



New Work from

SPINIFEX ARTS PROJECT



Image c/o Spinifex Arts Project

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SPINIFEX ARTS PROJECT

JULY 2023

D'Lan Contemporary
4 East 81st Street
New York, NY
10028 USA

SEPTEMBER 2023

Sydney Contemporary
Carriageworks
245 Wilson St,
Eveleigh NSW 2015





NEW WORK BY SPINIFEX ARTS PROJECT ACROSS THE HEMISPHERE

D’Lan Contemporary is thrilled to present a small group of new works from some of Spinifex Arts Project’s established and emerging artists. Since recently opening our new space on the Upper East Side in New York, a fantastic opportunity has arisen for D’Lan Contemporary to continue to bring the most exciting and innovative of Australia’s First Nations artists to the attention of both our local and international audiences.

The Spinifex Arts Project is currently celebrating the release of the monumental publication *Sun & Shadow: Art of the Spinifex People* edited by John Carty and Luke Scholes, which beautifully details and honours their unique contribution to Australian art history. To mark the release of this publication and the extraordinary and continuing success of this art movement, recent paintings by Patju Presley, Lawrence Pennington, Simon Hogan, Ned Grant, Timo Hogan, Dora Parker and Ian Rictor will be shown at D’Lan Contemporary, New York, in July and at Sydney Contemporary in September 2023.

With force and beauty, the vibrant work of these artists brings attention to the most far-reaching and remote places in Australia’s interior. The story of the Spinifex people is one of reclamation, declaration and collaboration, and I urge you to read studio manager Brian Hallett’s words for an insight into these artists’ sacred and profound Country, which is at the heart of these paintings.

We look forward to welcoming you at either or both D’Lan Contemporary, New York and Sydney Contemporary in July and September.

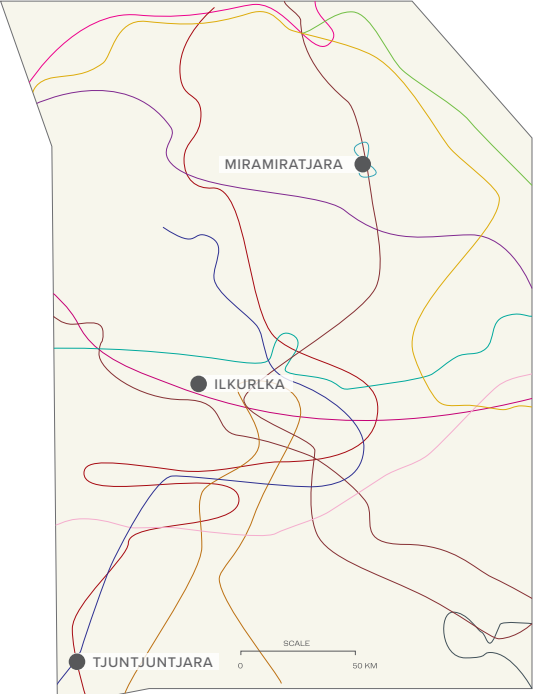
VANESSA MERLINO

Head of Research, D’Lan Contemporary

OPPOSITE: Ned Grant painting in the studio, image c/o Spinifex Arts Project

THE GEOGRAPHY OF SPINIFEX COUNTRY

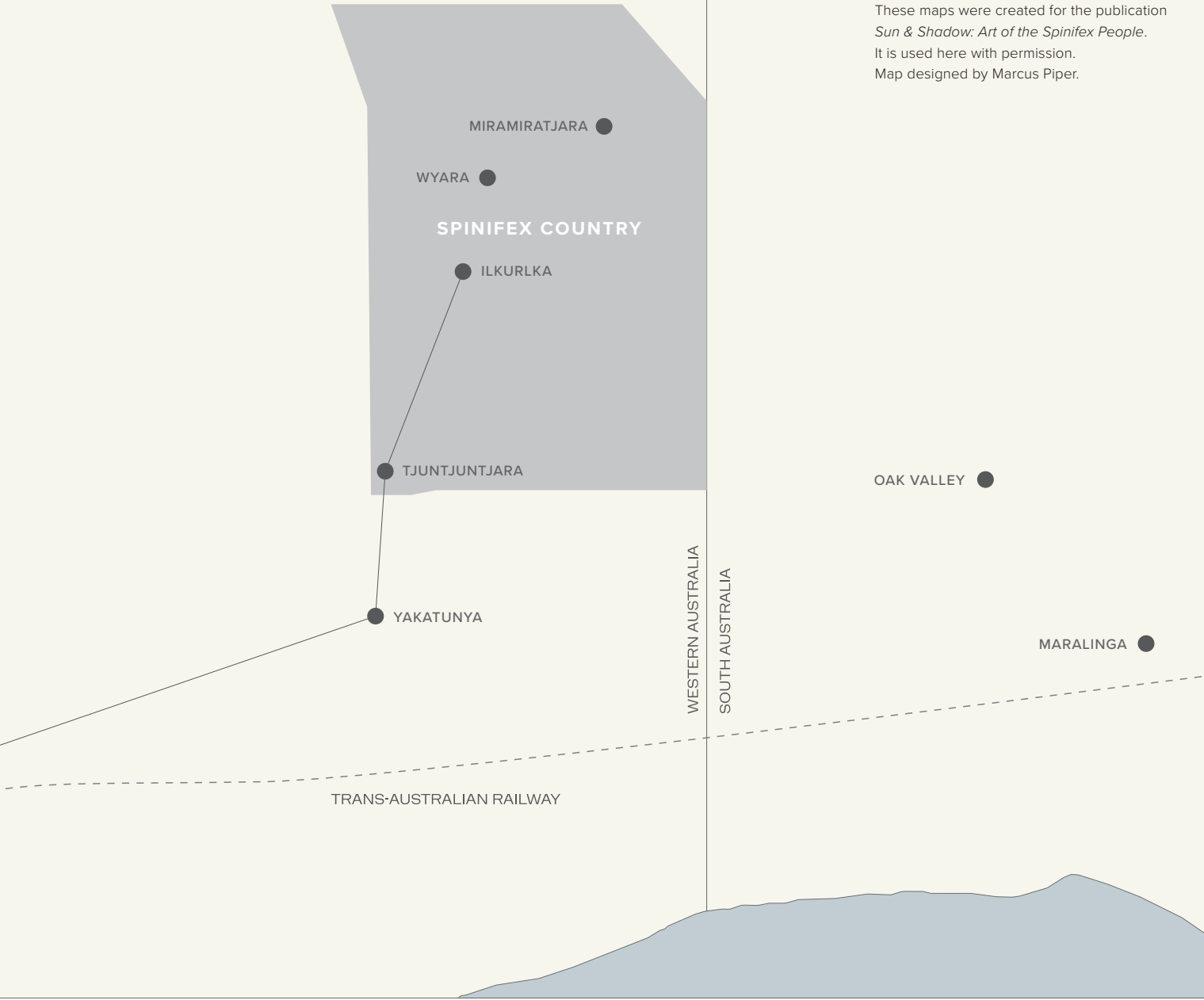
This map illustrates some of the key journeys of the ancestral beings whose actions created Spinifex Country and Law, and which today are the subject of Spinifex art.



- Bush Turkey
- Zebra Finch
- Two Men
- Seven Sisters
- Python Man
- Woman and Sons
- Thorny Devil
- Scrub Kangaroo Man
- Native Cat Man
- Water Snake
- Emu Man



These maps were created for the publication
Sun & Shadow: Art of the Spinifex People.
It is used here with permission.
Map designed by Marcus Piper.



A STORY WITHIN A STORY, WITHIN A STORY

It is easy to view this exhibition of paintings as you see it: as a group of mesmerising pictures hung upon well-lit, clean walls, in a perfectly curated gallery space. But these pictures are more than you see, or don't see. Let us move into the fabric of their meaning.

The Spinifex people know what it is to have one's very existence pushed aside as an impediment to another people's aspirations for global dominance. In the last mid-century, as a culturally rich society traversed the Great Victoria Desert in the centre of Australia, the government of the country was acquiescing to a higher power, that of the British Empire, and enabling a portion of this country to be used for the detonation of atomic weapons.

That this portion of Country was populated by the Spinifex people was a cursory observation, with native patrol officers sent out to remove any 'natives' from the immediate vicinity. Despite the apparent compassionate awareness of these officers, the Spinifex people were dispossessed of their lands and, with some irony, taken 1000 kilometres south-west to Cundeleele mission – an American evangelical Christian mission, an action that, in hindsight, did prove to be for their very own safety and survival.

People remember seeing the 'big smoke' from various vantage points, the immediate fallout from the detonation of nuclear bombs resulting in a widespread area becoming contaminated. It took many years for the desert environment to be systematically cleared of its inherited people; as they walked through the silent country past water sources with dead fauna nearby, some questioned where all their kin had disappeared to. People quickly became frightened, and that fear was used to keep them at a safe distance, to avoid interference or unwarranted attention. But they did not rest.

The Spinifex people kept alive their spiritual connection to a land they never ceded and to a culture they lived daily. After thirty years of exclusion



Patju Presley in the studio, image c/o Spinifex Arts Project



Ian Rictor in the studio, image c/o Spinifex Arts Project

from their lands, they began the long journey homeward, resolving to enshrine ownership by lawful means through a court of Native Title.

It was here with the arduous task of proving rightful ownership that the Spinifex people portrayed their cultural authority and knowledge in two major collaborative paintings depicting the breadth of Country that is the Spinifex Lands. This is where the important and tangible correlation between painting on canvas, cultural knowledge and the eventual return of rightful lands was first made. But it did not stop there.

A creative movement was now underway, with the Spinifex Arts Project facilitating painting camps on people's significant Country, some which they had not seen since being removed thirty-plus years prior. And, in 2000, the Spinifex people were finally granted Native Title over 55,000 square kilometres of the Great Victoria Desert of Western Australia. This completed a story of the resilience and survival of a people deprived of their spiritual habitat, but it also capacitated the beginning of another story, one of cultural celebration and blossoming creativity.

The artists of the Spinifex Arts Project depicted the sacred: written in the very landscape they painted. It was embraced publicly and commercially, with works by senior artists in constant demand. And as the twenty-five year milestone of this project passes, it is easy to reflect on the trajectory of an art movement that began as evidence of birthright and continues as confirmation of the creativity born from the very Country those same people first depicted. If you look closely, you will see this story written upon these walls.

BRIAN HALLETT

Spinifex Arts Project

PATJU PRESLEY

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1945

Itaratjara 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 90 cm (53.9 × 35.4 inches)

Patju was born in the bush at Itaratjara in the Great Victoria Desert in the 1940s. Like others of his generation, he and his family lived a nomadic existence, travelling the country before the lure of the mission and its promise of food drew people from the desert. But it was not just the temptation of ample food that brought Patju, as a young boy, and his family into Warburton Mission and, later, walking 800 kilometres further east to Ernabella. By the late 50s, the desert was no longer safe as the British Government began detonating large-scale nuclear weapons near where Patju was born. Because of this, Patju was not allowed back to his Country for many years.

Patju Presley paints with the spiritual confidence of someone who knows their place in the Creation, often singing the associated songs of particular sites while

rhythmically placing his myriad dots to form his striking compositions. His paintings depict several of these sites, such as his birth site of Itaratjara, and Wikaru, both situated east of traditional Spinifex Country and holding the Wati Nyulu Tjukurpa (Golden Bandicoot Creation Line) and Tulu, which contains Minyma Ngiyari Tjukurpa (Thorny Devil Women Creation Line). Patju says, ‘This is a good country, lots of stories here, close up to Watarru.’ These narratives, these characters that drive Patju in his compositions, express his intricate knowledge of the vast landscape and the mapped moral environment it contains.

Drawn from both Spinifex Arts Project certificate and John Carty and Luke Scholes eds. Sun & Shadow: Art of the Spinifex People

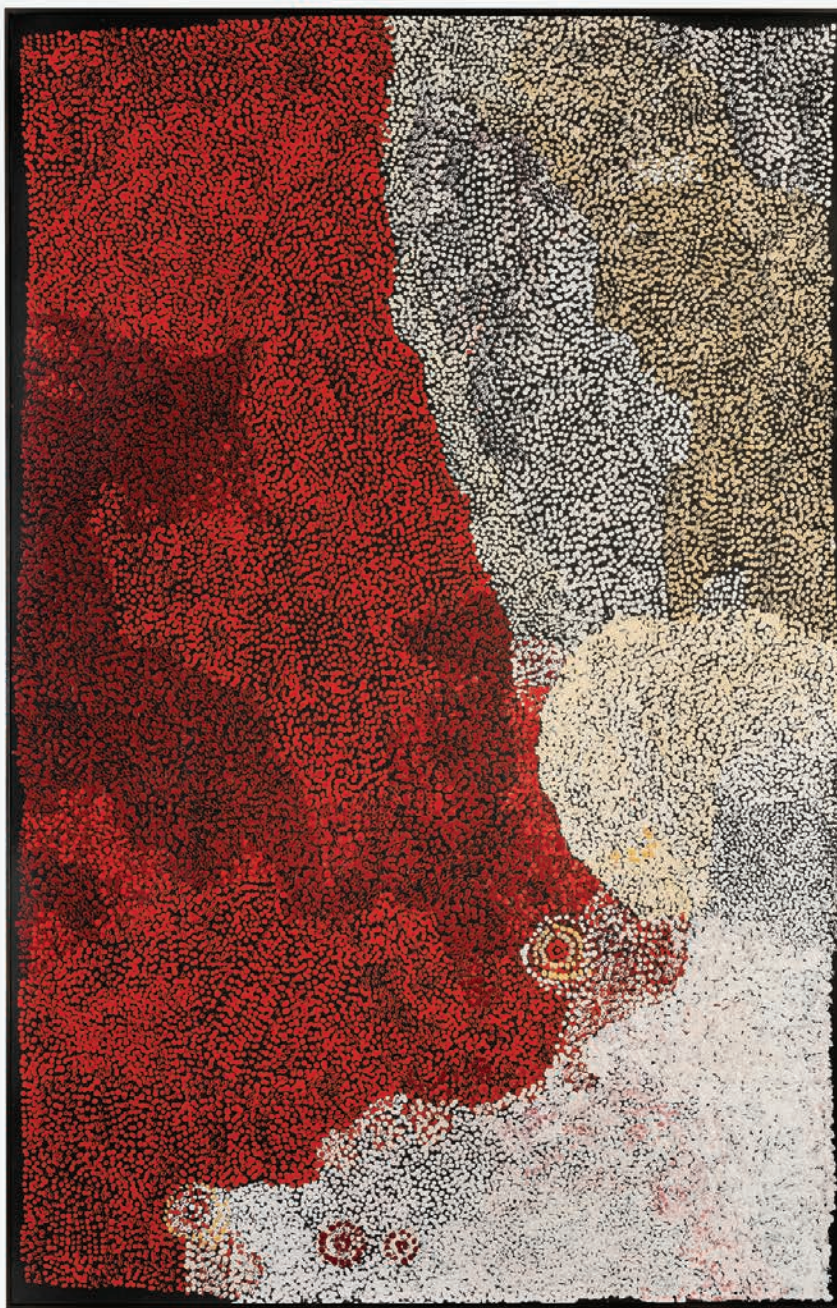


PATJU PRESLEY

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1945

Wikaru 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 90 cm (53.9 × 35.4 inches)



PATJU PRESLEY

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1945

Tulu 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 110 cm (53.9 × 43.3 inches)



TIMO HOGAN

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1973

Lake Baker 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
230 × 200 cm (90.5 × 78.7 inches)

Timo Hogan was born in 1973 to Anne Hogan and the prominent Spinifex, Kayili and later Wanarn artist Neville Macarthur. Lake Baker was Timo's father's Country, and at a young age, Timo was shown the sacred places and rituals associated with this significant site. In 2018, Spinifex Arts Project facilitated a return to Country field trip that would allow Timo to visit Lake Baker with his father, who was now residing at the Wanarn aged care facility in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. When it became clear that Timo's frail father could neither join them on the trip nor speak for the Country as its custodian, Timo proudly and enthusiastically took over the position as the 'boss' of Lake Baker.

Timo Hogan depicts the changing forms of his ancestral home with the confidence of someone who knows their place in the landscape. Here he shapes

the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Creation Line) into the large expanse that encapsulates the lake. The Two Men – The Wati Kutjara – watch as the ever-present and dangerous Wati Wanampi (Water Serpent Man) defines the lake's edges while wandering for food.

Timo allows the lake's inhabitants to move and shape the composition and brings alive the creation narrative that forms the very landscape it speaks of. He keeps his pallet tonal, allowing the lake's surface to shimmer and the story to take centre stage. The characters are the first beings, shaping the immediate environment with their actions and leaving a moral compass intertwined within the mapped habitat for all to follow.

Drawn from both Spinifex Arts Project certificate and John Carty and Luke Scholes eds. Sun & Shadow: Art of the Spinifex People

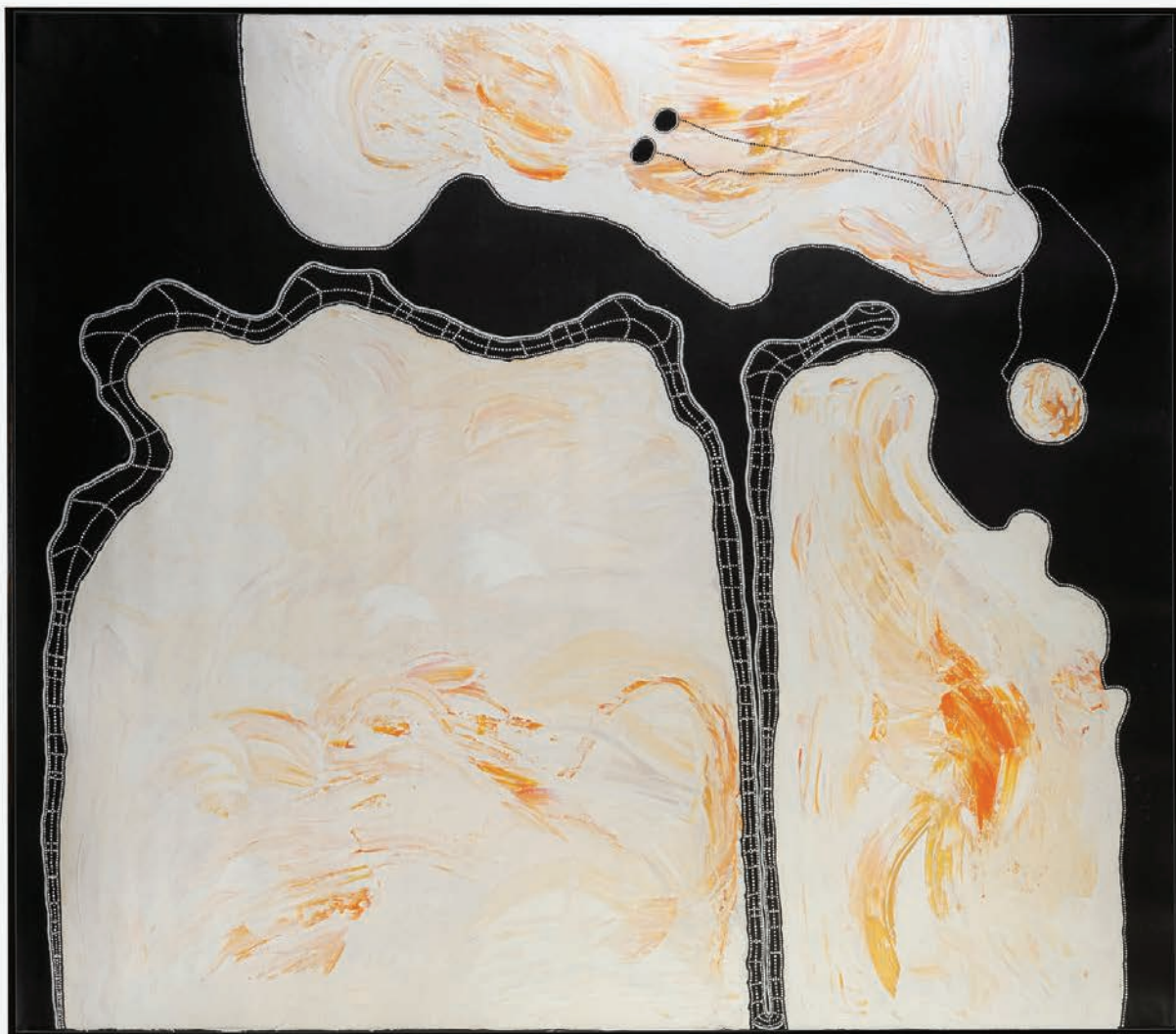


TIMO HOGAN

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1973

Lake Baker 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen
230 × 200 cm (90.5 × 78.7 inches)



DORA PARKER

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1962

Wati Kutjara 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 90 cm (53.9 × 35.4 inches)

Dora was born in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands in a small clinic in the community of Fregon. As she grew up, Dora moved to different communities and lived in places such as Wingellina, Cundeelee mission and Warburton in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Since settling in Tjuntjuntjara, Dora has become a recent yet central figure of the Spinifex Arts Project as an emerging artist, part-time employee and board member.

Dora Parker paints with freedom of expression for the sites she depicts and claims her identity in her painterly compositions. She now confidently portrays the significant area of Pukara in the north of traditional

Spinifex Lands. It is here that Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Creation Line) manifests. This epic narrative follows a father and son, Wanampi (Water Serpent), traversing the Spinifex Lands on ceremonial business. This Tjukurpa is one of the most prevalent men's creation narratives within Spinifex Country and can be painted by some women – as with Dora. The characters described are creation beings with the power of transformation, not just of themselves but the landscape they moved through.

Drawn from the Spinifex Arts Project certificate



LAWRENCE PENNINGTON

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1934

Pukara 2022

synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 110 cm (53.9 × 43.3 inches)

Born sometime in the 1930s, Lawrence spent his formative years travelling around Spinifex Country with his extended family. His first contact with settlement life came during the early 1950s when his family walked in to Ernabella Mission, where several of their relatives had settled over the previous two decades. After years spent living between desert outposts, Lawrence settled at Tjuntjuntjara in 1997, coinciding with a remarkable moment in history for the Spinifex people and the beginning of Spinifex art. The collaborative paintings that were made in support of their Native Title claims mapped the birthplaces of the men and women of Spinifex Country and set in motion the continuous relationship and connection with Country that the activity of painting offered.

Lawrence Pennington touches on the most profound qualities of the Tjukurpa in the unseen, taking the broad brush to the minimal resemblance of the characters that

inhabited the first journeys of the Creation period. He guides the important site of Pukara effortlessly onto the canvas, channelling the essence of the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Creation Line) from a time before, when Lawrence walked throughout Spinifex Country.

It is a time when he walked with the Song, following the physical manifestation left by the creation beings in the landscape, of the stories that made it so and of the characters that played out the journey. From Pukara, the Two Men, a father and son, powerful water serpents, depart on a significant ceremonial journey throughout Spinifex Country. These characters shape the immediate environment with their actions as a means of mapped instruction for all to follow.

Drawn from both Spinifex Arts Project certificate and John Carty and Luke Scholes eds. Sun & Shadow: Art of the Spinifex People



NED GRANT

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1941

Palpatatjara 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 90 cm (53.9 × 35.4 inches)

Ned Grant was born near Palpatatjara in the north-east quadrant of Spinifex Country in the Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia. During the Aboriginal Evangelical Mission sweep through Spinifex Country during the late 1950s, Ned was taken into the Cundeelee mission with his two brothers. By the 1980s, Ned, a senior man, helped drive the return to Country. He has been painting for the Spinifex Arts Project since its beginning in 1997 and was one of the main contributors to the Native Title collaborative paintings.

Ned Grant follows the wata (tree roots) underground as they search for life-affirming water sources. He sees them intertwined in the fabric of the significant sites he paints, depicting them as metamorphic beings from creation or as life-saving water catchments in

drought. This linking with this flora permeates Ned's work as he identifies with the spiritual connection the trees have always possessed across the lands and through eons.

Here he brings the important site of Palpatatjara into view with nearby Pikakara and Milpiltjara. This area of this Country holds the Maku Tjuta Tjukurpa (Witchety Grub Creation Line) and follows as all the Maku traverse these sites. These creation beings shape the landscape as they move through it, leaving behind the physical environment and the moral framework on which spiritual life can form.

Drawn from both Spinifex Arts Project certificate and John Carty and Luke Scholes eds. Sun & Shadow: Art of the Spinifex People



SIMON HOGAN

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1930

Lingka 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 110 cm (53.9 × 43.3 inches)

Simon Hogan paints history, past and present, with the gentle authority of one who has lived many lives. Born in the heart of Spinifex Country in the early 1930s, Simon was already an initiated man when the Australian Government sent out patrol officers to collect Aboriginal people from the area of possible contamination by atomic testing at nearby Emu Fields and later Maralinga. Simon moved to Mount Margaret Mission near Laverton but, famously, walked the 1000 kilometres plus back to his traditional Country. This feat, among many others, was told as his legend grew. He was a pioneer in the Spinifex people's movement to return to their traditional Country and their success in gaining Native Title in the year 2000.

Although he has a wealth of knowledge of sites within his vast Country, he now primarily paints his significant site of Lingka, centrally located in traditional Spinifex Lands. Here is the songline of Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Creation Line) generated from Lingka. It comprises Wati Walawuru (Wedge Tail Eagle Man) and Wati Wirutja (Owl Man), who resides at

Lingka. The narrative follows a particular day when Wati Walawuru asks the other man to 'Come hunting with me', but Wati Wirutja decides that he will stay home this day. Wati Walawuru soars off in search of game and is drawn to travel a long distance. Meanwhile, at Lingka, a big rain comes and severely floods the site, drowning Wati Wirutja. These are creation beings, the first beings, those usually bestowed with great metamorphic powers who shaped the landscape as they moved through it, leaving the physical reminders of their supremacy for others to follow.

The songlines follow the physical and moral paths these powerful beings undertook. They then become intertwined with song and ceremony to encompass the land and the means to embrace it culturally. For Simon, the Tjukurpa is within him, it is part of him, and he recalls the stories with passion and familiarity all at once as if animatedly transposed to the same sites he speaks of.

Drawn from Spinifex Arts Project certificate



IAN RICTOR

Pitjantjatjara language
born 1962

Tuwan 2023

synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 110 cm (53.9 × 43.3 inches)

Ian Rictor paints with a quiet reverence for the Country that he depicts, from his relatively recent nomadic movements over the endless interior that makes up Spinifex Lands. Ian walked from water source to food source and beyond, this was a cultural and family existence for survival in an arid land before his family were found and 'brought in' by relatives in 1986, making them the last known hunter-gatherers in Australia.

Ian's compositions centre on the life-affirming sites he depicts, and each are multi-layered with meaning. Many are surrounded with secrecy and only surface details can be recorded. Here he paints the significant site Tuwan situated in the heart of traditional Spinifex

Country. It is at Tuwan that the Tjulpu Tjuta Tjukurpa (Many Birds Creation Line) manifests.

This is an epic narrative following the journey of a group of Zebra Finch people as they journey south to save the world from rising seas by using their spears to hold the sea back. These characters described are creation beings who have the power of transformation, not just of themselves but the landscape they moved through. They left indelible physical reminders in a mapped environment and wrapped it in song and dance for all to follow.

Drawn from Spinifex Arts Project certificate



D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

Wurundjeri Country
40 Exhibition Street,
Melbourne VIC 3000

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Cover: PATJU PRESLEY
Itaratjara 2022 (detail)

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ABOUT

Formed in Melbourne, Australia, in 2016, D'LAN Contemporary exhibits and sells exceptional works of art by leading and emerging Australian First Nations artists.

With the view that Australian First Nations art can and should stand alongside the greatest art in the world, D'LAN Contemporary's aim is to engage and educate audiences, and to promote and elevate Australian First Nations art on a global stage.

ETHICS + PROVENANCE

D'LAN Contemporary maintains strict ethical practices and exclusively sources, exhibits and sells works of art with impeccable provenance, to protect the artist, the buyer, the seller – and the marketplace – from fraudulent sales or unethical procurement.

Please contact us at enquiries@dlancontemporary.com.au or visit our website for guidance on best practice when acquiring Australian First Nations works of art.

MISSION

Our mission is to develop an inclusive and sustainable marketplace for Australian First Nations art, and to help support artists, artist estates and their working communities.

D'LAN Contemporary contributes 30% of annual net profits to The National Endowment for Australian Indigenous Visual Art (NEIVA), an independent charitable trust fund established to centralise and distribute proceeds from art sales back to artists and their communities.

BUY + SELL WITH D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

D'LAN Contemporary provides specialist art advisory and management services and offers works of art for sale via selling exhibitions and Private Treaty.

We take pride in sourcing and selling exceptional works of art by Australian First Nations artists on behalf of our Australian and international clients.

We present the finest works of art to the secondary market in two annual exhibitions, SIGNIFICANT and REVERENCE, alongside a program of curated exhibitions.

If you are interested in buying or selling Australian First Nations art with D'LAN Contemporary, please contact us for a confidential discussion or appraisal at enquiries@dlancontemporary.com.au



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