

THE MULKA  
PROJECT

# WATAMI MANIKAY

THE SONG OF THE WINDS

# Watami Manikay

The song of the winds

*Our Gurrutu, our kinship, has no edge.*

*No middle, no beginning, no end.*

*It connects us and surrounds us equally.*

*We are each the centre.*

*Everyone who ever was or ever will be.*

*We are all connected.*

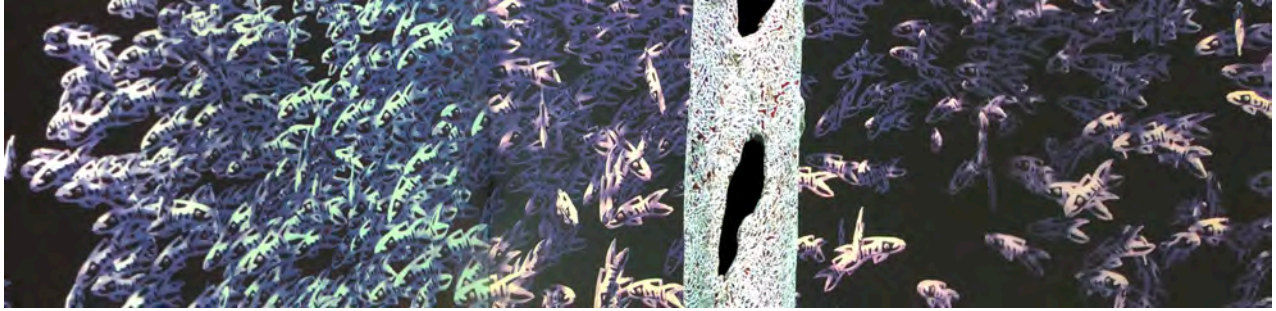
**Due to the closing of the Art Gallery of New South Wales to minimise the spread of COVID-19, The Mulka Project has produced an immersive online rendition of *Watami Manikay*, making it possible for the public to experience this extraordinary installation piece.**

*Watami Manikay* is an immersive collaborative performance by the Yolŋu digital artists of The Mulka Project. The collaboration weaves together the kinship relationships of artists from multiple connected Yolŋu clans. It links beyond people, to plants, animals, places, waters, seasons, and through to the winds. *Watami Manikay* cycles inside immersive landscapes. The space presents enveloping projections, paired with spatial audio, resulting in a mixed media canvas for our artists to present their digital performances, their selfhood and their unique relationships to each other and our world.

At the centre of *Watami Manikay* stands a unique larrakitj (hollow ceremonial logs) painted white with gapan̄ (ceremonial clay). The larrakitj represents the foundation gunḁa (the rock). The unwavering rock grounds each clan to their identity whilst the ephemeral gapan̄ represents the changing clouds rebuilding anew with every passing season.

*Watami Manikay* is not intended to be a filmic linear narrative but rather a cyclical work with no beginning middle or end, akin to the seasons or Yolŋu kinship. Each moment in the work is a valid entry point and exit point.

*Watami Manikay* combines The Mulka Projects experience in high fidelity virtual reality film-making, digital animation techniques, precise projector mapping skills, and countless generations of evolving Yolŋu art practice to create a powerful Indigenous contemporary work ingrained in one of Australia's oldest thriving cultures.



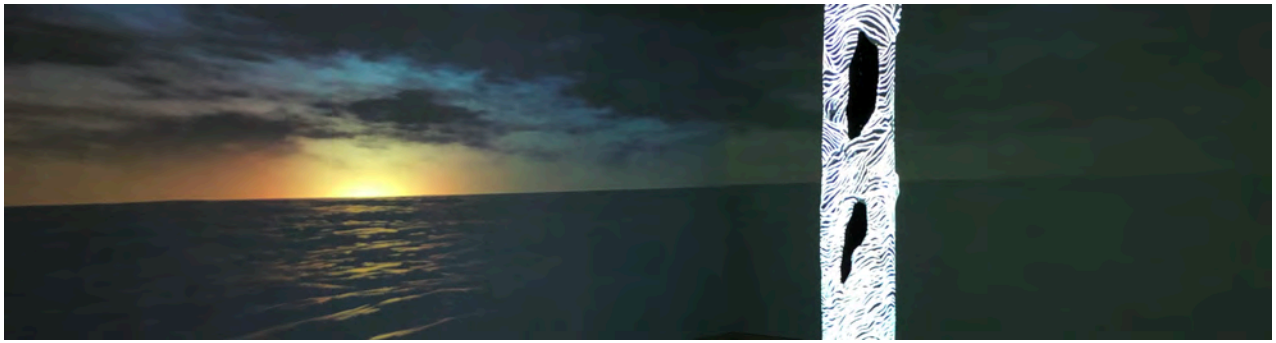
**Wukuṅ Waṅambi** places the viewer into his Marrakulu clans saltwater named Guḍultja. The surrounding waves rise over their heads and they are plunged into the darkness below, revealing the centre larrakitj (ceremonial hollow log) as a lone stringybark tree. The waves continue to rise and fall over the viewers heads, the rising waves strip the bark from the tree exposing it's smooth trunk, the waves then paint the trunk with gapaṅ (ceremonial clay), preparing it to be a canvas for Wukuṅ's minytji (design). The audience remains here, immersed in the underwater darkness. Wukuṅ sings his Marrakulu clan's Gapu manikay (Saltwater songline) and slowly countless schools of mullet arrive, spiralling and enveloping the viewer; during this time Wukuṅ's painted minytji (design) of the Sea Mulletts emerge onto the larrakitj. The Sea Mulletts swim off into the distance and the larrakitj fades to black leaving the audience in darkness



As multimedia artist **Patrina Munungurr's** face fades up out of the darkness her Djapu clan begin to sing the Wukuṅ manikay (Cloud songline). Old people sing this ancient songline to ask Yolṅu to paint themselves with gapaṅ (ceremonial clay) before they start performing bungul (ceremonial dance). Patrina displays the processes of preparing the gapaṅ which is used for ceremonies, artwork and for it's medicinal properties. She paints her forehead, which represents the Dhuwa waṅupini (cloud). As she covers her forehead, arms and hands with gapaṅ the centre black larrakitj is imprinted with Patrina's gapaṅ handprints, slowly the larrakitj is covered in gapaṅ and clouds till the entire larrakitj becomes white. *"Past, present and future. Gapaṅ helps us to stand strong"*.



**Mundatjṅu Munungurr** transports the audience inland to her mothers, Wangurri clan homeland of Dhalinybuy, right to the edge of the tranquil Dhaliny River. The larrakitj is blanketed by an overhead shot of Dhaliny River, displaying it's grandness and placement. Mundatjṅu's Momu (her mothers, mother) sings Gapu Gularri (Fresh and Saltwater) Milkarri (female sorrow songline). Wangurri clan leader Buwathay Munyarryun can also be heard singing the Gapu Gularri manikay (songline), imagining the freshwater of the river reaching the saltwater of the sea where the two waters mingle together.



Facing the eastern saltwater, **Ishmael Marika** sits, singing his Rirratjinu clan's Wanupini manikay (Cloud songline). The manikay calls the many different names of the clouds that build up over the sea and travel on Bullunu (East Wind). The clouds gather and darken embracing the central larrakitj building up and building up, signalling the approaching wet season of Midawarr. He takes the audience out over the saltwater at night as his Maḷu (fathers, brother) sings the Rirratjinu clan's Rulyapa manikay (Saltwater songline.) Meanwhile Ishmaels Rulyapa mintji (design) animates, encompassing the larrakitj, representing the Rirratjinu saltwater.



The audience is settled on the saltwater at dawn. As the sun rises, so too does **Gutiṅarra Yunupinu's** minytji (design), the Gumatj clans minytji of Baru the crocodile ancestral being, creator of fire. As the Baru minytj slowly shrouds the audience the central larrakitj is metamorphosed into the Baru, draped in it's skin. A 1986 audio recording of the Gumatj clan singing the Baru manikay (songline) plays. This audio was sourced from a Madarrpa clan woman's funeral filmed by Ian Dunlop and kept safe in the Mulka Archives. The audience is then, once again plunged back under the waves into the darkness.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



**Wukun̄ Wanambi** has held the position of Cultural Director at The Mulka Project since its inauguration in 2007. As well as the crucial role he plays at Mulka, Wukun̄ is also a renowned artist. Wukun̄'s first bark for the Saltwater project won the **1998 NATSIAA Best Bark Award**. Wukun̄ has gone on to establish a high profile career. He had his first solo show at **Raft Artspace** in Darwin in 2004 followed by solo shows at **Niagara Galleries, Melbourne** in 2005 and 2008. In 2008 he was commissioned to provide a design for installation on a seven-story glass façade in the **Darwin Waterfront Development**. Wukun̄ has been involved heavily in all the major communal projects of the last couple of decades including the **Sydney Opera House** commission and the opening of the **National Museum of Australia**. In 2014 he produced his first multimedia art piece *Nhina, Nhāma Ga Nāma (Sit, Look and Listen)* which was a concept inspired by the digital archive of cultural footage which he oversees and keeps safe at the Mulka Project. This piece is exhibited at **Raft Artspace** and has received great interest on an artistic level and also an academic level. In 2018 Wukun̄ combined his traditional art practices with his contemporary film art and won the **NATSIAA 3D Award** for his piece *Destiny*. This piece comprised of 3 larrakitj (burial poles) representing the rocks that stand in the mouth of Trial Bay painted with his renowned minytj (design) of Sea Mulletts searching for their great great grandparents. It also included an animation of his fish designs projected onto the floor of the gallery spiralling between the larrakitj. In 2019 he displayed a larger scale interactive version of this concept for the **Art Gallery of South Australia**, which was exhibited as part of the **Gurruṯu Exhibition for Tarnanthi**. In this adaptation of his 2018 piece the space that the projected fish swam was much greater, as well as spiralling around the larrakitj the fish interacted with the audience using motion sensor technology.

**Patrina Munungurr** is one of the leading cinematographers and post-production technicians at the Mulka Project. She came to predominance as a filmmaker after filming and producing two films focused on dhapi (male initiation ceremony) out in Yolṅu homelands. These two films are still some of the most popular ceremonial movies amongst the Yolṅu community. In 2016 Patrina graduated from an **AFTRS** short course in Melbourne and returned home inspired and completed a 7 part series documenting the hunting, preparation, and alchemy of the 7 colours of master weaver and colour dyer *Laṅani Marika* which was displayed at the **Darwin Film Festival** and is often used by young yolṅu weavers as a guide to dying pandanus. In 2017 Patrina delivered her first television commission for **NITV**, a documentary titled *Wandawuy Dhapi* (male initiation ceremony) and was a guest speaker on a panel at the 2017 **Tarnanthi Festival**. Also in 2017 Patrina produced and exhibited her first screen-based artwork at **The Good Shed Gallery** (Claremont WA) as part of the **Earth Matters Exhibition**. Her piece *Gurrkurr Dhalkuma* (Strengthening the Bloodlines) which was shot in 6K, focused on the properties of gapan (white clay) used for Yolṅu ceremony, art and health. This exquisite film piece has been described as meditative. As well as exhibiting her film she hosted workshops at the gallery the week of the opening, sharing her cultural knowledge. In 2018 Patrina produced another 6K film piece titled, *Dhunupa'kum Nhuna Wanda* (Straightening your Mind), this film piece was awarded the **2018 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Media Award**. In March 2019 Patrina travelled to Monash University, Caulfield and took part in a lecture to over 100 people, discussing the roles of The Mulka Project in the community of Yirrkala and later held a floor talk at **MUMA** discussing The Mulka Projects exhibition piece as part of the *Shapes of Knowledge* exhibition. She has just completed a commissioned collaborative 6k film piece with Ishmael Marika which will be displayed in March 2020 on a 3x16:9 screen at the **University of Technology Sydney**. The concept of their piece is based around Yolṅu mapping and the season of *Rarranhdharr*.

**Mundatjñu Munungurr** was one of only two students to complete their Year 12 studies and graduate in 2015 from Yirrkala School, an indigenous bi-lingual school located in a remote community in NE Arnhemland. As soon as she graduated she commenced employment as a Dhimurru Ranger to help protect and maintain the land for which she cares for deeply. During a year of conserving her and her Yolñu ancestors' country she discovered the potential of film as a medium for documenting her culture, keeping it safe and passing it down to the next generations. At the beginning of 2017 she embarked on her film career and acquired a position at The Mulka Project as a filmmaker in training. In her time at The Mulka Project, Mundatjñu's passion and skills for filmmaking has grown rapidly. Mundatjñu has helped film and produce a great number of cultural documentaries about the ceremony, language, art, and traditions of her Yolñu people. In 2017 Mundatjñu had two film works exhibited at major Australian art institutions. In 2018 she was involved in creating Virtual Reality environments for the Awaken exhibition at **Arts West Gallery** Melbourne University. In March 2019 Mundatjñu travelled to **Monash University** Caulfield with her Mulka workmates and took part in a lecture to over 100 people, discussing the roles of The Mulka Project in the community of Yirrkala, during this trip she also led a floor talk at MUMA regarding the Mulka Projects installation piece as part of the Shapes of Knowledge exhibition. In 2019 she contributed greatly to the development of the Gurrutu (Yolñu Kinship) Engine which was displayed as a multimedia piece at the **Art Gallery of South Australia** as part of Tarnanthi.

An accomplished filmmaker, artist, director and musician, **Ishmael Marika** has produced a plethora of works since his commencement at the Mulka Project in 2010. In 2011 Ishmael directed and produced his first film, which was a documentary on Yolñu land rights titled *Waña Watanumirri Dharuk*. This film has screened at many festivals as well as a private screening with the East Timor President Ramos Horta. In 2013 he was a finalist in the **NATSIAA Youth Award** for his piece *Sunlight Energy* and he also directed and produced a dramatic short film entitled *Galka*, which depicted Yolñu sorcery. *Galka* was launched to standing ovations at *Garma* and was also exhibited at **Primavera, Museum of Contemporary Art** in 2014 along side his other film art piece titled *My Grandfather Passing on a Message*, which was later, accessioned by the **National Gallery of Victoria**. In 2015 Ishmael worked with the **ABC** directing a short film *Gäpu Ga Gunda – The Art of Nongirriña Marawili* which, was broadcast as part of the **Art X North** project and he also produced *Rulyapa* for the **Slide** exhibition at **Gertrude Contemporary**. This same year he was recognised for his many achievements in film-making and community leadership and was presented the **NT Young Achiever of the Year Award**. 2016 Ishmael won the **NATSIAA Youth Award** for his video art piece *Sunlight Energy II* and the very next day received a **NIMA** award for best Traditional Song of the Year. 2017 saw Ishmael Marika produce by far his largest film piece, commissioned by **Transport for NSW**. Ishmael's 6K video piece called *Wunya'Gali* (The Other Side) was shot in 5 x 1 hour segments and is displayed at **Wynyard Station** Sydney on a giant curved LED screen, 23 metres wide and 3 metres high. *Wunya'Gali* provides a pure window into the life of a remote indigenous community existing in parallel with central Sydney, giving commuters and visitors a rare opportunity to witness the ebb and flow of indigenous life, alongside their own. Ishmael also collaborated with Martu desert screen artist Curtis Taylor on an art piece for the **In Cahoots** exhibition at the **Fremantle Art Centre** and in October 2017 Ishmael collaborated with famous artist Mr N. Wunungmurra on an installation called *Wanupini* (Cloud) for the **Art Gallery of SA** as part of **Tarnanthi Festival**. Ishmael's video projections accompanied Mr N. Wunungmurra's Larrikitj (burial poles). In 2018 Ishmael produced a film piece which is currently displayed at **Arts West Gallery**, Melbourne as part of the **Awaken** exhibition. Ishmael recently exhibited a collaborative artwork at **The National 2019** exhibition held at the **Museum of Contemporary Art** which is a projection of his clans water minytji (design) onto Larrikitj (burial poles). In 2019 he was heavily involved in the development of the *Gurrutu (Yolñu Kinship) Engine* which was displayed at the **Art Gallery of South Australia** during the **Tarnanthi Festival**. He also completed a collaborative piece with Patrina Munungurr, which will be displayed in March 2020 on a 3x16:9 screen at the **University of Technology Sydney**. The concept of their piece is based around Yolñu mapping and the season of *Rarranhdharr*.

The story of **Gutiŋarra Yunupiŋu** is inspirational. Despite being deaf since birth he has managed to overcome many barriers. He was one of only two students to complete their Year 12 studies and graduate in 2015 from Yirrkala School. As soon as Gutiŋarra graduated he was eager to commence employment at The Mulka Project as a Project Officer and filmmaker. Gutiŋarra works as a film-editor, producing his own creative films and also editing ceremonial footage filmed by himself and his teammates. Working as a cameraman takes him out to Yolŋu homelands where he regularly films cultural ceremonies and events. In 2017 Gutiŋarra Yunupiŋu produced a film for the Our Stories documentary series for **NITV** titled *Gutiŋarra Djälkiri* (Gutiŋarra's Journey), which focused on Yolŋu sign language, his first language. In that same year he also produced a collaborative video piece for **Tarnanthi**, titled *Yuta Mulkurr* (New Minds), which was exhibited at the Art Gallery of South Australia and in 2018, his film *Maykarran* (Lightening Strike) was a finalist in the Digital Portraiture Awards. In March 2019 Gutiŋarra travelled to Monash University Caulfield with his Mulka workmates and took part in a lecture to over 100 people, discussing the roles of The Mulka Project in the community of Yirrkala. Gutiŋarra recently was awarded the **Telstra NATSIAA Multimedia Award** for his 6k filmwork *Gurruŋu mi' mala* (*My Connections*) which demonstrates his connections to his people and his country through the Yolŋu kinship-system of gurruŋu. In this artwork he reveals his position in the world of gurruŋu through his first language, barrkuŋu waŋa (language from a distance) Yolŋu sign language. *Gurruŋu'mi mala* was later exhibited at the **Art Gallery of South Australia** as part of Tarnanthi 2019 and has received great interest due to the fascinating concept underlying this art piece and his history as a film maker and artist.

**Arian Ganambarr-Pearson** has been **Mulka Music's** head studio engineer since he commenced in 2015. He has developed into a competent sound engineer, music producer and has an amazing rapport with the Yirrkala community. He continues to work with a wide range of local artists across three generations and has gone above and beyond his work commitments to accommodate artists on weekends and well into the evenings. A crucial part of his job is to record songlines of the elders remotely and in the studio. These priceless recordings are kept safe in the Mulka Archive and made publicly accessible to the community. He has produced sound designs for many of The Mulka Projects exhibitions and films. Arian also works closely with school groups from Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy as well as hosts workshops in the Mulka Studio. Arian continues to work closely with, engineer and produce local artists and bands Marrtjala, Ezy 5, Marcus Lacey, Bala G, Johnathan Yunupiŋu, Aris MC, Yirrmal, The Y Boys, Yirrnŋa Yunupiŋu and other up and coming artists. He has also scored and produced music specifically to sync to Mulka Film productions and his background as a musician is a useful commodity in his role as studio engineer. Arian has helped female Yolŋu musician Dhapanbal Yunupiŋu's musical career flourish. In 2019 she released her debut album *Bidiwidi* which she produced in the Mulka Recording Studio with Arian mentoring her along the way.