



# Short St. Gallery



## Ngamaru Bidu

**Born** 1949  
**Language** Manyjilyjarra  
**Region** East Pilbara, WA

*"I been born [around] Karanyal and Martiliri (Canning Stock Route Well 22) in the parna (ground), only claypan. My jamu (grandfather) [was also] Jakayu [Biljabu's] father, my father's daddy. My mummy born long way, near to Wikiri (Midway Well) area. My father born Pitu (Separation Well). I'm biggest one [I was the eldest of five siblings]; me, Neil, Ivy, Gladys, then Caroline. My sister Gladys been born Wantili, Ivy born Georgia Bore (Pitarny), Caroline been born in Jigalong [Mission]. We walked around together [as we were] growing up."*

[As a child, Ngamaru walked around with her family, living a pujiman (traditional, desert dwelling) lifestyle. In 1963 Ngamaru saw a whitefella for the first time near Wiumukurrujunu rockhole; surveyor Len Beadell grading a road across the desert as part of a military weapons testing program. Shortly after this meeting Ngamaru, along with the other 28 Martu she had been travelling with, was tracked and pursued up by the Native Welfare Department. The group was eventually persuaded to move to Jigalong mission to join their relatives that had already moved in from the desert.]

*"They been chase us, long way - me, Ivy, and Kuru (Gladys) ran away with Mitchell and Teddy Biljabu. Kumpaya, Bugai and my mother ran away quick too. Landrover he been pick us up for Parngurr, all the lot, [driving on the] track for Jigalong. Family all coming in. I been come for first time [it was my first time in a vehicle]. I was naked one, put a blanket for kurnta (shame). I been living there in Jigalong with my mummy and family. I been working in the dining hall, making bread for kid. I been meet my nyupa (spouse), Mr Booth, and had a son, Ned Booth."*

- Ngamaru Bidu

Ngamaru was born at Martiliri (Well 22 on the Canning Stock Route), the eldest of four siblings. Her mother came from the area around Wikiri and her father from Pitu. As a child



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Ngamaru lived a pujiman lifestyle, and walked around with her family, moving from water source to water source dependent on the seasonal rain cycles. They often travelled with their extended relatives, Bugai Whyoulter and Jakayu Biljabu's families.

When Ngamaru was a teenager, her family and their travelling companions were tracked by Native Patrol Officers and staff from the Jigalong Mission. The group was persuaded to move to Jigalong Mission, where they rejoined the many family members that had already moved in from the desert. At the mission, Ngamaru's sister and some of the Biljabu family were sent to school, but Ngamaru went to work making bread.

From Jigalong Ngamaru moved to Strelley Community, where she met her husband, Joshua Booth. Together with their children they later moved to Warralong and then Punmu Aboriginal Communities before settling in Parngurr Aboriginal community (Cotton Creek), where Ngamaru continues to live today.

Ngamaru has painted since 2006. She has frequently painted with senior artists and relatives Mitutu Mabel Wakarta (dec.) and Kumpaya Girgaba. Ngamaru is known for the beautifully complex compositional structures and intricate patterning in her work, through which she very often explores the practice of fire burning in her Country and its related Martu cyclical seasonal changes. Ngamaru's work has been exhibited in galleries internationally and throughout Australia and acquired by the National Museum of Australia. She was selected in 2019 for the prestigious John Stringer Art Prize exhibition.

## Group Exhibitions

2024	Spirits of the Lands, Yaama Ganu, NSW
2024	Powerhouse Wanti, Moores Building Art Space, Fremantle, WA
2024	Outsider Art Fair, New York
2024	Following in Footsteps, Martumili Gallery, Newman WA
2024	Martumili Artists at Japingka Gallery, Fremantle
2023	Dancing For Our Country, Yaama Ganu, Moree, NSW
2023	Desert Mob 2023, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs
2023	TDF Collect Presents: 'Martumili Artists', Collingwood, Vic
2023	Mirrka (bushfoods), Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2023	Jury Art Awards Exhibition, Courthouse Gallery, Port Hedland, WA
2023	Songlines - Centres dart du desert australien, IDAIA/ Australian Embassy, Paris, France
2022	Marlakuringu - Return / Come Back, Yaama Ganu Gallery, Moree, NSW
2022	Waru (Fire), Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2022	Nyinani (Staying put)
2022	Tracks We Share



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2020	Ngurra Means Home, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2020	Belonging to Martu, Harvey Arts Project, Idaho, US
2020	Strong Country, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2020	Kujungka- Young and Old Together, Aboriginal Signature, Brussels, Belgium
2019	Desert Mob 2019, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2019	Salon Des Refuses 2019, Darwin, NT
2019	Martumili Kuulkaja (Martu Schools), Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2019	Nyumma (burnt Country), Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2019	Martu Wangka, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2018	Desert Mob 2019, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2018	Warla Tuwa, Aboriginal Contemporary, Bronte, NSW
2018	Martuku Ninti (Martu Knowledge), Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
2018	Voice of the custodians of the Homeland: Martumili, Aboriginal Signature Estrangin Gallery, Bruxelles
2017	Art at the Heart, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2017	Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters, touring exhibition from National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT
2017	Desert Mob, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2017	Salon Des Refusees, Charles Darwin University Gallery, NT
2017	Community Life, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2017	After The Rains, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2017	Constellation, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2017	Women of Martu, Suzanne OConnell Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
2016	Light Geist, Fremantle Arts Centre, Perth, WA
2016	Scratching the Surface, Alliance Francaise de Sydney. Sydney, NSW
2016	Black White & Restive, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW
2016	Summer Salon and Art Parade, Whistlewood, McCulloch and McCulloch, Mornington Peninsula, VIC
2015	Three Deserts Singing, Frewen Arts, Piccadilly, Mayfair, London, UK
2015	Palya, Martumili Artists, Tjarlirli Art and Warakurna Artists, Vivien Anderson Gallery, Brightspace, St Kilda, VIC
2015	Tarnanthi, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, SA
2015	Desert Mob, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2015	Hedland Art Award, The Courthouse Gallery, Port Hedland, WA
2015	Martumili Artists, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2015	Pukuripa - Good Inside, Yaama Ganu Gallery, Moree, NSW
2015	Together as One Martu - Art from the far Western Desert, The Gallery Shop, Waverley, NSW
2014	Martumili, Harvey Art Projects, USA



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2014	Martu Art From the Western Desert, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW
2013	Australia, Royal Academy of the Arts, London, England, UK
2013	Desert Mob, Araluen Art Centre, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2013	Painting It Martu Way, Art Mob, Hobart, TAS
2012	November We Don't Need A Map: a Martu experience of the Western Desert, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2012	Martumili Artists 2012, Merenda Gallery, Perth, WA
2012	Decrochage de l'exposition des Martumili Artists, Galerie Kungka, France
2012	Martumili Artists at Art Mob, Art Mob, Hobart, TAS
2011	Waru! Holding Fire in Australia's Western Desert, Thomas Welton Stanford Art Gallery, Stanford University, San Francisco, USA
2011	Yiwarra Kuju – One Road, One People, Australian Museum, Sydney, NSW
2011	Yiwarra Kuju – One Road, One People, Perth Convention Exhibition Centre, Perth, WA
2011	Revealed – Emerging Aboriginal Artists from Western Australia, Gallery Central, Perth, WA
2010	Martumili Group Exhibition, AP Bond Gallery, Adelaide, SA
2010	Yiwarra Kuju – One Road, One People, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT
2010	Jakulpa laju kartyinpa (Bringing a message), Chapman Gallery, Canberra, ACT
2010	Martumili Group Exhibition, Redot Art Gallery, Singapore
2009	Puntu kumu (Belongs to the people), Newman Visitors Centre, Newman, WA
2009	Nintijunu (Teaching), Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney, NSW
2009	Desert Mob, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2009	Wangka-Lampaju (Our Story), Randell Lane Gallery, Perth, WA
2009	Warranpalampa (Our Country), William Mora Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
2008	Martumili Artists, Port Hedland Courthouse Arts Centre and Gallery, Port Hedland, WA
2008	Jitirangu (Rainbow), Randell Lane Gallery, Perth, WA
2007	Martu-la wakamu kuwarri wiyaju, William Mora Galleries, Melbourne, VIC

## Collections

Art Gallery of Western Australia  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia  
National Gallery of Victoria  
National Museum of Australia



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## Awards

2019	Finalist, Hadleys Art Prize, TAS
2019	Finalist, John Stringer Art Prize, John Curtin Gallery
2013	Finalist, Glencore Art Centre Award