

THESE ARE THE THINGS WE HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN

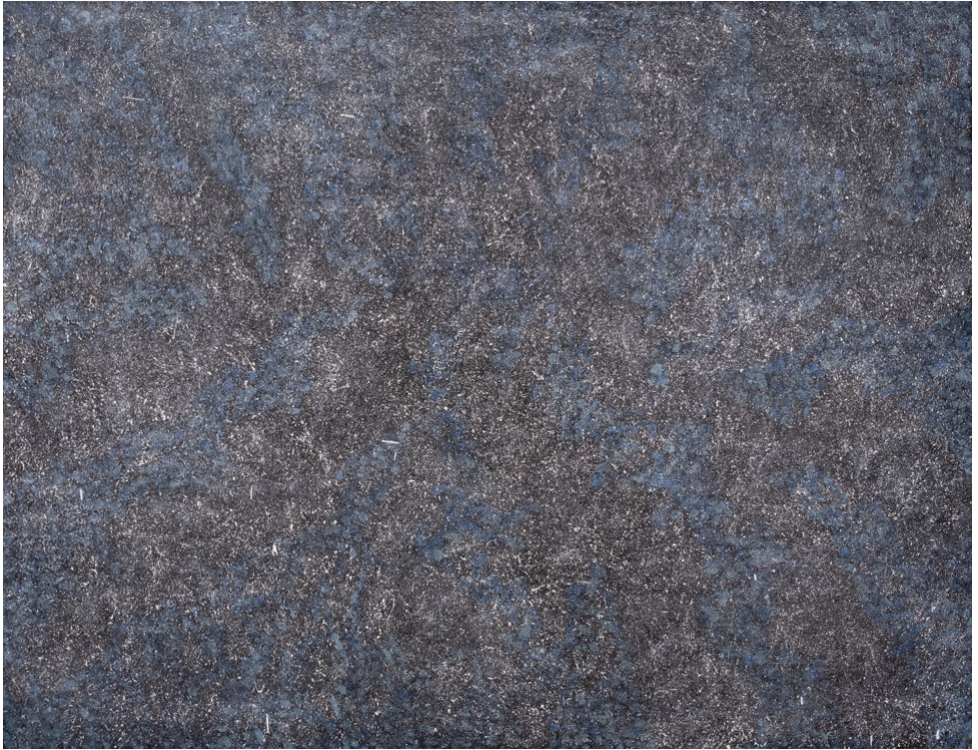
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THE STORIES



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Joelene Roughsey, *Thunganmu*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 152 × 197.5 cm

#137-20 *Thunganmu*

I'm painting this in honour and in memory of my Grandfather Arnold Watt. Thunganmu is the name given to him by his parents and it means The White Foam of The Sea and he belonged to the Bunbudgee (The White Dove) clan group from Barkarrkiya at the very top end of Mornington Island. He was born on Mornington Island and left to work on cattle stations at the age of 15 and married in 1967 and had 4 children. He took up painting and became skilled in it. He was trained in painting traditional stories on bark by our Elders at the time, and as well he attended art college at Mount Gravatt in Brisbane. He had his works in exhibitions throughout Queensland and later in his life he taught at the school here on Mornington Island – he taught language, art, dance and everything that had to do with his Culture.



#140-20 Netta Loogatha, *Little Brother*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 197 × 197 cm

#140-20 *Little Brother*

Before the missionary removed us from Country, we were still living the old ways. We were babysitting my baby brother for my parents; it was winter and we had a fire and windbreak to keep us warm. He was asleep in a bark coolamon near the fire, and we played. While we were playing, he had woken up and crawled into the fire, we tried to pull him out as the other sisters ran to get help. By the time our father and his wives came back he had died, and we, including our mothers, were all in big trouble. We then had to travel across country on foot from Rukuthi, our Father's Country, to Mididinki, my Aunt's Country, where he was mourned and buried under a native fig tree.



#154-20 Netta Loogatha, *My Country*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 122 × 198 cm



#1495-19 Netta Loogatha, *My Country*,
Acrylic on Belgian linen, 121.5 × 110.5 cm

#154-20 & #1495-19 My Country

It's good to make artworks, learn from each other. We learned all about our country and story places from our old people. Now we are painting and drawing them so our grandchildren will learn all about them.

Our Aunty Sally Gabori showed us the way, and we learned from her and follow in her footsteps. We have our own paintings and drawings now of our homelands and sacred places, where we were born, oyster reefs and waterholes or camping spots. I am happy to show other people my country and culture through my art. It brings a smile to my face when I finish an artwork and see a part of me on it.

This painting is about my Country on Bentick Island, Rukuthi and specially Bilmee were I was born, also known as Dog Story Place. My mother gave birth to me here – it's my home.



#155-20 Ethel Thomas, *King Alfred's Makarrki*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 198 × 198 cm

#155-20 *King Alfred's Makarrki*

Makarrki is a big estuary in the north of Bentinck Island. There dugong would come into the area during high tide. Sneaking in behind them, the Kaiadilt men would erect long nets across the narrow mouth of the eastern lagoon, and wait for the tide to recede. The dugong tangled themselves in the nets, and the men, with their bare hands, would wrestle them, climbing on their necks and drowning them in the shallows. Really Makarrki was a traditional slaughterhouse where dugongs herded themselves because of the Kaiadilt's knowledge of natural tidal flows.

This painting is all about our Father's Country - the missionaries called him King Alfred. This is where he was born. His wives would tell us stories about how he and his brothers would go and hunt at Makarrki and he would share his food with other families. At the back where the two rivers meet is a place for gathering mud shells, catching crabs and trapping fish. Our Father chose Rukuthi for its open spaces to raise his children, but to hunt he went home to Makarrki. He was my Father and Sally's big brother.

Today Makarrki is shared Country for our Kaiadilt people, but especially for his grandsons and his sister's family to hunt dugongs and turtles as they did all those years ago. For him we paint his Country so our children would not forget how and by who they are also tied to country.



#156-20 Amanda Jane Gabori, *My Mother's Country*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 152 × 196 cm

#156-20 My Mothers Country

This art work is about my mother's country on Bentinck Island, it's called Mirdidingki on the south side of Bentinck Island. She carries the name Mirdidingkingathi meaning she's from here and Juwarnda her birth sign meaning dolphin. It was her mother's country and was handed down to her as her brothers had their own country. This is her Country where the big lake is, were water lily bulbs watercress and swamp turtles were gathered just after the wet season and here too the small creek is, where traditionally her people would come to feast on mud mussels and dam the fish during the winter months. My mum's main role on Bentinck was to take care of her brothers' children, he too was reasonable for her.

She was only a young woman when she was removed from Bentinck Island and taken to Mornington Island at the promise of plenty of food. After arriving on Bentinck, she married her husband Pat Gabori and had children 2 boys 5 daughters. Both her and her husband longed to return to country to live or even to visit. So, she and her husband were kept busy raising her children and continued to provide food by hunting and gathering for food sometime walking long distances and even take them camping.

When she started to painting, she was able to charter flights back to her beloved country, sometimes staying for weeks, at that time some of her people had returned to live there. She took her eldest daughter to help her and her husband. She continued to do this until her ill health became too much.

I will always paint her country, because I know it was everything to her. She always had a lost look about her, like sadness and loneliness when speaking about country. I will also show her character and love of life and family that's how I see Her and her country.



#166-20 Dorothy Gabori, *Stone Fishtraps*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 197 × 197 cm

#166-20 Stone Fish Traps

Ngurruwarra means stone fishtraps in our Kayardild language. We can still see the fishtraps that the old people built along the coasts of Bentinck Island.

My people were building stone fish traps for a long time when they were on Bentick Island, and it always provided a good catch and oysters would grow on them as well and during the winter months we would eat them. My parents helped build one Mornington Island down at the old village, they were young then and the old people showed them. The Lardil people have also built some on their Country and people still use them today.



#191-20 Dolly Loogatha, *Thundi*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 197 × 197 cm



#1398-20 Dolly Loogatha, *Thundi*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 101.5 × 198 cm

#191-20 & #1398-20 Thundi

Thundi is a part of Rukuthi on Bentinck Island. Thundi is where I was born - my Mother gave birth to me here, no hospital, doctors or nurses - only midwives from my tribe. I share this part of the Country with my sister Rounga and my youngest Dad Percy, because his Country is close by. It's out of the way of winds and a good area to set up camp close enough to the river to catch sea food even dugong and turtles shelter from storms there.

There's a story place here and the old people would tell us about the turtle woman, she was not listening to the Elders and one day walked out on to the mud flats and turned into an oyster rock - you can see this rock there today. If you follow the river up there's another place that's sacred to us. The old people say that it's bad country - if you pass by pregnant women must walk sideways and only men enter the cave there and you must be naked to go inside. If you walk on other people's Country listen to them.

I left my home as a child with my Mother to live on Mornington Island. I was taken and placed in a dormitory with children my age and as I grew up my family would tell me of my birth place and my tribe and clan group. When I turned 13, I was sent out to work on stations and eventually I loved this lifestyle. I met my son's father on the mainland, but my big sister took care of him and raised him on Mornington. I still longed for my Country on Bentinck Island.

When I returned to Mornington I went with my husband to Bentinck and we camped on my Country, Thundi, it was good to be home hunting and gathering with my aunties, sisters and other family members. Then we left because the government couldn't support us with funding and now, I go back whenever anyone asks me to go back.

This country Thundi I will always carry with me and paint to remember where I come from and so my grandchildren would know it's their country too.



#166-20 Helena Gabori, *Stone Fishtraps*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 198 × 186.5 cm

#166-20 Stone Fishtraps

Ngurrwarra means stone fishtraps in our language. We can still see the fishtraps that the old people built along the coasts of Bentinck Island. I painted these stone fishtraps in memory of my People, to tell others about them. On my Father's Country at Nyinyilki there is a stone fishtrap which was used by my Family for generations before they came to Mornington Island. There is no one back there now to take care of them, and that's so sad - all that is going to be lost, we'll only have photos for the generations to come will not know how hard their ancestors worked to build their lives.



#292-20 John Williams, *Lardil Dream Time Stories*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 198 × 152 cm

#292-20 Lardil Dream Time Stories

You see these stories they're to remind people to be mindful whose land they walk on otherwise you can get sick and they got to respect sacred story places. That's why old people tell us these stories so you know what to do and where not to go. Family and country, we must listen and look after each other.

The top part is about Emu in the Sky: Long time ago there were two sisters, Emu and Turkey, they were good hunters and mothers. But because of jealousy Emu can fly no more and Turkey can only lay 2 eggs today. Today Emu spirit rests in the Milky Way to remind us not to be jealous and to share with family. One day they went hunting and when they returned to the camp Turkey told Emu that her hand was sore and could Emu pass the fire so she could cook her food and when Emu did, she burnt her wings. Next morning, they go hunting again and this time Emu went home first to hide her babies, so when Turkey got home Emu told her that all her babies had died and then Turkey killed all her babies, then Emu called out to her chicks to come out.

Rat and Squid: This story happens between Birri on Mornington Island and Rocky Island. How the Rat got his tail and Squid got his ink. Moral of the story - Don't laugh at your parents, elders and people or strangers who help you. One day the Rat wanted to cross the channel but he couldn't swim. Along came his friend Squid and told him that he would give him a ride across, so off they went. As they were travelling through the water all Squid could hear was Rat laughing. When they to the other side Squid asked Rat, "What you laughing for" and Rat said "Your whiskers were tickling me about my body and the way it washed over your big eyes was funny". Squid was feeling insulted and threw a spear at Rat and that's how he got his tail and Rat then grabbed a fire stick and hit Squid and burnt him and that's how Squid got his ink.

The Two Boys: So, this story is about these two boys turning into two stones because they got mulgary because they not allowed to mix their land food and their sea food. And they been freshly initiated and they went near the salt water and the Rainbow Serpent smelt them. They got really hot and their bodies burned. They run down to the salt water, jumped in the water and turned into two big rocks. And when you go along Forsyth, you see them two rocks there today.

In our custom there's land food and sea food and you can't take the sea food into the freshwater or the land food down to the salt water. That's how we get mulgary..



#314-20 Elsie Gabori, *Dibirdibi Country*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 197.5 × 122 cm

#314-20 Dibirdibi Country

Dibirdibi means rock cod in our language. It is our Father and Pat Gabori's father's totem. It was Dibirdibi who cut out the channels cutting Bentinck Island from the mainland. Dibirdibi's final resting place was the high hill Bardathurr on Sweers Island, south-east of Bentinck Island. This place is called Dibirdibi Story Place. In search of water, the old people cut the liver of Dibirdibi to pieces and threw these on to rocks at the foot of a cliff where it became a perpetual spring. The Dibirdibi story is big story for all Kiadilt people because Dibirdibi was mean in not sharing his shelter with his sister. From this story we learn to share with family and not to be mean.



#377-20 Amanda Jane Gabori, *Mud Shells on My Mother's Country*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 197.5 × 197.5 cm

#377-20 Mud Shells On My Mother's Country

This painting is about my Mother's Country on Bentinck Island, it's called Mirdidingki and is on the south side of the island. She carries the name Mirdidingkingathi meaning she's from here, and Juwarnda is her birth sign meaning dolphin. It was her Mother's Country and was handed down to her as her brothers had their own Country. This is her Country where the big lake is, where water lily bulbs, watercress, and swamp turtles were gathered just after the wet season and here too the small creek is, where traditionally her people would come to feast on mud mussels and dam the fish during the winter months

Mud shells are known as karnjirrdi in our Kayardild language. Mirdidingki is the place where traditionally our People would come together and gather mud mussels. There's lots of story places around here. When the tide comes in the shells can move over the mud. We collect them and cook them on the coals and they are good eating. When babies get coughs or colds we feed them these and they are real good for upset tummies as well.

I will always paint her Country, because I know it was everything to her. She always had a lost look about her, like sadness and loneliness when speaking about Country. I will also show her character and love of life and family because that's how I see her and her Country.



#685-18 Dolly Loogatha, *Kalturi*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 121.5 × 153 cm

#685-18 Kalturi

Kalturi is a small point on the coastline on my Country at Bentinck Island. From here you can see Sweers Island. My aunties and sisters would bring our grandchildren here on holidays – it's just a short walk from Main Base. Here the children would spear fish, we would fish, gather shell fish and oysters from off the rocks and the children went wild playing on the rocks and sand. Sometimes we would be lucky to find a turtle nest and take a few eggs during the nesting season. There were times me and my sisters would go by ourselves to collect shells to make necklaces to sell at the fishing resort. When my husband was alive, we'd go and camp there and the water was not far.

I paint from my memory all the things that I see, mainly the animals in the sea and the sandbanks. Kalturi holds a special place in my heart, I hope the next generation would go back and rebuild, even for holidays so we don't lose the knowledge of Country.



#949-19 Amanda Jane Gabori & Dorothy Gabori, *Sweers, My Father's Country*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 101.5 × 188 cm

#949-19 *Sweers, My Father's Country*

Our Father's Country is towards the south of Sweers Island. It's the place where the buganun oysters are. This Country was given to him by his Father Harry Kabararriji. This is also the place where Dibirdibi the river cod entered the ground and when he died, he formed a fresh water spring. During the winter months people would go there to collect oysters and get water. The water is not brackish and it's the only area where fresh water can be found and easily dug up on the beach. Our Father went back before he died and even though he couldn't see his family described the area to him. It was good that he went home before he died.



#1015-19 Amy Loogatha & Ethel Thomas, *Makarrki*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 196 × 197 cm

#1015-19 Makarrki

Amy Loogatha is the older and Ethel Thomas the youngest of King Alfred and Thelma Loogatha.

Makarrki is on the north side of Bentinck Island and a large river system runs through it. This is our Father King Alfred as he was known by the missionaries, this Country is his – it's where he was born. His Kayardild name, Makarrkingathi Dingkarringathi Thuwathu Bijarrb, and our Mother was Thelma Loogatha Minakurinathi Juda Juda – that's her Kayardild name.

I (Amy) painted the top part of his Country where the salt pans are - here his Country is nearby his younger brother Percy's Thundi and back to Wudu Rukuthi where he raised his children. We shared in painting the river because it provided food for our families even today our boys go back to hunt for dugong and turtles, but only if the weather's fine. I (Ethel) painted the mud and mangrove dwelling shells which we call mardalwanda wirrinda - there's plenty in the river like mud shells, cockles, long mangrove shells and many more. Our Dad's wives and sisters made sure we knew him and his country by the stories they told.

Makarrkingathi (north side of Bentinck Island) Dingkarringathi (small island south east of Sweers Island) Thuwathu (rainbow serpent - birth sign) Bijarrb (clan totem - dugong) and our Mother was Thelma Loogatha Minakurinathi Country Minakuri Juda Juda (birth sign - christmas bird).



#1016-19 Elsie Gabori & Helena Gabori, *Our Father's Country*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 152 × 197.4 cm

#1016-19 Our Father's Country

Our Father's name is Pat Gabori whose Kaiadilt language name is Kabararryjngathi Bulthuku. The language name is very significant - Kabaraarryi is the name place on Bentinck Island where he was born and ngathi means from that country and his second name Bulthuku is his birth sign, the mistletoe bird.

We share the same father because in our custom men were allowed to have many wives, we are not half-sisters, we are full sisters.

Elsie says: My proper name is Elsie Gabori Dibirdibi and I am the oldest daughter of Pat and Maudie Gabori Minakurignathi Juda Juda (Christmas bird).

Helena says: I am the third child of Pat and Sally Gabori Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda (dolphin).

Our Father's Country is on Sweers Island and this land was passed down to him from his family. This is where the settlers came and built a community, they were farming goats and my Father's family were forced to move to Bentinck Island, where our Dad was born. It's also where Matthew Flinders ran aground and made repairs to his ship. Today a resort operates fishing charters and we visit when we can.

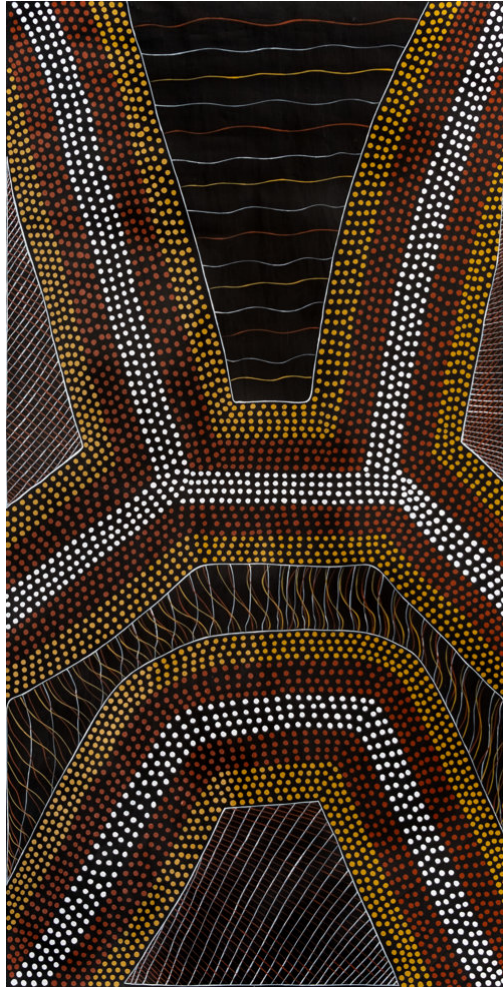
Our Father was always talking about returning to his home land. He was taken to live on Mornington Island during the missionary days along with his people. When he did return, he had his wife and our eldest sister with him, he didn't stay long as he was going blind. He always had locked away in his memory his County, Culture, and his People. During his lifetime he helped fight for Land Rights and that was because of his deep knowledge of land, sea and culture.



#1125-19 Amy Loogatha, *Love Rocks*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 135 × 60 cm

#1125-19 *Love Rocks*

On my country, Bentick Island, there are love charms and we call them love rocks. Always the young people would go looking so they could catch a partner. With them love rocks they will have a partner for life if they call out their name while holding and calling out their name. We tell them don't go doing it too much otherwise they get sick or the other person would get sick. We tell people especially the young ones to be careful not to take anything that they don't know about from another person's country without first asking them.



John Williams, *Yarakara Body Painting*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 198 × 101 cm

#9728P07-15 Yarakara Body painting

It is a big thing to wear your own totem to corroboree, nobody else apart from members of your clan is to wear it. The Yarakara (Lardil) is the giant sea eagle - this totem paint-up comes from Birri and has been handed down through the generations from grandfather to father and grandson. When I used to travel away to dance Overseas and here in Australia and even here in my community to dance, I felt so proud of showing the people my family paint-up.



#9828L08-15 John Williams, *Thuwathu's Trail*, Acrylic on Belgian linen, 198 × 151 cm

#9828L08-15 *Thuwathu's Trail*

This painting is about Thuwathu, the Rainbow Serpent and the trail he left and his resting place. After his sister burnt his humpy with him inside it, he rolled about in pain starting from Dugong River and creating story places as he went, he transformed the land, rivers, creeks, swamps, hills, reefs, fresh water holes and springs. His final resting place is at Wirrija where there is a rock bed of colours red, yellow and white. Here at this country don't ever mix land food and sea food together or enter the salt water with greasy hand always wash your hands otherwise you mulgari - our people believe this spirit of the Rainbow Serpent will enter one's body and you get really sick and Song Man would have to sing it out.

Woolloongabba Art Gallery

613 Stanley Street Woolloongabba Qld 4102 Australia ~ +61 7 3891 5551 ~ email@wag.com.au