



**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL: FRIDAY 9 AUGUST**

17.30 Darwin CST /18.00PM AEST Sydney and Melbourne time for print, online, radio, TV and social media

## Winners announced at the *Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards*

**Friday, 9 August 2019:** Distinguished Yolŋu artist Djambawa Marawili AM, from the remote homeland of Yilpara in East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, has won the prestigious Telstra Art Award at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory's 2019 *Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA)* in Darwin.

Marawili's artwork, *Journey to America 2018* is made from natural pigments on stringybark. It was selected as the overall winner at the 36<sup>th</sup> *Telstra NATSIAA* from more than 280 entries and 68 talented finalists.

*Journey to America 2018* reflects on his recent extensive travels to the United States of America promoting Yolŋu philosophy. The spirit of these ideas flow like sacred *Maḏarrpa* saltwater and/or fire between the two countries.

Djambawa Marawili's work shows five different states of water in Blue Mud Bay. The Yirritja estates of Yathikpa, Baraltja coastal and Baraltja riverine and the Dhuwa waters of Djarwarrk and Dhudi Djapu. The main flow is generated through Marawili singing the fire of the estate of Yathikpa which is passing from Australia indicated by the iconic coat of arms, towards America home of female 'ancestral being' the Statue of Liberty.

The winning work was chosen by an experienced judging panel comprising: Art Gallery of South Australia Director Rhana Devenport; established Tiwi artist and cultural leader Pedro Wonaeamirri (Gurrumaiyuwa); and Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Senior Curator of Indigenous Cultures, Zoe Rimmer.

The judges felt that this masterwork by a senior Yolŋu man manifests tremendous spirit, power and energy.

"The scale is remarkable, and Djambawa Marawili's virtuosic use of natural materials and intricate and complex brushwork, honed over decades of dedicated practice, creates dynamic flows and movement across this immense bark. The personal narrative within the work articulates his leading role in sharing Yolŋu philosophy with the world."

MAGNT Director Marcus Schutenko is thrilled with the outcome:

"Congratulations to Djambawa Marawili AM on such an exemplary and expressive artwork. This year, MAGNT received such an impressive selection of high-calibre artwork from across Australia and Mr Marawili's artwork is a clear reflection of this. We are delighted to share the stunning array of thought-provoking artwork in our *Telstra NATSIAA* exhibition, accessible for all to see and experience," Schutenko said.

Telstra Chief Executive Officer Andrew Penn said: 'The *Telstra NATSIAA* exhibition is an incredibly exciting showcase of the most important contemporary Indigenous art in Australia today. It is critical that we continue to celebrate and preserve the diversity of Indigenous culture by supporting new, emerging talent and leading artists from across the country. Certainly, the calibre of this year's artworks reflects the

Principal Partner



urgent need to share Indigenous stories and to amplify the voices of our Indigenous artists. As a passionate collector of Indigenous art myself, I am delighted that Telstra continues to be a proud partner and supporter of this remarkable program.”

In addition to the \$50,000 Telstra Art Award prize, the 2019 *Telstra NATSIAA* comprise six categories across multiple art disciplines and a range of entries.

The 2019 category winners are:

### **Telstra General Painting Award**

**Kaylene Whiskey**, Indulkana, SA

*Seven Sistas* 2018

‘The Kungkarangkalpa (Seven Sisters) *Tjukurpa* is about sisters looking out for each other. I’ve painted seven strong women: Wonder Woman, Cher, Whoopi Goldberg, Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz, Catwoman, Dolly Parton and Tina Turner. They’re hanging out on the Iwantja Arts sign, hiding from the cheeky *wati* (man),’ Whiskey said.

#### **Judges’ comments:**

“In this irreverent interpretation of the *Kungkarangkalpa* (Seven Sisters) *Tjukurpa* (Dreaming), Kaylene Whiskey invents and casts her own heroic women onto an imaginary stage within her community at Indulkana. By reclaiming televised pop culture idols she celebrates female empowerment and sisterhood by creating an exuberant drama and in a playful twist superimposes the scene onto a repurposed tourism road sign. Connecting generations and cultures, Kaylene paints her *Tjukurpa* to a loud soundtrack of classic rock, pop, and country music.”

### **Telstra General Works on Paper Award**

**Nyaparu (William) Gardiner (dec)**, South Hedland, WA

*Our Old People* 2018

“Doing these paintings is how I remember our old people. These pictures I’m showing you are from my memories. We can’t forget our old people, the law and culture they put us through, my paintings are about remembering them now they passed away,” Gardiner (deceased) said.

#### **Judges’ comments:**

“Heartfelt and highly personal, this inventive frieze-like work on paper honours elders and remembers people who are now gone. Originally a storyteller in Nyangumarta language, Mr Gardiner’s poignant drawings and paintings of people and place frequently recall his time working on pastoral stations in the Pilbara and the Kimberley. There is an intimacy in this ambitious work that connects directly with our humanity.”

### **Telstra Bark Painting Award**

**Nongirrŋa Marawili**, Yirrkala NT

*Lightning strikes* 2018

At the Maḡarrpa clan estate of Baratjula, a large rock set in deep water was struck by ancestral lightning. This electric ‘curse’ had been cast by Mundukul, the Lightning snake. This depiction has been rendered in natural pigments and discarded magenta print toner.

#### **Judges’ comments:**

“In a radical reinterpretation of materials, Nonggirrŋa Marawili has interspersed a new language of unexpected colour into the tradition of bark painting by recycling the ‘found materials’ of magenta print toner. Nonggirrŋa is a senior woman working from Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre at Yirrkala. The confident iconographic forms in the work carry important cultural knowledge informed by her strong familial ties.”

### **Wandjuk Marika Memorial 3D Award (Sponsored by Telstra)**

**Malaluba Gumana**, Yirrkala NT

*Rainbows in the Lilies* 2018

“This is the oldest story. Rainbow Serpent at Garrimala, a snake in motion disturbing the water, causing ripples and rainbows. Shimmering stagnant water in dry season. Lightning hiding in rainbows. The arc of the iridescent scales. The swathe of the cyclone,” Gumana said.

### **Judges’ comments:**

“As one of the most prolific artists from Yirrkala, Malaluba Gumana is a foremost exponent of *marwat* (cross-hatching) technique using a finely controlled hairbrush. Gumana won the 2013 Telstra NATSIAA Best Bark category. These commanding *larrakitj* create the shimmering effects of the Rainbow Serpent at Garrimala. Her exquisite painting depicts her mother’s Galpu clan designs of *dhatam* (waterlilies) and *djari* (rainbow) while the scale and scope declares her deep immersion in these powerful stories.”

### **Telstra Multimedia Award**

**Gutiŋarra Yunupiŋu**, Yirrkala, NT

*Gurrutu’mi Mala - My connections* 2019

“I was born hearing-impaired so my family and friends communicated with me using Yolŋu Sign Language (YSL). Where I live Yolŋu teach all children YSL from a young age so it means I can communicate with all Yolŋu from my community easily. YSL is important for hearing Yolŋu also, when we go hunting we use it to communicate from a distance. When I went to school I was taught Auslan (ASL), so now I use YSL and ASL to communicate. Without Yolŋu sign language I would have found it hard to communicate with my community.” Yunupiŋu said.

### **Judges’ comments:**

“This is an exciting and inspirational multimedia work that tells a highly personal story about communicating cultural identity and connection. The artist casts himself in this captivating digital video, highlighting the importance of *barrkungu wanga* (language from a distance) sign language within the everyday life of his Yirrkala community where he works as a cameraman and film editor. This is an important work in its remarkable translation of cultural language through the language of art. The work is timely given that 2019 is the UNESCO International Year of Indigenous Languages.”

### **Telstra Emerging Artist Award**

**Titus Nganjmirra**, Gunbalanya, NT

*Queen Elizabeth* 2019

The background depicts the first flag to be planted on Australian country near Sydney. On top of this Titus painted both male and female Nayuhyungki, the first people, as well as the plants and animals who have lived in the stone country of Arnhem Land for thousands of years. Queen Elizabeth’s face is also found on Australian money. In Kunwinjku, the word *kunwardde* translates both ‘money’ and ‘stone’ from English. In

this work, Titus plays with meanings of words and origins of culture. Money is symbolic of exchanges between people. The stone country beings demonstrate culture, resources and traditional ways in which bininj people live. Through painting the Queen in West Arnhem Land style, Titus assimilates balanda (white) culture into Kunwinkju culture.

**Judges comments:**

“This sophisticated and concentrated work is both serious and playful, referencing Australia’s history of colonisation and the resilience of Indigenous culture and in particular the visual language of West Arnhem Land. This work is a vigorous mix of ancient cultural knowledge and recent events that have irrevocably shaped the politics and governance of this land.”

All category winners receive \$5,000. Award winners will be announced at the *Telstra NATSIAA* Opening ceremony at MAGNT from 6pm on Friday 9 August.

*Telstra NATSIAA* finalists’ works will be exhibited at MAGNT in Darwin from Friday 9 August, after the evening Awards Ceremony, until Sunday 3 November 2019.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists were invited to submit one original work that has not been previously exhibited or made available for sale. All awards are non-acquisitive and entrants are eligible to win one award.

For full details go to [www.magnt.net.au/natsiaa](http://www.magnt.net.au/natsiaa)

**- ENDS -**

**Available for interviews:**

- Marcus Schutenko, Director, Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory
- Luke Scholes, Curator of Aboriginal Art and Material Culture, Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory
- Genelle Sharples, Media and Sponsorships Principal at Telstra

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The *36th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards* is sponsored by Telstra and supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.