

Purungumparri Ngaripikimi Puruntarinnga
We make strong stories from paper and carved ironwood

Purungumparri Ngaripikimi Puruntarinnga is the fourth Woolloongabba Art Gallery group exhibition of Tiwi Design from Nguuu on Bathurst Island, Tiwi. The relationship between these two institutions dates back to Tiwi Design's first Woolloongabba exhibition in 2010, *Pupuni Jilamara* or Good Body Painting and featured many of the artists currently showcased. *Pupuni Jilamara* opened at Woolloongabba with a shark dance performed by artists Gordon Pupangamirri and Vivian Douglas Walapini Kerinauia (Walapini Kerinauia's work is also featured in this exhibition). This was a fitting dance for both the country of origin and the country of performance, as both Tiwi mob and the Turrbal people of Meanjin (Brisbane) are known as fishing mobs. For both of these countries, the sun, water, the turtle are elemental forces of significance in the everyday life of culture. The artists of Tiwi Design have been generous with us here in Brisbane, sharing their strong stories over significant distance.

To review these shared stories across the six years since that initial exhibition is to witness palpable development on a number of scales. Most apparent is the capacity of the artists themselves, many of whom have been immersed in their practice for decades now and whose culture and ideas have been applied with skilful expression to a diverse array of mediums including painting, carving and sculpture, textiles and wood block print. The individual skill of each artist has the effect of accelerating the momentum of the art centre as a whole. Tiwi Design is rapidly gaining national and international attention for the quality of the culture and stories stemming from these two small and incredibly beautiful islands of Bathurst and Melville.

It goes without saying that Tiwi Design's development stretches back further than their Brisbane audiences. Half a century has passed since the first wood block carvings were created by Bede Tungutalum and Giovanni Tipungwuti in a makeshift studio under the Bathurst Island church. These strong stories with humble beginnings set the foundations for what is now one of the longest established Indigenous art centres in Australia. As sure as the past informs the future, the future informs the past. In particular, the recurring imagery of the Jilamara (body painting) captured in the work of Brenda Tipungwuti, Tess Tipungwuti, John Martin Tipungwuti, Jock Puautjimi and Vivian Douglas Warlapinni Kerinauia provide us with comprehensive context and information on how the people of the island embody and pay respect to other forms of island life. Specifically, these Jilamara paintings educate us on the types of preparation involved in the celebration of Kulama, the ceremony that marks the end of the wet season. Margaret Renee Kerinauia's *Kulama* paintings provide us with further insight into the ceremony's significance. Her renditions portray in elaborate detail the different communities that get together to share in the new life cycles that this ceremony brings and forms some of the strongest contributions to the exhibition. Long-standing artist Maria Orsto provides contemporary interpretations of the elements as they are experienced on the island, offering kinetic depictions of the sea, sky and sun that govern island life. Maria's sister Roslyn Orsto provides us with information of the family arrangements on Tiwi, the four skin groups (Jiminga) of sun, pandanus, stone and mullet. Mario Munkara's wood carvings have staked their claim as some of the most popular works originating from Tiwi Design to date. Munkara materialises many of the animals that play central parts within the Tiwi dreamings, sourcing the pigment for his sculptures from ochres chipped off the local cliff faces on the island.

Together these artists form *Purungumparri Ngaripikimi Puruntarinnga/We make strong stories from paper and carved ironwood*. Like the local ironwood that forms the material from which so many of these works emerge, Tiwi stories only gain strength with their age.

Carmen Ansaldo 2016