



Carissa Gurlwalwal

Born 1990, Western Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia.

BIOGRAPHY

Carissa Gurwalwal is the daughter of renowned weaver, Barbara Gurwalwal, whose work is included in collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. Gurwalwal lives in Gunbalanya, western Arnhem Land, and speaks Kune and Kunwinjku. Her skin name is Ngarridjdan and her Country is Buluhkaduru.

For many language groups in western Arnhem Land, *wak wak* (black crow) is a significant, ancestral creature. At a Dreaming place called Kurrurldul in western Arnhem Land, an ancestral *wak wak* called Djimarr stands in the middle of a creek in the form of a rock. The water there is black like the feathers of the *wak wak* which signifies its toxicity. The water of this creek is not good to drink. Stories such as these which emerge from an oral tradition and relate to the physical landscape serve to remind their listeners of knowledge crucial for survival and wellbeing. Gurlwalwal paints *wak wak* using *rarrk* (crosshatching), a technique traditionally used to indicate ancestral presence. The iconography she uses to depict *wak wak* stems from ceremonial body paint designs.

Aside from painting, Gurwalwal sculpts mimih spirits from wood. Among some Indigenous peoples of western Arnhem Land, there is a shared belief that the mimih were responsible for this region's oldest cave paintings depicting these spirits. Mimih are considered the first ancestors and are told to have arisen from crevices in rock faces to teach the Kunwinjku people how to hunt, cook, make love, dance, sing and paint. Mimih spirits are often depicted as wispy, elongated figures and yet, despite their delicacy, they are told to be capable of fatally injuring humans if approached in the wrong way.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 *Revelation & Concealment*, JGM Gallery, London, United Kingdom
2022 *Karrimarnbun Daluhdaluk (Women Creating Together)*, Coconut Studios, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia

JGM GALLERY

24 Howie Street London SW11 4AY

Phone: +44 (0) 207 228 6027 | Email: info@jgmgallery.com | Website: www.jgmgallery.com