



Johnathon World Peace Bush, Murrintawi (white people), 2021, locally sourced natural earth pigments on linen 150cm x 200cm. Photo: Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association

Melbourne Art Fair by Victoria Perin

19 Feb 2022

● Buku-Larrngay Mulka, Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association, Milingimbi Art and Culture Aboriginal Corporation, Waringarri Aboriginal Arts, Warlayirti Artists Aboriginal Corporation, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre 17 Feb – 20 Feb 2022

Honestly, the 2022 Melbourne Art Fair is good. It's even great in parts. The greatest part by far is blandly named the "Indigenous Art C the non-profit Agency Projects, which is seemingly funded initiatives and other "innovative philanthropists". If I squin it's revealed that they have fully footed the bill for five rem governed Art Centres to attend the Fair and produce fancy represented artists. Excellent! Now we're talking! We love t flowing to the best sites of contemporary art making in the

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and Warlayirti Artists—aren't pulling any punches either. They've brought the A-team.

I've never seen Ben Galmirrl Ward's work in the flesh before. It's essential to closely observe the organic triangle that he uses to depict the crannies of a water-systems, valleys and ranges of the Miriwoong people's land (at the eastern extremity of the Kimberley). The triangles are so soft, so non-geometric, that they almost appear quilted across the country. This innovation would be enough, but Ward also has a breathtaking technique for depicting clouds. Like nothing I've seen before, they're serpents, they're birds' wings and beaks, they're pointy and weightless. Cast against grim, grey skies, the overall effect is tender and melancholy.



Ben Galmirrl Ward, *Boolgoormirri and Jigoomirri*. 2022, natural pig
130 x 125 cm. Photo: Waringarri Aboriginal Arts

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jilamara (body painting design), Bush depicts popes and other appropriated western figures with an all-over verve that seems a fitting replacement for Catholic velvets and gold.

From Tiwi opulence to Milingimbi solemnity, walk across the Fair to Helen Ganalmirriwuy Garrawurra’s exhibition and you’ll find a very distinct mood. A minimal painter who has permission to use Liyagawumirr sacred geometry in natural red, yellow and white, Garrawurra and her sister, Margaret Rarru Garrawurra, have also developed a black (*mol*) dye for natural fibres. Woven into a radiating circular mat that is displayed on the wall, the black dye lends inarguable power to Garrawurra’s dark sun-forms.



Wanapati Yunupiñu, *Gurtha*, 2021, engraved aluminium, 75 x 75 x 5 cm
Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre

While Patsy Mudge dell might have the most beautiful pair of two recent works appearing to dissolve in front of you, the

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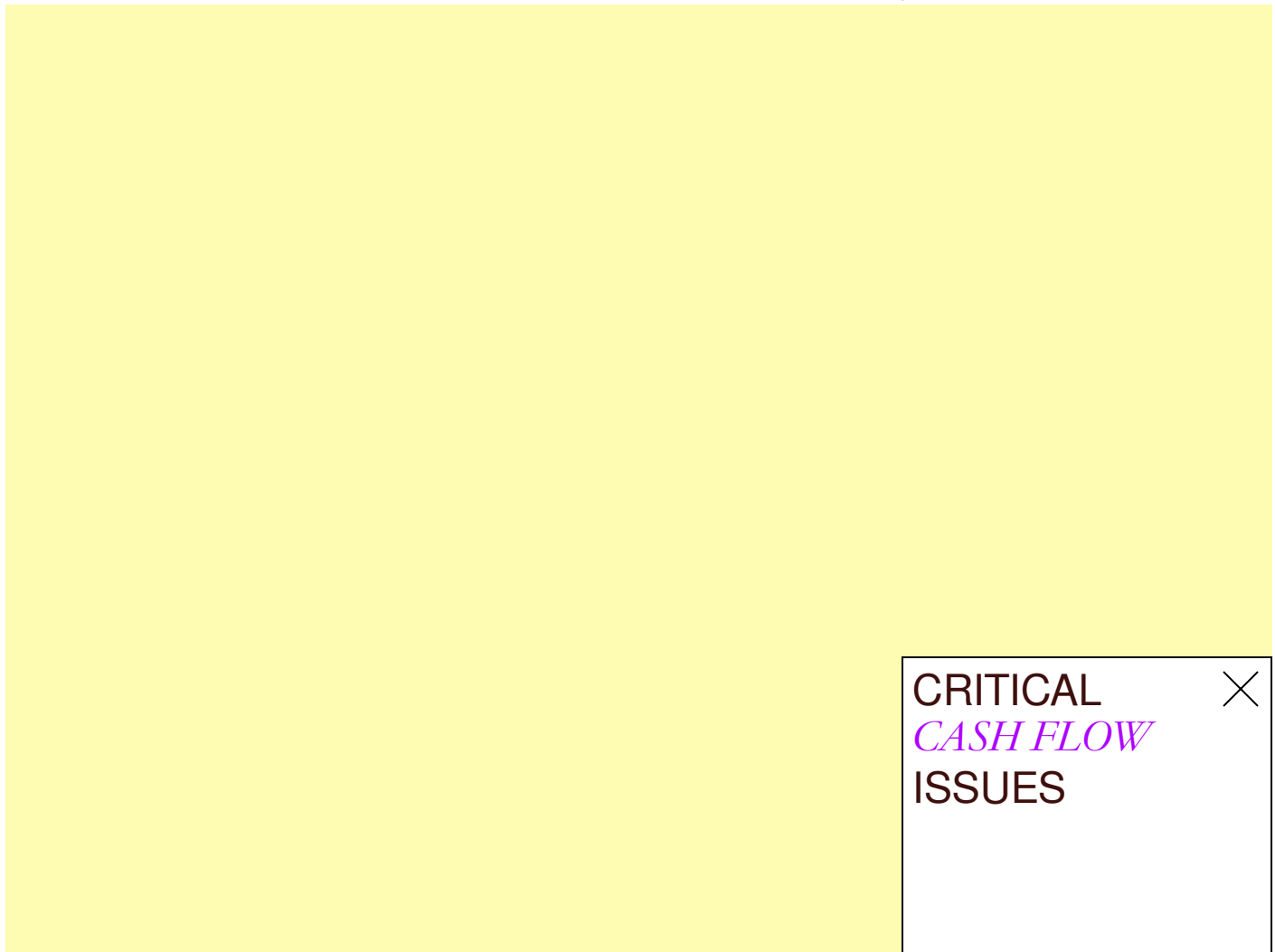
otherwise), which sets a special corner of the Fair on fire. The south looked jealously to the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art in Darwin late last year when the exhibition *Murrjiny* surveyed eight artists from Yirrkala, all working in the medium of engraved “steel” (found metals). Now we get a piece of it ourselves, with Yunupinju’s *murrjiny* paintings that overlay images of marine life (from deep and shallow water) with ancestral designs of fire. These works *do* appear both hot and cool. The exposed aluminium twinkles innocently, but I wouldn’t touch the *murrjiny* surface; cut with a rotary drill, I bet it’s sharp as hell.

ARTISTS: BEN GALMIRRL WARD, JOHNATHON WORLD PEACE BUSH, HELEN GANALMIRRIWUY GARRAWURRA, PATSY MUDGEDELL, WANAPATI YUNUPIJU

Victoria Perin lives in Naarm and is a PhD student at the University of Melbourne.

PREVIOUS

By Giles Fielke, 19 Feb 2022



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Melbourne Art Fair, 17 Feb – 20 Feb 2022 Neon Parc, Anna Schwartz Gallery, FUTURES, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Justin Miller Art, Yavuz Gallery, 1301SW

By Paris Lettau, 4 Feb 2017

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