

REVERENCE



SYDNEY

REVERENCE

28 NOVEMBER 2024 – 10 JANUARY 2025

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We are delighted to present this year's annual exhibition *Reverence* in our new gallery in Sydney. We are honoured to be entrusted with this exceptional body of work, a fitting collection for this important inaugural exhibition as we celebrate the opening of a new, permanent space in New South Wales.

The twenty-one works within this exhibition are the culmination of almost twelve months of attaining a refined selection of consigned works. Every work has been hand-picked for its exceptional quality and to highlight each of the stylistic shifts that have occurred throughout the trajectory of this significant movement.

We open with Sonia Kurarra's beautifully resolved picture *Martuwarra* 2013 – a fabulous revelation with which to begin this boutique offering. The collection combines highly contemporary and expressive works alongside exceptional early works on wood and bark, integrating the time periods within the genre, and in turn expanding knowledge within our market and inviting a broader engagement.

Uta Uta Tjungalá's monumental early board *Untitled – Yina at Tilirangaranya* 1972 is undisputably one of this artist's masterpieces and is one of the many focal points of our exhibition. Originally acquired by the present owner's family from the important early exhibition *Warlpiri and Pintupi Art*, held at the Barossa Arts Festival in 1973, it is an outstanding recent discovery. We are truly honoured and grateful to be entrusted with this superb picture to present in this sale.

Also of particular note is Emily Kam Kngwarray's *Untitled* 1992. Additionally, an exceedingly rare nineteenth century sculptured hooked boomerang is the only example of this style of boomerang to have ever been offered for sale. Having first appeared at a Sotheby's auction in 2009, it is on offer once again some fifteen years later.

We are also extremely excited to present one of Bill Whiskey's last remaining large-scale works to still remain in private hands. This monumental picture, 182 × 270 cm in size, possesses the soothing and healing qualities that we often see in the work of this Western Desert master.

Our Sydney Gallery Manager, Lauren Harvey, our Team, and I welcome you to the opening of *Reverence* and the launch of our exciting new gallery in Sydney.

D'LAN DAVIDSON

DIRECTOR, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY

SONIA KURARRA

born circa 1952
Walmajarri

Martuwarra 2013
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
120 × 90 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia
Mangkaja Arts, Western Australia, cat. no. 556/13
Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney
Private Collection, New South Wales, acquired from the above in 2014

EXHIBITED

Sonia Kurarra – River Country,
Aboriginal & Pacific Art in association
with Mangkaja Arts, Sydney,
15 August – 13 September 2014

AUD 9,600

Sonia paints the sandy billabong country along the stretch of the Fitzroy River that runs directly behind the community at Fitzroy Crossing. After the floodwaters recede, some billabongs hold a plentiful supply of parlka (barramundi), kurlumajarti (catfish) and bream.

Sonia began painting at Mangkaja Arts in the early 1990s, working primarily on paper. Since 2008, she has worked predominantly on canvas, exhibiting in numerous group shows. Sonia had an overwhelming response to her first solo show in 2009 and has since established herself as one of Mangkaja Art's leading contemporary artists.

—
Drawn from the accompanying Mangkaja Arts certificate



NAATA NUNGURRAYI

circa 1932 – 2021
Pintupi

The Rockhole Site of Marrapinti 1999
synthetic polymer paint on linen
120 × 60 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Kintore,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. NN990887
A-Space on Cleveland, Sydney
Private Collection, Sydney,
acquired from the above
Australian Aboriginal Art, Christies,
30 August 2005, lot 9
Private Collection, acquired
from the above
Aboriginal and Oceanic Art, Sotheby's
Sydney, 25 November 2007, lot 58
Corporate Collection, Sydney,
acquired from the above
Australian & International Art,
Gibson's Auctioneers & Valuers,
Melbourne, 16 April 2023, lot 174
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above

AUD 18,000

Naata Nungurrayi was born sometime in the early 1930s at the rockhole site of Kumil in the Pollock Hills of Western Australia. She lived throughout this vast region until, in 1963, her family encountered a Northern Territory Welfare Branch patrol. The following year the family relocated to Papunya, before they eventually settled at Walungurru (Kintore) in 1981.

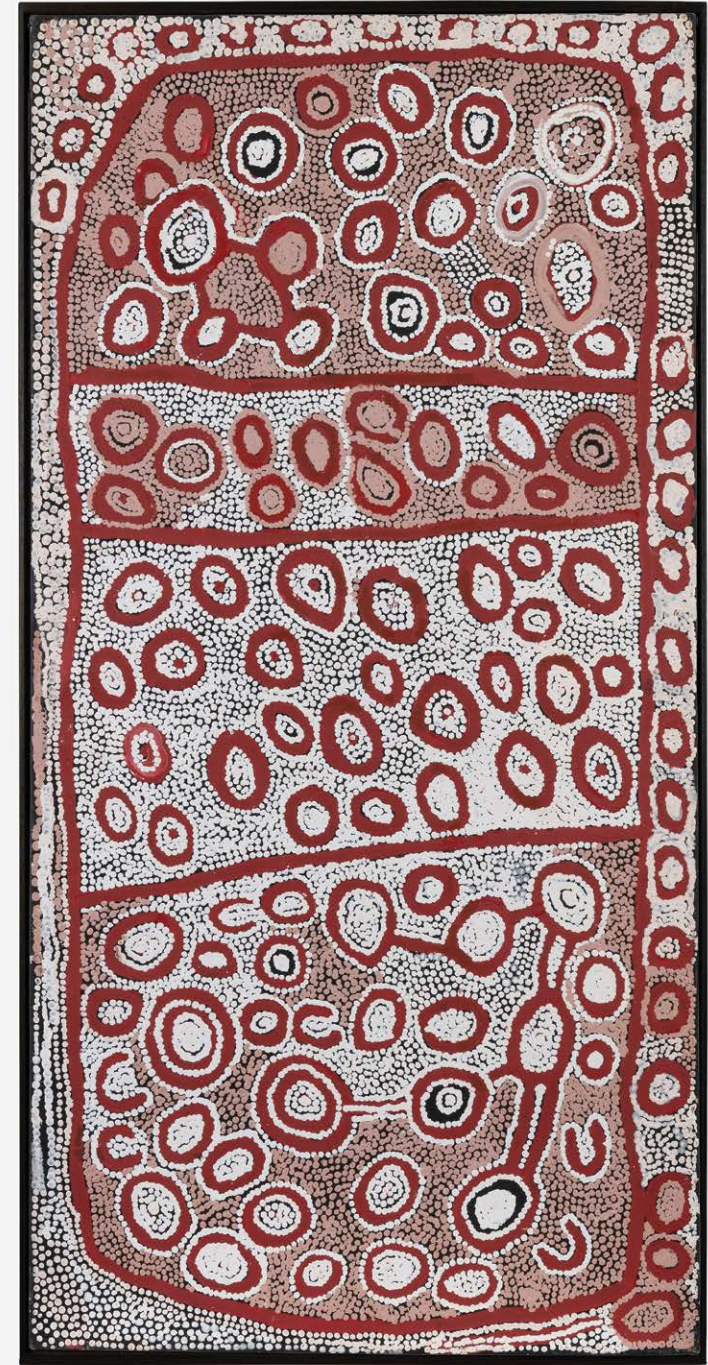
Naata was among a group of women who began painting in the mid-1990s, many of these women having observed the genesis of the Western Desert art movement decades before. Initially her small, slowly crafted paintings loosely resembled compositions made famous by the male painters of Papunya Tula.

The Rockhole Site of Marrapinti exemplifies Naata's unique assemblages of armllets, grids and circles. Over time Naata emerged as an instinctive painter whose command of line, colour and form

was immediate and breathtaking. Rarely are artist and art so inextricably linked, each possessing a precious balance of cultural authority, artistic spontaneity, conviction and whim.

Naata has contributed to many major national and international exhibitions, including *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2000 and the landmark 2009 exhibition in New York City, *Nganana Tjungurringanyi Tjukurrpa Nintintjakitja – We Are Here Sharing Our Dreaming*. A solo exhibition of her work appeared at the Papunya Tula Artists gallery in Alice Springs in 2011 and her work has been acquired by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the National Gallery of Victoria and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

LUKE SCHOLES



JIMMY KERINAUIA

Working in the 1950s and 60s
Tiwi

Tapara circa 1958
natural earth pigments on
carved ironwood
47.5 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist
Dorothy Bennett Collection,
acquired from Bathurst Island,
Northern Territory, no. 59
Private Collection, Sydney, acquired
from the above by private sale
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 9 July 2001, lot 29
Private Collection, acquired
from the above

AUD 60,000

Kerinauia has carved and painted the ancestral figure of Tapara, also known as the Moon Man. During the Parlingari (Dreaming), Tapara committed adultery with Bima, one of the first Tiwi people. One day Tapara and Bima left Bima's son Jinaini alone, resulting in Jinaini's death from thirst and exposure. Bima's husband, Purukuparli, found their son dead and fought with Tapara, who returned to the sky.

In the late 1950s, when Tapara was created, Jimmy Kerinauia was part of an extended family group, referred to as the Mandimbula, based at Paru on the southern coast of Melville Island. The fiercely independent Kerinauia family was at the centre of the Mandimbula, and had developed an innovative sculptural practice featuring small carved human figures and animals. The Kerinauia family quickly established a reputation as gifted sculptors, attracting the keen interest of collectors, including Dorothy Bennett, who acquired this sculpture in October 1958. At the time, Bennett

was the secretary for orthopaedic surgeon Dr Stuart Scougall. Through their regular visits to the Tiwi Islands and Arnhem Land, both became passionate collectors of Aboriginal art.

Accompanying them on this trip was the deputy director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Tony Tuckson, and his wife, Margaret. They had come to check on the progress of a series of Pukumani poles that Scougall and Tuckson had commissioned for the gallery earlier in the year. During their six-week stay, they took the opportunity to acquire other work being made on the islands.

Bennett was a regular and prolific purchaser of carvings from Paru and Milikapiti (Snake Bay). Created during the formative period of Tiwi carving, *Tapara* is a rare and remarkable sculpture from one of the Tiwi Islands' most renowned artistic families.

LUKE SCHOLES



ARTIST'S NAME NOT RECORDED

Untitled – Mimi Spirits circa 1962
 natural earth pigments
 on eucalyptus bark
 70 × 31 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted in Western
 Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
 Dorothy Bennett Collection
 Collection of John Titchener
 Michael Hamson Oceanic
 Art, California
 Private Collection, acquired
 from the above

AUD 14,000

Western Arnhem Land is one of the world's great rock art provinces. The Arnhem Land Plateau, a vast expanse of fissured rock country, dominates the landscape of the western and south-western parts of the region. The energy of the Djang, or Dreaming, reverberates through the creative transformations found in the vast number of symbolic forms and styles that map the great western escarpment. The ancestral world of the Kuninjku people is unique in its figurative emphasis; X-ray images, mimi spirits and other dynamic spirit beings that are found nowhere else. These rock faces are a millennia-old well of inspiration that has stimulated some of Australia's great bark painters to develop new interpretations of the powers of ancestral beings and their role in maintaining life forces.



UTA UTA TJANGALA

circa 1926 – 1990
Pintupi

Untitled – Yina at Tilirangaranya 1972
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
113.2 × 53 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Papunya,
Northern Territory
Warlpiri and Pintupi Art, Barossa
Arts Festival, Barossa Valley,
South Australia, 1973
Private Collection, acquired
from the above

EXHIBITED

Warlpiri and Pintupi Art, Barossa
Arts Festival, Barossa Valley,
South Australia, 1973

AUD 280,000

Uta Uta Tjangala came to prominence among a cohort of Pintupi people who were born on Country, growing up there into adulthood, and only making their first contact with non-First-Nations culture as young men. Driven by hunger, and the urge to be reunited with relatives, Uta Uta left the Gibson Desert with other members of his family, making the two-hundred-kilometre trek during prolonged drought, and reaching a small government outpost at Haasts Bluff in December 1956. Food and water were available at Haasts Bluff, but Uta Uta continued to worry for those members of his family who remained in an increasingly lonely desert. In July 1958, Uta Uta joined a party led by Patrol Officer Jeremy Long, with the aim of finding isolated Pintupi families.¹ Leaving the patrol, Uta Uta chose to stay on his Country, searching familiar water places until he located his family. After several months, and with his son-in-law, Timmy Payunka Tjapangati, Uta Uta led another group of relatives back to Haasts Bluff.

Three decades later, the Pintupi made a heroic return to their homelands, creating communities at Walangurru (Kintore) and Kiwirrkurra as well as a constellation of outstations. Uta Uta established

himself at Muyin, an outstation near the Northern Territory/Western Australian border.² It was after his return to Country that Uta Uta created a series of monumental canvases, three of which graced the Australian Embassy in Washington, and are now in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

The current *Untitled* 1972 board was created at the start of Uta Uta Tjangala's artistic career, in the Men's Painting Room at Papunya, a space I have previously referred to as Australia's most influential atelier. The board was painted during the 'interregnum', a period of intense creativity that flowered between Geoffrey Bardon's departure in August 1972 and the appointment of Peter Fannin as art advisor for the nascent Papunya Tula Artists in December of the same year. The interregnum is characterised by extravagant visual experimentation by the founding artists of the desert art movement. So, rather than being identifiable through any single stylistic trend, works produced during the interregnum are set apart by their diversity, as well as by fleeting trends that were passed around and across the art room, to then disappear. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the period is that many works were



painted on asymmetrical-shaped boards.³ Uta Uta's *Untitled* 1972 painting is among the largest of the works created during the interregnum and the board's gently curved edges add to the painting's thrusting dynamism.

The painting was hastily sketched by Patricia Hogan, Director of the Stuart Art Centre, as she assembled 414 boards that together comprised Consignment 19, the largest and most diverse group of works ever to leave Papunya.⁴ The original documentation of the current untitled painting provides scant information. Significantly, there is no site name nor is the subject/Dreaming of the painting recorded, so an estimation of its content must be garnered from comparative analysis with other works from Uta Uta's oeuvre, and those of his countrymen.

Despite the paucity of information recorded at the point of the painting's production, it is clear that Uta Uta stocked its surface with a rich array of iconographic information, through which he intended to convey the power of his Tjukurrpa (ancestral history). The following appraisal of the likely subject is based on an analysis of the painting's distinctive composition and the content of the turlku (sacred objects) described on its surface.

Uta Uta was among the most respected and forceful of the Pintupi artists; accordingly, when assessing this work, the anthropologist Fred Myers wrote: 'The designs on the churingas [turlku]

look quite specific, as if they are reproductions of some actual ones, rather than just generic designs', adding, 'Uta Uta was probably more likely to do that than some others [of the founding Papunya-based artists].⁵ Here, Myers is emphasising that Uta Uta's boisterous personality, together with his undisputed ceremonial authority, resulted in him depicting highly prized sacred iconography to a greater extent than is the case with more retiring Pintupi artists, who tended to disguise or omit potentially contentious sacred signs from paintings. Uta Uta was an assertive character, frequently pushing cultural constraints to the limit, and this work exemplifies how his personal charisma is transmitted, through bold composition and confident brushstrokes.

The strong vertical orientation of this untitled painting shares its directional linearity with other paintings that describe the westward journeying of Yina, a lascivious old man of the Dreaming. Yina's journey starts at Kumpurarra (Henty Hills), where his advances towards a group of ancestral women were ignored. Dismayed that the women perceived him to be too ugly to be of interest, Yina trudges through Tjukanyina, towards Malkunja, before continuing to Ngurrpalangu (the site of Uta Uta's conception), and on to Yumari and nearby Tilirangaranya (near the Northern Territory/Western Australian border).

Many of Uta Uta's depictions of 'the Old Man Dreaming' have an intentional vertical

orientation (Yina is a slave to his oversize penis). In 1971, for instance, when Uta Uta was first becoming acquainted with the rectangular format of Western art, he would use the long diagonal axis of his chosen board to describe the dominant sexual iconography of the Yina story. Early works that demonstrate this orientation are *Old Man Story* 1971, *Ceremony Dreaming for Yumari* 1971 and (the erroneously titled) *Bush Tucker* 1971 (all three works in the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory).⁶ Uta Uta's intended reading of these boards is revealed in a photograph taken in front of the Men's Painting Room in December 1971. Geoffrey Bardon stands with his arms folded alongside a group of twelve founding artists; whereas the other men hold their respective paintings to correspond with a conventional Western upright orientation, Uta Uta (fifth from the left) holds *Bush Tucker* 1971 diagonally and low, over his shorts, thereby emphasising the correlation with his own physicality and the painting's subject, Yina's penis.⁷

This vertical orientation of the 'Old Man' iconography is further exemplified in the straight-up composition of paintings of the same subject by Charlie Tarawa (Wartuma) Tjungurrayi; see in particular *Medicine Story or Man Dreaming* 1971 and *Medicine Story* 1971 (both works from the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory).⁸ There are also compelling compositional and iconographic similarities between *Old Man*

(*Yina*) *Dreaming* 1972 (Private Collection) and *Untitled* 1972. Both *Old Man (Yina) Dreaming* and the current work are comprised of several vertical turlku arranged tightly to fill the available space.⁹ It is on the basis of these correlations that I suggest the Dreaming of the lascivious Old Man Yina is the most likely subject for *Untitled* 1972.

When questioned about the potential subject of the current work, Myers suggested the painting may be a depiction of Tilirangaranya, a group of large standing rocks associated with the Old Man Dreaming to the near south of Yumari. Both sites are located on a plain set within the endless parallel dunes that dominate the region. Whereas Tilirangaranya is characterised by the masculine verticality of its standing stones, Yumari is a deep interior space, its female form created by a cross-shaped fissure in a large flat rock that fills with water after rain. Both locations are sexually charged, for it was at Yumari that Yina finally unleashed the sexual desire that had been tormenting him on his long westward journey. Shockingly, Yina copulated with his Yumari (mother-in-law) on the flat rock described above, and their proscribed relationship lends its name to the site.¹⁰ After their prohibited coupling, Yina walked a few hundred metres to the south to Tilirangaranya, where in the morning he lit a fire, decorated himself in the traditional manner, and shouted out, with his hand in front of his mouth (a formal proclamation, referred to as tjararlangu).¹¹



UTA UTA TJANGALA
Old Man's Dreaming 1983
 Muyingga, Northern Territory
 synthetic polymer paint on canvas
 242 × 362 × 5 cm (Reg measurement)
 South Australian Government Grant 1984
 Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
 © Estate of Uta Uta Tjangala/
 Aboriginal Artists Agency, 844P11

Yina finally left Tiliranganya, moving towards his inescapable and excruciating punishment – the consequence of his sexual transgressions.

The story of Yina and his Yumari is a challenging account of uncontrollable lust and its aftermath. It is therefore important to note that Uta Uta himself would delight in recounting this tale. There is no doubt that Uta Uta understood how confronting the notion of sexual relations between a son-in-law and mother-in-law is in every society. Further, as Uta Uta revealed the climax of Yina's ancestral narrative, and the consequence of his transgression was foreshadowed, the artist appeared to enjoy watching the shock of recognition register on the faces of his non-First Nations audience.

Myers' estimation of the episode as the most likely subject is based on a compelling visual correlation between the standing stones at Tiliranganya and the vertical rows of sacred objects in the current painting – the sacred objects quite literally turned to stone in the contemporary landscape. Myers came to this interpretation through a comparison between the composition of one of Uta Uta's best-known works, *Old Man's Dreaming* 1983 (Art Gallery of South Australia), and the orientation of the objects in *Untitled* 1972. The six long vertical ovals in *Old Man's Dreaming* 1983 are a very clear and quite realistic depiction of the prominent standing stones at Tiliranganya. Rather than inscribing them with iconographic imagery (as is the case in *Untitled* 1972), the outlines of

the standing stones/turlku in the 1983 version are infilled with powerful concentric bands. These patterns emanate power, whereas the iconography on the turlku in the 1972 painting exemplify truth.¹² I concur with Myers' reading of Tiliranganya as the likely site referred to in *Untitled* 1972.

Uta Uta is most renowned for his largest canvases, most of which were created in the decade before his death in 1990. Such was his power as a painter, he tested the boundaries of even his largest commissions, wherein numerous concentric circles quite literally thrum and spin with ancestral energy. Uta Uta's presence, alternately emanating warmth or bubbling with incipient rage – his burning eyes looking through your gaze to the infinite horizon beyond – find form in his bustling compositions. One experiences Uta Uta's personality palpably when standing in front of his creations, for at an ontological level they are self-portraits. It is this directness that makes Uta Uta a unique and powerful artist.

In the darkness of the Men's Painting Room, Uta Uta gave voice to his ceremonial authority with this pared-back representation of the Old Man Yina, an epic with which he was intimately associated. Given his animated, insistent personality, it is no surprise that Uta Uta Tjangala grasped the largest board that he could reach, inscribing on its surface icons associated with the core of his being.¹³

JOHN KEAN

1. Vivien Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2008, p. 25.
2. Personal communication with the artist, 1989.
3. The boards were cut in the Manual Training Centre, some two hundred metres away from the Men's Painting Room.
4. Luke Scholes confirmed this work was included in Consignment 19. He accounts for the relatively high number of paintings as resulting from an 'ongoing consignment which began approximately November 1972 and continued through until the end of that year'. Email correspondence, 9 October 2024.
5. Fred Myers, email correspondence, 3 October 2024.
6. All paintings listed in this paragraph are in the collection of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and are reproduced in Luke Scholes (ed.), *Tjungunutja: From Having Come Together*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 2017.
7. Reproduced in Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2004, p. 28.
8. Both paintings are reproduced in Scholes (ed.), *Tjungunutja*.
9. Uta Uta Tjangala, *Old Man (Yina) Dreaming* 1972 is illustrated in Judith Ryan and Philip Batty (eds), *Tjukurrjanu: Origins of Western Desert Art*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2011, p. 138.
10. There is a strict avoidance relationship between a son-in-law and their mother-in-law in the cultures of arid Australia. This restriction on direct social contact also extends to any potential mother-in-law.
11. Fred Myers, email correspondence, 3 October 2024.
12. For an extended discussion of meaning and value in Uta Uta's paintings of the Old Man Dreaming, see Fred Myers, 'Truth or Beauty: The Revelatory Regime of

13. While the author was art advisor at Papunya Tula Artists, 1977–1979, he worked with Uta Uta Tjangala, and maintained regular contact with the artist until his death in 1990.

SOURCES

Geoffrey and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2004.

Vivien Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2008.

Vivien Johnson, *Once Upon a Time in Papunya*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2010.

John Kean, 'A Big Canvas: Mobilising Pintupi Painting', in Philip Batty et al. (eds), *Colliding Worlds: First Contact in the Western Desert 1932–1984*, Museum Victoria Publishing, Melbourne, 2006, pp. 46–52.

Fred Myers, *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal High Art*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002.

Judith Ryan and Philip Batty (eds), *Tjukurrjanu: Origins of Western Desert Art*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2011.

Fred Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC, 1986.

Luke Scholes (ed.), *Tjungunutja: From Having Come Together*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 2017.

EUBENA NAMPITJIN

circa 1921 – 2013
Wangkajunga

Kinyu 2010
synthetic polymer paint on linen
100 × 100 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Balgo,
Western Australia
Warlayirti Artists, Western
Australia, cat. no. 580/10
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2010

AUD 18,000



EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

circa 1915 – 1996
Anmatyerr

Untitled 1992
synthetic polymer paint on linen
120 × 90 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Delmore,
Northern Territory
Delmore Gallery, Northern
Territory, cat. no. 92C009
Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney
Private Collection, Sydney,
acquired from the above

AUD 260,000

From 1992 to 1994, Emily entered what has been called her 'high colourist phase', which is characterised by a softened picture plane where dots bleed and converge into various tracks of layered colour across the canvas. Emily's whole body was engaged in mark-making, just as it was in dance, and she would often sing as she painted, a method that stems from the cultural practice of singing Country. The harmonies and rhythms of her works mirror the physical and auditory mechanisms of dance and song. One can sense the movement in her work, the bouncing or 'dragging' of the brush mimicking the dancers' bodies in ceremony as they propel forward, making short shuffling marks in the sand.



DICK NGULMARMAR

circa 1911 – 1977
Ganalbingu

Untitled – Flying Fox circa 1962
natural earth pigments
on eucalyptus bark
39 × 100 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted on
Milingimbi, Central Arnhem
Land, Northern Territory
Dorothy Bennett Collection
Collection of John Titchener
Michael Hamson Oceanic
Art, California
Private Collection, acquired
from the above

AUD 12,000



Central bar of cross-hatching represents freshwater:
Sidebars represent the ground.
Thin yellow bands denote the tree from which the
flying foxes hang upside down.
Yellow, black and red circles are the droppings of
the flying foxes
Tiny white dots denote rain.

—
Drawn from Dorothy Bennett's field notes – verso

YIRAWALA

circa 1903 – 1976
Kuninjku

Bush Turkey and Snake circa 1970
natural earth pigments
on eucalyptus bark
70 × 29.5 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, created at Croker
Island, Western Arnhem Land
Sandra Le Brun Holmes, Sydney
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, Melbourne,
24 November 2009, lot 101
Private Collection, Sydney,
acquired from the above

AUD 25,000

Yirawala was a senior Kuninjku artist, ceremonial leader, Law keeper and 'clever man' – medicine man and healer – an Elder of the Gunwinggu language group. Born around 1903 at Marrkolidjbanin in the Liverpool River region of West Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, Yirawala spent much of his life living and working at Minjilang – Croker Island, where he passed away in 1976. He was a leading figure in the struggle for land rights against mining interests in West Arnhem Land and strongly promoted Aboriginal art as more than simply ethnographic material.



ARTIST'S NAME NOT RECORDED

A Very Rare Hooked Boomerang
 nineteenth century
 carved hardwood

PROVENANCE

The Artist
 Private Collection, Queensland
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
 Sydney, 20 July 2009, lot 1
 Private Collection, acquired
 from the above

AUD 50,000

This rare form of hooked boomerang presents a conundrum for ethnographers – there is no direct evidence of it having been used for fighting or hunting, and it has been found in only two widely separated regions – Coopers Creek in north-eastern South Australia, and Roper River in the Northern Territory. Painted forms of this boomerang were known to have had a ceremonial function in the Cooper Creek region. Edward Stirling, director of the South Australian Museum, collected this example during his 1899 expedition to the Warburton River, north of Lake Eyre.¹

1. Philip Jones, *Boomerang*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1996, p. 64 and p. 93 for illustrations of related examples.



OTTO PAREROULTJA

circa 1914 – 1973
Western Arrarnta

*Untitled – Central Australian
Landscape* 1963
watercolour and pencil on board
48.8 × 74 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted in the
Hermannsburg region,
Northern Territory
Jimmy Bergengren – House
of Goodies, Alice Springs
Private Collection, acquired
from the above
Thence by descent

AUD 30,000

Inspired by Albert Namatjira, the Pareroultja brothers, Otto, Reuben and Edwin, commenced painting at Ntaria/Hermannsburg in the mid 1940s. The individual talents of each brother were quickly recognised and, as for Namatjira, their paintings were exhibited to acclaim in Australia's southern cities.¹

Rex Battarbee, who mentored the first generation of the Hermannsburg School, regarded the approach the Pareroultja brothers took as being more expressive and less 'photographic' than that forged by Namatjira. So much so that Battarbee compared the Pareroultjas' work to the Post-Impressionists – Edwin to Paul Gauguin and Otto to Vincent Van Gogh.² Battarbee mused that Otto conveyed 'aboriginal qualities in his work by making his shadows like aboriginal rock-drawings'. He continued, 'I am sure this tendency was purely unconscious, brought about by his dreaming and his unspoilt attitude towards art.' Making the connection between brushstrokes and customary artistic practice, Battarbee believed Otto's 'concentric circles and wavy lines' were derived from the iconography of 'sacred churungas' (Tywerreng).³ According to Otto's nephew Hubert

Pareroultja (a senior watercolour artist), Otto was 'strong in the law'.⁴

By the 1960s, when *Untitled – Central Australian Landscape* was painted, Otto Pareroultja had established a recognisable personal style. To excite consideration of the artist's work through the lens of Primitivism, Battarbee titled a very similar work, painted in the same year, *Totemic Rhythm* 1963.⁵ In contradistinction to the wildness implied by Battarbee's title, I propose that Otto Pareroultja's compositions conform to strict protocols, consciously leading the viewer's eye to significant landmarks.

The current work, *Untitled – Central Australian Landscape*, was painted from precisely the same location as the better known *Totemic Rhythm*. The scarred tree that dominates the foreground is, without doubt, the same ancient river red gum that occupies the left side of *Totemic Rhythm*. I suggest, therefore, that the tree is not just a splendid specimen of a gnarled old gum but an individual, most likely the body of a totemic ancestor associated with the towering red sacred sites in the mid ground.

The linguist and scholar of Western Arrernte culture T.G.H. Strehlow may have been prompted

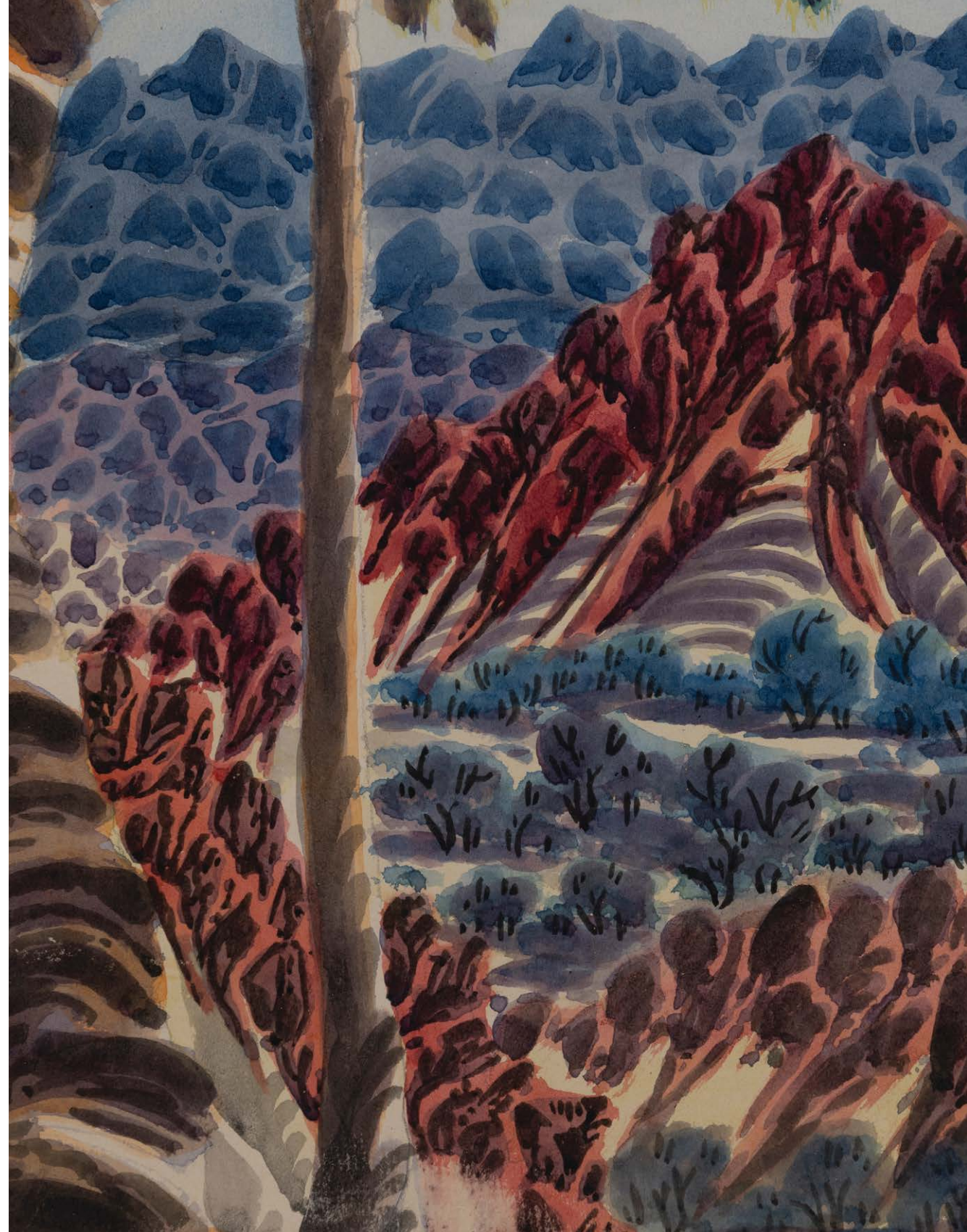


by Otto Pareroultja's radical stylisation when, in 1956, he wrote: 'It is even possible that in two or three generations' time – perhaps sooner – young aboriginal artists may begin to use again the spirals, lines and circles in a new geometrical form of abstract art.'⁶ Namatjira's success as a painter certainly alerted his countrymen to the desirability of becoming an 'artist', a profession that, in the cash-based economy of post-World War II Central Australia, was both novel and potentially lucrative. While building on the lucidity of Namatjira's artistic achievement, Otto Pareroultja inscribed his own depictions of Country with powerful personal marks. Seen in retrospect, the rhythmic intensity of Pareroultja's hand is a stepping stone towards the revolutionary paintings from Papunya in the early 1970s that would bear out Strehlow's prediction. Yet, Otto Pareroultja's mature paintings are much more than representational landscapes; like the Papunya boards that would follow, they embody the ancestral power that resides in Country, their every brushstroke evidence of a painter who was strong in the Law.

JOHN KEAN

REVERENCE

1. Otto Pareroultja presented his first solo exhibition at the Athenaeum Gallery in Melbourne in 1948.
2. Rex Battarbee, *Modern Australian Aboriginal Art*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1951, pp. 23, 27.
3. Battarbee, *Modern Australian Aboriginal Art*, p. 27.
4. Hubert Pareroultja, in John Kean, *Dot, Circle and Frame: the Making of Papunya Tula Art*, Upswell Publishing, Perth, 2023, p. 37.
5. Otto Pareroultja, *Totemic Rhythm* 1963, Araluen Art Gallery, gift of Gayle Quarmby, on loan from the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.
6. Theodor George Henry Strehlow, *Rex Battarbee: Artist and Founder of the Aboriginal Art Movement in Central Australia*, Legend Press, Sydney, 1956, p. 20.



BILL WHISKEY TJPALTJARRI

circa 1920 – 2008
Pitjantjatjara

Rockholes Near the Olgas 2006
synthetic polymer paint on linen
153 × 90 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Amunturrungu
– Mt Liebig, Northern Territory
Watiyawanu Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. 77-06142
Private Collection, Alice Springs,
acquired from the above

AUD 45,000

Bill Whiskey's art is focused almost exclusively on the ancestral White Cockatoo story from his birthplace of Pirupa Alka, 130 kilometres south of Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) in Central Australia. The story focuses on three birds – the White Cockatoo and his friend the Eagle and their adversary, the Crow. The floating roundels, one of the most striking compositional elements of the design, symbolise the rockpools formed in the vast desert landscape in the battle between the ancestral birds. Bill Whiskey was the first to conceptualise and innovate stylistic depictions of his birthplace, developing specific iconography for this story within the general conventions of Western Desert painting. These distinguishing features of his work are products of his mind's eye, which views Country as a continuum.



BILL WHISKEY TJPALTJARRI

circa 1920 – 2008
Pitjantjatjara

*Rockholes and Country
Near the Olgas* 2007
synthetic polymer paint on linen
182 × 270 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Amunturrungu
– Mt Liebig, Northern Territory
Watiyawanu Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. W99-07375
Nanda\Hobbs, Sydney
Private Collection, Sydney,
acquired from the above

EXHIBITED

*Masterpieces from the Western
Desert*, Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri &
Wentja Napaltjarri, POB Contemporary
and COSA Gallery, London
Desert Mob 2008, Araluen
Arts Centre, Alice Springs

LITERATURE

*Masterpieces from the Western
Desert*, Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri
& Wentja Napaltjarri, exhibition
catalogue, London, 2008, p. 3
Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri, Ken
McGregor and Jenny Zimmer,
Macmillan Art Publishing,
Melbourne, 2009, pp. 82–83

AUD 250,000



MIDPUL (PRINCE OF WALES)

circa 1935 – 2002
Larrakia

Body Marks 2001
synthetic polymer paint
on canvas
140 × 121 cm overall (diptych)

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted in Darwin,
Northern Territory
Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin,
cat. no. KB0300 & KB0304
Private Collection, Adelaide,
acquired from the above in 2001
*Important Australian Indigenous
Art*, Deutscher and Hackett,
Melbourne, 26 March 2024, lot 21
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above

AUD 45,000

Midpul, known as the Prince of Wales, was born in 1935. He served as a traditional landowner, ceremonial leader and respected Elder of the Larrakia people. The Larrakia are 'saltwater people', sharing a vibrant culture based on their proximity to the sea. Their Country extends from the Cox Peninsula in the west to Gunn Point in the north and from Adelaide River in the east southward down to the Manton Dam; much of this region is now known as Darwin.

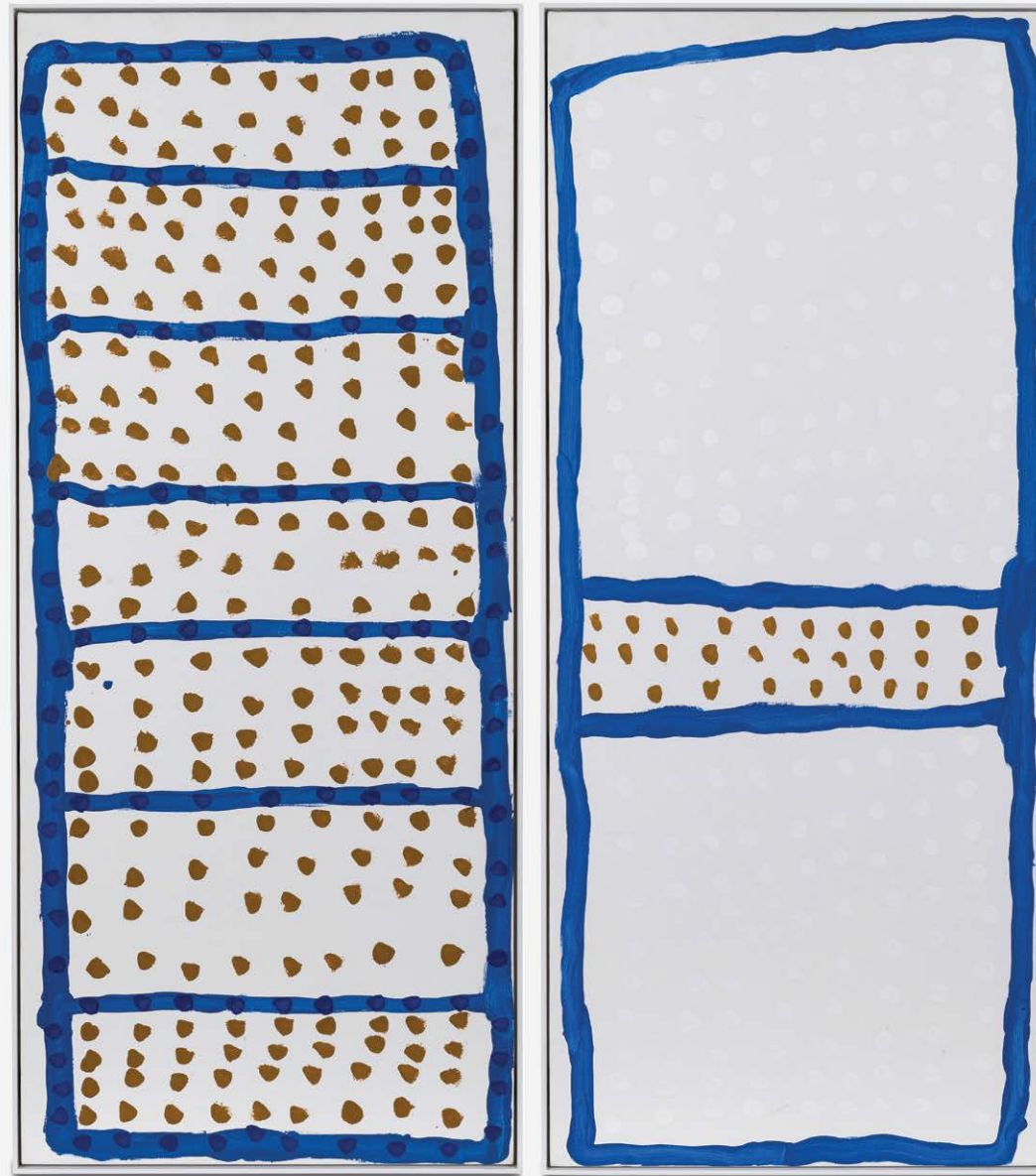
Midpul inherited custodianship of Larrakia ceremonial dances and songs at a young age when his father, Imabul (Old King George), passed away. Midpul's cultural responsibilities in leading song and dance in Larrakia ceremonies have strongly influenced his practice as a visual artist. Hetti Perkins remarks that his compositional style can be 'read like the sheet music for an improvised symphony';¹ the dots are intuitively arranged in contrasting colours and are layered with a sense of musicality, rhythm and sequence. *Body Marks* 2001 is presented as a diptych, a two-sheet symphony embedded within the marine blue frame that structures the two responding panels. For the Larrakia people, practising culture is tied to ceremonial dance, song and body decorating.

In his artistic output, Midpul maintained a sole focus on these three pillars of culture, translating the body paint designs of his Larrakia clan onto canvas to convey their rhythmic spirit.

It wasn't until 1995, when he was sixty years old, that Midpul began painting his celebrated 'Body Marks' compositions. He would translate these ceremonial designs on various supports, including cardboard and bark, before arriving at the canvas, which he continued to paint until the early 2000s when he suffered from a stroke that thwarted his ability to paint.

Midpul was the first artist from the Larrakia region to gain prominence. In 2001, he was awarded the General Painting Award at the 18th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA). His work is now held in important public and private collections, including the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of New South Wales and the National Gallery of Victoria.

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Reference: Hetti Perkins, *Tradition Today: Indigenous Art in Australia*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2014, p. 66.



WUKUN WANAMBI

1962–2022

Yolŋu

Gudultja 2004

earth pigments on hollowed trunk

266 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Yirrkala,

Northern Territory

Buku-Larrngay Mulka, Yirrkala

Art Centre, cat. no. 25761

Raft Artspace, Alice Springs

Private Collection, Western Australia,

acquired from the above in 2004

EXHIBITED*Wukun Wanambi*, Raft Artspace,

Alice Springs, 14 August –

4 September 2004

AUD 35,000

Wukun Wanambi was born in eastern Arnhem Land into the Marrakulu clan of the Yolŋu people, inheriting Saltwater imagery, culture and designs. His father, Mithili Mr Wanambi, prolifically painted Saltwater designs but passed away before he could share these stories and designs with his son, Wukun.

In 1997, Wukun contributed to the Saltwater Project, through which a collective of Yolŋu bark painters created a body of work telling the story of the Yolŋu people of North-East Arnhem Land and defending their claim to sea rights. During this time, Wukun connected with Yangarriny Wunujmurra and other djungayi – men who taught the younger men their clan lore and introduced them to the ways of painting their cultural designs.¹ These connections gave Wukun the authority to paint Saltwater designs, which had not been consistently painted since his father's passing sixteen years earlier.

The first painting on bark that Wukun completed for the Saltwater Project would go on to win the award for the bark painting category at the 1998 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA). This accolade began a successful career defined by innovation and cultural leadership.

Expanding his artistic practice, Wukun began painting Larrakitj – hollow logs decorated with clan designs in natural earth pigments and traditionally used to hold the remains of those who have passed away. Regarding his practice of carving and painting Larrakitj, Mr Wanambi explains that '[t]he outside surface of things hides what is inside. I want to share what is hidden'.² This attitude towards sharing Yolŋu culture saw the artist continually diversifying his practice; he was also an accomplished filmmaker and founding director of the Buku-Larrngay art centre in 2007.

Throughout Wukun's twenty-five-year career, his works have been widely celebrated and collected in private and public collections across Australia and abroad. His legacy extends beyond his individual works, as major commissions and community projects at the Sydney Opera House, Darwin waterfront and Buku-Larrngay art centre carry his artistic innovation and dedication to Yolŋu culture.

1. National Museum of Australia, 'Mr Wanambi', *Unsettled: Stories Within*, exhibition catalogue.

2. National Museum of Australia, 'Mr Wanambi'.



BELOW
ARTIST'S NAME NOT RECORDED

Untitled circa 1950s
 natural earth pigments
 on eucalyptus bark
 40 × 67 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Groote
 Eylandt, Northern Territory
 Collection of John Titchener
 Michael Hamson Oceanic
 Art, California
 Private Collection, acquired
 from the above

AUD 12,000



OPPOSITE
ARTIST'S NAME NOT RECORDED

Untitled – Octopus circa 1961
 natural earth pigments
 on eucalyptus bark
 47 × 29 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Groote
 Eylandt, Northern Territory
 Collection of John Titchener
 Michael Hamson Oceanic
 Art, California
 Private Collection, acquired
 from the above

AUD 9,600



KITTY KANTILLA

circa 1928 – 2003
Tiwi

Skin: Fire: Dance: Rain 2001
synthetic polymer paint on linen
85 × 95 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Melville Island, Northern Territory
Jilamara Arts & Crafts Association, Northern Territory, cat. no. 666-01
Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney
Gould Collection, Melbourne, acquired from the above in 2001

EXHIBITED

Kitty Kantilla, Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney, 29 November – 22 December 2001, cat. no. 11
The Director's Choice 2015: Celebrating 35 Years, Gould Galleries, Melbourne, 1 May – 13 June 2015, cat. no. 27

LITERATURE

Celebrating 35 Years, The Director's Choice 2015, 1 May – 13 June 2015, Gould Galleries, Melbourne, cat. no. 27 (illus.)

AUD 40,000

Kutuwulumi Purawarrumpatu Kitty Kantilla was a consummate Tiwi artist. With an illustrious career spanning over 50 years, she was at once a strict traditionalist and innovator, which saw her hailed 'the Queen of Jilamara', being the name of the local art centre on Melville Island as well as the Tiwi term for 'good design'. Originally a sculptor of Tiwi ancestral figures, Kantilla painted on eucalyptus bark before transferring the use of natural earth pigments to canvas and paper in the mid 1990s and continued to paint in a conventional abstract Tiwi style – where the interpretation of pictorial elements are subsumed within the patterns of Pukumani and Kulama ritual designs that are traditionally painted onto the bodies of ceremonial participants and tutini burial poles.

After passing away in 2003, the same year that her work was selected for the Clemenger Contemporary Art Award at the National Gallery of Victoria, Kitty Kantilla's reputation continued to be enhanced with the inclusion of her work in major international exhibitions. An exceedingly important artist, Kantilla's work is included in major public and private collections throughout Australia, the musée du quai Branly, Paris, and the British Museum, London. In 2007, the National Gallery of Victoria staged a major retrospective exhibition of Kantilla's work, celebrating the artist's life in art and the breadth and beauty of contemporary Tiwi practice.



UTA UTA TJANGALA

circa 1926 – 1990
Pintupi

Untitled 1989
synthetic polymer paint on linen
121.5 × 181.5 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Papunya,
Northern Territory
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. UU8907103
Corporate Collection, Paris
Private Collection, Switzerland
D'Lan Contemporary, Melbourne
Private Collection, Melbourne,
acquired from the above in 2022

EXHIBITED

Significant 2022, D'Lan Contemporary,
Melbourne, 24 June – 29 July 2022

LITERATURE

Significant 2022, D'Lan Contemporary,
Melbourne, 2022, p. 41

AUD 120,000



ANGKALIYA CURTIS

born circa 1928
Pitjantjatjara

Cave Hill 2019
synthetic polymer paint on linen
117 × 199 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at
Nyapari, South Australia
Tjungu Palya, South
Australia, cat. no. 19-106
Desert Mob 2019, Alice Springs,
2019, cat. no. TJU02
Private Collection, Victoria,
acquired from the above

EXHIBITED

Desert Mob 2019, Araluen Arts
Centre, Alice Springs,
5 September – 20 October 2019

AUD 14,000



CARLENE WEST

1944–2021
Pitjantjatjara

Tjitjiti 2014
synthetic polymer paint on linen
137 × 200 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist, painted at Tjuntjuntjara,
Western Australia
Spinifex Arts Project, Western
Australia, cat. no. 14175
Japingka Aboriginal Art
Gallery, Western Australia
Private Collection, Tasmania,
acquired from the above in 2014

EXHIBITED

Spinifex Artists 2014, Japingka
Aboriginal Art Gallery, Fremantle,
10 October – 7 November 2014

AUD 120,000

Carlene West was born in 1944 in the sandhills that border Tjitjiti, an expansive salt lake contoured by undulating sandhills that are covered in a lattice of tawny spinifex and saltbush, in southern Spinifex Country, Western Australia. West spent much of her childhood at Cundelee mission, home to many Spinifex people who were forced to leave Country due to the British atomic testing at Maralinga.¹ At Cundelee, Carlene spent her teenage years attending school at the Christian mission, far removed from the Country and life she knew as a child. Carlene married Tjintu ceremonial leader and celebrated artist Fred Grant, and the two artists became influential in the return to Country movement of the Spinifex people and were instrumental figures in reclaiming Native Title from the state. Their enduring commitment to seeing their land come back to their people eventually saw Carlene able to return to Tjitjiti in the early 2000s, and in 2007, she began painting her ngura (Country).

West's lucid vision of her salt lake country is presented in magnificent scale in *Tjitjiti* 2014. The work casts shimmering light in a high-key palette of red and tone-shifting creams and whites, set on a black background that reflects the surface of the salt lake in continual flux. Elements of the artist's Tjukurpa (Dreaming) are also incorporated into the design and composition of this work; the fine red dots that contour the loose form of the salt pan evoke the stories of the artist's ancestral beings moving through and shaping the landscape.

The repetition of the salt lake form throughout her oeuvre can be read as a continued contemplation of the highly sacred spirit of the artist's birth Country, and her deep affinity to the landscape as a custodial figure.

1. John Carty, in Henry F. Skerritt (ed.), *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia from the Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection*, Nevada Museum of Art and DelMonico Books, Prestel, 2016, p. 94.





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ABOUT

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

ETHICS

Our mission is to create a transparent and sustainable marketplace for Australian First Nations art and to respect and protect the integrity of the artist, the buyer, the seller – and the marketplace – from fraudulent sales or unethical procurement.

We maintain strict ethical practices and only exhibit and sell works of art with a clear line of provenance.

D'Lan Contemporary allocates 30% of annual net profits to centralise and distribute proceeds from art sales back to Australian First Nations artists and their working communities.

PROVENANCE

Every work of art exhibited and sold by D'Lan Contemporary has a clear line of provenance.

Documentation we draw upon to establish provenance includes:

- Community Art Centre certificate of provenance/authenticity
- Transfer of ownership documentation
- Purchase receipt or invoice
- Inclusion in academic / art historical publications
- Inclusion in exhibitions, and exhibition catalogues (private and/or public institution)
- Collection/exhibition inventory numbers (private and/or public institution)
- Inclusion in auction catalogues
- Documented appraisals

D'Lan Contemporary's guidance on best practice for buying Australian First Nations art is:

CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS (1980–PRESENT)

All contemporary Australian First Nations works of art should be accompanied by documentation linking the artwork to the artist via their Community Art Centre or their primary gallery/representative.

Community Art Centres operate with an ethical focus and establish their own individual guidelines by which all artworks are sold.

Primary market artworks should only be bought from a Community Art Centre or an official artist gallery/representative.

Secondary market artworks should only be bought with a source of provenance from a Community Art Centre or an official artist gallery/representative.

MODERN AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS ART (1950S–1980)

For artworks created prior to the establishment of Community Art Centres, such as bark paintings, Hermannsburg watercolours, Papunya boards and sculptural artworks made for sale, there is less necessity for Community Art Centre provenance.

However, artworks from this period with no traceable history are likely to have less market value than those that do – even when an artwork is clearly authentic.

Highly desirable provenance for artworks from this period includes Papunya Tula Artists, Stuart Art Centre and Maningrida Arts, or a clear link to a primary collector such as Geoffrey Bardon, Dorothy Bennett, Sandra Le Brun Holmes or Dr Scougall – who were all active in the 1950s–1970s.

ARTEFACTS AND OBJECTS (1880S–1950)

With artefacts, often much of the important collection history has been lost over time. Therefore, proven provenance can greatly impact value.

Before acquisition, research should be undertaken to ascertain the origin of the artefact or object, and how and when it left its country of origin.

Best practice in this segment is to obtain advice from a trusted industry expert before buying or selling.

PROTECTION OF MOVEABLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT

The *Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1985* (PMCH Act) implements Australia's obligations under the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970 (1970 UNESCO Convention), to which Australia is a State Party.

The 1970 UNESCO Convention requires State Parties to ensure that no collecting institution accepts illegally exported items.

The Australian Government administers the PMCH Act through the Ministry for the Arts. The PMCH Act regulates the export of Australia's most significant cultural heritage objects by implementing export controls for objects defined as 'Australian Protected Objects'.

If you have any questions about acquiring or selling Australian First Nations art, please contact us at: enquiries@dlancontemporary.com.au



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