

**THE CROSS  
ART PROJECTS**



#### **Injalak Arts And Crafts**

Injalak is located at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), population 1100, near Kakadu National Park border in Western Arnhem Land. The language spoken is Kunwinjku with English as a second language. Injalak opened in 1989 and has over 200 artist and weaver members from Gunbalanya and ten active outstations.

#### **The Cross Art Projects**

The Cross Art Projects promotes contemporary and historic art practices that cross establishment grids and allows small-scale investigations. The Cross Art Projects has the needs of curators who are working independently of institutions in mind and encourages the expression of social engagement.

#### **THE CROSS ART PROJECTS**

A space for independent art & curatorial studies

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#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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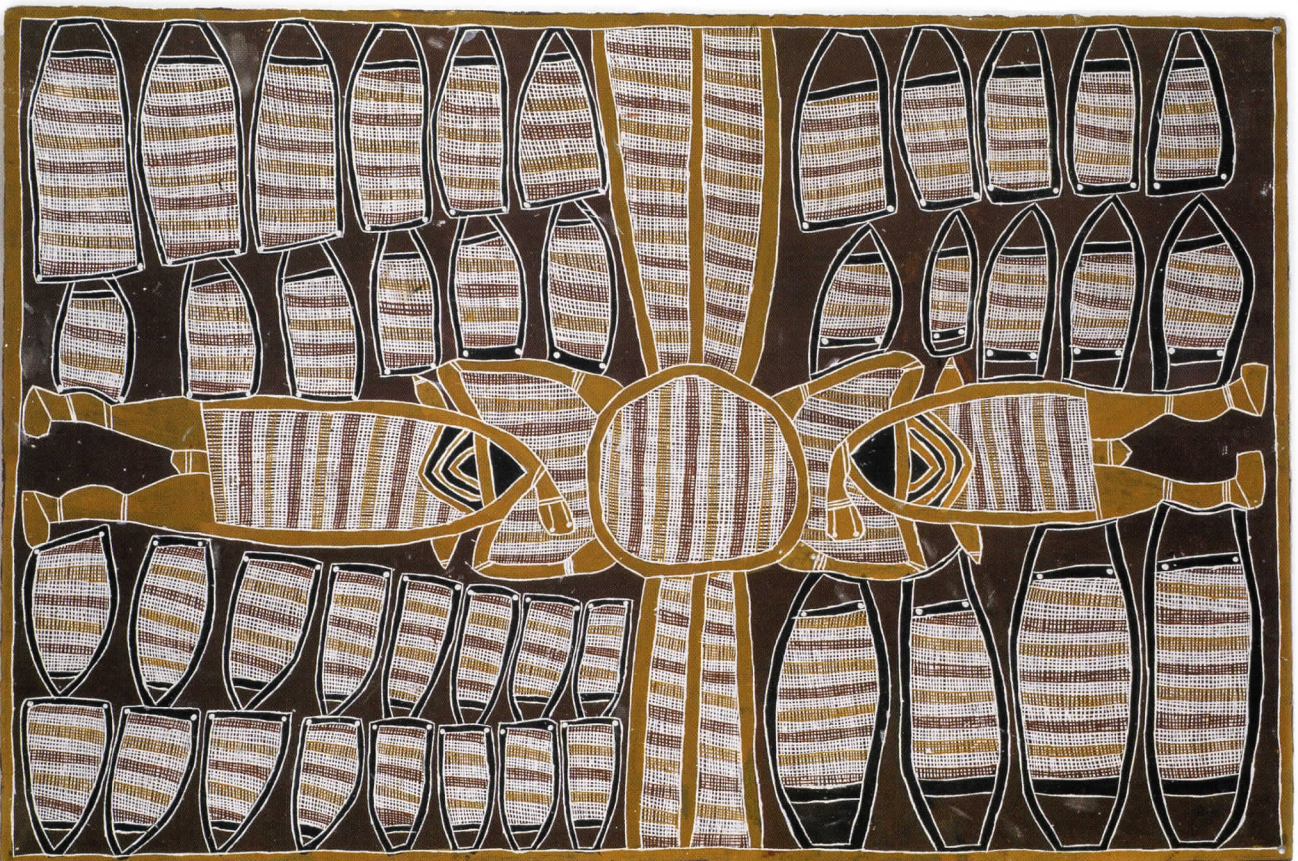
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# ENGLAND BANGGALA



**WATER, STONE AND SPIRIT**  
Paintings, 1999–2001





England Banggala, *Devil Spirits / Pandanus Mat*, 2001. 150 x 100cm

Cover: England Banggala, *Snakes Dreaming/ Djingabardiya and Djiarpuny*, 2001. 102 x 153cm

## ENGLAND BANGGALA WATER, STONE AND SPIRIT Paintings, 1999–2001

The Cross Art Projects in association  
with Injalak Arts & Crafts Assoc. Inc.,  
Western Arnhem Land

Curator Anthony Murphy

1 June–2 July 2005

### ENGLAND BANGGALA

England Banggala came to prominence as one of a group of artists who, from the mid-1970s, transformed an ancient rock and ceremonial painting tradition into a full-time profession. Artists such as England Banggala, Johnny Bulunbulun, Peter Bandjuidjul, Mick Kubarkku, John Mawurndjul, Jimmy Njiminjuma, Terry Ngamandara, put the Manningrida Arts Centre (est 1973) onto the international contemporary art map.

England Banggala, a fully initiated elder, recorded the history and religion of his ancestors on bark and paper. Banggala was born at isolated Cadell River in south-central Arnhem Land, home of his An-nguliny clan and Gun-natpa language speakers. The waterways and flood plains of this fertile and picturesque river region provide his themes and subjects. He passed away in late 2001, aged about 76.

England Banggala's late paintings focus on significant mythology interconnected over several sites: *Djijapuny*, the ancestral water snakes resembling Rainbow Serpents; *Jingabardiya*, the traveling female water spirits who changed into



England Banggala, *Funeral Log Dreaming*, 2001. 153 x 52cm



triangular pandanus fibre mats at the sacred water hole; *Bopjinyarr* and *Lorrkon Djang*, hollow funeral log Dreaming. These images can be read as a map of the ancestrally created landscape. The sites are also home to a number of totemic beings including mullet, *kapalma* (water lily), *birimurra* (leech), long-necked turtle, barramundi and crocodile.



England Banggala, *Pandanus Mat*, 1999, 100 x 75cm

Banggala's painting is typified by a strong line, bold design and purposeful symmetry achieved by use of a broad rather than fine brush. Rather than as background, the *rarrk* (cross-hatching) is restricted to clearly defined areas of the torso in the manner of ritual body painting. His works can be contemplative or energetically full of the rhythmic movement of fresh water beings.

Large areas of colour, dotted subdivisions and plain background reflect Banggala's association with the Rembarrnga language people of the isolated and inaccessible south-western and south-central Arnhem Land. Rembarrnga Aboriginal art, although stylistically individual, is united through common themes of water and stone country and spirit figures.

Bark was Banggala's preferred medium but he also made carvings and ventured successfully into printmaking. Later he preferred cotton paper and often spent long periods of time 'sitting down' at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), painting for Injalak Arts and Crafts which opened in 1989.

The art of England Banggala is hanging in major art galleries and museums and his bibliography is large. He exhibited in most Australian states and traveled with dance groups as a performer, singing and dancing in the traditional tribal way.

Significantly, he taught his daughter, the renowned artist Dorothy Galaledba, how to paint his stories. In 2000, Dorothy Galaledba won the male-dominated bark painting section of the prestigious Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Awards.

England Banggala was a visionary who saw the benefits of returning to homelands. In the early 1960s, as the senior ceremonial man, he took advantage of a colonial fiat and developed a market garden to supply the new service settlement of Maningrida. Gochan Jiny-jirra on the Cadell River became the first outstation, before the homelands movement gained the political momentum needed to establish the Land Rights Act.

Before settling at Gochan Jiny-jirra, like many of his contemporaries, Banggala moved around. He intermittently attended Milingimbi Methodist Mission School where the missionary named him England. He worked as a farmer and carpenter at his outstation, sometimes shot buffalo at Oenpelli and worked in Darwin for long periods.



England Banggala, *Djarbul*, 2000  
153 x 52cm

his life when he sat down to paint at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli). Banggala stayed regularly with Murphy, generously teaching his stories.

*Text adapted from: Anthony Murphy, 'Obituary for Elder from Cadell River', Association of Northern Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists, 2002*

Eventually Banggala married Mary Karbirra his promised wife and they raised seven children.

England Banggala's art and leadership is testimony to his conviction about the power of the creator beings and their continuing relevance in understanding life in this area of Arnhem Land.

As a mark of respect over the mourning period, England Banggala's family withdrew artworks held by Injalak Arts from public view. This is our first opportunity to view these remarkable late works.

Anthony Murphy, manager of Injalak Arts and Crafts, came to know England Banggala well during the last four years of



## ENGLAND BANGGALA (c. 1925–2001)

### SELECTED BIOGRAPHY

The artist was born around 1925 at an isolated outstation of Manningrida called Gochan Jiny-jirra (Cadell Gardens) on the Cadell River in Central Arnhem Land.

Tribe: Gunardba

Language: Buarra, Gun-nartpa dialect

Local Group (clan): An-nguliny

Social Affiliations: Yirricha moiety, Ngarrich subsection

### EXHIBITIONS

1982 *Aboriginal Art at the Top*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

1983 *Painted Objects from Arnhem Land*, University Drill Gallery, ANU

1987, 1992 & 1999 *Fourth, Ninth and Sixteenth National Aboriginal Art Award Exhibitions*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin

1988 *Bulawirri / Bugaja a Special Place*, National Gallery of Victoria

1988 *Gochan Jiny-jirra Artists*, MOCA, Brisbane

1989 *Aboriginal Art: The Continuing Tradition*, National Gallery of Australia

1990 *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia (cat.)

1990 *Balance 1990: views, visions, influences*, Queensland Art Gallery (cat.)

1990 *Spirit in Land, Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land*, National Gallery of Victoria (cat., Judith Ryan)

1990 *Keepers of the Secrets. Aboriginal Art from Arnhemland*, Art Gallery of Western Australia (cat., Michael O'Farrell)

1992–3 *New Tracks Old Land: An Exhibition of Contemporary Prints from Aboriginal Australia*, touring USA and Australia (cat.)

1993–4 *Aratara. Art of the First Australians*, Kunstmuseum Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf; Hayward Gallery, London; Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek, Denmark (cat., Bernard Luthi & Gary Lee)

1994 *Power of the Land, Masterpieces of Aboriginal Art*, National Gallery of Victoria (cat.)

1994 *Manningrida Collection*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (cat.)

*In the time before morning: Aboriginal Art, Jim Davidson Collection*, 1995, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

*Men of High Degree*, 1996, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

2000 Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of NSW (cat.)

### AWARDS

1992 Half Fellowship, Aboriginal Arts Unit, Australia Council for the Arts

### COLLECTIONS

Artbank, Art Gallery of NSW, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of Western Australia,

Australian National University, Christensen Collection, held Museum of Victoria, David Betz collection, New York, USA; Djömi Museum,

Manningrida; Gold Coast City Art Gallery; Holmes a Court Collection, Perth; Kluge Foundation,

Charlottesville, Virginia, USA; Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin;

Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Victoria, Myer Foundation, Melbourne; National

Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Walonia Aboriginal Art, The Netherlands.

### SELECTED REFERENCES

Caruana, Wally, *Aboriginal Art*, 1993, Thames and Hudson, London.

Discovery Media, Documentation Pty Ltd, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1990.

England Banggala, *Mullet*, 1999.  
150 x 56cm  
All works natural ochres on  
Arches 640gsm cotton paper

