

***Maḍayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*
premieres at Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, in September 2022**

First major exhibition of Aboriginal Australian bark paintings to tour the U.S.



HANOVER, N.H. — From a remote corner of Australia has emerged one of the most powerful painting movements of our time. *Maḍayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala* traces more than 80 years of significant contributions to global modern and contemporary art by some of Australia’s leading artists. Curated by Yolḷu people of northern Australia, *Maḍayin* invites you to experience this great tradition from the perspective of those who shaped it. With 90 seminal paintings—many never before seen in the United States—from the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia and other institutions worldwide, the exhibition offers a rare opportunity for American audiences to experience the grace and majesty of this revered artistic tradition.

Organized by Kluge-Ruhe in partnership with the Buku-Larrḡgay Mulka Centre in Australia, *Maḍayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala* debuts at Dartmouth College’s Hood Museum of Art, which collaborated on its content and presentation, in Hanover, New Hampshire, September 3–December 4, 2022, before embarking on a sweeping two-year nationwide tour. The exhibition, which is the first in-depth presentation of bark painting in the U.S., will be accompanied by a comprehensive 352-page bilingual catalog (in Yolḷu-matha and English).

“*Maḍayin* extends the Hood Museum’s well-established commitment to Aboriginal Australian art,” said John Stomberg, Virginia Rice Kelsey 1961s Director. “These paintings represent an art movement unlike any other. This work, compelling and original, is thoroughly of one place: Yirrkala.”

For millennia, Yolḷu people around Yirrkala in northern Australia have painted their clan designs on their bodies and ceremonial objects. These designs are not merely decorative; they are the sacred patterns of the ancestral land itself. Yolḷu describe them as *maḍayin*, a term that encompasses both the sacred and the beautiful. In the 20th century, Yolḷu people turned to painting on eucalyptus bark with ochres to express the power and beauty of their culture. The result was an outpouring of creativity that continues to this day as artists find new and innovative ways to transform their ancient mark-making traditions into compelling contemporary statements.

The artists of Yirrkala are at the forefront of Australian contemporary art. In recent years, their work has been included in biennales in Istanbul, Moscow and Sydney and in the Asia-Pacific Triennial, while being collected by major public institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, British Museum and National Gallery of Australia.

The idea for the exhibition was born when acclaimed artist and Yolŋu cultural leader Djambawa Marawili AM found his clan designs on bark paintings in American museums during a residency at Kluge-Ruhe in 2015. He suggested an exhibition that would tell “the whole story” of Yolŋu bark painting from a Yolŋu perspective.

As Marawili has stated: “The land has everything it needs. But it couldn’t speak. It couldn’t express itself. Tell its identity. And so it grew a tongue. That is the Yolŋu. That is me. We are the tongue of the land. Grown by the land so it can sing who it is. We exist so we can paint the land.”

Maḍayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala is the result of a collaboration that began in Fall 2015 between Kluge-Ruhe and Yolŋu artists and curators, who have led the project at every stage of its development. The exhibition opens the door for Yolŋu Aboriginal Australian people to tell the story of their culture and heritage. Recognizing Indigenous authority and leadership, *Maḍayin* is the first exhibition curated by Yolŋu for an international audience. The exhibition, publication, virtual site and tour reshape how museums engage with Indigenous art and people, transforming institutional hierarchies of knowledge.

A key component of *Maḍayin* is the commissioning of 33 new works by important Yolŋu artists Djambawa Marawili, Nyapanyapa Yunupinju, Gunybi Ganambarr, Nongirrŋa Marawili, Naminapu Maymuru-White and Wukun Waŋambi. This extraordinary selection of new work represents the finest body of bark paintings produced in the last three decades, complementing older works in the exhibition that date as far back as 1935.

After its premiere at the Hood Museum of Art, *Maḍayin* will travel to the American University Museum at the Katzen Art Center, Washington, D.C., January 28–May 21, 2023; the Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles, August 20, 2023–January 14, 2024; and the Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, February 22–July 21, 2024.

The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia is the only museum in the U.S. dedicated to the exhibition and study of Indigenous Australian art. As the foremost public collection of Aboriginal Australian art outside of Australia, the museum has collaborated on exhibition and education projects with public institutions across the world, including the National Museum of Women in the Arts, National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of South Australia and Musée de la civilisation.

Maḍayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala is organized by the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia. Its presentation at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth is generously supported by the Charles Gilman Family Endowment, the Owen and Wagner

Collection of Aboriginal Australian Art Endowment Fund and the Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation. The exhibition has been made possible through the longstanding relationship between Kluge-Ruhe and the Yolŋu community at Yirrkala. More information about the exhibition can be found at madayin.kluge-ruhe.org.

###

About the Hood Museum of Art

The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth centers art and people in teaching and learning through inclusive and robust academic, cultural and civic engagements with art and its histories. It seeks to advance learning, care and connections through the reach and relevance of visual art and material culture as a nexus for the exchange of ideas. With its renewed focus on serving Dartmouth's faculty and academic mission, the recently expanded facility broadens the museum's reach to students, faculty and departments across campus, while deepening its engagement with its longtime stakeholders. It also makes a bolder statement about the significance of the arts within the life of Dartmouth and provides the arts district with an arresting front door to the Green.

About Dartmouth College

Dartmouth College educates the most promising students and prepares them for a lifetime of learning and of responsible leadership, through a faculty dedicated to teaching and the creation of knowledge. The Dartmouth model is unique in higher education: the fusion of a renowned liberal arts college and robust research university where students and faculty partner to take on the world's great challenges. Since its founding in 1769, Dartmouth has provided an intimate and inspirational setting where talented faculty, students and staff—diverse in background but united in purpose—contribute to the strength of an exciting academic community that cuts easily across disciplines.

About the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia

The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection expands knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian arts and cultures to cultivate greater appreciation of human diversity and creativity. With a collection of more than 2,200 objects, Kluge-Ruhe offers a variety of rich programming on-site and digitally. Its well-established residency programs bring eminent Indigenous artists and knowledge holders to Charlottesville to engage with the University of Virginia community and the public. Kluge-Ruhe is committed to expanding Indigenous leadership throughout the museum and creating high-value, immersive experiences to serve broader audiences.

Media contacts:

Stephanie Elton

Blue Water Communications

800.975.3213

elton@bluewatercommunications.biz

Nils Nadeau

Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth

Associate Director, External Relations and Operations

603.646.2095

Nils.A.Nadeau@dartmouth.edu

Anna Kaye Schulte

Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth

Public Relations Assistant

603.646.2821

Anna.Kaye.M.Schulte@dartmouth.edu

Image: Gunybi Ganambarr, *Garrapara*, 2018, natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, 64 11/16 x 21 1/4 in. (163 x 54 cm). Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, The 2017–19 Kluge-Ruhe Maḍayin Commission; 2020.EL.0004.017