



LARRAKITJ Kerry Stokes Collection

Curated by Anne Brody, Associate Curator, Kerry Stokes Collection.

Since 2000, a forest of Larrakitj comprising works by Yolngu artists from North East Arnhem Land has been gradually taking shape in Perth. The public now has the opportunity to see this unique collection of 95 memorial poles in this free exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Larrakitj are sculptures that originate as trees in stringybark forests. Hollowed out by termites, the trees selected for Larrakitj are usually harvested after the dry season fires. A cultural cycle then begins as the trunks are smoothed and shaped until the surface is ready to be painted in ochres. Each completed Larrakitj is an imposing presence.

Covered in iconic imagery of sea and land, saltwater and freshwater, Larrakitj present a deeply layered experience of people, places and clans from Blue Mud Bay to Arnhem Bay.

The past decade has been revolutionary for Larrakitj, which are now among the most powerful aesthetic objects in contemporary Australian art. Their realm of importance now reaches far beyond their historical origins in traditional funeral rites.

On display are works by 36 men and women representing two generations. The exhibition contains and promotes an energizing dialogue about the public and personal, the past and the present, about tradition and innovation.

The artists are represented by Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, a Yolngu-owned arts centre and cultural hub of Yirrkala, an Indigenous township on the western side of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

**Larrakitj will be on display at the Art Gallery of Western Australia
13 February – 31 May 2009. FREE**

Nawurapu Wunungmurra, 1952-
Garraparra (*Gitkit*) 2006 [detail]
earth pigments on naturally hollowed log, h. 288 cm
Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth

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