

Minerva,

Prints 2004 - 2007

Balang John Mawurndjul AM and Kay Lindjuwanga

25 April - 16 May 2026

Artist power couple Balang John Mawurndjul AM and Kay Lindjuwanga were married for over 50 years and led the way to many innovations in Kuninjku art practice in Western Arnhem Land. Mawurndjul's use of *rarrk* (cross-hatching patterns) to map his clan lands have mesmerised audiences across the world and inspired a generation of young artists. Perhaps less well-known was his support for women artists. Mawurndjul taught Lindjuwanga and their daughter how to paint and encouraged them to exhibit their works.

Mawurndjul and Lindjuwanga often painted together for hours, no doubt fuelling each other's creativity. In 2004 the opportunity arose for them to try etching on copper with my father, French printmaker Jean Kohen. They were immediately open to trying a new medium with my father, whom Mawurndjul had previously met in Paris.

From the start, Mawurndjul was keen to be involved in every step of the process: preparing the copper plate prior to etching, experimenting with the acid baths to accentuate the grooves in the etched lines, inking plates, removing the excess ink (a tricky step), preparing the humid sheet of hand-made paper and finally, running the press. Immersing himself in the printmaking process enabled him to discover the possibilities of the medium.

He appreciated the technical difficulties, telling my father that, like the art of *rarrk*, the art of printmaking was unforgiving and not something you could master very quickly. On the other hand, Lindjuwanga preferred just to incise the plates, skipping the other steps, saying with a laugh that she trusted the 'old man' (my father) to get the best possible print from her plates.

It was decided to produce a limited edition of 20 prints per etching, to ensure image quality and provenance.

Between 2004 and 2007, Mawurndjul and Lindjuwanga created a series of etchings, which like their bark paintings rendered the ancestral power emerging from key places in their country. These places include Milmilngkan, a site where Ngalyod (the rainbow serpent) lives in a waterhole; Dilebang, a site renowned for its *delek* (white ochre), which is said to be the excrement of Ngalyod; and Kakodbebuldi, a site where the Mardayin ceremony was performed.

Adapting with ease to the print medium and working with an economy of lines, Mawurndjul and Lindjuwanga created compositions that go straight to the essence of their symbolic pictorial universe. Their etchings have been exhibited in Australia and Europe and acquired by major public institutions, including the National Gallery of Australia.

This exhibition presents printer's proofs, the final tests made before undertaking the full edition, gifted to the printers to thank them for their work and collaboration.

The exhibition is a humble homage to the artists' work and their symbiotic relationship.

Mawurndjul and Lindjuwanga passed away at the end of 2024, two months apart.

- *Apolline Kohen, April 2026*

Between 2002 and 2008, Apolline worked with Balang John Mawurndjul AM and Kay Lindjuwanga as Director of Maningrida Arts Culture.

Minerva, 14 Vine St, Redfern
Thursday - Saturday, 12-5PM
gallery@minervasydney.com
minervasydney.com
@minervasydney

