



Carissa Gurwalwal

Born 1990, West Arnhem Land, Australia.

BIOGRAPHY

Carissa Gurwalwal is the daughter of renowned weaver Barbara Guwalwal. Residing in Gunbalanya, Gurwalwal works full-time at West Arnhem Shire's Aged Care Facility. Although she is new to painting, her work is already attracting the attention of collectors and galleries nationally and internationally.

Gurwalwal's interpretation of Wak Wak (Black Crow) is exact and striking and reminiscent of the work of her late aunty Ngabangardi Gunjarwwanga, who continues to be an inspiration for her in her artwork. Wak is the language word for black crow in many Kakadu and West Arnhem language groups. It is also the name for a significant and sacred djang (dreaming) site in West Arnhem Land at a place called Kurruldul, specific to bininj (aboriginal people) of the Kurulk clan. Often when artists depict this djang, the rarrk (crosshatching) painted is representing 'Djimarr', the black crow that resides at Kurruldul. It is said that the 'Djimarr' took the form of a rock formation, that now sits at the bottom of Kurruldul creek. This design is sometimes used in sacred ceremonial practices in Arnhem Land, which is painted onto bodies, representing 'Djimarr'.

As well painting, Gurwalwal creates an array of Mimih Spirits. The Aboriginal people of western Arnhem Land say that their Mimih rock pictures were painted not by humans but by the Mimih spirits. The drawings, usually in red ochre, show elegant, graceful stick-like human figures in action - fighting, running, dancing, leaping and hunting, preparing meat and using fire. The Mimih live in the nooks and crannies of the rocky landscape, coming out at night. They are said to be so thin and frail that they can emerge from their hiding places only when there is no wind, otherwise they would be blown away. The Mimih not only created these lively self-portraits, but also are the Dreaming ancestors who taught people to paint, hunt, dance and compose songs.

They are like humans but they live in a different dimension. They were depicted during the freshwater period. The Mimih are dangerous if approached the wrong way, may kick, knee, slap, smash with a racket like object or sit on someone; which causes sometimes fatal injuries.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2023 *Ngurna*, JGM Gallery, London, United Kingdom

2022 *Karrimarnbun Daluhdaluk (Women Creating Together)*, Coconut Studios, Darwin, Australia

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24 Howie Street London SW11 4AR

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