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Project



The Buku Art Centre and Mulka Project aims to sustain and protect Yolŋu cultural knowledge in Northeast Arnhem Land, Australia under the leadership of community members. The Mulka production house and archive is managed by Yolŋu law, governance and culture. The Mulka Project is actively involved in partnerships with academia, museums and individual researchers with collections and projects significant to the region.

As the Mulka Project explains, 'The sacred art of this region details the spiritual forces behind the on-going Creation and continuing identity of the fresh and saltwater country of the Miwatj region.' Under Yolŋu Law the 'Land' extends to include sea. Both land and sea are connected in a single cycle of life for which the Yolŋu hold the songs and designs. The art of the Yirrkala region has been developing an appreciative audience since the township was founded as a mission in 1935 and work from Yirrkala was amongst the earliest commercial Aboriginal art marketed overseas.

To demonstrate their rights and responsibilities over specific areas of both coast and sea, and to protect those same marine environments from abuse by outsiders, the landowners

Yirrkala Art Centre, Yirrkala, Northern Territory, Australia. 1997.

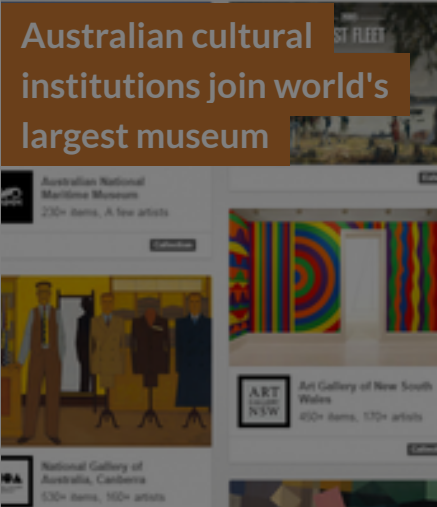
combined to make the Saltwater Collection of Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country in 1997. The collection of 80 bark paintings made by 47 Yolŋu artists toured nationally (1998-2001) and is now held at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. It formed part of the Yolŋu legal case for recognition of these rights. After a lengthy court case which went through every level of the court system, the High Court determined in 2008 that the Yolŋu were the owners of sea estates covering Aboriginal land.

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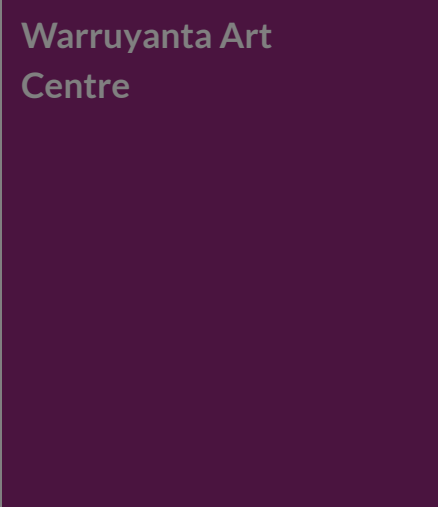
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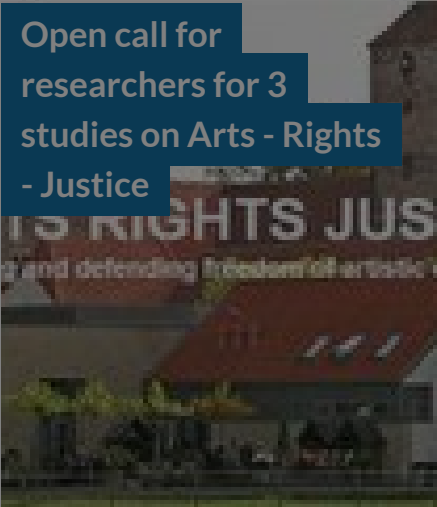
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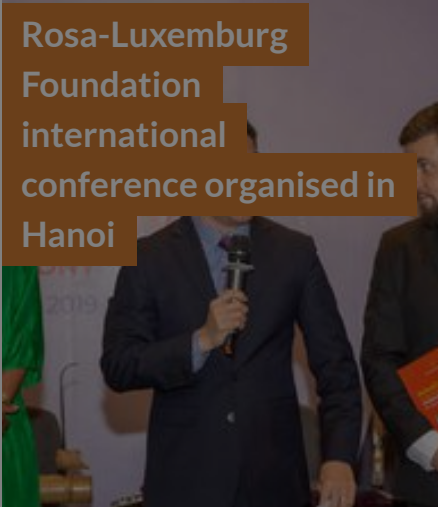
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