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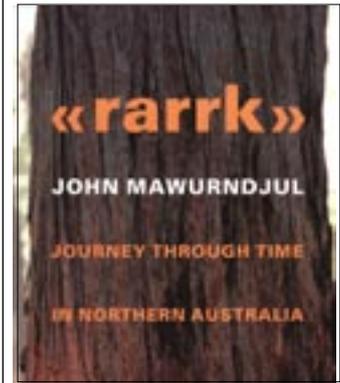
NEW BOOK INFORMATION

TITLE: *Rarrk – John Mawurndjul : Journey in Time in Northern Australia*

SYNOPSIS: John Mawurndjul is one of Australia's leading Aboriginal artists, if not the greatest of the living. This is a comprehensive monograph published in order to explore the many facets and avenues not only of John Mawurndjul's works, but following up on daily, practical and theoretical issues influencing Australian indigenous art.

John Mawurndjul is an innovator who has developed Kunwinjku bark painting from an iconic art form into a non-figurative style with a compelling geometry, building on the work of older leading Kunwinjku artists Yirawala, Marralwanga and Njiminjuma. Mawurndjul has, over the years, forged a new way of painting out of the old, transforming the dot infill X-ray method derived from figurative rock art and body painting into a total of non-figurative works, composed entirely of masses of *rarrk* (cross-hatching), unrelieved by figurative motifs. His complex and understated geometry, which is made up of infinitesimal, moiré-like cross-hatched variations – occasioning multiple shifts and optical gyrations within the paint layer – is no longer contained within the figurative envelope of an ancestral being, Mawurndjul invented a geometry which takes up the entire surface of the painting and today must be seen as the central focus of his work. As Judith Ryan, curator for indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria explains, the *rarrk* itself is indicative of ancestral potency and points to hidden internalized layers of past and present ceremonial practice. Ceremonies seldom performed today, but into which Mawurndjul was initiated as a young man, have left a lasting impression on his development as an artist. John Mawurndjul's work transcends its cultural and personal points of origin. It must be seen as indicative of his inherited rights and responsibilities to particular tracts of land, including ancestral sites and land-related ceremonies. This is represented in Land Rights – a highly political claim in Australia.

Taking the rapidly changing development of the past two or three decades as an indicator, John Mawurndjul's work fits well into a theoretical debate of how art was produced and understood in the course of the late twentieth century – in his case a body of works which has been widely neglected and taunted as "primitive", "ethnic" and/or "folk art" – and consequently draws us into an ongoing theoretical debate which marks the beginning and transformations of the new century we are entangled in. However, the pace and extent of the transformations that have taken place, and the sheer diversity of the art that has been, and still is being produced, mean that no single interpretative model can do justice to the whole. To quote Jason Gaiger, the contested nature of the past decades of twentieth-century art – and as a matter of fact of the art produced today – the competing claims for its significance have resulted in a plurality of interpretative approaches that rarely coincide either in their evaluative conclusions or in their underlying theoretical assumptions.



PUBLICATION DATE:
Oct. 2005

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280 x 230mm
11 x 9 inches

ILLUSTRATIONS:
140 full colour illustrations
maps.

ISBN:
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CATEGORY:
Australia, Aboriginal art,
Anthropology

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