Exegesis

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Awakening Kalkadoon Art: A New Dreaming

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Statement of Contribution

I am firstly appreciative for the academic and personal support of my supervisors, Associate Professor Robyn Glade-Wright, and Dr. Kristi Giselsson. We have together become a competent team and the resulting exegesis is testament to their contribution in facilitating my progression as an academic and artist. I would also like to thank other J.C.U. students and staff members, including Professor Martin Nakata and Maree Searston for their continuing willingness to offer their guidance and assistance.

Uncle Jimmy has always been a mentor of mine in the family and his knowledge and wisdom of Kalkadoon culture is invaluable.

Abstract

This exegesis chronicles my journey of researching Kalkadoon art and creating a body of creative work to indicate a new Kalkadoon Dreaming. This research was combined and compared with historically documented information. I commenced with practice-led research and progressed to implement a new methodology that I have termed informed-practice-led research. This new method combines ideas of Indigenous Research Methodologies (I.R.M.) and Western creative practice research methods. I.R.M. are a necessary and vital form of research for academic institutions, offering an important counterpoint to Western research methods.

I have contextualised Kalkadoon art as a means of maintaining a connection to my culture. I have then situated my own Kalkadoon arts practice with various Indigenous and non-Indigenous arts practices and philosophies through the sources and influences that have informed my works of art.

My research and creative practice have culminated in a major exhibition and this exegesis describing my awakening and new knowledge developed through the process of creating my art. This project is significant as it has created a new approach to research and Kalkadoon painting that may function as an informative resource for future art practitioners.

My personal aims have been to maintain a connection to my culture and spirituality through painting. The writing is what confirms this by creating a complete record for further criticism and expansion.

Along with this exegesis, I have produced nine highly considered paintings that shall, I hope, have meaning for the community and other Indigenous peoples. I hope this knowledge will add to the canon of Indigenous art within Australia, and as there are only a few practicing Kalkadoon artists, there is also scope for the research to enable future art practitioners.

There is value in Kalkadoon culture, and it is through art that I can best explore, express, and share it. Art is a tangible form of individual expression and interaction with traditional forces that can help shape and guide our people into a strong future, secure in the knowledge of our long history of a spiritual connection to the land.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Ngai Kalkutungu - I am Kalkadoon. The Kalkadoon are the Indigenous people from the land of the Mount Isa region of north-west Queensland. Kalkadoon has become the name for our people who share common lands, customs, and beliefs. We are many, we are proud, and we are strong in our culture. *Kalkutungu* is the proper pronunciation while 'Kalkadoon' is the anglicised version and, as it is the more familiar, it will be used throughout. I have also incorporated the use of italics to indicate less common Indigenous words, titles, and scientific names.

The term 'Country' will be capitalised to emphasise that Australian Indigenous peoples are custodians of their land and, to reiterate the intimate connection we have to the natural environment. For example, *Kuathuat* or the Rainbow Serpent is a major protagonist in the Dreaming who takes many forms including that of a male rainmaker, a male or female water snake, and water itself in the form of rivers, waterholes, rain, clouds or a rainbow.

'Dreaming' is a term used to explain what has been described as Indigenous Australian's "animist cosmology" (McLean, 2016, p. 16). However, it is not descriptive or inclusive enough and over time has become reductive. Barry Hill emphasised how from the outset there was confusion around the precise meaning when he wrote that the term 'Dreaming' was a "…slight mistranslation" of the *Arrernte* word *Alcheringa* (Hill, 2003, p. 11). *Ritjinguthinha* is the Kalkadoon term for Dreaming however, for reasons of clarity, I have chosen to retain the use of the term 'Dreaming' and use the Kalkadoon term where appropriate. I will elaborate on the concepts in later chapters.

Art is the medium through which I can awaken and connect with my Kalkadoon culture. In this Master of Philosophy research project, titled Awakening Kalkadoon Art: A New Dreaming, I have positioned traditional cultural knowledge and symbols in contemporary works of art as a vital source of meaning making. This research commenced with practice-led research involving cultural history, early records of Kalkadoon symbols and the process of painting. My family's knowledge has then been combined with research and history of the Kalkadoon. My work has been informed by records of Indigenous symbols from the broader north-west Queensland region. The research is informed by discussions with my family members, and especially my elder Uncle Jimmy who has given me permission to paint Kalkadoon symbols and images in

my new Dreaming. My research and practice have culminated in a major exhibition and exegesis describing my awakening and new knowledge developed through the process of creating my art. I have developed a personalised Kalkadoon regional style of painting using a visual language that conforms to Kalkadoon regional perspectives and knowledge.

My paintings are based on the idea of a formalised process involving aesthetic devices learned from knowledgeable family members, theories of art and details of Kalkadoon and other Indigenous arts practice. These aspects are intertwined and progressed with understanding and experiences of being a contemporary Indigenous Australian artist. I subscribe to the view that Indigenous artists have contributed to our national identity and will continue to do so. This research is significant as it has created a new approach to Kalkadoon painting that may function as an informative resource for future art practitioners. I hope the knowledge I have created will add to the canon of Indigenous art practice within Australia. My paintings and exegesis were guided by the following research question:

> *In what ways can paintings position traditional Kalkadoon symbols and knowledge as a vital source of meaning making?*

The following chapters commence by establishing the historical background of the Kalkadoon people and the interactions with European people. This will contextualise the initial contact and transcultural exchange of the colonial period. The main source has been my discussions with Kalkadoon elders who I have been privileged to yarn with over many sessions. My principal source is James "Goanna" Taylor who is known as Uncle Jimmy. Our relationship is through my grandfather and Uncle Jimmy's father who are brothers. Uncle Jimmy is a respected and wise Kalkadoon elder. Uncle Jimmy is currently living in Townsville, and I am able to visit him and yarn about my project, our family and culture. Uncle Jimmy produces small paintings for sale and often has many displayed in his home. These paintings often provide a context for our yarns and helps me to formulate my writing and paintings. I will show Uncle Jimmy some images or text I have discovered in my research which he can help to clarify and add contents or comments.

Another source has been the information and diagrams recorded by doctor and amateur anthropologist, Walter E. Roth. It is a curious situation to note that information from these two disparate sources has coalesced into the development of a New Dreaming in my art. I have then situated my own Kalkadoon arts practice with various Indigenous

Australian and Western arts practices and philosophies through the sources and influences that have informed my works of art. It was therefore necessary to introduce a unique research methodology which is a combination of Indigenous and Western methods. The final outcomes are the culmination of my arts practice and philosophical approach to my theories of Indigenous Australian art and culture as a legitimate identifier and political instrument of education and continuance of knowledge sharing.

Chapter 2: Situating Concepts, Context & Background

The following chapters will elaborate on Kalkadoon history, before, during and after contact with non-Indigenous people. The colonial period of dispossession was catastrophic for our people who lost a lot of their traditional way of life. This true history is a sensitive subject that needs to be aired to reveal some of the harsh truths of the past and to show that we Kalkadoon have survived as a people with continuing connection to our Country and culture.

Pre-Contact History

The Kalkadoon people have occupied lands in north-west Queensland for many thousands of years. Archaeologists have sought to place dates on occupation, although it is not an exact science with evolving methods of analysis. Excavations from the late 1970's on the Barkley Tablelands revealed evidence of occupation, "more than 17 000 years old… [and] at least 30 000 years old and perhaps considerably older" (Flood, 1983, pp. 82-83). Over time, new dating methods substantiated these estimates while recent studies point to an even longer history of Indigenous people's occupation throughout Australia. Dates have "ballooned" over the decades from 10 000 to as much as 80 000 years (Pascoe, 2014, pp. 40-41). There is speculation of much older time frames with evidence from increases in charcoal deposits:

> *"The change dates from about 130 000 years ago… There is no easy explanation for the marked increase in fire activity, coinciding with and probably causing a major change in forest type, other than the suggested arrival of people"* (Hanley and Cooper, 1982, pp. 99-100).

Colonial Doctor and amateur anthropologist Roth (1897) described some of the neighbours of the Kalkadoon as 'messmates' including the *Workoboongo*, *Injilinji* and *Oboroondi* peoples to the north of the Kalkadoon and west of the Leichardt River (p. 42). Roth was able to demonstrate that throughout the region kinship groups were connected and interacted with wider networks. The Kalkadoon and neighbouring peoples would share land and resources, when necessary, for example during a drought (Armstrong, 1980, p. 40). In times of warfare alliances formed, and kinship ties extending to other groups allowing for intermarriages. Roth stated:

> *"Speaking generally, these same tribes are able to render themselves pretty mutually intelligible, and possess in common various trade-routes, markets and hunting-grounds, customs, manners, and beliefs; in other words, they might, as a whole, be well described as 'messmates'"* (Roth, 1897, p. 41).

The Eastern side of Kalkadoon Country is composed of the Pre-Cambrian Selwyn Ranges and Barkley Tablelands. From the Selwyn Ranges our Country stretches west to the Georgina River then north to Camooweal. This area is dominated by large areas of semi-arid flood plains. The Great Artesian Basin runs alongside the ranges generating freshwater springs which provide permanent water.

Our ancestor Toby Leichhardt was the boss of our ancestral Country that surrounds Kajabbi and stretches west of the Leichhardt River to Camooweal on the western edge of Kalkadoon Country. He was the 'boss' because he was the ceremonial ritual leader. Grandfather Toby was born around the 1890's, at a time when last names were not used by Kalkadoon people. He chose for himself the surname 'Leichhardt' because he was born on the Leichhardt River on Country and because the name has a certain acclaim as it is the surname of the famous explorer Ludwig Leichhardt

One of our major Dreaming lines, and one of my major themes, is the Rainbow Serpent and dingoes which will be discussed in the chapter, Cardboard to Canvas: The Paintings. The Rainbow Serpent lives in a waterhole on the Leichhardt River. Through ceremony the Rainbow Serpent emerges from the waterhole and migrates in the form of the passing rain before returning to rest. Our ancestors camped by this waterhole and travelled from place to place with the seasonal availability of water and food. Kalkadoon people are the agency of the Rainbow Serpent; we are that waterhole; that is where we come from. Rainbow Serpent Dreaming also belongs to our neighbours and peoples further afield thus connecting us through ceremony and kinship. This Dreaming was passed on from Toby Leichhardt to Uncle Jimmy and he is now the 'boss'.

The relevance of my project is confirmed by similar projects in the arts that emphasise the importance of art in expressing Indigenous Australian peoples' continuing connectedness to Country. For example, the *Dharumbal* people's connection to *Toonooba* – the Fitzroy River – in central Queensland. A public art project placed artistic flood markers along the river that,

> *"…assert Indigenous voices into discourses of place, particularly discourses about the significance of rivers on Country…* [further]*art*

> *can facilitate interaction through which…* [Indigenous] *artists can affirm, negotiate, share and explore their identities while challenging dominant Eurocentric preoccupations of place and identity"* (Fredericks & Bradfield, 2021, pp. 89-90).

Contact History

Colonial attitudes towards Indigenous Australian peoples have caused lasting impacts for Kalkadoon people. Although attitudes have changed over time, it is important to remember the injustices and misunderstandings of the past.

The Kalkadoon term "*yanyi"* (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 59) or "*yun-yi*" (Roth, 1897, p. 168) was used to describe European people at the time of first contact. *Yanyi* means ghost or spirit, and our neighbours the Mitakoodi, used the term "*parago"* or corpse (Roth, 1897, p. 168). Roth (1897) stated that, "…considering how the aboriginals in these parts have up to recent times been treated, these terms are not to be wondered at" (p. 168). Although a valid reason, the fact that similar terms were already in use can explain the relationship between Indigenous Australian people and Europeans, and it has been proposed that the terms used for Europeans had a different interpretation from Roth. For example, the term *yanyi,* I believe implies that the newcomers were, as McLean (2016) reiterated, "…dead relatives returning from the spirit world" (p. 10). Many Indigenous peoples used a similar strategy of terms carrying double meanings. While it is well documented that the Europeans were initially held in this positive light, at the time of contact with Kalkadoon people Europeans viewed Indigenous peoples as primitive brutes and that any efforts of conciliation were not possible (Armstrong, 1980, pp. 21-25). This positioned the two cultures as being distinctly opposed to each other's ways of thinking and negatively influenced their understanding of each other.

Kalkadoon people still had language and religious practices in the mid to late 1800's however, as more land was encroached on by non-Indigenous pastoralists and prospectors their cultural practices deteriorated. It was not until the 1860's that the first Europeans entered Kalkadoon Country. The Burke and Wills exploration party entered the region at this time however, the expedition failed in 1860-61. Several attempts by colonist explorers to find them bought more Europeans into the region. These explorers mapped Country making it possible for others to advance. In addition, and just as significant as the mapping and describing of the land by explorers, was the *Lands Acts of 1860* which granted the invading pastoralists "secure tenure" in their dispossession of

Indigenous peoples. As a result, the pastoral industry expanded in the region, and it was worth 71.49% of the revenue for the newly formed colony of Queensland which was established in 1859. As a consequence, the pastoralists held a majority in the parliament and they advocated for the expansion of the industry resulting in the Kalkadoon people facing confrontations with "pioneer settlers" over land and water rendering them a fragmented and displaced society (Armstrong, 1980, p. 80).

Conflict

The Colony of Queensland separated from the 'mother' colony of New South Wales (NSW) in 1859, retaining one policy and reversing another which were both detrimental to the survival of the Indigenous peoples. Queensland retained the use of the Native Mounted Police (NMP) that enabled them, along with the pastoralists and prospectors, in the outright killing of Indigenous peoples by reversing the Exeter Hall system. The Exeter Hall system was a set of policies that advocated for the abolition of slavery and for the fair treatment of Indigenous peoples. It had become law in NSW when seven Europeans were hung in 1838 for murdering Indigenous people in the Myall massacre. Although seemingly fair and just in NSW, the reversing of the Exeter Hall system in Queensland, and the employment of the NMP, favoured capital investment over Indigenous rights ensuring the rapid expansion of the colony (Armstrong, 1980, p. 28). The NMP were formed to provide protection to the pastoralists and prospectors from attacks by the Indigenous peoples in Queensland. For Indigenous peoples, the NMP were used as an instrument of suppression and ultimately dispossession. Senior Australian public servant and amateur historian Robert E. M. Armstrong (1980) stated:

> *"The Native Mounted Police, in its capacity to make dispersals and punitive expeditions, assumed the character of a para-military organization administering a crude form of justice and largely not responsible for its actions"* (p. 170).

Kalkadoon Country was seen as ideal for grazing cattle and sheep despite the fact there are not many permanent water sources in the region and those that are, are very sacred to our people. Therefore, cattle and sheep were speared for food and herds driven off from especially sacred waterholes. Reprisal attacks were swiftly undertaken (Armstrong, 1980, p. 90, 126; Fysh, 1950, pp. 94-98). A reprisal or "dispersal"

consisted of the NMP, along with the pastoralists and prospectors, who would pursue and often kill hundreds of men, women and children (Armstrong, 1980, pp. 128, 170-172). Robert Armstrong (1980) insightfully described that, “A “dispersal” was, in fact, a camouflage for the indiscriminate killing, rape and child braining” (p. 111). This set a pattern that would be repeated for at least the next six years from 1878-1884. The Kalkadoon escalated the situation, not only due to sacred waterholes being polluted, but also in an attempt to wipe out the invaders who were committing atrocities that what would be now labelled as war crimes (Fysh, 1950, pp.123-124, 182).

The Kalkadoon people were seen as the most fearsome people encountered in northern Queensland. Roth (1897) stated how, “…the Kalkadoon, [were] said to be the most savage of the Aboriginals under consideration” (p. 135). Historian Hudson Fysh (1950) recalled, “…that the Kalkadoons were a tribe above the average in savagery and bravery” (p. 184). After many years of guerrilla style warfare by the Kalkadoon and reprisals by the invading forces, a major turning point was the confrontation in 1884 at the subsequently named Battle Mountain. It is difficult to discuss Kalkadoon history without reference to Battle Mountain which was named after the site of a pitched battle in 1884 between the Kalkadoon people and the NMP assisted by the pastoralists and prospectors.

In 1883 the appointment of Sub-Inspector F. C. Urquhart to the NMP would mark the beginning of the end for the Kalkadoon as a force for resistance. After subsequent killings by the Kalkadoon and ‘dispersals’ by the invaders, 1884 saw what was to be the final stand of the Kalkadoon. The Kalkadoon warriors challenged Urquhart to, “…come out into the hills, and they would finish him off” (Armstrong, 1980, p. 136). Urquhart gathered men from the surrounding districts to join him and the NMP. They finally tracked down the Kalkadoon who had taken up a “defensive position on a boulder-studded hill, which is known to this day as Battle Mountain” (Armstrong, 1980, p. 142).

Both sides were prepared for a final showdown. As the invaders took up their position Urquhart proclaimed, “Stand in the name of the Queen!” (Fysh, 1950, p. 183), which was met with howling contempt and a hail of spears and rocks. Urquhart ordered the invaders to advance up the steep ridge when he was struck in the face with a lump of ant-bed and knocked out. After Urquhart recovered, he devised a flanking movement that distracted the Kalkadoon from maintaining their position. Suddenly, the Kalkadoon formed ranks and with large spears held horizontally out in front advanced in lines

down the ridge only to be gunned down in their hundreds (Armstrong, 1980, pp. 140-145). Fysh (1950) also reported that a "dispersal" went on for several days afterwards (pp. 183-184).

Battle Mountain is now sacred and revered to the Kalkadoon people. The invasion and war had finally left the Kalkadoon unable to live a completely traditional life. As more land was taken, the survivors had little choice but to gather at pastoral stations and beg for insufficient rations in exchange for hard labour. For the Kalkdoon people to survive our ancestors worked hard at maintaining our culture as best they could. Today there are still efforts to revive the language and preserve knowledge of traditional material and spiritual culture. Any resistance by the Kalkadoon was unwinnable through violent means, the inevitable result being assimilation into a foreign culture, and for me to now take up the mantle and proudly showcase my cultural heritage.

Our identity as Indigenous Australian peoples has moved quickly from a traditional mode to massacres and retaliation, motor cars and assimilation. However, there is incalculable value in Kalkadoon culture, and it is through art that I can best explore, express, and share it. Art is a tangible form of individual expression and interaction with traditional forces that can help shape and guide our people into a strong future, secure in the knowledge of our long history of a spiritual connection to the land.

Walter E. Roth: Accidental Anthropologist

Walter E. Roth studied medicine (not anthropology) in England before emigrating to Australia in the late 1880's where in 1894 he accepted the appointment of Surgeon at the Boulia, Cloncurry and Normanton Hospitals. His medical duties were light, being on the frontier, which gave him spare time in which he learned the language and cultures of the local Indigenous peoples, including the Kalkadoon. During this time Roth produced a series of ethnographic reports. His books contain information on varied subjects including descriptions and illustrations of the artistic culture of the Kalkadoon people. Unfortunately, Kalkadoon traditional life was deteriorating while Roth was conducting studies of our people. The earliest study of the Kalkadoon people, *Ethnographical Studies Among the North-West Queensland Aborigines,* was published in 1897 (Reynolds, 1988). In the same year the *Protection Act* was created (Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897[Qld]), and Roth was subsequently appointed as the first Northern Protector of Aboriginals the following year

in 1898 and Chief Protector in 1904 (Reynolds, 1988). Roth's work is a remarkable ethnographical study considering he was an amateur. The late Professor Barrie Reynolds wrote in the forward to the facsimile edition of Roth's ethnographic series that despite being "…untrained in these fields… Their importance is such that no anthropologist, archaeologist, historian or linguist concerned with Aboriginal north Queensland can afford to ignore them" (MacIntyre, 1984).

Anthropologists and Colonial Administration

Roth was more than capable of conducting anthropological studies of Indigenous people, in fact he was a contemporary of the anthropologist, Baldwin Spencer (Reynolds, 1988). The two men's lives intersected on many occasions. Both attended Magdalen College, Oxford, and both moved to Australia where they made names for themselves studying the Indigenous peoples. These studies were among the earliest of their kind and qualified Roth and Spencer into the positions of Protectors of Aborigines in Queensland and the Northern Territory, respectively. Spencer and others criticised Roth as an amateur anthropologist, and it is unfortunate that Roth used his own terminology and spelling of Indigenous words (Mulvaney, 2008, pp. 114-113) and did not specifically name any of his Indigenous informants (McDougall R., & Davidson I., 2008).

During the late 1800's the European Enlightenment had ushered in a scientific approach to anthropology based on Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Darwinism established the idea of a hierarchical view of evolution (Armstrong, 1980, p. 22). Anthropologists adopted this view in which they believed that social evolution and the social origins of human beings was also hierarchical. On this scale, Indigenous Australians were placed on the lowest level of human evolution for absurd reasons such as skin colour and practices such as scarification (Gorman, 2008, p. 100). Anthropologists living in Australia during the 1890's were informed by this narrow scientific viewpoint which denigrated Indigenous peoples in the service of political ends and is a racist scar on Australian history. It is a regrettable situation and one which is being corrected. Ian Davidson (2008) reminds us of the obligations and position of the anthropologists:

> *"Anthropology in the 1890's was a discipline very different from the one it would become in the 20th century… much of the effort of the early anthropologists went into collecting informal accounts of*

> *'primitive'* [my parentheses] *people and translating them into more formal statements about social evolution"* (p. 122).

Roth's life, like many Victorian men who traversed the world, involved rigorous scholarly work in the pursuit of scientific knowledge. However, Roth's parents also encouraged a pluralistic outlook based on cosmopolitan ideas and values of the Enlightenment period. Judith Brody (2008) wrote that Walter Roth and his brother Henry:

> *"…undoubtedly recognised that there are cultures authentic in their own right, which are outside their own social order and system of values… and this made them outsiders to the world they originally inhabited"* (p. 31).

Roth's and other anthropologists' views of Indigenous peoples differed to that of less tolerant people in the 1890's. What was similar was the prevailing incorrect assumption about social evolution. John Mulvaney (2008) spoke of Roth who, like some of his contemporaries, "…held sincere humanitarian motivation for their misguided authoritarian policies" (p. 113). Kate Khan (2008) explained how despite Roth's paternalistic attitude, "…he was a man ahead of his time. In an age when Indigenous peoples were being exploited and killed he actively defended their rights" (p. 190).

Not Quite a Proper Anthropologist

When Roth became Protector, his personal beliefs were becoming incompatible with government policies for the controlling of Indigenous peoples. Roth advocated for large reserves where Indigenous peoples could be left alone. After a Royal Commission into the treatment of Indigenous peoples, Roth:

> *"…was criticised by some for his findings and even his motives. He had been under constant attack for some years from what he saw as hostile vested interests in the north, aired through Parliament"* (Reynolds, 2008, p. 50).

Part of his duties as Protector included ethnographic reports on Indigenous peoples which advanced his interest in anthropology. Roth resigned as Protector in 1906 before leaving Australia and continued with his anthropological studies, although he

was still not recognised for his efforts. Talking about his later international career and reputation, Neil Whitehead (2008) reveals how, "In the eyes of his contemporaries Roth thus appeared as not quite a proper anthropologist." (p. 240). While working in the harsh environs of north-west Queensland, Roth would often admit his own inadequacies. On one occasion he wrote that his inquiry was not understood or appreciated, and so for Roth it was, "…a matter for research to which I propose reverting on some future occasion. My method of inquiry was naturally somewhat primitive" (Roth 1904, p. 16). Despite Roth's said failings as an 'proper' anthropologist', he was a competent illustrator, and his illustrations are an enduring record of Kalkadoon culture and art.

Barrie Reynolds had been working on a biography of Roth during his retirement. Regrettably, it remains unfinished as Reynolds passed away in 2019. Reynolds (2008) did point out Roth's strengths and weaknesses and his relationship to his research which:

> *"…ranged from archaeology and linguistics to medical anthropology, but perhaps his strongest interest was in material culture and technology. He was a careful and painstaking fieldworker… His drawings are simple but clear and his observations succinctly expressed. His work is strong on the technology of manufacture and usage of artifacts and on typology. It was less affective in his coverage of symbolic and social aspects of material culture…* [Although Roth's work] *became the basic accounts on which subsequent anthropologists have relied, for his observations were sound"* (p. 52).

Roth was dedicated to understanding Indigenous peoples as people. He worked to build relationships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and improve the conditions of Indigenous peoples while under pressure from all sides to conform. Khan (2008) allows Roth his due respect when she tells us how he:

> *"…recorded what he identified as a rich culture of a people under threat. The legacy he left for future generations is a unique resource of material relating to the traditional life of the Aboriginal people of a vast region of Queensland"* (p. 190).

I feel it is fortunate that Roth was able to document Kalkadoon culture while it was still somewhat intact, particularly following the Battle Mountain massacre of 1884. Roth was a one of very few people who recorded Kalkadoon culture in the late 1800's

and early 1900's. I feel that Roth was a reliable witness and diligent with his visual records and for these reasons is an important resource for my research. The diagrams and information he recorded have been interpreted in my paintings, some of which are reproduced here in the chapter, Kalkadoon Iconography (fig.1). Roth's work has remained a primary source on ethnography, anthropology and history and his contribution is one that is appreciated.

Chapter 3: Philosophical Framework

The following chapters will explore Kalkadoon art and interrelated concepts with other Indigenous Australian art. This concerns Kalkadoon artistic culture and the commonalities with the wider north-west Queensland region, along with other regions including Arnhem Land and Central Australia, where there are aesthetic similarities as well as related Dreamings.

The New Dreaming

The world is imbued with the energy left by our ancestors who created the world. The creator beings are revered through ritual practices that involve elaborate decoration of ritual objects, on the ground and on the bodies of the participants. This process enhances an object, ground or the body and creates a relationship between the Dreaming and the participants of the ritual.

Ritjinguthinha, the Kalkadoon term for 'Dreaming' implies the connectedness of past, present and future. It is a profound lore that connects different peoples and the natural world through the spiritual agency of our ancestors and ensures the sanctity of our culture. The Dreaming is an unfolding process, "…existing from the beginning of time, is just as relevant in the present as it was in the past, and is vitally important for the future" (Berndt et al., 1982, p. 21). Ritualising the past establishes relevance in the present and keeps memory alive for the future. The past is naturally living in the present through memories; the Dreaming emphasises the spiritual unity of time and space and the energy it all contains. McLean wrote that the formalities of the Dreaming involve:

> *"…the history of the world, the nature of being (ontology) and the rules for living (ethics and politics) …However, any person initiated into the subtleties of Dreaming can receive new Dreamings that might alter or add to existing verses"* (McLean, 2016, pp. 16-17).

Another important creation Dreaming line from my grandmother starts with the earth being a vast plain, a dark void. The land was given form by the ancient beings who had been asleep in the ground. As they awoke and pushed through the ground, they formed mountains and as they moved, they sang Country, the trees, and animals into being. The Old Man in the Sky sent forth spirit children and created the first people. The actions of the creator beings continued until they eventually returned into the land, sky or waters.

I began to show an interest and a talent for art at a young age. My aunty Dawn taught me that painting is a re-enactment of the initial creation, and I should start with a dark background to represent the void of creation. Then a dot border to frame and contain the story-image that is then built up with bright colours, dots, and patterns. She once asked me to create a painting for her.

"Just paint a snake," said Aunty Dawn because it is easy to render.

"Now, make a dot border to frame it and fill in the background," she said before exclaiming.

"It's all up to you!"

Once I began to paint another of my relatives, my great aunt, said that I could paint in my own way, and I have been given permission to paint certain Kalkadoon Dreaming lines. I was given a certain freedom because we are now in a new Dreaming. The old system was broken, leaving any restrictions that were imposed. As it is, in the 1970's and 80's, the elders in our community were declining and the language and culture was declining with them. They declared that the old ways were largely lost or asleep. Wherever it is asleep, it can be awakened again, and my paintings form a chapter in this reawakening. For me it is also repatriating the old to renew my connection to the past and the ancestors. One way I empathise with and understand my ancestors is through art.

Indigenous Australian Art and the Alchemy of Tradition and Innovation

Contemporary secular Indigenous art in Arnhem Land and Central and Western Australia began with acquisitions by anthropologists however, this art was first only seen as ethnographic. Nonetheless, from the interest in this early art production Indigenous Australian artists would finally gain respect in the art world. Indigenous artists were also given financial compensation for their work which gave rise to art centres in these remote regions. With the gradual establishment of art centres in the 1970's and 80's, McLean (2018) confirms how:

> *"…the artworld began to show interest in the movement. During the 1970's ethnographic museums were uninterested because they*

> *worried about the authenticity of work that used modern materials such as acrylic paint and canvas, and art galleries were unresponsive because of the works' apparent ethnographic content"* (p.135).

Myers (2002) studied the art of the *Pintubi* and other desert groups and reiterated that for them painting has become a means to, "…objectify political aspirations and identity, as well as indigenous aesthetic sensibilities" (p. 5). Western Desert peoples have sought to, in their own words "*yurtininpa* (make visible)" their cultural integrity through painting (Myers, 2002, p. 5). As the elder artists developed their styles of contemporary or neo-traditional painting, they also secularised their initial intentions by excluding the sacred or rendering layers of dots to conceal it, to the point where, "…paintings became increasingly abstract as the depiction of ancestral events morphed from the iconographic of pictographs to a more aesthetic domain" (McLean, 2016, p. 133).

Similarly, in Arnhem Land, as bark paintings became commodified, innovation emerged. Production increased in the late 1950's as the market became more accommodating and with this change there were also changes in style. Subject matter and pictorial devices were considered for the work to be more appropriate: to be viewed by and sold to non- Indigenous people. The new 'ordinary paintings' as Berndt et al. (1982) pointed out are, "…secular projections of the secret-sacred" (p. 69). The compositions are sketched out onto the background colour which can be edited in the planning stage. Western Arnhem Land artists employ the use of space in their bark painting to enhance the visual impact. By contrast, north-eastern Arnhem Land paintings are, "…highly stylised and abstract, covering the whole …available surface …[where] naturalism is muted and symbolism enhanced" (Berndt et al., 1982 pp. 62-65).

In describing the rise of contemporary Indigenous art from remote regions, McLean (2016) offers an explanation for the increased production, professionalisation and inventiveness of the artists during the 1970's, stating that:

> *"The mores of anthropology were exchanged for those of the art world, as if the indigenous artist was no longer a figure of collective tribal aspirations but an individual, and his art a personal expression…*[that] *evolved onto more carefully painted and individualistic styles, though ones that still reflected their regional origins"* (p. 118).

In Arnhem Land, the practice of bark painting was admired by Western art critics, "…for its truth to tradition and apparent refusal to engage with Western art and modernity" (McLean, 2018 p114). However, as public recognition for Indigenous Australian art grew, the traditional artists sought to secularise their images, as noted earlier. One of the best examples is that of West Arnhem Land artist Yirawala, who was well known for his, "…barks [that] combined dynamic figuration with a sense of form and decoration" (McLean, 2016, p. 96). The new work was neo-traditional in that Yirawala, "…changed the West Arnhem Land art style by pioneering a greater use of rarrk (cross-hatching) infill" (McLean, 2016, p. 100).

Traditional Indigenous Australian art is concerned with ritual, as a means of embodiment. Spiritual ideals need a material form and vehicle to become manifest. Traditionally, there is also art that relates to everyday and historical events. These latter themes could become part of, "…stories, myths and songs, many of which were also expressed in ritual performance" (Berndt et al., 1982, p. 48). The artwork then becomes a ritual object which, "…by virtue of their recreation by an artist, contained the spiritual substance of relevant mythic beings, or served as temporary vehicles for those beings" (Berndt et al., 1982, p. 50). The essential requirement for the ritual to succeed is, "…based on the pattern traditionally circumscribed for those characters" (Berndt et al., 1982, p. 50). Perkins et al. (2004) noted that *kuninjku* artists of Arnhem Land are simultaneously, "…alchemists of tradition and innovation" (p. 15). I am inspired by this idea of artists being alchemists of tradition and innovation, and I have sought to emulate this idea in my painting.

Kalkadoon Art

Thuuthuu is a Kalkadoon term for, "…markings, patterns, ripples… writing… [and] *thuuthuu artii* – to paint, to mark… to write" (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 49). My *thuuthuu artii* or painting is the medium through which I can awaken, connect with and keep our Kalkadoon culture and spirituality alive. There is knowledge acquired from my family and historical documents that I use as inspiration. My paintings are an emotional connecting to the ancestors that maintains the integrity and value of Kalkadoon art as a spiritual and cultural practice.

I am firstly guided by my elders who advise me and approve the work. Then there are my own investigations into what has been documented. Our Kalkadoon ancestors

suffered from the invasion into our Country in the mid to late 1800's and therefore the majority of the cultural iconography that inspires my paintings have been collected from Roth's publications. Within Roth's studies are a lexicon of symbols and patterns that I incorporate into my paintings. I have also learned about Kalkadoon rock art and iconography from Uncle Jimmy and his involvement in rock art research, including a thesis by JCU student K. Rudolph-Borgar, *Aboriginal rock images of the Mount Isa region, North West Central Queensland* (1989).

My aim is to be a recognised and accepted as a Kalkadoon artist by producing paintings that are contemporary expressions of our culture. Curator and arts writer Wally Caruana (2012) wrote, "Art is central to Aboriginal life… [and] is a means by which the present is connected with the past and human beings with the supernatural" (p. 7). As Indigenous Australian art expanded into the public realm, and out of the sacred, artists began experimenting with new materials creating, "…new art forms which often compliment rather than replace existing ones" (Caruana, 2012, p. 11).

Kalkadoon Iconography

Within Kalkadoon art there are patterns and symbols that are painted or engraved on shields, bull-roarers, spears, swords, message sticks and boomerangs. I have incorporated some of these patterns and symbols into my paintings, principally from boomerangs. Boomerangs are adorned with patterns and symbols that are incised using a possum tooth or sharpened flint (Roth, 1897, p. 143), (fig.1). They were manufactured throughout north-west Queensland and traded widely with other groups of Indigenous peoples. The meanings of the engraved symbols and patterns on boomerangs and other objects were known throughout the region although not necessarily manufactured there. Some local differences exist however, there is, as Roth stated, a "…general consensus of opinion" (Roth, 1897, p. 144) as to the interpretations. The boomerangs manufactured by the Kalkadoon, for example, include only certain types of the interspersed symbols, "…the kangaroo-toe type and the feather-pattern line. The former, up here, appears to have no further meaning than "two-fellow anything": the latter… is known as… a grass woven dilly-bag" (Roth, 1897, p. 145), (fig.1. I. & K.). The 'grass woven dilly-bag/feather-pattern line' consists of chevrons placed vertically and parallel and is known as "*ingki-ingki*" in Kalkadoon (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 15).

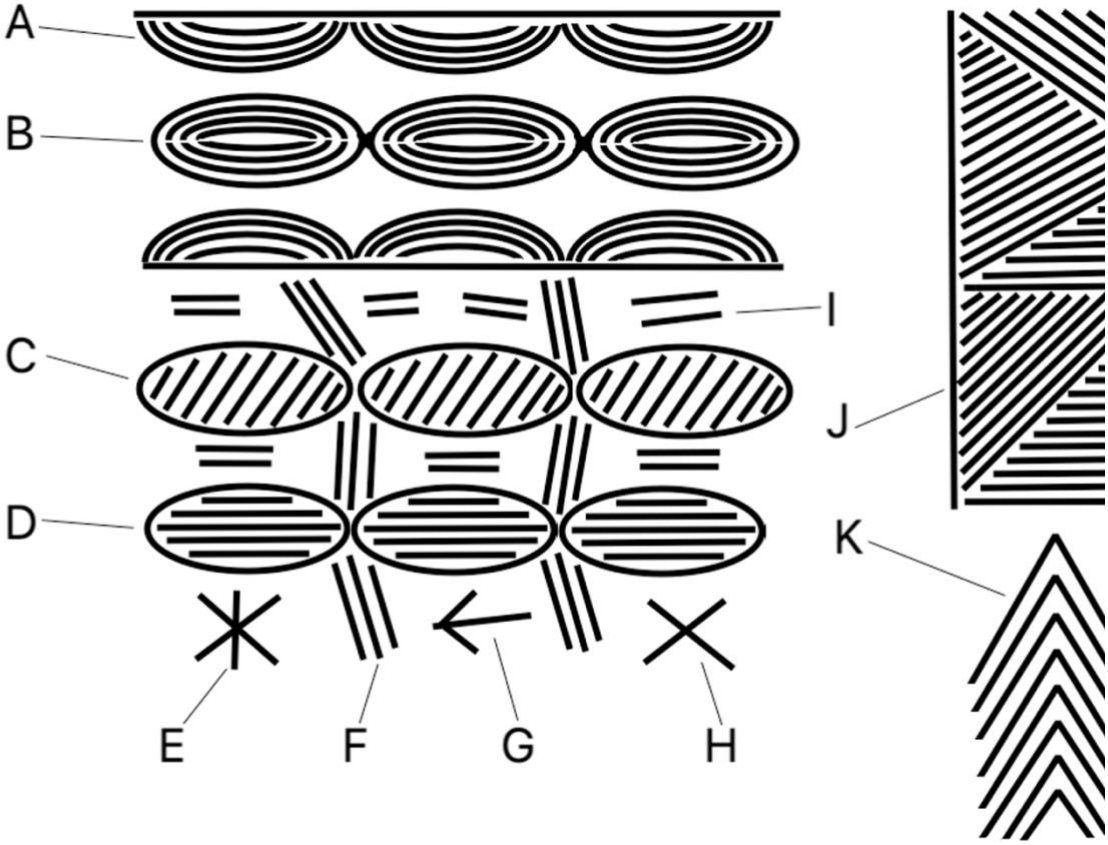

Figure 1. Indigenous North-West Queensland symbols and patterns from boomerangs: Reproduced from the illustrations of W. E. Roth (1897)

A. Festoons as ripples in water **B.** Shuttles as fishing nets or mountains **C.** Shuttles as pearl-shells **D.** Shuttles as leaves **E.** Bee or hornet symbol **F.** Female flash-mark **G.** Emu track **H.** X symbol **I.** Two-fellow anything/kangaroo track **J.** *Mintja thuuthuu* pattern **K.** Dilly bag pattern

Roth (1897) was given interpretations for some of the iconography as far as naming them, including the interspersed symbols and, those along the length of boomerangs such as, "…shuttles and festoons" (p. 144). The festoons appear along the edges of boomerangs and consist of a semi-circle filled in with concentric parallel lines, "…so as to represent ripples on the water's edge" (fig.1. A) (Roth, 1897, p. 144). The shuttles are oval shapes that are strung together in a figure eight pattern. When filled with concentric longitudinal lines they are called "mountain-tops" or a "fishing-net" (fig.1. B). When the lines are angled to a slant they are "white-shell marks" (fig.1. C),

and with more straightened longitudinal lines they become “leaves” (fig.1. D) (Roth, 1897, p. 144).

As mentioned, there are the interspersed symbols on boomerangs placed in the open spaces, sometimes in rows or grouped to form a pattern. The singular ones include diamond shapes as eyes. Diamonds also appear on message sticks where they are a female symbol (Roth, 1897, p. 144). The X is a male symbol and as well as appearing on boomerangs they were applied as scars by men, “…on the thighs of near male-relatives in times of mourning” (fig.1. H) (Roth, 1897, p. 145, 164). They are also described as a beard on a message stick or as two rivers crossing. Other motifs include the emu tracks as a triform device with a longer line in the centre (fig.1. G), and the X symbol with an extra line through the centre as a bee or hornet (fig.1. E) (Roth, 1897, p. 138, 145).

The kangaroo tracks are two parallel lines which were previously described as the ‘two-fellow anything’ symbol. From this I can extrapolate more meaning as Roth (1897) described a message stick comprising single straight lines which are, “…dead-fellows” (p. 138). Therefore, if two straight lines are ‘two-fellow anything’ for example, two people meeting, then a single line is one person. Further, the X symbol appears on a smaller returning boomerang which shows an emu being chased into an emu net by some hunters who are symbolised by an X (Roth, 1897, p. 128). An X, being two straight lines crossed, is then a dynamic human figure with two arms and two legs.

The transverse patterns on boomerangs include the “…female flash-mark” (Roth, 1897, p. 144) (fig.1. F), consisting of three parallel lines placed in a zigzag formation. Another transverse pattern is the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern (fig.1. G), made with two parallel lines to divide the space which is in-filled with parallel lines. With no interpretation from Roth (1897), it may be grouped within the description of, “‘finishing off’…which is only executed for the sake of making the implement look more ‘flash’” (pp. 143-144). The Kalkadoon word “*mintja”* or “shine” (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 29) correlates with the term ‘flash’ which is the subject of the next subsection. *Thuuthuu* as stated in Kalkadoon Art, can be interpreted as ‘markings’ or ‘patterns’ therefore, I have termed the parallel line pattern *mintja thuuthuu* which roughly translates as ‘shiny lines.’ It is a Kalkadoon version of an in-fill pattern device similar to dotting or *raark* which will be referred to in following subsections.

Flash

Throughout the north-west Queensland region there are methods described that enable one to, "…make him flash-fellow" (Roth, 1897, p. 110): to look fashionable and/or feel renewed. The term 'flash' was used by the local people and Roth quoted it to encompass this kind of personal enhancement and separate it from the ceremonial, although it is relevant to both. As well as the painting and ornamenting of the body or objects, 'flash' can also describe brilliant colours and patterns in nature.

Roth (1897) recorded the practices of ornamentation of artifacts and the body for corroborees, as well as 'personal flash'. Oiling the hair and skin or tying string around the beard encompasses both aspects. Other items include, "…tooth ornaments… forehead-nets… grass necklaces and painting of the face and body" (pp. 109-114). The process consists of combining animal oils with ground ochre pigment, called 'grease' by Roth, and applied by hand. Both men and women may cover their face with red or yellow, otherwise with horizontal bands of white (Roth, 1897, p. 110). Men painted their bodies with bands of white grease in curvilinear lines from the elbows, across the shoulders to the waist, with parallel lines across the thighs. Women painted themselves with a trilinear band of yellow or red ochre grease known as a 'female flash-mark' (fig.1 F), which appear on boomerangs as described in the previous chapter. It was applied using three fingers to smear the grease along the limbs and across the torso. Both patterns are similar to the ceremonial costume patterning, although in the case of men, blood-feathering was used instead of grease. Blood-feathering consists of balls of feather down coloured with ochre and applied to the body with blood as an adhesive (Roth, 1897, p. 114). McLean (2016) related how the performers of a corroborees generate their own shimmering:

> *"The dancer's tremor …creates the flash of the down in the firelight. …*[and] *it sends a chill that raises one's hairs …the down is the origin of the ubiquitous dotting in Western Desert painting, which performs a similar aesthetic role to Yolngu cross-hatching or raark"* (p. 257).

Flash can be a verb or an adjective encompassing a wide range of uses but usually it is associated with something bright and shiny that is pleasurable to look at. Fred Myers (2002), talking about Western Desert Pintupi artists, wrote that from their point of view, "Pintupi do know that buyers do not like messy paintings; they think Europeans like them to be "flash"" (p. 67). Ian McLean (2016) found that, "Abstraction,

the artists discovered, was the best way to 'make it flash' for the market, as indeed it generally is for ceremony" (p. 199). Even for so-called purely abstract Indigenous art there is often still an underlying aesthetic relating to 'flash'. *Kaiadilt* artist Sally Gabori Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda (c.1924- 2015), "…was unforthcoming about the meaning of her abstract gestural marks [however,] …most explanations refer to the shifting light playing off the water and sand" (McLean, 2016, p. 202).

Flash Patterns

Patterns are another way Indigenous Australian artists imbue their work with 'flash'. *Rarrk* consists of crosshatching devices from western Arnhem Land that are used to in-fill figures and backgrounds. Hetti Perkins et al., (2004) stated *rarrk* is used as, "…a visual metaphor for, and manifestation of, ancestral power" (p. 19). Caruana (2012) describes *rarrk* as imparting:

> *"…a notion of brightness which signifies the presence of ancestral or spiritual power in a work. Today, artists often elaborate on these designs as they seek to give their paintings vibrancy"* (p. 26).

Movement and action are also expressed by the use of *rarrk*, rather than suggesting movement within the figures themselves (Berndt, 1982, p. 65). Perkins et al. (2004) further explained how there may also be variations in colour and arrangement and that, "…the best artists do not reduce this component to an applique pattern" (p. 129). Artist John Mawurndjul was interviewed for the exhibition, *Crossing Country*. Mawurndjul reiterates how his father had said to, "…keep doing crosshatching and you will learn your own way" (Perkins et al., 2004, p. 139). Mawurndjul interpreted his painting of Ngalyod or Rainbow Serpent:

> *"We don't paint the actual body, but its power. We represent its power with crosshatching, we don't paint its human form, no. We only paint the spirit, that's all. It has a human body 'inside', but we only paint the spirit. That's what's inside my head, yes. When the rain is coming, the spirit (of Ngalyod) is visible and I thought, I will paint this in a picture. I painted the crosshatching"* (Perkins et al., 2004, p. 138).

Berndt et al. (1982) explained how *rarrk* "…gives the impression of a repetitive design, but nevertheless has meaning" (p. 65). The layers of meaning in *rarrk* are

conceptually literal and figurative. The first layer is the designed pattern, analogous to the shimmering of light on the surface of water. For example, the observation of the water's surface can enable a knowledgeable person to discern that the currents and bubbles in the water reveals the presence of a turtle. Therefore, within the layers of meaning, "One is commensurate to the viewers level of ancestral knowledge, the other is purely an aesthetic reaction" (Caruana, 2012, p. 226).

As well as *rarrk*, dotting can offer similar interpretations. Caruana (2012) elaborates how, "…as in desert art and the *rarrk* of Arnhem Land, the dots impart a notion of brilliance indicating the presence of supernatural power" (p. 186). Western Desert artists have increasingly used dots to fill background space and over time:

> *"…painters would elaborate the visual effect of the dots into an aesthetically distinct variant of the painting …both cross-hatching and dotting are motivated by an underlying aesthetic interest in producing visual brilliance"* (Myers, 2002 pp. 68-69).

Mardayin miny'tji describes sacred painting from north-east Arnhem Land which also informs contemporary public painting. Howard Morphy (1989) explains *mardayin* as being, "sacred law [and] …*miny'tji*: design, and colour" (pp. 24-25). *Miny'tji* are made up of diamond shaped symbols aligned in chains before being infilled with crosshatching. As they are sacred, artists began replacing the geometric patterns with more figurative elements to "de-sanctify" their paintings (Caruana, 2012, p. 60). Each *miny'tji* design has its own prescribed meaning and can describe any variety of natural phenomena in terms of colour or anything colourful such as an insect or, "any regularly occurring pattern or design whether it is natural or cultural" (Morphy, 1989, p. 24).

The painting process itself offers insights into the aesthetics of Arnhem Land art. Once the composition is chosen and approved the artist will draw outlines that will be in-filled: "At this stage the painting is referred to as 'dull' or 'rough'" (Morphy, 1989, p. 27). Through the painting and decorating process, the art can exhibit power and beauty. The outlining is usually conceived in yellow or black on a red background then the majority of time is spent cross-hatching. When complete, the painting, "…attains a shimmering brilliance… [or] *bir'yun"* (Morphy, 1989, p. 27). The criteria of approval and *bir'yun* are two important examples central to Arnhem Land aesthetics. Crosshatching should also conform to a clarity of line thickness and spacing otherwise it

will be judged, "as being 'too rough'" (Morphy, 1989, p. 28). Similarly, the painting will be judged 'dull' if dark colours dominate. *Bir'yun* is the ancestral power present in natural elements such as light, sun light or refractions on water which correlates with 'flash' and the Kalkadoon term *mintja.*

Flash Colours

Colour palette choices are another way of energising a painting with 'flash'. The work of the Desert artist Ngupulya Pumani who, like many of her contemporary Desert artists – including myself - works from dark to light. Diana Young described in Bunn (2017) how lighter brighter colours are built up on a dark background with, "…dots and dashes creating rhythm and iteration, a mutable seeming surface where colours react to one another… the over-all effect creating a shimmer" (p. 156). Pumani described her own paintings as being, "…influenced by, and replete with attachment to, her late mother and the flash of colours of women dancing" (Bunn, 2017, p. 156). The *Pitjantjatjara* have the word "*rikina"* or flash to encompass anything that comprises a contrast of colour (Bunn, 2017, p. 151). The colour changes seen in Uluru indicate for Anangu the presence of ancestral energy. Young stated in Bunn (2017) that, "For them the motility of the colours *is* the active spiritual presence in their land" (p. 157). Today with new acrylic colours:

> *"Anangu artists aim to make their work rikina/flash, to make an image filled with vitality and movement that alludes to the transformations of country, transformations which show the continuing spiritual power and presence of the Creation Ancestors"* (Bunn, 2017, p. 154).

Archaeological studies have added to the significance and meaning of ochre colours. Paul Taçon (2008) concluded that colour – in its own right – is associated with images as a source of ancestral power:

> *"…*[ochre] *pigment*[s] *are linked together in story, song, ceremony, visual art and landscape… symbolised and represented by bright colour… For the Waanyi and other north Australian groups, a world without colour would be no world at all. For bright colour, as a form, symbol and expression of Ancestral power, not only powers the world but also brings it to life"* (p. 171).

Flash colours influenced the choices of stone used by Indigenous people to make tools. Throughout Australia stones were chosen, "…because they were the most bright and colourful – and thus the most powerful" (Taçon, 2008, p. 164). Archaeology now extends into artistic activities, as Taçon (2008) stated:

> *"Form and substance are criteria archaeology commonly deals with as a means of getting at meaning. Adding colour to the mix thus opens a whole new dimension for the exploration of meaning…. Cross-hatched in-filled bark paintings and body art, elaborately painted objects and skeletal material and some contemporary acrylic paintings are considered significant if they radiate brilliance and colour… Rainbows and Rainbow Serpents are among the most outstanding examples of things both intensely colourful and powerful…"* (p. 164).

Natural pigments or 'ochres' are pigments sourced mainly from mineral oxides and clays, and charcoal is sometimes used. Fixatives are typically water, saliva and animal oils or they could be used dry. Less typical is the use of gums, blood, and honey (Roth, 1904, p. 15).

Ochres, with their own Dreaming lines, are ground and mixed with a medium to make paint. There are Kalkadoon words for different colours and ochres. Information taken from Roth gives the types of ochre and general meanings. Further meanings are applied in association with Dreaming lines that include sources of ochre which are traded from these sites and used to depict that story thereby imparting the spiritual energy and power of the associated ancestral spirit. The land is alive with the spiritual energy of creation and when paint is made and used there is a humanising relationship. Painting has been a way of communicating this expression for many cultures over time. The painting process is therefore a spiritual process as much as a material one, that can transform materials into beautiful, energetic and meaningful objects.

Kalkadoon Colour Dreaming

"Purlapurla" and *"purluwarra"* are Kalkadoon for white, whitish, or grey, just as "*purlu"* is smoke (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 44). *"Pirrakarra"* and "*piakarra"* are white paint (p. 42) in the form of gypsum: a sulphate of lime that is first heated, then mixed with a small amount of water and left to set like plaster which is then ground to make paint. White is the most 'flash colour' and relates to the most heightened emotional

situations. It is the colour of mourning and used in times of tribulation; within the region white is also, "…a 'fighting' colour" (Roth, 1904, pp. 14-15).

"Kurrikurri" is red (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 23), "*mila"*, *"milthi"* (pp. 28-29), and *"yapala"* are red ochres (p. 59). The Kalkadoon make red using types of iron oxide typically from haematite mixed with ferruginous clay. Red can also be made by heating yellow ochre (Roth, 1904, p. 14). Red is a male colour and is associated with, "…envy, hatred and malice, of force, and energy, visible (fire) and invisible (spirits)" (Roth, 1904, p. 15).

"Parru" is yellow and yellow ochre (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 40). As with red, yellow ochre is also an iron oxide, being limonite or a hydrous oxide of iron. Yellow is a female colour however, it is used by all as a sunscreen to reflect the heat during hot summer days (Roth, 1904, pp. 14-15).

"Marrtjin, matjin, marrtjintjula, matjintjula" are terms for black, and "*umaaka*" or "*umantjaamantja*" for black paint (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 63). It is sourced from either charcoal or pyrolusite, an oxide of manganese (Roth, 1904, p. 15). Black is used less frequently for, "…out-lining and finishing-off designs, both on weapons and their own bodies" (Roth, 1904, p. 15).

"Yalapu" is green (Enoch et al., n.d. p. 59), and blue is associated with black, being "black-ish" (Roth, 1897, p. 116).

The interpretation of colour meanings correlates with Kalkadoon cultural knowledge. The Rainbow Serpent brought colour into existence in the Dreaming, and the Dingoes created the ochres. This knowledge gives direct additional meanings to the colours and ochres. By incorporating this knowledge and investigating traditional decorative elements, I am able to produce paintings that are informed by tradition while being contemporary, and expressions of a continuance of my culture.

Chapter 4: Precedents of Practice

In the following chapter I will consider contemporary Indigenous Australian artists that have had an influential impact on my art. Artists such as John Mawurndjul, Munggurrawuy Yunupingu and Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi have distinguishable and similar precedents in their art practice to each other and my own, including the aesthetic style and philosophical approach to painting.

John Mawurndjul

John Mawurndjul (b. 1952) is an innovative Kuninjku artist from West Arnhem Land who like many of his generation elaborated on and invented new patterns of rarrk cross-hatching. In his earlier work, Mawurndjul, like his contemporaries, painted in the prescribed manner with a dark ground over which solid monochrome figures and decorated backgrounds were painted (Caruana, 2012, p. 224). This relates to the elements of my style which also employs a dark ground, solid figures, and in-filled backgrounds.

In Willsteed (2004), Luke Taylor described Mawurndjul as, "one of the most experimental bark painters in Arnhem Land" (Willsteed, 2004, p. 86). Mawurndjul's experimentation progressed from the more typical style to one that was individual, although still inspired by his teachers and culture. In what McLean (2016) called, "a neo-traditional manner" Mawurndjul followed his elder generation in innovating bark painting: "…he also changed the West Arnhem Land art style by pioneering a greater use of rarrk (cross-hatching) infill" (pp. 96-100). Taylor describes a more recent, "geometric aesthetic" where Mawurndjul completely covers his bark paintings in rarrk and that, "he is also creating new forms of patterning and composition" (Willsteed, 2004, p. 86). This new style is not without precedent as McLean (2016) reflected that Mawurndjul has taken his tradition and interpreted it for a new contemporary art world:

> *"Each generation, he believes, must reinvent ancestral knowledge. However, if Mawurndjul unequivocally steered Kuninjku bark painting away from its figurative rock art heritage, he pulled it towards the geometric abstract rarrk used in sacred body designs; that is, even closer to ancestral knowledge"* (p. 185).

Mawurndjul's forthrightness and prolific arts practice gained him respect as an elder. He has inspired and encouraged other artists, myself included, to express their individuality while also maintaining cultural ties. Indigenous culture is not static, and like any other culture, the integrity and value of culture is to integrate and incorporate change: to learn from the past and work for the future survival of the people and their culture. I admire Mawurndjul's courage to be the instrument of change. Through his art he carefully stages and orchestrates change with thoughtful attention and reflection. In an interview he described his process and thinking:

> *"I'm doing things differently. I'm thinking about what my father told me. I know everything today from my dreams. I have ideas in my mind that can change. I paint crosshatching but over the plain colour, the light colour [white]. The old people painted with red colours. Red and white, black, but we, however, have changed that. The way I paint is my own idea from my own way of thinking. I changed the law myself. We are new people. We new people have changed things"* (Perkins et el., 2004, p. 136).

Munggurrawuy Yunupingu

Mungurrawuy Yunupingu (c1907-1979) is considered to be a pioneering bark painter from Yirrkala in North-East Arnhem Land. Cooee Art galleries explains on their website that Yunupingu helped develop a narrative style of large-scale episodic bark paintings (Cooee Art, 2021). Yunupingu's painting style is similar to the way I was taught by building up the story/image with colour and patterning. Paintings, such as *Lany'tjung story number two* (1959) have inspired the composition and style of my painting, *Kalkutungu Molonga Warrma* (2021), where the painting is divided into separate panels that narrate each night's performance of the *Molonga* corroboree.

The story depicted in *Lany'tjung* is an epic involving Crocodile and Fire Dreaming. Crocodile was performing rituals with other "mystic men" and while they were dancing their fire accidentally spread out of control and Crocodile was burnt before escaping into a nearby bay (Berndt et al., 1982, p. 154). Crocodile is depicted in the upper right panels and in the lower left is a bandicoot who hid in a hollow log to escape the fire. In the lower right panel is a corroboree and, of interest to me is the upper left panel in which, "a new Dreaming is called out and danced" (Caruana, 2012, p. 70), which is an example of how new Dreamings can manifest. Ken Watson wrote in Willsteed (2004) how in this same panel:

> *"The patterns of diamond-shaped miny'tji (sacred clan designs) at the top left of the painting allude to Mungurrawuy's preoccupation with a missing canoe at the time he made this painting. By including this event with the Ancestral story, he shows the relationship between the Ancestral past and the present"* (p. 196).

The painting is replete with *miny'tji* as described in the chapter, Flash Patterns. In *Lany'tjung* for example, Crocodile had the *miny'tji* fire design of infilled diamonds burnt onto his back. Other examples of *miny'tji* diamond patterns used in the painting represent sandbanks, flames and footprints (Willsteed, 2004).

I find Yunupingu's bark paintings, like other great art, to be more than paintings, and more than the sum of their parts. They surpass the person and take on a life of their own. *Lany'tjung* is one such painting that resonates with me via its visual power. I saw the painting in print at an early age, and it was one of the first Indigenous Australian paintings that captivated me and made me proud to be an Indigenous Australian person and to become an artist. Its impression on me was confirmed when I viewed *Lany'tjung* in person at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW). It was unexpected as I was unaware it was there. I recognised it from a distance and was drawn to it. While standing in front of it I experienced a synesthetic response. I felt a warm glow in my stomach, and I could smell burning crocodile flesh. I have never experienced anything like that before or since.

Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi

One element common to contemporary Indigenous central desert art, the art from Arnhem Land, and reflecting on my own art is how artists construct their images, which according to Andrew Crocker originally, "…took the form of body and ground decorations and decorations of flat surfaces such as shields and cave walls" (Crocker, 1987, p. 19).

The Papunya art movement was one of the first contemporary art movements, and like other neo-traditional movements that followed in the desert, Arnhem Land and elsewhere is that the artists looked to secularise their paintings from a sacred ceremonial context to one that could include a public audience. I have been given similar guidance from Uncle Jimmy who has told me how much to say and how much to paint. For instance, I am unable to paint Rainbow Serpent and Dingo together, otherwise the painting will be too sacred for public display. When I have an idea for a painting I will

show Uncle Jimmy a drawing and he will approve or suggest an alternative. He is happy as long as my paintings are individual expressions of our cultural subject matter. McLean (2016) wrote that in Papunya after the initial sacred paintings:

> *"…illustrations of secret ceremonial objects ceased or were disguised in layers of dotting; paintings became increasingly abstract as the depictions of ancestral events morphed from the iconography of pictographs to a more aesthetic domain"* (p. 133).

The secularised or public paintings started small, planar and were executed on the ground or in the artist's lap. Similar to Arnhem Land bark paintings, an artist will work by moving around different sides of the painting which can disrupt the perspective and orientation. Caruana (2012) writes that although the orientation is of less significance:

> *"The relationship between the arrangement of elements in the paintings and the cardinal points of the compass conveys greater meaning, as the latter are commonly used in the description of distant people and places, and the direction of the travels of the Dreaming beings"* (p. 113).

I also paint on the ground although, rather than planar, my paintings are usually orientated in a conventional Western style, from top to bottom and left to right. Traditional teaching, passed on via oral cultural events have provided an understand of the importance of the land and the connections of different peoples indicated by the 'cardinal points of the compass,' and it informs the composition of my map-painting *Tharrapatha* (2022), where I have depicted the Rainbow Serpent as the Leichardt River. I will discuss this painting further in a subsequent chapter, Cardboard to Canvas: The Paintings.

Papunya artist, and Pintupi man, Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi (1921-1999) was an artist who conventionalised his paintings. Papunya artists typically start with dark backgrounds similar to the way I was taught (Caruana, 2012, p. 114). Tjungurrayi's earlier paintings such as *Mitukatjirri* (1972), are purely symbolic without any naturalistic elements. As symbols convey multiple meanings a painting can be described in both a secular and sacred manner. Desert artists also use dots in outlining or in fields to give their artworks brilliance or 'flash' as described in a previous chapter, Flash Patterns. This has a similar effect to the Arnhem Land crosshatched line work of *rarrk*

and *miny'tji* or the Kalkadoon *mintja thuuthuu* line pattern. There have been innovations in the use and application of dots which:

> *"…may be intended to evoke the use of birds' down or fibrous fluff, or to imitate the process of making ground paintings. They have been used to indicate differences in topography and vegetation. Areas of dots may mask sacred designs, and they may be used to produce visually stimulating effects intended to evoke the presence of supernatural power in the earth"* (Caruana, 2012, p. 116).

Mitukatjirri includes symbols and shapes representing geology and ancestors. It is painted in a minimal style with a black background, red ochre symbols and shapes that are outlined in white dots (Caruana, 2012, p.116). As with my painting I also use dots as a framing devise and to outline figurative and symbolic elements, which is derived from blood-feathering as described in the chapter, Flash.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Informed-practice-led Research

My Master's project has developed a new research method that will extend and shift the paradigms. My research involves collecting and repatriating the decorative arts of the Kalkadoon people from sources such as Roth (1897, 1904) and Taçon (1996, 2008). This, in combination with talking to my family, assisted in relating documented information to traditional knowledge: ultimately producing contemporary paintings.

My project started with a practice-led research methodology however, since beginning I was fortunate to have reconnected with Uncle Jimmy. He has given me his blessing to take up the mantle of sustaining and promoting our culture through my art and academic research. I therefore found it necessary to employ a new integrated approach to my project that made me rethink the make-up and outcomes of my exegesis and artwork. I chose to keep the practice-led research methodology and alter it to my own method of 'informed-practice-led research'. This form of research from books in combination with discussions with family required this new and unique research method where traditional knowledge, 'informs' the theoretical content, aesthetic style, and context of my paintings. The illustrations and writing of Roth (1897, 1904) and on rock art also inform the aesthetics of my 'practice' which is 'led' by my academic research.

Firstly, I will discuss practice-led research and then find the commonalities and additions I have integrated from Indigenous Research Methodologies (I.R.M). This has led to an inclusive informed-practice-led methodology suited to my project. The aim of the research is to provide a basis for understanding and appreciation of Kalkadoon art by creating several paintings with contextual analysis expanding on ideas of theoretical knowledge. By researching historical documents and conversing with family I have been able to produce paintings that are a continuance of our culture and history.

Practice-led Research

Practice-led research, as stated, is where I started my research through the process of utilising Roth as a primary source of information on Kalkadoon artistic culture. Remaining the same is the reflexive method of which Associate Professor Robyn Glade-Wright (2017) wrote:

> *"In a reflexive process, literature about theories of art and the context of the art informs practice. In turn the practice informs the*

> *establishment of a conceptual basis for the work, which informs theory"* (Glade-Wright, 2017).

Artists draw on their own socio-cultural position during practice-led research. The artist constructs meaning by interpreting their experiences through practice. This is known as an interpretivist/constructivist method and it aligns with social science theories which aim to understand the "world of human experience" (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006, p. 4). The interpretivist/constructivist method involves personalised meaning. This might be a thought, hunch or as what Collingwood describes as a "psychic disturbance" (Graham, 2005, p. 42). This psychic disturbance motivates the artist to create artwork to address their concerns. The creative process does not happen in a vacuum. This psychic disturbance motivates the artist to create artwork to address their concerns:

> *"Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with reference to the creative outcomes"* (Candy cited in Glade-Wright, 2017).

Art, and writing about art, is not static but a dynamic evolving classification. Through a process of imaginative construction or self-discovery an artist adds value through sharing and relating the personal to the public. As the artwork develops and is expanded, a "pattern of meanings" (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006, p. 4) develops which can create new understandings of the topic. Art making combined with discussions with family, review of literature and writing has enabled my project to progress.

Critical writing on Indigenous Australian art has excelled at pace, with differing views prevailing from Indigenous peoples, anthropologists, philosophers, and the art world. There are complicated debates, and as one example, language problems exist. Indigenous Australian artist Brenda L. Croft (2015) observed that within art there is also:

> *"…an absent (silent, oppressed, dispossessed) history of adequate representation through critically assessing the distinct capacity of visual representation to address the chasm existing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous"* (p. 238).

Indigenous Research Methodologies

Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM), along with other terms for methods and approaches to Indigenous research, have only recently entered into academia and are evolving through many different fields of research creating new paradigms. However, it does have at its core an Indigenisation by "…utilizing decolonizing methodologies originally laid out by [Linda Tuhiwai] Smith [in 1999]" (Drawson et al., 2017, p. 4). Drawson et al. (2017) also reiterated on the evolving and precise nature of I.R.M. by stating that:

> *"…although it remains unclear exactly what constitutes an Indigenous research method or methodology. There is a broad use of such terminology within research communities, with limited generalized agreement regarding what Indigenous research is and how such endeavours differ from mainstream research practices"* (p. 2).

IRM offer alternatives to research that incorporate Indigenous people's perspectives. I have the benefit of having an Indigenous voice and now there is a way of expressing it academically. IRM are a necessary and vital form of research for academic institutions as an important counterpoint to Western research methods. IRM have now also become an international effort for colonised Indigenous peoples to decolonize the Euro-centric views about us (Chilisa, 2012).

Methods described by Indigenous Australian academics, such as Karen Martin-Booran Mirraboopa, provide methods of research that recognise the value and importance of an Indigenous voice. Martin-Booran Mirraboopa (2003) explained that it depends on the research being conducted however, there must be protocols set in place:

> *"These protocols are part of the research findings and strongly reflect the relational ontology, epistemology and methodology employed through the Indigenist research framework"* (pp. 213-214).

Indigenous culture is built on relationships to the natural environment: the land, the plants, the animals and ultimately to each other. Indigenous research paradigms are formed by a reflexive process and relational ontology, epistemology, and axiology. These philosophical systems have been identified as, "Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing" (Martin-Booran Mirraboopa, 2003, p. 208; Wilson, 2008; Chilisa, 2012).

Pathway is another Indigenous Australian research method which enables Indigenous concepts to be integrated into a framework for research where, "…the Path provides the structure that the research study will follow and the Way refers to the process…" (Drawson et al., 2017, p. 11). Dadirri has also been put forward as a way to structure Indigenous research by emphasising "…deep and respectful listening" (Stronach & Adair, 2014, p. 117). 'Pathway' and 'Dadirri' are aimed at collaborative research between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. They do, however, explain Indigenous people's ways of knowledge sharing and gathering.

Academic scholar, Distinguished Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) points out the similarities and differences within Western and Indigenous research paradigms. One difference is the Western "neutral and objective" scientific approach to research. Similarities arrive through the reflexive qualitative methods and relational emphasis of the social sciences where the research aims to enhance societal relationships and "benefit mankind" (p. 122).

IRM address issues of research conducted on or by Indigenous peoples. In my case, I am an Indigenous person conducting research on my own culture. By combining knowledge from my family with that which is documented I must combine methodologies and create my own approach to post-graduate research and art making. New paradigms of research evolve in some cases because Indigenous research combines, "resistance to Euro-Western research methodologies …and strategies for decolonization" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 13). My aims are to repatriate historical information such as that of Roth and then to compare it to research on my family's cultural knowledge in order to inform my thesis writing and art practice. Through her researching of methodologies, Professor Bagele Chilisa (2012) asks if IRM can be validated and move towards decolonising through Indigenising methodologies within a postcolonial Indigenous paradigm. The term 'postcolonial' is, as Chilisa (2012) states, "highly contested and at the same time popular" (p. 12). For some, 'postcolonial' may mean that colonisation is over, but the legacy and effects of colonisation are still apparent. In this context 'postcolonial' is a move toward decolonisation in conjunction with the emerging political struggles and globalisation of the late twentieth century (Smith, 2012, p. 101). Chilisa (2012) describes how, "The word postcolonial is used in the research context to denote the continuous struggle of non-Western societies that suffered European colonization" (p. 12). Her statements confirm the stance of IRM goals of decolonisation as, "a process of centring the concerns and worldviews of the

colonized Other so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and perspectives" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 13).

Smith (2012) reiterates how there is an:

> *"…agenda for action…* [that] *connects local, regional and global efforts which are moving towards the ideal of a self-determining indigenous world. The processes, approaches and methodologies – while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities – are critical elements of a strategic research agenda"* (p. 120).

Chilisa (2012) describes how there is already a dichotomy and yet positivity in the paradox:

> *"Postcolonial indigenous methodologies must be informed by the resistance to Euro-Western thought… envisage a space* [and] *…create new research methodologies that take into account the past and the present as a continuum of the future. This is the in-between space where Euro-Western research methodologies steeped in the culture, histories, philosophies, and the social condition of the Westerners can collaborate with the non-Western colonized's lived experiences and indigenous knowledge to produce research indigenous to their communities and cultural, integrative research frameworks with balanced lending and borrowing from the West"* (pp. 11-12).

By contrast, Shawn Wilson (2008) argued that research can be purely Indigenous without reference to Western paradigms in their current position. Wilson found that collaborative methodologies are problematic because, "we can never really remove the tools from their underlying beliefs" (p. 12). Indigenous Australian art has historically adapted to modernity in often innovative and provocative ways. Discourses on art and ideology are an ongoing consequence of the colonial past where cultures certainly clashed. As McLean (2016) makes clear, "There was destruction galore… but there was also fusion" (pp. 249-250). There are conversations with contemporary art, other Western thought and, "in the domain of law, as such paintings are now tendered as legal documents in Native Title claims as if they are archives of land ownership" (McLean, 2016, p. 251). With the clash came what McLean describes as 'transculturation' where each culture exchanges with the other, ideally, in their own terms. This is an ongoing process of a back and forth that enables each culture to articulate meaning and hopefully arrive at an agreed truth. McLean's idea of transculturation is a way of explaining how culture is not static or isolated and that it is

and has been art and the artists that are often at the forefront of any exchanges. He points out that within Indigenous Australian art and art generally:

> *"…the aesthetic sphere of cognition and cultural discourses it produces are not delimited by ideological or cultural mores, even when they are expressions of them. Art and its discourses are certainly pressed into the service of ideology but it would seem that art's poetic operations continually exceed such instrumental imperatives – as indeed they must if art is to engage us effectively in political and other ways"* (McLean, 2016, p. 247).

My research process has added to the existing paradigm of practice-led research and offers an alteration of an *informed-practice-led* research method. This new method is certainly a transcultural approach in the McLeanian sense although removed by over one hundred and twenty years from the time of Roth's publications. It is repatriating my own culture from a non-Indigenous person and therefore the exchange has come from my own people via Roth. By researching non-Indigenous historical documents and conversing with my relatives I have produced an exegesis and several paintings that are a new Dreaming of Kalkadoon art. My dilemma is that I am a Kalkadoon person researching Kalkadoon art. My aim has been to be respectful and as non-biased as possible, while at the same time use this platform to document an approach to revive and renew the art of the Kalkadoon people. A contextual analysis of the paintings expands on the context, aims and outcomes of the written and practical artwork. My research involved discussions with family, friends, peers and my supervisors, reading/writing/painting, and then discussing the progress and any results.

The following diagram (fig.2) sets out my method as a reflexive process. I have incorporated family knowledge to show the connection with my research which has informed my painting. The double arrows indicate the back-and-forth flow of ideas, knowledge and the review processes which all reciprocate because they are not isolated.

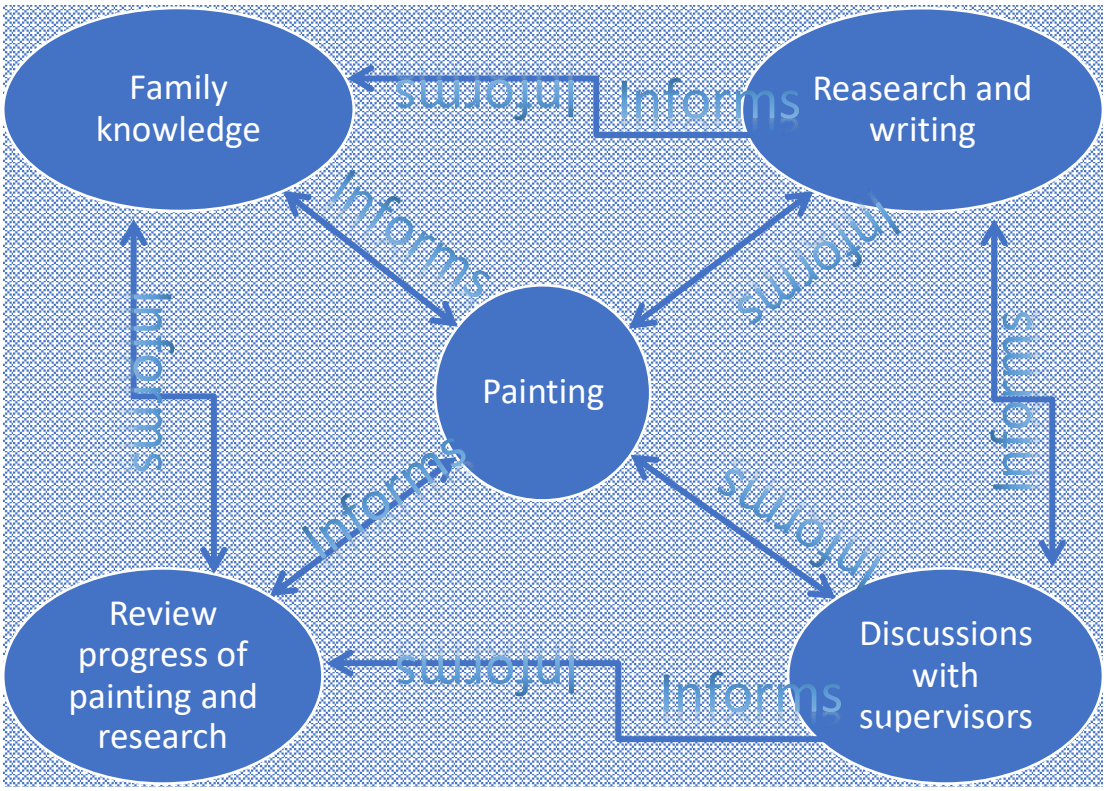

Figure 2. Diagram of informed-practice-led research methods

Chapter 6: Researchers Creative Practice

A Creative Philosophy

The creative practical work for this project includes paintings which utilise the traditional oral knowledge from my family and the iconography recorded by Roth in order to generate a Kalkadoon aesthetic. My Masters research project has been a journey of personal connections to my Kalkadoon ancestors, culture, and history through art. Through my contemporary Kalkadoon paintings and the written exegesis, I hope I have created a valuable resource that will preserve our cultural heritage and inspire future artists by displaying the continuation of Kalkadoon culture through art. My personal aims have been to maintain a connection to my culture and spirituality through painting. The writing is what confirms this by creating a complete record for further criticism and expansion. The cultural exchange starts with Indigenous people who like myself:

> *"…are rebuilding value by reviving their cultural life and, where required reinventing it. This suggests it is genuinely sacred art – …painting is a way of Aboriginal people making country, of creating the link with the world of Dreaming in the present, and not merely showing it. By an inspiring alchemy of grief and fortitude… where suffering, tradition, and dispossession are coming back at us as the beauty and joy of colour and line on canvas"* (Ferrell, 2012, p. 52).

A sure part of being a painter is the adage 'the first brush stroke is the hardest'. This is also true of the last brush stroke, of knowing when to cease to prevent over-working. This also applies to line work, as each line fills a blank space. Mastering the control of the brush stroke from start to finish has taken many years. I use a long, thin script brush and mix the paint with a generous amount of water to add flow. With the brush fully loaded, I liken the method of line-making to the confidence involved in flying or perhaps a gymnastic manoeuvre where there is a take-off point, in-flight transitioning, then spotting and making the landing.

Mistakes are not mistakes if you learn from them. Each line teaches about the next line. Imperfections enhance beauty by making something unique. Uniqueness and beauty are not necessarily interchangeable or incongruent however, one can make the other by their intangibility either individually or by consensus. Perfection is

unattainable for mortal beings, although I believe that through consistency and perseverance mastery may be achieved.

The inspiration for my paintings stems in part from rock art however, rather than simply copying the symbols I interpret them in my own way. This adds meaning and continues the teaching aspect of rock art. Rock art is an enduring and sacredly indelible record of people from the past. One reason Indigenous Australians paint and incise on rocks is to reveal something to other people, either publicly or privately. In the Arnhem Land rock art tradition, there are firsthand accounts explaining the usage of rock art as a teaching and learning tool. This I believe, has had a direct influence on the way some Indigenous Australian artists have represented their art. In an interview for the exhibition *Crossing Country,* 2004, we hear this evidence from Arnhem Land artist Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerrek. He related how he painted a goat on a rocky outcrop and when asked where he had seen it, he replied,

> *"Maranboy, ngarrurndi ngabanbukkang ngabimbom. Wurdurd marrek barri-bengkayi yiken dabbarrabbolk. Marrek barribengkayi, kayakki. I saw it at Maranboy and when I returned, I painted it. The children had never seen one, neither had the old people. They didn't know what a goat was at all"* (Perkins et al., 2004, p. 99).

A Visual Journey

I have developed a traditional/contemporary Kalkadoon style of art, that could be inspirational to future Kalkadoon artists who may envisage their own style. The expansion of arts practice that has resulted from my research may also inspire Indigenous artists from other regions to research, imagine and create their own style.

I like to start with an image in my mind. I keep it there and contemplate the feeling it evokes. If the image stays and gets stronger, I will then utilise scaled illustrations to consider the colours and compositional elements of the painting. I divide the picture plane geometrically in halves from the top and bottom, and from each corner through the centre as seen in the illustration for *Kuathuat* (fig.3). This allows me to see what dynamics are at play and to make decisions about the placement of each element within the painting. I then transfer my design onto the canvas with chalk which can be adjusted and finally dissolves or can be wiped off without damaging the painting. When describing blood-feathering, Roth (1897) stated that the blood was painted over the pattern, "which has been previously deliminated [*sic.*] with its 'kopi' pattern" (p. 114),

before the feather-down is applied. 'Kopi' is a widely used term for '*pirrakarra'* or '*piakarra'* as mentioned in the chapter, Kalkadoon Colour Dreaming. It is a form of white plaster that can be used dry to draw with or ground and mixed with a medium to make paint. Describing the bark painting of Arnhem Land, Berndt et al. (1982) explains the initial approach to painting and the ability to adjust the composition where the artists first define the outer boarder with, "an ochre-line 'frame'" (p. 63). Then from this point:

> *"…the design the artist has in mind is outlined broadly on the red-ochred surface. Even some of the great artists erase parts of their initial sketches in the process of planning what they want to portray"* (Berndt et al., 1982 p. 56).

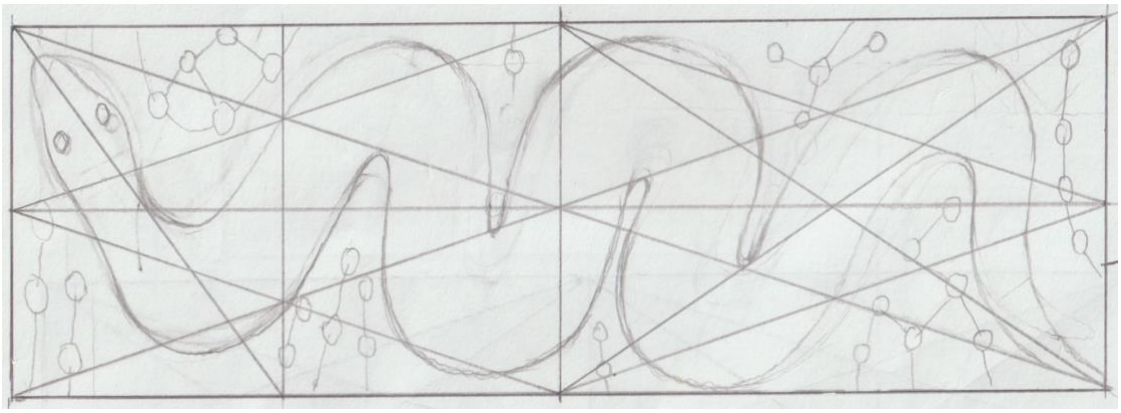

Figure 3. Scaled illustration for the painting, *Kuathuat (The Rainbow Serpent)*

My paintings, as noted in the chapter, The New Dreaming, commence with a dark background on which I place the main figures centrally to give them importance. The figures are usually painted in solid red ochre reminiscent of rock art. I then outline the figures and frame the picture with white dots which follows the convention of blood-feathering. The backgrounds are then infilled with the *mintja thuuthuu* line pattern. I typically start with white lines, leaving a gap that is later filled in with a coloured line. There are variations that I have employed which will be discussed in the chapter, Cardboard to Canvas: The Paintings. Also as stated in the chapter, Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi, the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern is similar in aesthetic style and effect to that of Arnhem Land *rarrk* and *miny'tji.* The main difference between them is the fact that *rarrk* and *miny'tji* are crosshatched patterns while the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern is comprised of parallel lines. Also, the size of the lines is thicker and I will also rearrange the design orientations and colour combinations to individualise each

painting. The organisation of the *mintja thuuthuu* line pattern can create depth and dimension within the overall pattern. By drawing onto the canvas with chalk I am able to consider the background *mintja thuuthuu* pattern as part of the composition. These patterning devices produce the effect of a shimmering flash of brilliance. They represent the evocative and resonant powers in nature and that which is present in entities such as the Rainbow Serpent. In explaining the significance of *rarrk* and its association with the Rainbow Serpent, Taçon et el. (1996) remarked how Indigenous people:

> *"…liken it to the shimmering effect of the sun on water; it also is said to represent the essence of rainbow colour and life itself… cross-hatched rarrk designs add brilliance, rainbow colour or rainbowness, Ancestral power and aesthetic potency to paintings. In essence, the cross-hatching makes the subjects of paintings 'alive' with Ancestral power and with spiritualness, found within all living things, that is most concentrated within the Rainbow Serpent"* (p. 120).

Commensurate Western Theories

My painting process involves the examination of Indigenous Australian and Western theories of art. As I have discussed the similarities between other Indigenous Australian art and Kalkadoon aesthetics, the following descriptions include valuable insights into the compatibility with my art and that of some Western art theories. The uniqueness of my painting has been the emphasis on Indigenous aesthetics including 'flash' symbols, patterns, and colours. As well, my painting involves Western theories of art, such as colour theories and Gestalt theories of visual perception including colour theory, and compositional devices and dynamics including centre/frame relationships, rhythm, repetition and symmetry.

Isaac Newton described the colour wheel in the 1600's after observing the colour spectrum through a prism which showed the true nature of colour (Morgan, 1992, pp. 244-245). The colour wheel arranges the colours to show the harmonies of colour or hue. There have since been many who have added to the representation of colour or refuted those of Newton and proposed their own methods including Goethe, Chevreul, Maxwell, Hering, Munsell, Klee and Itten (Morgan, 1992, pp. 247-251). As stated in Morgan (1992):

> *"Color harmonies may be studied relative to the four hue harmonies: complementary, triadic, analogous and monochromatic…*[however] *The general color harmonies will remain the same no matter what color notation system is used"* (p. 267).

What I find to be more critical to my work is the choice of colour palette and the mixing of those colours. My general palette consists of red and yellow ochre, black and white. I also use several other reds, yellows and blues, as well as magenta, gold and newly invented paints that I find pleasing. From these I can make secondary and tertiary colours however, pure colour is more usual. I do sometimes mix colours to achieve new colours. I will tint colours with white or tone them with black and white or by mixing the primary hues I can make novel reds, yellows, or blues. This spectrum allows me to build visual relationships with colour through the harmonious use of tone, intensity, and the value of each colour. This also relates to figure/ground relationships where certain colours stand out more on certain ground colours adding to the flash of brilliance through colour that I desire in my paintings (Morgan, 1992, pp. 262-281).

Cardboard to Canvas: The Paintings

The first three paintings, *Kalkutungu Molonga Warrma* (*Kalkadoon Molonga Corroboree),* 2021 (fig.4), *Ingki-Ingki* (*Dilly Bag)*, 2021 (fig.5) and *Yampurru* (*Shield),* 2021 (fig.6), are painted on cardboard which I had been using over many years and had become part of my brand or style of painting. Resembling bark paintings, my cardboard or 'Urban Bark' paintings became a way of creating distinct artwork. They originally evolved from being unable to afford canvas and frames so I would find cardboard which was free to paint on. Although not unique in itself, as other artists have used found materials, the 'brand' was recognisably different. It also confirmed how much I am influenced by and admire Arnhem Land bark painters. Their skill and dedication to their craft and the continuing use of ochre colours is something that has inspired my work, as well as the formal and later informal compositions and use of *rarrk* and *miny'tji* crosshatched infill. The Arnhem Land bark painters have remained exemplars of strong cultural people that can also navigate the Western worlds, especially that of art and politics. Considering the longevity of my cardboard paintings I decided to switch from cardboard to canvas which is a more stable and archival material, and for the fact that the painting is more important than what it is painted on.

At this stage of my project, I incorporated more personally relevant content inspired by documents that Kalkadoon elder, Uncle Jimmy, contributed to concerning our culture and history (Rudolph-Borgar, 1989). As discussed in the Methodology section I have included Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM) into my project

adding to Practice-led Research with Informed Practice-led Research. The expansion of the research for my project has revealed new insights into Kalkadoon culture and history and highlighted what is of significance.

Figure 4. *Kalkutungu Molonga Warrma* (*Kalkadoon Molonga Corroboree)*
2021, acrylic on cardboard, 120x75cm

Kalkutungu Molonga Warrma (*Kalkadoon Molonga Corroboree)*, 2021 (fig.4), is thoughtful conceptually rather than merely documentary. Roth experienced the corroboree, and he produced detailed descriptions. His purpose was to demonstrate the memory capacity of Indigenous peoples and the trade of corroborees. While writing, Roth (1897) was lost for words at the indescribable beauty of such a performance stating that it was, "…a scene which requires an abler pen than mine to describe" (p. 120). This indicates that during the 1890's Kalkadoon cultural integrity was still evident in the performing of corroborees, trade, language and arts practices.

The painting is executed in a didactic narrative fashion with separate panels depicting the *Molonga* corroboree through the five nights and days of its performance. Corroborees could be found in dreams and are composed mainly by wise elders. They are often traded to other people who in turn pass them on. The new owners being ignorant of the original language used in the corroboree would learn the songs and movements by rote and the story and meaning attached to the corroboree are transmitted orally. The origins of the *Molonga* corroboree are uncertain, although it is known that *Molonga* is an, "evil-doer from whom mischief may be expected" (Roth, 1897, p. 121) and if the corroboree was not performed properly, *Molonga* would seek revenge with unspeakable and horrifying acts. In 1893, Roth (1897) recorded that the *Molonga* corroboree was being relayed via the *Workia* people north-west of Kalkadoon Country, where it first appeared in 1894, before being traded to people further south (p. 118).

The painting began with a brown background to represent the Indigenous peoples skin colour. The corroboree costumes are depicted by the red and white dots to denote blood-feathering. The leaders of the ceremony are distinguished by the feathers in their upper arm bands and by differences in their costume. Each performer wears a human hair belt with a pearl shell in front and eagle feathers on either side. The figures themselves are absent as I only wanted to allude to them as the costumes are the main subject, and because I did not want the painting to have too much power as this painting is conceptual, rather than a re-enactment. The emphasis is on the costumes and the performance rather than the performers. *Molonga* is depicted in the large panel on the left holding a feather tipped spear. There are also the various implements used by the performers and the singed leaves which are tied onto the lower legs are represented by the oval motifs as described in the chapter, Kalkadoon Iconography.

Starting from the upper left panel we see the first night's performance. Then moving left to right and top to bottom are the subsequent evenings with *Molonga* appearing on the fifth night with other performers in the bottom left panel. The figures with only white dots are the performers who appear each sunrise to close the previous night's performance. During a corroboree such as *Molonga*, each day would proceed as normal until the evening when the performers would prepare in what Roth (1897) called the "green room" (p. 119). The 'green room' is to prevent anyone from seeing the performers before they emerge and is manufactured with tree branches leaning together. The 'green room' is pictured bottom right in the painting along with the audience as U-shaped figures and the fires as concentric circles. The background is in-filled with the

mintja thuuthuu pattern in grey as a neutral colour and to represent the smoke from the fires.

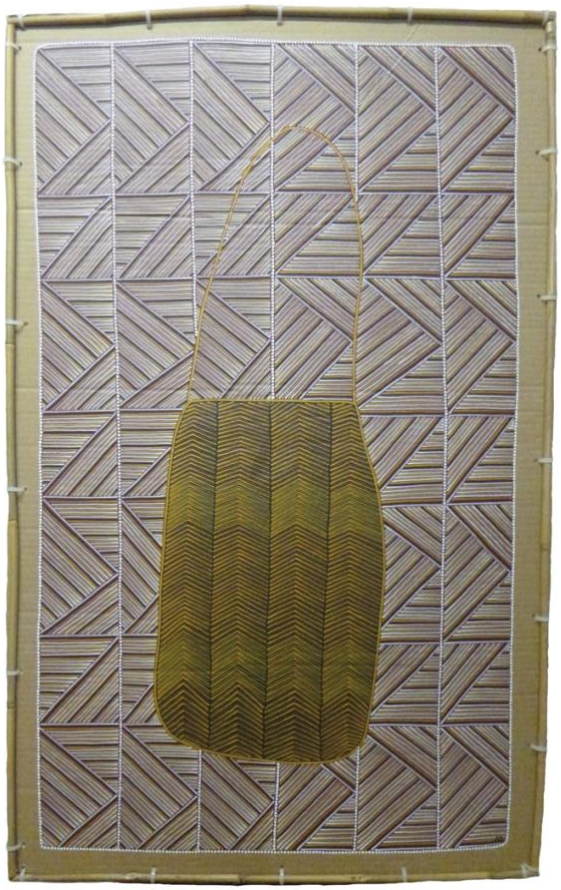

Figure 5. *Ingki-Ingki* (*Dilly Bag)*, 2021, acrylic on cardboard, 110x70cm

Ingki-Ingki (*Dilly Bag)*, 2021 (fig.5), is painted on a red ochre ground and depicts a dilly bag in the central plane. As explained in the chapter Kalkadoon Iconography, the parallel chevrons placed vertically represent a dilly bag. The background is filled in with the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern in a dynamic arrangement of alternate colouring to produce a formal background for the dilly bag to stand out against.

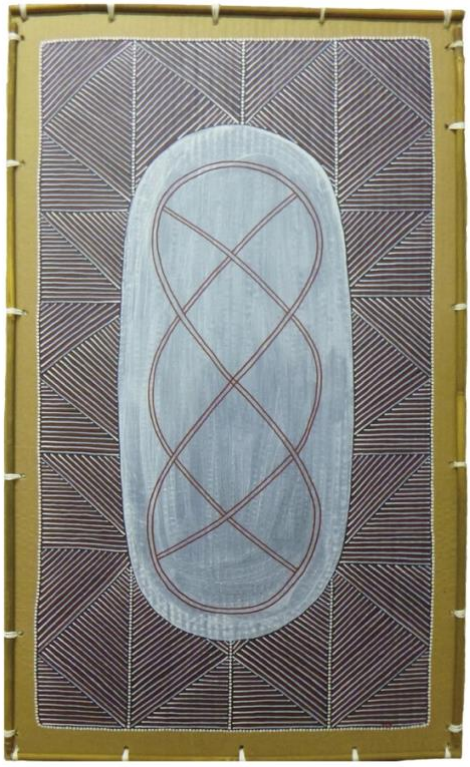

Figure 6. *Yampurru* (*Shield)*, 2021, acrylic on cardboard, 80x50cm

Yampurru (*Shield)*, 2021 (fig.6) is a representation of a life size shield with a Kalkadoon figure 8 pattern in red on white as illustrated by Roth. The background is filled in with the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern also in white and red as I wanted a muted palette to give equal weight to each element.

The patterns in *Ingki-Ingki* and *Yampurru* were repatriated and appropriated from the illustrations of Roth. They are, on the surface, documenting Kalkadoon art however, they were chosen because dilly bags and shields offer their own metaphorical connotations. Dilly bags are utilitarian and widely used to carry materials such as food, medicine or items of trade value. They can also carry personal and sometimes sacred and secret items and so can represent both privacy and mystery. Further, the making and gifting of dilly bags is a socialising activity. Shields conjure an image of a defensive fighting posture where parrying of spears or boomerangs is necessary. This could allude to the political manoeuvring for the survival of our people and culture often against great odds.

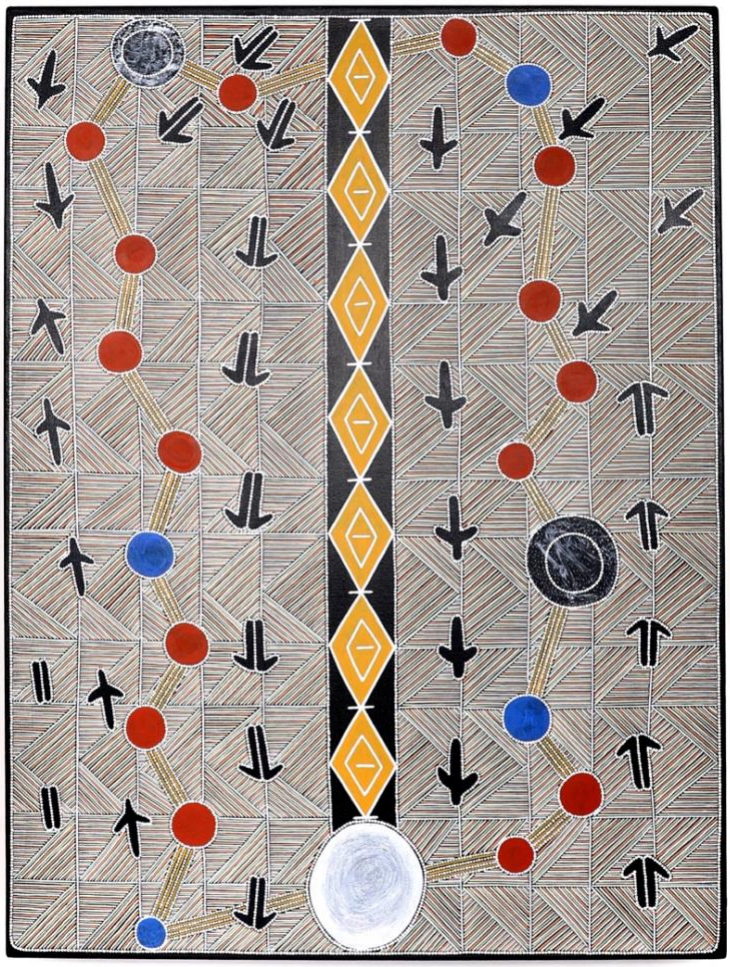

Figure 7. *Utjan Ritjinguthinha* (*Fire Dreaming),* 2021, acrylic on canvas, 91.5x121.5cm

Utjan Ritjinguthinha (*Fire Dreaming)*, 2021 (fig.7), is a depiction of an old Dreaming line recorded in Urquhart (1885), describing the discovery or re-discovery and final mastery of fire. The story relates to a time when people had lost the ability to make fire and they would eat their meat raw.

One day while preparing the meat a fire broke out (possibly from lightning) and it frightened the people who ran away. Once they returned, they found some of the meat was cooked and after tasting it, found it was good. A meeting was held, and it was decided to send a woman after the fire. She went and followed the fire, learning from it, before returning with embers to start a new fire. This fire was maintained by the woman and used to cook on. One day a flooding rain extinguished the fire and the woman was blamed for not saving it. She was banished as punishment, and one day in her frustration rubbed two sticks together which she found could generate heat and embers to start a fire. She returned to her people with this new technology and was welcomed as

a heroine. Now the people had their own means of making fire (Urquhart, 1885, pp. 87-88).

Utjan Ritjinguthinha – Fire Dreaming, 2021 (fig.7), shows the sacred fire at the bottom as a large white circle. The circle motif can represent people and places including a waterhole, campsite or a sacred site such as a corroboree ground. The smaller circles are waterholes in blue, campsites in red and the sacred sites are the larger black and white circles with the travelling lines in between which show the path of the fire and the woman following it. This story is open to speculation as to what was learned and accomplished on the woman's journey following the fire. To represent the woman in the story, I have employed the central diamonds in yellow which are a female symbol, as mentioned in the chapter, Kalkadoon Iconography. The scattering people are represented by the 'two-fellow anything' symbol documented by Roth, also featured in the chapter, Kalkadoon Iconography. In addition to Roth's illustrations of boomerang engravings, and which also appear in rock art, are the scattering animals represented by emu tracks which are the singular triform marks and the kangaroo tracks that are the paired tick mark lines. I have added this extension to differentiate them from the 'two-fellow anything' symbol. The background is in-filled with the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern in white for aesthetic 'flash' purposes, orange to represent the fire and green to represent the new growth after the fire.

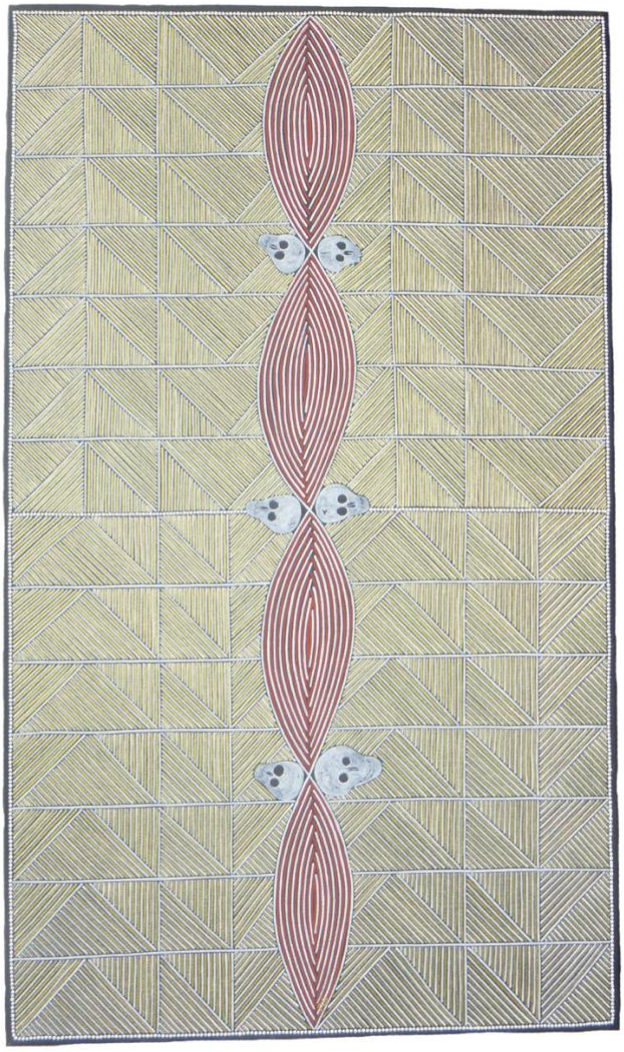

Figure 8. *Battle Mountain Memorial,* 2022, acrylic on canvas, 112x66cm

Battle Mountain Memorial, 2022 (fig.8), is a memorial to the events described in the chapter, Conflict History. Battle Mountain itself is a battlefield graveyard and holds a memory of a time of war fought on Australian soil. I did not want a graphic depiction of the events, but rather I wanted a more conceptual painting relating to the difficult dilemma faced by our ancestors who felt they had little choice but to give their lives in defence of our land.

The central ovoid patterns represent Battle Mountain and are painted with red lines to represent the bloodshed and white lines as a sign of mourning and fighting, as described earlier in the chapter, Kalkadoon Colour Dreaming. The skulls relate to eyewitness accounts that state that the Kalkadoon were, "…slaughtered in such great numbers that, for decades, a hill [Battle Mountain] was littered with the bleached bones

of warriors [men], gins [women] and piccaninnies [children]" (Blainey, 1960, p. 23). Kalkadoon people understand that when we visit Battle Mountain the spirits of the departed are happy because we have come to see them.

In the background *mintja thuuthuu* pattern I have used white, again as a sign of mourning and fighting, and gold to conceptualise the memorialisation of the painting; to impart the sacred, pureness and incorruptibility that gold connotates. The Kalkadoon people valued gold similarly to other cultures as a rare, pure metal that remains, in its raw state, shiny − without tarnishing or oxidising. It is relatively soft and can be worked, melted and reformed. The Kalkadoon people however, admired it in its natural state as a nugget or within veins of quartz. In 1934 prospector and stockman, F. G. Brown was informed by an Indigenous stockman, called 'Kalkadoon' Jack, of a "…giant gold nugget" being placed in the centre of a corroboree ground (Brown, 1983, p. 51). Another Kalkadoon story refers to two yellow snakes, one large and the other small. The smaller snake is said to be a reef of gold that was mined out of Bower Bird mine in the late 1800's, while the location of the large yellow snake remains a secret (Brown, 1983, p. 45).

Figure 9. *Kurrikurri Thuku (Red Dog)*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 66x112cm

The final four paintings involve combining the iconographic elements from Roth and the artistic and cultural knowledge gained from my kin about the story of the

Rainbow Serpent and the two dingoes who travelled together in the Dreaming. Through my research I found a reference to the story in Taçon (2008), who stated that, "…the Kalkadoon hold the red and Red Dog story" (p. 170). There was a red dingo and a white dingo, where the red dingo created red ochre in Kalkadoon Country while the white dingo created white ochre in another Country. Taçon (2008), used the *Waanyi* term "*jidijidi"* which denotes ochres imbued with the dingoes' power, and for this reason these ochres were sought through trade in preference to local ones (p. 170). My painting, *Kurrikurri Thuku* (*Red Dog)*, 2021 (fig.9), speaks directly to the part of the story where the red dingo created the red ochre in Kalkadoon Country. The red ochre is represented by the red circle; the large parallel lines or 'two-fellow anything' as cited in the chapter, Kalkadoon Iconography, are tracks and the background is filled in with the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern of black and white lines. With this painting I started with a red ground and then outlined the figure of the dingo and symbols within.

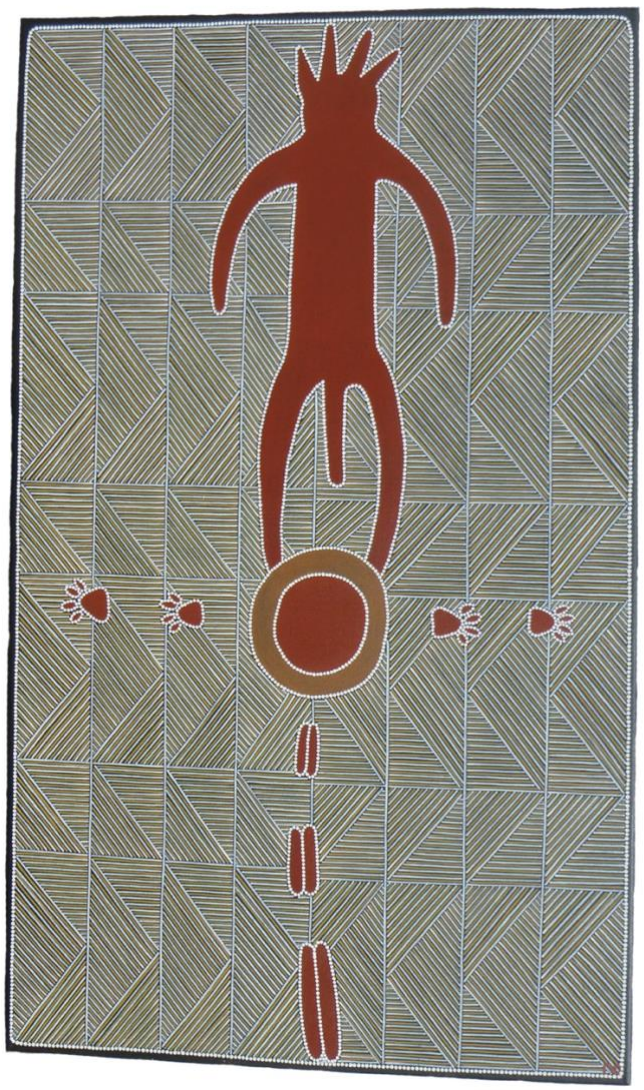

Figure 10. *Munuthangu Yurru (Dingo Man),* 2022, acrylic on canvas, 112x66cm

Dingoes are very sacred to Kalkadoon people with strong connections to the Rainbow Serpent, and they must be treated as separate subjects within painting. *Munuthangu Yurru* (*Dingo Man)*, 2022 (fig.10), is my interpretation of rock art depictions of Dingo Man that appear in red ochre with my addition of a white dot outline. I have shown dingo footprints and the 'two-fellow anything' symbol to show the travelling aspect of the story, as well as the shape-shifting ability of Dingo Man who could be either a man or a dingo. In rock art depictions, and my painting, Dingo Man's penis is shown to denote his maleness and virility. Dingo Man also relates to the time when animals were people (Roth, 1897, p. 125). This painting conforms to my use of centrally placed figures and symbols with the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern in white and yellow dominating the background.

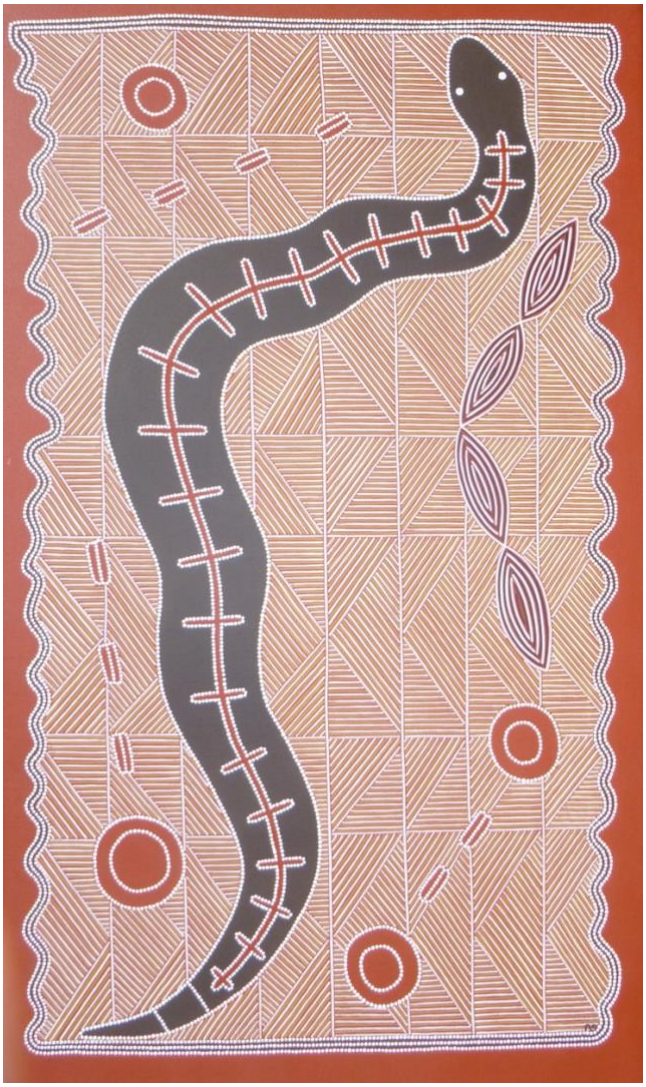

Figure 11. *Tharrapatha* (*Leichardt River)*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 112x66cm

Tharrapatha (*Leichardt River)*, 2022 (fig.11), and *Kuathuat* (*Rainbow Serpent)*, 2022 (fig.12), are two interpretations of the Rainbow Serpent. *Tharrapatha* (*Leichardt River)*, 2022 (fig.11), is in the form of a map depicting the Rainbow Serpent as the Leichardt River. The Leichardt River has its source south of Mount Isa and winds north before taking a sharp turn east at Kajabbi, then winding its way north again into the Gulf of Carpentaria. I have included our ancestral campsite in the bottom left as a large circle which also refers to Uncle Jimmy's knowledge of rock art which includes large circles. There are also other circles which are sacred sites including rock art sites in the lower right and a stone axe quarry in the upper left. The ovoid pattern in black and white depicts the location and form of Battle Mountain. These features, along with the

mintja thuuthuu pattern complete the composition enabling the viewer's eye to move around the canvas aided by 'two-fellow anything' tracks. As a map painting this painting is a departure from my other centrally placed figures and symbols. Although, with this composition the central space is empty which also demonstrates centre/frame relationships. Painted in a map-form style enabled me to reveal my knowledge of our Country and the central/sacred importance of the Leichardt River.

With *Munuthangu Yurru* (*Dingo Man),* 2022 (fig.10), and *Tharrapatha* (*Leichardt River),* 2022 (fig.11), I have employed the same design and colour combinations of the *mintja thuuthuu* line pattern. The difference being that *Munuthangu Yurru* (*Dingo Man),* 2022 (fig.10), has a black ground while *Tharrapatha* (*Leichardt River),* 2022 (fig.11), has a red ground. The design of the *mintja thuuthuu* pattern in these works is most easily rendered for myself being right-handed, and I wanted to show how a change of ground colour can make a noticeable difference.

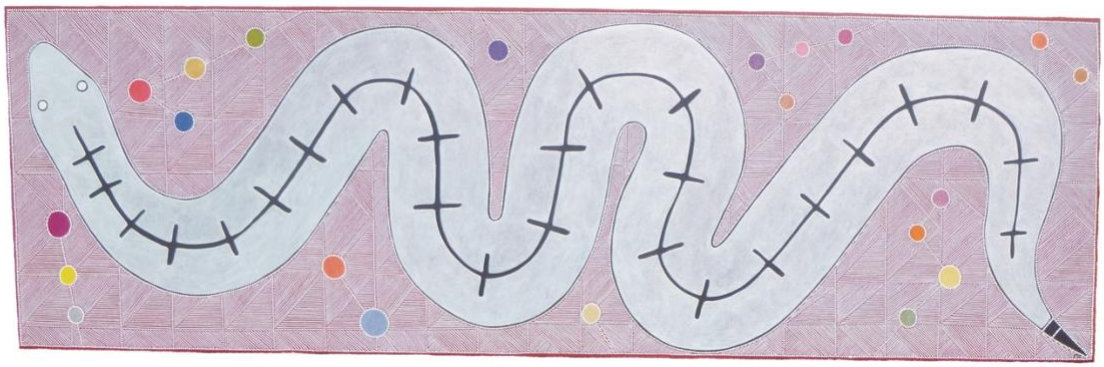

Figure 12. *Kuathuat* (*The Rainbow Serpent)*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 224x66cm

Kuathuat (*The Rainbow Serpent)*, 2022 (fig.12), is more painterly or whimsical, and as it is the last painting it is the culmination of technique and style while continuing to push further. The painting is on a red ground with the Rainbow Serpent in black. I have shown the Rainbow Serpent dominating the composition with less of the *mintja thuuthuu* line pattern. The background includes circular motifs in several distinct colours which represent the Rainbow Serpent's shed skin which generated all the colours in the Dreaming. Also, for the same reason, I have used a colour called interference red on the Rainbow Serpent, which is a transparent iridescent micaceous paint that gives a metallic shine which enhances the power of the Rainbow Serpent, along with the scale. The Rainbow Serpent in Kalkadoon culture is painted in a serpentine fashion to show the movement of a snake especially that of one swimming

on the water. In this work and *Tharrapatha* (*Leichardt River),* 2022 (fig.11), I have added the spine of the Rainbow Serpent with a cross-line pattern similar to rock art depictions. With this painting I have represented the Rainbow Serpent in its animal form: a water python, *Liasis fuscus*.

When the paintings were displayed in the gallery setting, I was able to clearly see a progression in my artwork. The artworks matured over the research journey which commenced with cardboard paintings documenting Kalkadoon cultural history incorporating traditional patterns from artifacts. My style was refined in the subsequent canvas paintings with content that was portrayed in a new way. These later works are a synthesis of my research which enabled me to generate a uniquely Kalkadoon style that incorporates Kalkadoon Dreaming lines with the styles of Kalkadoon rock art, body art and artifact decoration.

What remained constant was the implementing of the *mintja thuuthuu* line pattern. Although the *mintja thuuthuu* is a set pattern, within each painting I employed variations in line colour and the configuration of the pattern. The colours of the paintings largely remained with ochre colours which conforms to Indigenous cultural knowledge. However, some works have non-traditional colours that I used to expand on the meanings for example gold, in *Battle Mountain Memorial,* and the colours of the rainbow in *Kuathuat* (*The Rainbow Serpent*).

The ultimate goal with the creative work has been achieved through generating my own Kalkadoon manner of painting. The exhibition was illuminating and inspired me to continue exploring the themes of the current research. Throughout this Masters project I was able to formulate a Kalkadoon aesthetic, and develop my own creativity to become a contemporary Indigenous Kalkadoon artist.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Reflections

As there are not many precedents in Kalkadoon art, and only a few practicing artists, it was necessary to involve other influences in my current artworks. Therefore, I looked to other regions that are more established as contemporary centres of art. The artists represented in these galleries are often neo-traditional, in that they have arrived at their style of painting through their traditions. With my work it was more the case that I have repatriated our traditional mode from rock art, body art and artifact decoration largely from documented evidence. My techniques and method of painting reflects the greater Indigenous aesthetic of making the work 'flash', and with this in mind I have represented Kalkadoon art in a deliberate and considered manner. What is unique about my art are the symbols and patterns within Kalkadoon art and the unique history and culture of our people.

My research can be described as being predestined in its culmination. As stated in the Methodology chapter, I had planned an in-depth analysis of Roth and other accounts of Kalkadoon art, history and culture. As my project evolved however, I was able to expand my painting practice to include Kalkadoon Dreaming lines and empower my paintings with Kalkadoon cultural knowledge and wisdom. This reminds me of the philosophy around the beginnings of the Papunya contemporary art movement in the 1970's. The artists depicted esoteric rain Dreaming images in the first two years and, "…conceived their art movement in these mythic terms" (McLean, 2016, p. 124). The reasons were the formal inclusion of religion in art, and at first the artists looked to receive affirmation from the ancestors that the new paintings met with their approval. The senior artists called out to the spirit ancestors to acknowledge that what they were painting was acceptable, and after Kaapa Mbitjana Tjampitjinpa won the Caltex/Northern Territory Art Award, "The men knew that the ancestors had answered their call" (McLean, 2016, p. 132).

As stated, my project expanded into researching family knowledge combined with my initial objective of exploring Roth and other documented sources. However, some people believe that to include anthropological studies as inspiration would deprecate Indigenous Australian art. Colonisation adversely impacted Indigenous Australian's way of life: it cannot be reversed and so must be understood as it remains. For example, as stated in the chapter Anthropologists and Colonial Administration, in the past anthropology was used as a tool for the colonisation and subjection of

Indigenous peoples. The information they gathered was evidenced in the false assumption that the human race was hierarchical. However, the work of Roth is in some cases the only record of traditional Kalkadoon art and must be repatriated and re-legitimised as a means of decolonisation. My project should be seen as decolonisation: not simply ethnographic, and yet autoethnographic. By overcoming the displacement from our lands and the degeneration of language, a new Dreaming is called out in the light of Land Rights, reviving the language, repatriating artefacts and for myself reinterpreting the old by inventing a new contemporary art practice.

We have seen that some Indigenous Australian art relies on kinds of aesthetic flash as ancestral power. Whether through patterns, symbols or colours, the reverence is evident in the production, gaze and response. I have also considered the links between some Indigenous Australian group's ideas around their aesthetic values, principally the flashing of patterns, symbols and colours which are the power of the Dreaming ancestors. Kalkadoon art has a regional specific style with shared values with many Indigenous groups. In past years I have been working on developing my painting skills and refining my Kalkadoon style of art. My paintings now include the *mintja thuuthuu* line pattern as a kind of 'flash' device, and by also incorporating colour and compositional theories, my paintings offer value to art and culture as Indigenous Australian artists contribute to our national identity.

The initial outcome of my project was successful in that I have produced an individual traditional/contemporary Kalkadoon style of painting. Along with this exegesis, I have produced nine highly considered paintings that shall, I hope, have meaning for the community and other Indigenous peoples. This research contributes a new approach to Kalkadoon art and it may function as an informative resource for others. I hope this new knowledge will add to the canon of Indigenous art within Australia, and as there are only a few practicing Kalkadoon artists, there is also scope for the research to enable future art practitioners. It is my legacy to legitimise, contemporise and realise there is a place for Kalkadoon art. Honouring, respecting, and learning from the past is how we maintain our pride in who we are; Kalkadoon people.

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