

# Presentation Abstracts

(in order of program)

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# Bark paintings: A journey into the mounting methods at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Full presentation

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Bark paintings from the Northern Territory form a significant part of Australian Aboriginal Art collections, with over one thousand held at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) alone. Spanning a period of over sixty years of collection history, these bark paintings bear witness to various types of mounting techniques including make-shift supports constructed out bush by Aboriginal community arts centres; the framer's support attached to the bark and framed; and specialised supports designed by conservators.



*Image care of MAGNT, 'Mounting bark paintings using polyurethane foam, 1985'*

This paper discusses the past mounting techniques found in the bark painting collections of the MAGNT and provides insight into the current support systems developed and deployed by MAGNT. With such a varied history of bark painting supports, the question of how to manage the barks becomes a significant component for their conservation needs.

Due to the nature of the bark - stringy bark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*) - and methods of preparation for painting, the primary support is susceptible to changes in humidity and temperature with a tendency to have significant planar distortion. This can cause the bark to warp, curl, crack and split as it returns to the original memory of the tree it was once attached to. This distortion encourages bark paintings to pop out of their mounting systems with climatic fluctuations or to split if there is restriction. The current mounting system utilised at the MAGNT is designed to prevent restriction, minimising structural splitting and allowing for movement.

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Lisa Nolan is a Conservator at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), Darwin. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Art) from Queensland University of Technology and Master of Arts (Cultural Material Conservation) from the University of Melbourne. Lisa has worked on many exhibitions including the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Art Award for the past eight years.