



BREATH OF LIFE LA VIE N'EST QU'UN SOUFFLE

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"The sound of the yidaki calls everyone together in unity."

Djalu Gurruwiwi

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Yidaki, more commonly known as didgeridoo, is the iconic Aboriginal instrument. Yidaki found its way to the streets of Europe and gained tremendous popularity to the point that this music instrument is almost synonymous with Aboriginal Australia. Despite this widespread attention, very little is known about yidaki. This exhibition and publication sets out to acquaint a European public with this captivating music instrument, with the people and the unique culture who produced it and with the land where it originated. More than just an emblematic wooden instrument, yidaki is a cultural and spiritual marker. It is the whole story of a region and a people; it is also about healing.

The Yolngu of northeast Arnhem Land have since time immemorial been custodians of the yidaki. Djalu Gurruwiwi is as a foremost authority intrinsically connected to this sacred instrument and provides an immersive insight. Moving from the archetypal sound of the yidaki, the *bruit originaire* to use the words of Rainer Maria Rilke, the focus shifts towards a broader scope of the culture and art of the Yolngu. Through the work of three prominent Yolngu artists that all share the remote community of Gangan as homeland - Gunybi Ganambarr, Malaluba Gumana and Bulthirimi Wunungmurra - several ancestrally significant places are visited and stories linked to these, such as that of the Mokuy spirits or Witiŋj, the Rainbow Serpent, are told. Anchored in deep cultural knowledge, their vivid and innovative work connects past and present.

Georges Petitjean is an art historian and obtained his Ph.D. with research on the art of the Western Australian Desert. His main field of research is the transformation of primordial Aboriginal art into contemporary art. He was curator of the Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art (AAMU) in Utrecht from 2005 to 2017. Since then, Georges Petitjean has been curator at Collection Bérengère Primat, one of the leading collections of Aboriginal art in the world.