

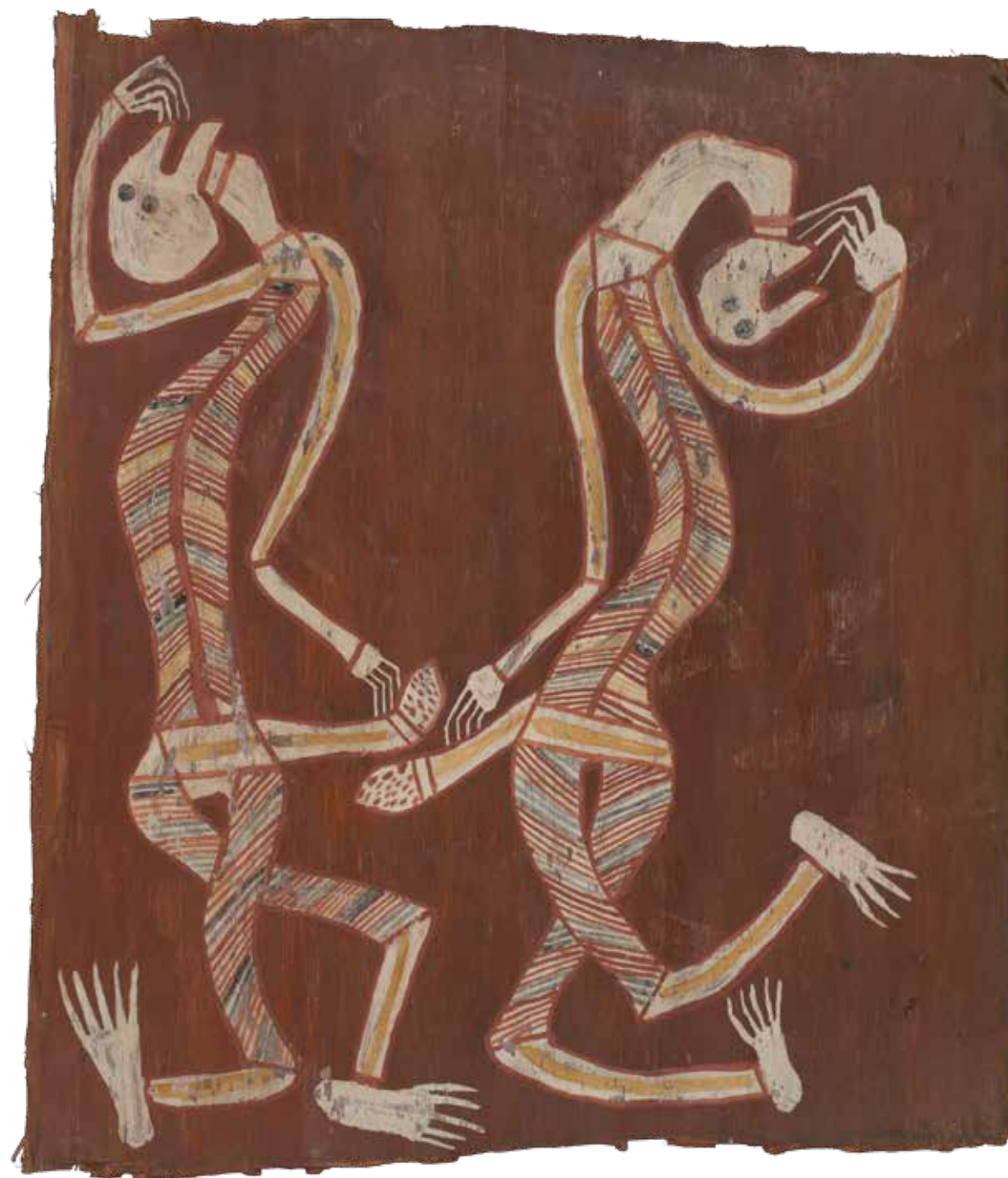
DYNAMIC

FIGURES

Dynamic figures is a term applied to a style of rock painting in western Arnhem Land that dates back at least 15,000 years. These figures are drawn as though caught in the act of movement, whether running, throwing a spear or dancing. A number of artists in this exhibition, including Najombolmi, Wally Mandarrk and Bardayal Nadjamerrek, also painted on rock.

The figures in these paintings are usually referred to as *mimih*. These are not ancestral or creator beings but spirits who inhabit the rocky escarpment. *Mimih* are credited with teaching the Bininj people the arts of living: how to hunt, cook, dance, sing and paint.

A type of painting that appears in the rock art of the region concerns sorcery. Such paintings were often commissioned to bring harm on a person who had wronged another, often for sexual infidelity. In the latter case, images of the culprits are drawn with distended and multiple limbs in awkward postures and occasionally with stingray barbs inserted into the joints and flesh to inflict pain.



Paddy Compass NAMATBARA
Alardju clan, Iwaidja language
1890–1973

Two Mimih Spirits Dancing, 1963
collected by Karel Kupka at Minjilang (Croker Island)
66.5 x 55.5 cm