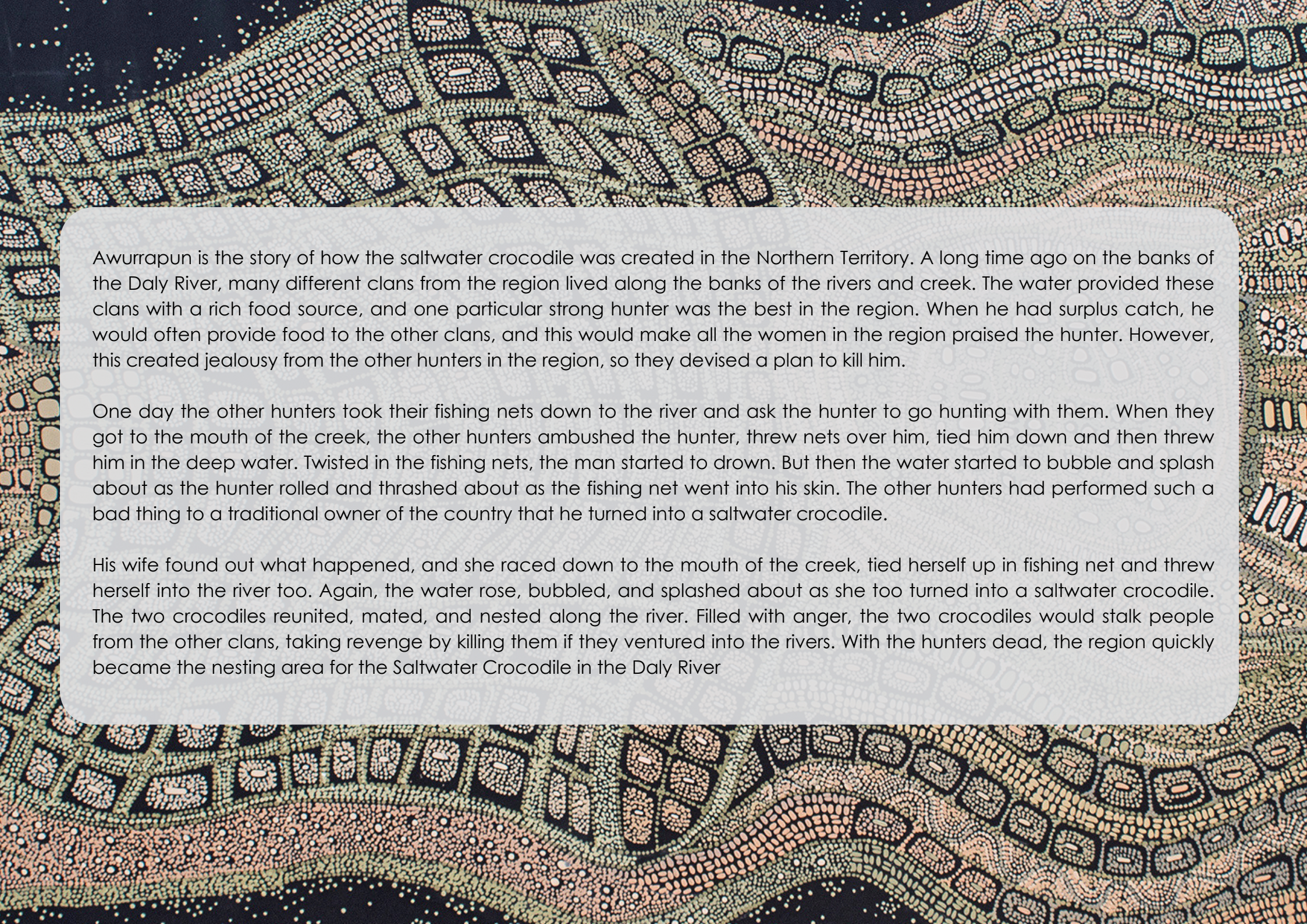


Awurrapun (2025)

90 x 212cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen

\$24,995

HMCG0345



Awurrapun is the story of how the saltwater crocodile was created in the Northern Territory. A long time ago on the banks of the Daly River, many different clans from the region lived along the banks of the rivers and creek. The water provided these clans with a rich food source, and one particular strong hunter was the best in the region. When he had surplus catch, he would often provide food to the other clans, and this would make all the women in the region praised the hunter. However, this created jealousy from the other hunters in the region, so they devised a plan to kill him.

One day the other hunters took their fishing nets down to the river and ask the hunter to go hunting with them. When they got to the mouth of the creek, the other hunters ambushed the hunter, threw nets over him, tied him down and then threw him in the deep water. Twisted in the fishing nets, the man started to drown. But then the water started to bubble and splash about as the hunter rolled and thrashed about as the fishing net went into his skin. The other hunters had performed such a bad thing to a traditional owner of the country that he turned into a saltwater crocodile.

His wife found out what happened, and she raced down to the mouth of the creek, tied herself up in fishing net and threw herself into the river too. Again, the water rose, bubbled, and splashed about as she too turned into a saltwater crocodile. The two crocodiles reunited, mated, and nested along the river. Filled with anger, the two crocodiles would stalk people from the other clans, taking revenge by killing them if they ventured into the rivers. With the hunters dead, the region quickly became the nesting area for the Saltwater Crocodile in the Daly River

In Helen's country there is both saltwater and freshwater, with an abundance of fish. In the olden days, people would go hunting with fish nets (syaw) woven out of pandanus.

Fish nets are made by stripping both ends of the middle leaves of a pandanus tree. After being stripped the women and men roll them together on their mid-thigh to make ropes. The ropes are then twined to make a fishnet. Over time, parts of the fish net would rot and need repairing.

Syaw (2023)
120 x 238cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$37,500
HMCG0296

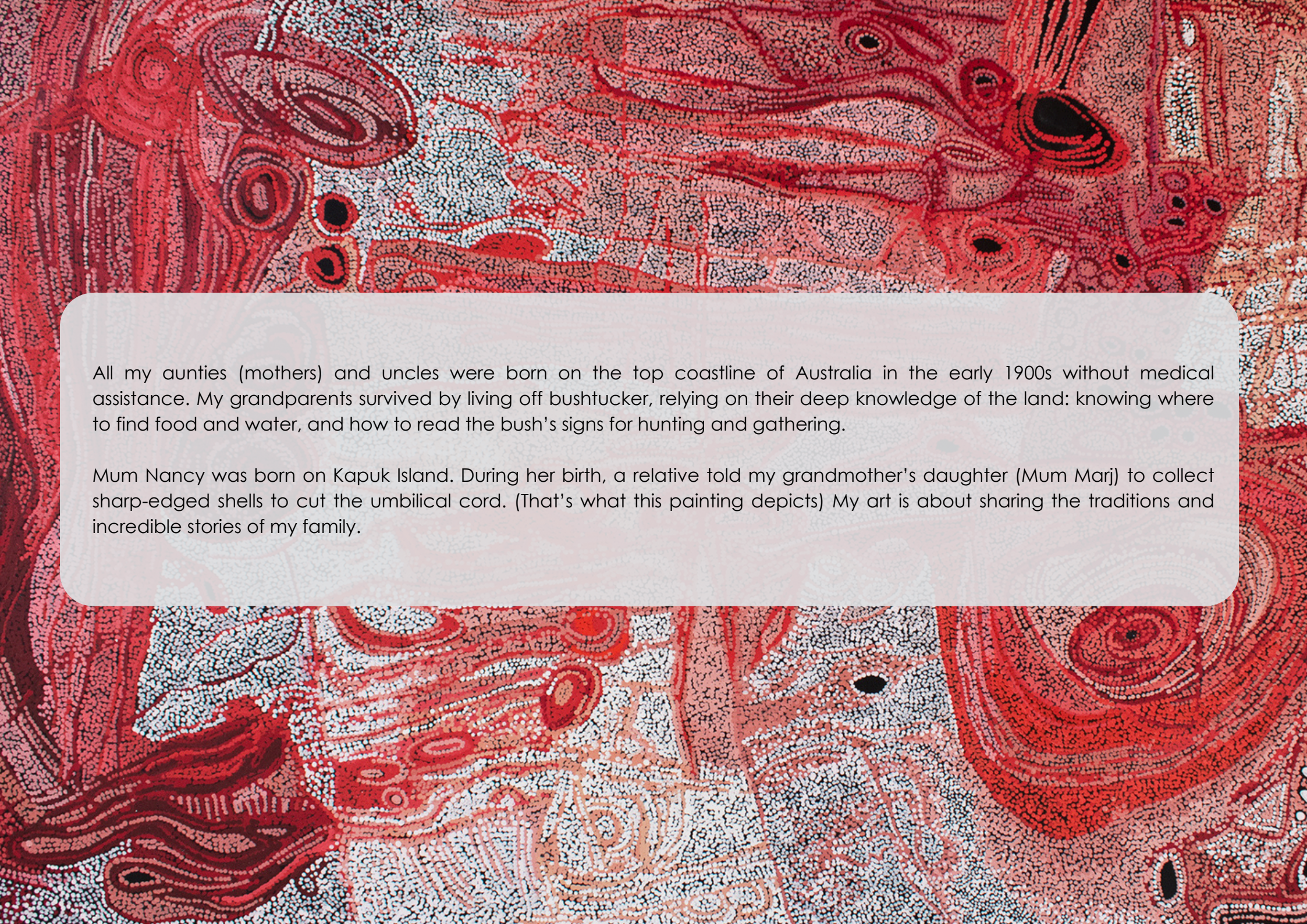




Ant Hills by Pink Lotus (2025)
121 x 182cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$24,995
HMCG0374



The Birth of Mumma Nancy (2025)
120 x 180cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen
\$24,995
HMCG0353



All my aunties (mothers) and uncles were born on the top coastline of Australia in the early 1900s without medical assistance. My grandparents survived by living off bushtucker, relying on their deep knowledge of the land: knowing where to find food and water, and how to read the bush's signs for hunting and gathering.

Mum Nancy was born on Kapuk Island. During her birth, a relative told my grandmother's daughter (Mum Marj) to collect sharp-edged shells to cut the umbilical cord. (That's what this painting depicts) My art is about sharing the traditions and incredible stories of my family.

Yenggiba or paperbark is a vital resource for my people, the Wadjigan from the country of Bulgul, southwest of Darwin. The bark is used for underground cooking and for holding water. The trunks and bark are used for the construction of traditional bush huts.

Its use for underground cooking is still particularly common today – many bush foods taste far better when cooked wrapped in the bark. We don't cook those foods any other way. This painting is a representation of the paperbark, my country and its uses.



Paperbark (2025)
121 x 181cm, Acrylic on Linen
\$24,995
HMC0375





Helen McCarthy Tyalmuty

DOB: 1972

Born: Tennant Creek, NT

LANGUAGE GROUP: Batjamal

COMMUNITY: Bulgul, NT

Helen McCarthy Tyalmuty is a Wadjigan woman and was born at Tennant Creek in 1972. Helen comes from Bulgul country in the western Wagait area of the Top End (around a two and a half hour drive south west of Darwin) and her ancestors are from saltwater country. Helen's language is Batjamal and her totem is the mud crab. After spending most of her childhood at Nauiyu Nambiyu Community (Daly River), Helen completed her education at Mount St Bernard College at Herberton on the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland.

Helen studied teaching, initially at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education in the N.T. and completing her degree at Deakin University in 1994. It was during this time at university that Helen's art career started to take shape. In 1993, she was already involved in her first art festival. Her painting continued to develop after moving into teaching full time.

For 10 years she successfully combined a job as a teacher in remote communities with her painting activities. Around 2003, Helen devoted herself to painting full time, gradually honing her skills and developing her own unique approach to the Dreamings she portrays. 2006 marked a significant milestone in Helen's career, with her inaugural solo exhibition in Sydney, quickly followed by further solo and group exhibitions in Melbourne and Singapore.

In August 2007, Helen was honoured to receive the People's Choice Award at the 24th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award for her painting Tyemeny Liman's Wutinggi (Grandpa Harry's Canoe). She says of her grandfather "In his day he was the best canoe maker in his country. It's a sad story and a good story at the same time. It's the last canoe that he ever made." Helen was also a finalist at the 2008 Telstra Awards. Helen's artistic prowess found global acclaim when she was commissioned to create the stage backdrop for the Oprah Winfrey Show's Australian filming in 2011.

Despite a brief hiatus, her creative spirit was reignited upon returning to her childhood home, Daly River, in 2015. The return to her roots and to Country was the catalyst for an immense surge of creative output, as witnessed in her two solo exhibitions at Kate Owen Gallery in 2016. The following year, Helen appeared as a finalist in prestigious art prizes such as the Paddington Art Prize, the Georges River Art Prize, and was awarded the inaugural Margaret Olley Art Award at the Mosman Art Prize.

Between 2017 and 2020 Helen lived in Alice Springs, Darwin, Daly River and Sydney. Her artworks during this time exquisitely demonstrate her ability to find inspiration all around her. Accolades continued to follow, and in 2020 she was awarded the Aboriginal Art Winner at the 2020 Fisher's Ghost Art Award. Her painting titled 'New Growth - After the Fire' was in response to the devastating bush fires that swept across the country.

The global pandemic saw Helen spend more time at home and with family. It was also the flourishing of the Bulgul Artists, an informal collective of family and friends from Bulgul and surrounding regions in the Top End. While the collective can trace its origins back to 2003 when Helen first started painting, the success of Helen and her sister Kerry McCarthy inspired others to take up Aboriginal art as a career, or to revive dormant careers.

The Bulgul Artists art studio is a hive of creativity and culture, and Helen enjoys mentoring, encouraging and supporting her fellow family members as they develop their art careers. The collective has also been a perfect channel for the next generation to connect and process their growing understanding of culture, community, family, and identity, as Helen's son and emerging artist Heath Minjin Wilson, is a testament to.

Helen has a relentless passion to learn all she can about culture and country from her elders, as well as the ability to effectively communicate through her art using an array of styles, intricate dotting and delicate brushwork techniques, abstract imagery, bold colour use and intuitive interplays with space and form. Her art can be multi-layered, complex and colourful, or it can be restrained, solemn and occasionally ominous. Her work resonates with a timeless yet contemporary allure, making her highly appealing to international collectors.

Helen explains that she finds inspiration all around her; in her deep connection to country, in the traditional practices associated with a life living bush and in her incredible family stories. Helen's connection to Country and culture combined with her non-indigenous education are the foundations she uses to express her ideas and experiences in her own unique manner. This capacity to give contemporary interpretations to her ancient Dreaming stories makes her a distinct voice in the contemporary Indigenous art scene today. Through her unwavering commitment to preserving culture and fostering artistic expression, Helen McCarthy Tyalmuty continues to chart new horizons and inspire generations to come.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

2026 WINNER THE ALICE PRIZE, ALICE SPRINGS

2025 CALLEEN ART AWARD - FINALIST

2025 MOSMAN ART PRIZE, SYDNEY - FINALIST

2025 MUSWELLBROOK ART PRIZE, MUSWELLBROOK - FINALIST

2024 FISHER'S GHOST ART AWARD, CAMPBELLTOWN - FINALIST

2024 PADDINGTON ART PRIZE, SYDNEY - FINALIST

2024 NATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ART PRIZE, CANBERRA - FINALIST

2022 HADLEY'S ART PRIZE, HOBART - FINALIST

2022 RAVENSWOOD AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ART PRIZE, SYDNEY - FINALIST

2022 CONNECTION | SONGLINES FROM AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PEOPLES IN A SPECTACULAR IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA

2020 FISHER'S GHOST ART AWARD, SYDNEY - WINNER

2020 CALLEEN ART AWARD - FINALIST

2019 CALLEEN ART AWARD - FINALIST

2017 MOSMAN ART PRIZE, SYDNEY, MARGARET OLLEY ART AWARD - WINNER

2017 PADDINGTON ART PRIZE, SYDNEY - FINALIST & HIGHLY COMMENDED

2017 GEORGES RIVER ART PRIZE, SYDNEY - FINALIST

2017 HORNSBY ART PRIZE, SYDNEY - FINALIST

2008 25TH NATSIAA, DARWIN - FINALIST

2007 24TH NATSIAA, DARWIN - FINALIST & PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD WINNER

COLLECTIONS

- HENDERSON FAMILY COLLECTION, SYDNEY
- CORRIGAN COLLECTION, SYDNEY
- LUCIANO BENETTON COLLECTION, VENICE
- DEAKIN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, MELBOURNE
- ARALUEN ARTS CENTRE, ALICE SPRINGS
- FONDATION BURKHARDT-FELDER ARTS ET CULTURE, MOTIERS, SWITZERLAND



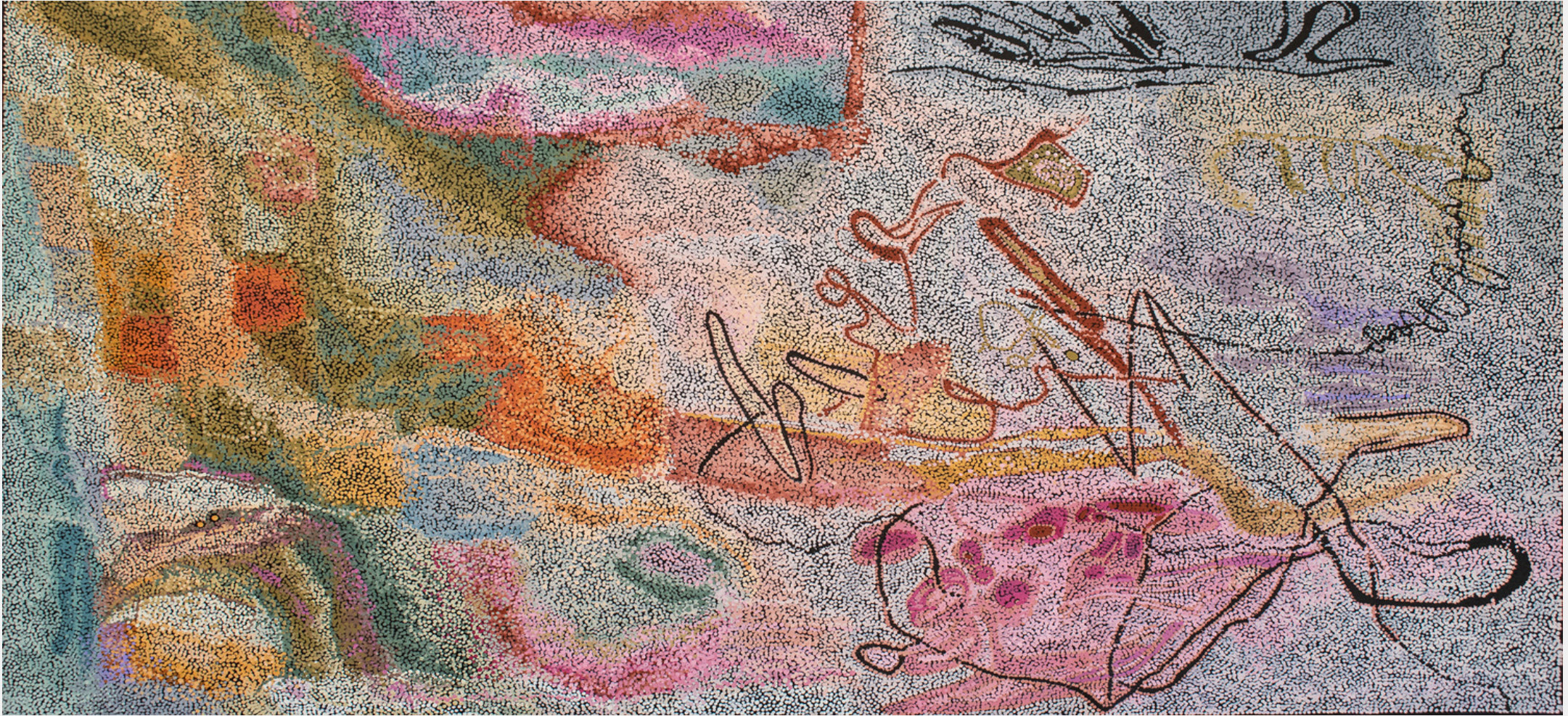
ETHICS & AUTHENTICITY




Kate Owen Gallery is committed to upholding the rights of Indigenous artists and each painting is sold with a Certificate of Authenticity guaranteeing the provenance of the work.

The Gallery is a proud member of the Aboriginal Art Association of Australia (AAAA), the pan industry organisation for people involved in Indigenous art.

The Association binds members to a strict code of conduct, so visitors can be assured that artists are dealt with fairly, transparently and with respect.



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