

SIGNIFICANT

PART ONE



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First Nation viewers are advised
that this catalogue contains images
of deceased persons.

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Cover: KAAPA MBITJANA TJAMPITJINPA
Mikantji and Tywerl 1971 (detail)

Previous: OLD WALTER TJAMPITJINPA
Corroboree and Body Decorations
1971 (detail)

SIGNIFICANT

PART ONE

2 JUNE — 22 JULY 2023

With essays by John Kean

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Foreword

Welcome to *Significant 2023*. Due to this year's high quality of consignments, we have decided to print a two-part catalogue for the first time in the history of our most important annual exhibition. With essays written by John Kean, Part One encompasses several highly significant foundational works from Papunya.

Unarguably, the artworks created from 1971 to 1972 represent some of the most important paintings in Australian art history, for it was this moment in time, and these jewel-like treasures, that changed an Australian contemporary art movement and a country's identity forever.

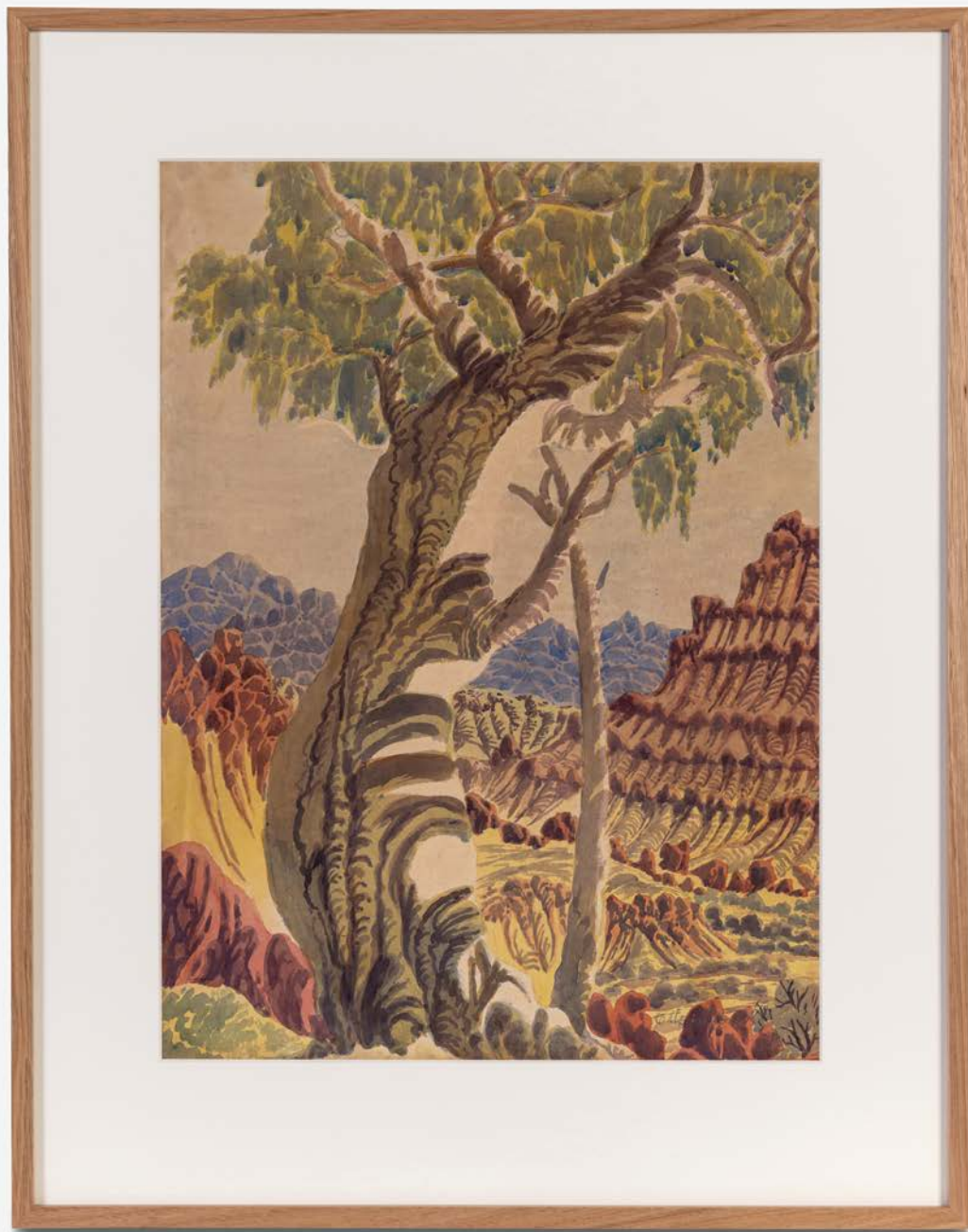
Among the collection's many highlights is Kaapa Tjampitjinpa's monumental painting *Mikantji and Tywerl* 1971. It is one of the first tranches of eight artworks produced in 1971 by Kaapa Tjampitjinpa. It can be regarded as one of the most significant discoveries this century, its whereabouts unknown until now. We encourage you to read the complete account of Luke Scholes' and John Kean's research on its importance, which you can access via our website.

Other highlights include Walter Tjampitjinpa's *Untitled – Snake Dreaming* 1971 and Tim Leura's *Honey Ant Dreaming – version 4* 1972. Both appeared in the National Gallery of Victoria's acclaimed exhibition *Tjukurrjjanu: Origins of Western Desert Art*, which travelled to Musée du quai Branly, Paris, in 2012.

We finish this catalogue with the sale of Clifford Possum's *Possum Dreaming at Napperby* 1979. This critical picture appeared in the artist's travelling retrospective in 2003–2004. The highly published work offers a window into a world that was yet to come – the birth of a contemporary art movement.

And through that journey, we have an incredible opportunity to learn from the oldest living culture on Earth by listening to the voice of its peoples as presented in these seminal pictures.

D'LAN DAVIDSON
DIRECTOR, D'LAN CONTEMPORARY



OTTO PAREROULTJA

1914–1973

Arrernte language group

Untitled – Landscape

circa 1950s

watercolour and pencil on board

56 × 42 cm

PROVENANCE

The Artist

Rex Battarbee, Northern Territory

Tmara-mara Gallery, Alice Springs

Bruce Oram, Northern Territory,

acquired from the above

Private Collection, Western Australia

AUD 14,000

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, like 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 of the Pareroultja brothers 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' (*Tjwerrenge*).³ According to Otto's nephew Hubert Pareroultja (a senior watercolour artist), Otto was 'strong in the law'.⁴

By the 1960s, when *Untitled – 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 similar work *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 along proscribed pathways to significant landmarks.

The current work, *Untitled – Landscape*, was painted from precisely the same location as the better known *Totemic Rhythm*, but on portrait

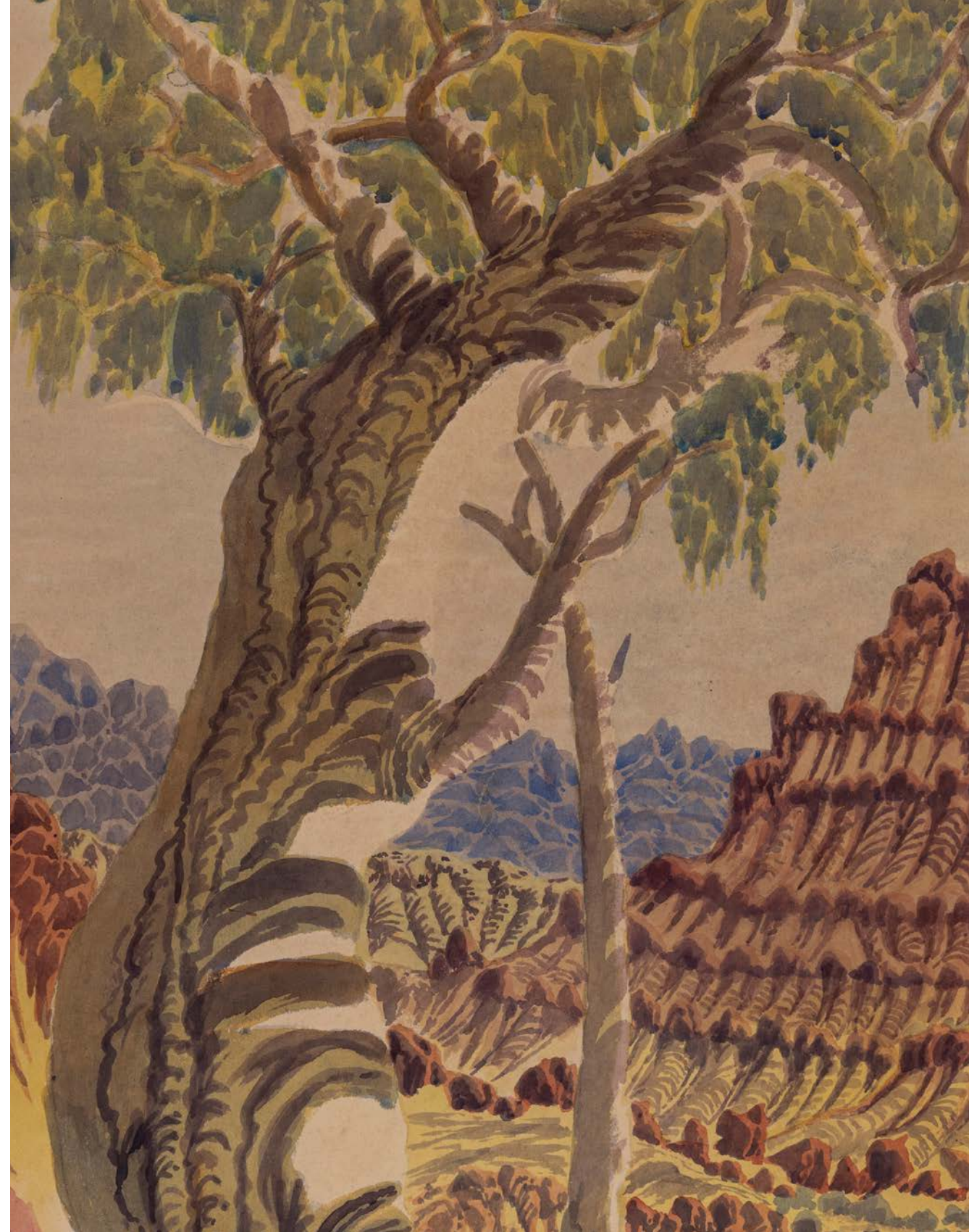
rather than landscape format. The scarred tree that dominates the foreground is, without doubt, the same ancient river red gum that occupies the left side of *Totemic Rhythm*. I suggest, therefore, that the tree is not just a splendid specimen of a gnarled old gum but an individual, most likely the body of a totemic ancestor associated with the towering red sacred site in the mid ground. The winding path from the tree into the mid distance is delineated by serried red rocks, linking the ancient gum to the base of a tessellated peak.

The linguist and scholar of 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.

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1. Otto Pareroultja presented his first solo exhibition at the Athenaeum Gallery in Melbourne in 1948.
2. Rex Battarbee, *Modern Australian Aboriginal Art*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1951, pp. 23, 27.
3. Battarbee 1951, 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 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.





**KAAPA MBITJANA
TJAMPITJINPA**

circa 1925 – 1989
Anmatyerr and Warlpiri
language groups

Mikantji and Tywerl

1971
mixed media on compressed
fibreboard
91.5 x 92 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1971
Purchased by Jo Caddy at
Alice Springs for Dr Margaret King-
Boyes AM and thence by descent
Private Collection, South Australia

This painting will be included in
the forthcoming exhibition *65,000
Years: A Short History of Australian
Art*, the inaugural exhibition in the
redeveloped Ian Potter Museum of
Art, opening on 23 May 2024 and
running until 20 August 2024.

LITERATURE

John Kean, *Dot, Circle and Frame: The
Making of Papunya Tula Art*, Upswell
Publishing, Perth, 2023, p. 134, (illus).

AUD 500,000

It was at Papunya during the cooler months of 1971 that Kaapa Tjampitjinpa set about collecting the materials he required: paints and brushes from the school, boards from various construction sites and the rubbish dump. When Kaapa had everything he needed, he sat down to paint a series of elaborate ceremonies.

Remarkably, Kaapa's initiative ignited a flame that spread to become Australia's most significant art movement. Yet the exact sequence of events that led to the emergence of a revolutionary form of painting at Papunya is still shrouded in mystery. Every new piece of evidence can shed light on this critical juncture in art history. It is now more than fifty years since Kaapa commenced painting at Papunya and the ranks of those present at this outback settlement in 1971 are thinning. So the appearance of a major painting, *Mikantji and Tywerl* 1971, from the first days of the new movement, is an opportunity for analysis, re-evaluation and celebration.

Published accounts of the events in Papunya in 1971 vary in assigning greater or lesser significance to the roles played by the handful of expatriate workers who supported the nascent movement. However, Kaapa's precedence emerges undisputed.

Even Geoffrey Bardon, the art teacher frequently cited as facilitating developments, defers to Kaapa. In the first published account of the movement's genesis, Bardon writes: 'Kaapa Tjampitjinpa had been the most enterprising and independent artist in the traditional manner before my arrival in Papunya.'¹ Chronicler of the movement, Vivien Johnson, goes further, describing Kaapa as the leader of a discrete movement that both preceded and then ran in parallel to Bardon's initiatives. Johnson refers to early works, with performers realistically depicted on the ceremonial ground, as belonging to a distinct 'school of Kaapa'.² Thus, the appearance of a virtually unknown painting by Kaapa Tjampitjinpa, painted prior to his work being seen outside of the community, is significant. Thrillingly, the painting is equal in its visual impact to any of Kaapa's work from that brief period, as he translated images of sacred ceremonies onto the rectangular format of Western art for the first time.

The previously untitled painting, which I will refer to as *Mikantji and Tywerl*, had been hung, out of reach, in a stairwell in a house in Adelaide, unseen but by family and friends of its original owner. The unanticipated appearance of *Mikantji*



and *Tywerl* fills a gap in the evolution of Kaapa's earliest work when he was on the cusp of public recognition as joint winner of the Caltex Art Award on 27 August 1971. *Mikantji and Tywerl* shows a ceremonial performer, two pythons and Water Dreaming icons. The painting is daringly conceived and in fine condition; it can be counted among Kaapa's greatest pictorial achievements. The eight boards that we can be confident he painted before winning the award provide a glimpse into Kaapa's creative genius. They show an artist working through ideas at a rapid rate, an individual possessed of clarity of mind and particular purpose.

It is generally assumed that paintings by Papunya artists depict one or more 'Dreamings'; however, when considering early works, such as Kaapa Tjampitjinpa's *Mikantji and Tywerl*, it is important to remain open to the artist's original intention, for the painting was created before the conventions of contemporary desert art quickened. There were few direct regional precedents for a painting of comparable ambition. Indeed, the very act of inscribing sacred images of such compelling clarity hardened the ground on which subsequent desert artists would tread.

In Anmatyerr belief, totemic ancestors are animate beings believed to inhabit particular sites. Kaapa is likely to have chosen to represent subjects of inherited significance. So, to what degree can we regard these works as being portraits of Kaapa's totemic ancestors? The inclusion of a fully decorated performer at the centre of the *Mikantji and Tywerl* raises another tantalising possibility. Could this be a portrait of the artist himself, in performance, re-enacting the actions of his ancestors on the ceremonial ground?³

When conceiving *Mikantji and Tywerl*, Kaapa was imagining the ceremonial ground in three-dimensional complexity. The painting is a comprehensive visualisation of the penultimate moment in the ceremonial celebration of the Water and Python Dreamings. While the performer is realistically painted kneeling at the centre of the ceremonial ground, other objects are signified by abstracted forms. For example, the ellipses, mirrored on the left and right edges of the board, show the path of the Water ancestors. At another level, they are icons applied on prepared earth as ephemeral mosaics.

The compelling aura of *Mikantji and Tywerl* is derived, in part, from the painting's remarkable

Kaapa Tjampitjinpa with a side of sheep and a box of groceries days after he won the Caltex Art Award, accompanied by (from left) Bob Dixon and sons Bob Kaapa and Keith Kaapa, Papunya, August 1971. Photo Mary White, Jon and Mary White Design Archive, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Australia

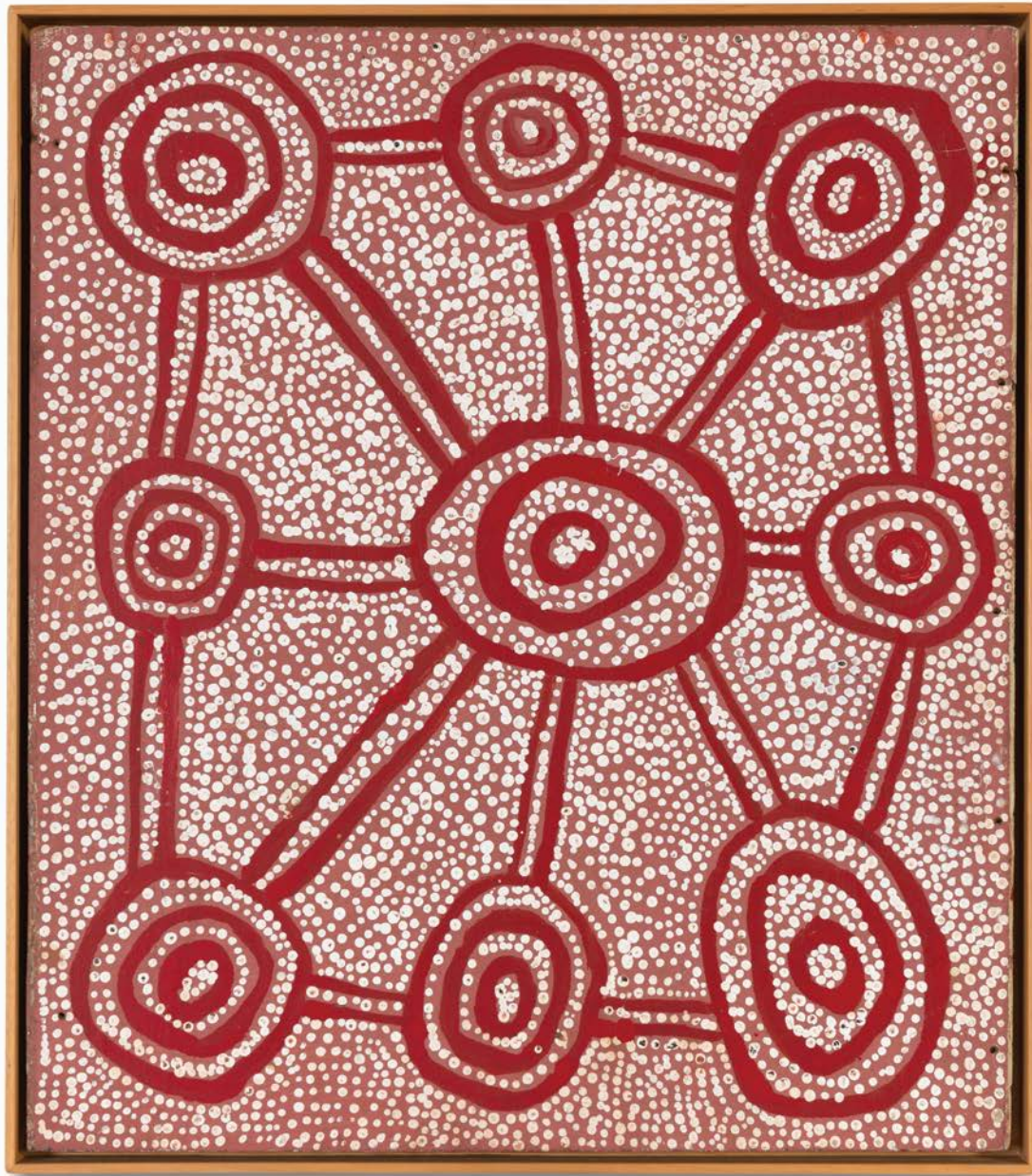


provenance. It was one of the first consignment of eight boards by Kaapa Tjampitjinpa, a series to which much contemporary desert art can be traced. The significance that I attribute to *Mikantji and Tywerl* is not merely based on the painting's priority, for the painting possesses the intensity of the ceremonies it so vividly recalls. Kaapa's command is derived from his ritual achievement; he was an acclaimed songman and a gifted performer. Further, Kaapa was an audacious provocateur, who transcribed the details of sacred ceremony, customarily performed in seclusion at ceremonial camps outside the purview of pastoralists, missionaries and government officials, and placed these scenes on the public record, in all their splendour, for all to see.⁴

Kaapa was seen as a contentious figure in the community by settlement authorities, who distrusted him as a troublemaker, and on occasion among his own people, for he stretched boundaries wherever he went. Kaapa Tjampitjinpa was the boss for himself in every way – songman, artist, activist – he was the individual with enough hutzpah to ignite the desert painting movement.⁵

The author thanks Jason Gibson, Huckitta Lynch Penangke, Malcolm Heffernan Pengart and Luke Scholes, who have contributed to the content of this essay.

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1. Geoffrey Bardon, *Aboriginal Art of the Western Desert*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1979, p. 14.
 2. Vivien Johnson, *Once Upon a Time in Papunya*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2010, pp. 11–43.
 3. John Kean, *Dot, Circle and Frame: The Making of Papunya Tula Art*, Uppswell Publishing, Perth, 2023, pp. 192–209.
 4. Jack Cooke became aware of Kaapa's paintings when he saw one of his works for sale in the Papunya Social Club, Johnson 2010, p. 28.
 5. This is an edited version of a longer essay, see the link in our viewing room at diancontemporary.com.au



OLD WALTER TJAMPITJINPA

circa 1912 – 1981
Pintupi language group

*Corroboree and
Body Decorations*
1971

natural earth pigments and
concrete on composition board
49.5 × 43 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1971
The W.L. Jackson Collection of Early
Western Desert Paintings, Victoria
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 28 June 1999, lot 62
The Collection of Ian W.
Hicks AO, Melbourne

LITERATURE

Geoffrey Bardon and James
Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made
After the Story: The Beginnings
of the Western Desert Painting
Movement*, The Miegunyah Press,
Melbourne, 2004, p. 113, painting 31
AUD 40,000

Walter 'Talpulpa' Tjampitjinpa (known as Old Walter Tjampitjinpa) and Mick Wallankarri Tjakamarra were the two most senior men to contribute to the emergence of painting at Papunya. Both led long and complex lives that stretched back to before the earliest intrusion of non-Indigenous people into their Country. Talpulpa/Walter was born in the Western Desert during the first decade of the twentieth century and was among a group of Pintupi men and boys who, in 1923, marched hundreds of kilometres across unfamiliar country to investigate stories of strange people and bags of 'sweet food' at Hermannsburg mission. Beyond the mission's boundaries, the frontier was beset with danger, and Tjampitjinpa was the victim of a police patrol, presumably in search of Indigenous men who had speared stray cattle. His experience earned him the nickname Tjainatjara (literally 'with chains'), for, in his youth, Talpulpa was captured and led in chains to a remote police outpost.

The painting, alternately titled *Corroboree and Body Decorations* and *Untitled (Tingarri Decorations)*, draws on two very different aspects of Tjampitjinpa's experience. Most obviously, its icons relate to the ritual life of Pintupi men. Looking more forensically, the materials from which the painting is created are redolent of the assimilationist era, when a new settlement was constructed at Papunya, where it was believed the people of the Western Desert could be trained in the civilised ways of the dominant European culture.

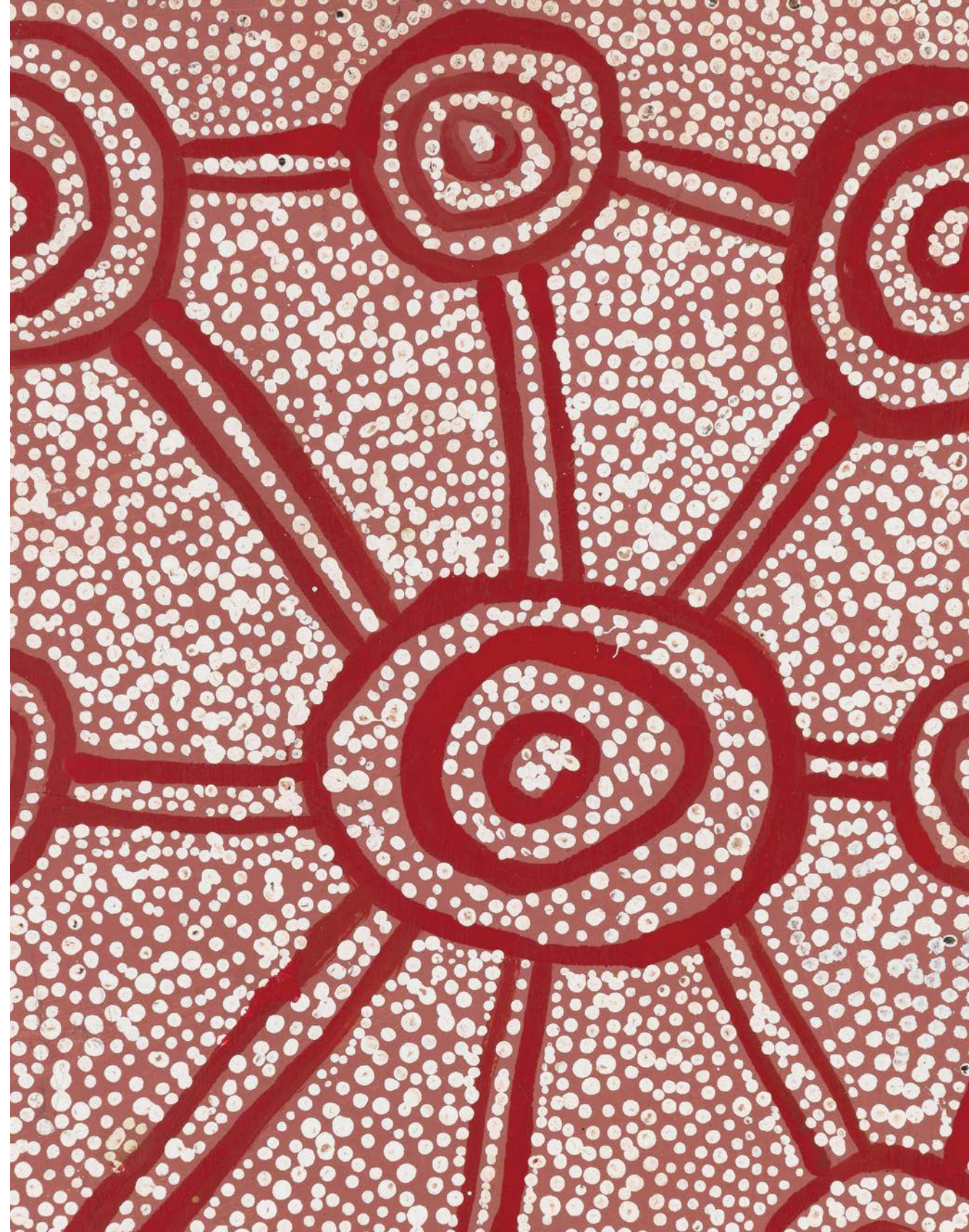
Significantly, *Corroboree and Body Decorations* is listed as 'Painting 31' by Geoffrey Bardon, who writes that it was created in September 1971.¹ The painting formed part of an important collection of nineteen early boards that were assembled by Mr Len Jackson and Mrs Lois Jackson at Papunya.² An entry from the sale of the Jackson collection in 1999, adhered to the back of the work, states, "These 'early' works had been painted on scraps

of wood, off cuts, floor tiles and painted in a variety of mediums ... as the artists were working in “small groups”, some “in the barricaded space behind the classroom”, others in “the old settlement office” ...³ This work is painted on salvaged Masonite; it bears nail holes that indicate it had been fixed to a larger architectural structure. The artist initially used water-based pigments, then the Tingarri icon was highlighted with bright red enamel paint. The detritus of settlement life with which the work was created, however, belies the artist’s intent.

Both the design and straightforward application of the paint of *Corroboree and Body Decorations* reflect ritual practice. Similar designs are applied to men’s torsos in ceremonies of instruction performed for post-initiate novices.⁴ The design also evokes designs that are applied as ‘mosaics’ to hardened earth as the focal point for ritual. In this

instance, the ‘dots’ are applied as wamulu (chopped and coloured plant matter), which is adhered to the earth to emphasise sacred signs associated with particular ancestors. As is the case with the majority of Tjampitjinpa’s paintings, the object’s power is derived from the directness with which he transfers ancestral designs onto a portable medium.

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1. Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2004, p. 113.
 2. Len Jackson taught at the manual training centre established in a Nissen Hut close to the Papunya School.
 3. *Sotheby’s Important Aboriginal Art*, Melbourne, Monday 28 June 1999, Sotheby’s, Armadale, Victoria, p. 51.
 4. See photographs by Llewellyn Parlette of Pintupi men preparing for ceremony at Warren Creek in June 1972, in Luke Scholes (ed.), *Tjungunutja: From Having Come Together*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 2017, pp. 118–125.





OLD WALTER TJAMPITJINPA

circa 1912 – 1981
Pintupi language group

Untitled – Water Dreaming 1971

synthetic polymer paint and enamel
paint on composition board
57.1 × 43.4 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1971
The Artist
Yala Yala Gibbs Tjungurrayi,
Papunya, Northern Territory
Private Collection, Alice Springs,
acquired from the above
Private Collection, Darwin

This painting, along with two other later works by Kaapa Tjampitjinpa and Johnny Warangula, was purchased directly from Yala Yala Gibbs when he was the Aboriginal police tracker, living at the back of the Papunya police station. The previous owner spent many years at Papunya and at that time was working as the government building supervisor.

AUD 30,000

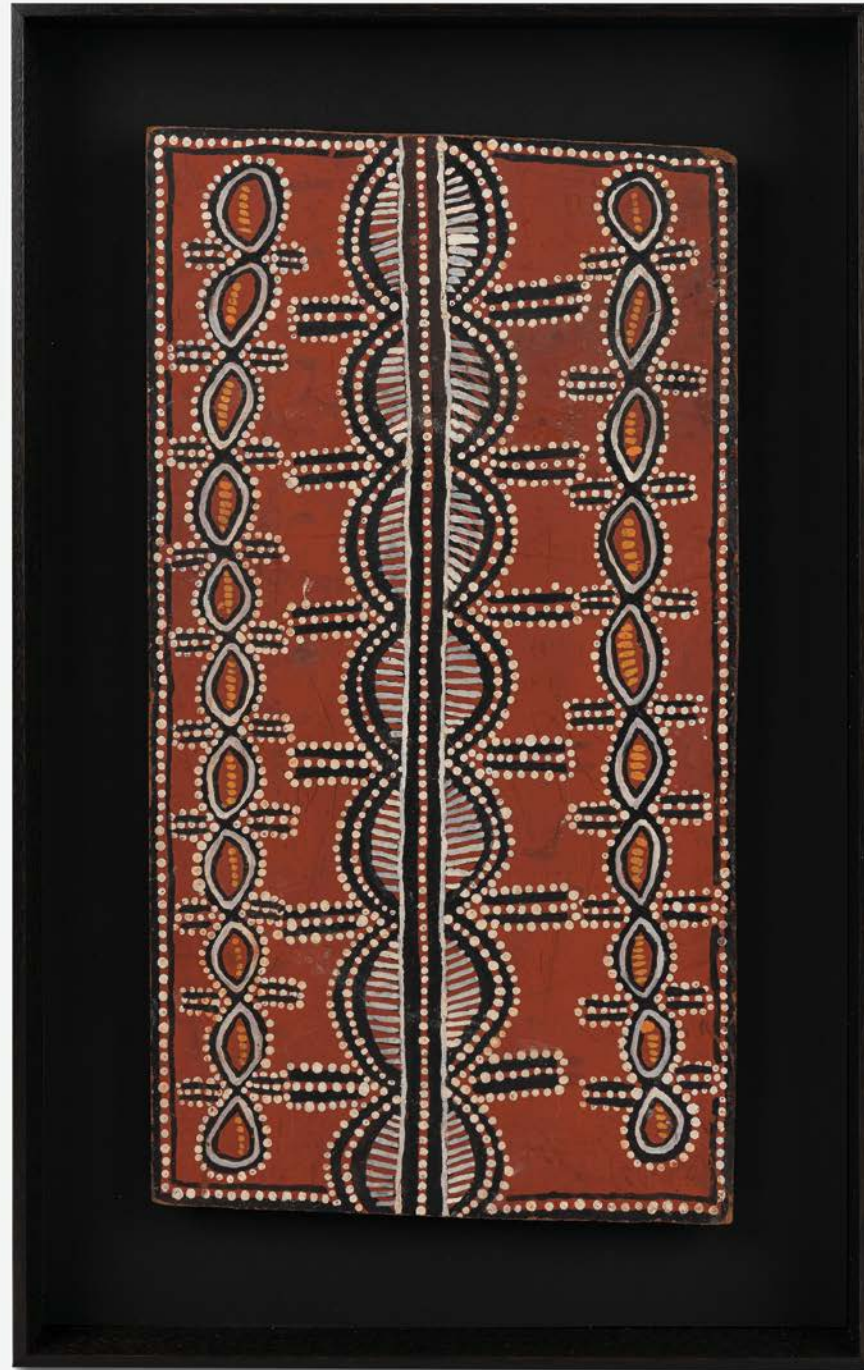
Talpulpa/Walter (also known as Old Walter) was more than seventy years old and a senior custodian for the Water Dreaming site of Kalipinya when he commenced painting at Papunya. His classificatory brother and fellow rainmaker Kaapa Tjampitjinpa had recently requisitioned the 'old settlement office', establishing a secluded studio where men could gather. In 1959, the same office had been the location where the minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck (later Sir), had officially opened Papunya as a model settlement. It was just twelve years later, in the winter of 1971, and with zero fanfare, that the old settlement office became the studio where Australia's most significant art movement was born.¹ Paintings created in Kaapa's atelier celebrate sites over a vast area beyond the confines of the dusty community.

Kalipinya is a 'native well' set in gravelly soil and surrounded by sandhills. Inconspicuous to the casual visitor, Kalipinya was a major fallback water source used by countless generations of desert people as other more ephemeral water sources were exhausted. The site's importance as a place of refuge and sustained residence is reflected in its spiritual

significance. Kalipinya is the site where Winpa, the lightning ancestor, arose and then, painting himself with red ochre, sang up all the elements of an ancestral storm, before marching to the east, 'hurling thunderbolts in all directions'.²

Talpulpa created several depictions of the Water Dreaming at Kalipinya, and while all are composed with iconography associated with Winpa's storm, each gives emphasis to a particular aspect of the formation of the tempest and its passage across the Country. This version emphasises lightning (long, sinuous lines) crashing through heavy clouds (sets of short parallel bars) to cause thunder. The torrential rain and hail that followed is evoked by the rapidly applied white marks. Interestingly these marks do not, for the most part, follow the major icons but are created spontaneously to create an overall drenching effect.

1. Vivien Johnson, *Once Upon a Time in Papunya*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2010, pp. 28–29.
2. Richard G. Kimber, 'Walter Tjampitjinpa', in *Tjukurrjanu: Origins of Western Desert Art*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2011, p. 115.



**KAAPA MBITJANA
TJAMPITJINPA**

circa 1925 – 1989
Anmatyerr and Warlpiri
language groups

Sandhill Dancing Dreaming
(version 1)

1971
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
47 × 25.5 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1971
Geoffrey Bardon, Sydney
Bill Ward, Sydney, acquired
from the above
*Australian, International and
Aboriginal Art*, Bonhams & Goodman,
Melbourne, 23 April 2008, lot 69
The Le Pley Collection,
Western Australia

Accompanied by a signed
statement by Geoffrey Bardon
explaining the creation and the
iconography of this work.

LITERATURE

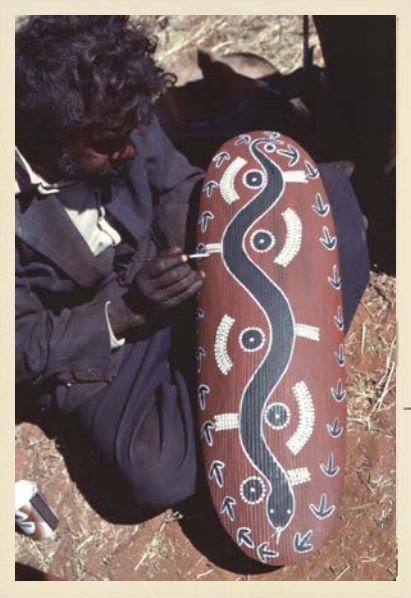
Geoffrey Bardon and James
Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made
After the Story: The Beginnings
of the Western Desert Painting
Movement*, The Miegunyah Press,
Melbourne, 2004, p. 117, painting 41
AUD 60,000

In the spring of 1971, Geoffrey Bardon, the schoolteacher who nurtured the development of painting at Papunya, documented Kaapa Tjampitjinpa producing *Sandhill Dancing Dreaming*.¹ A few weeks earlier, Kaapa had been recognised as the joint winner of the Caltex Art Award, and as the movement gained momentum, he was the undisputed leader of the ‘painting men’.² Driven by the potential of the artform that he had so recently devised, Kaapa was intent on exploring various ways in which aspects of men’s ritual could be represented within the rectangular format of portable art.³ Unlike *Mikantji and Tywerl* 1971, which depicts the ceremonial ground in its entirety, *Sandhill Dancing Dreaming* is composed of icons derived from the designs of sacred objects.

Kaapa’s approach to painting in these early months of the movement was distinctly different to that of his peers. *Sandhill Dancing Dreaming*, for example, is rigorously symmetrical and precisely planned, each icon being mirrored to fill the space. In a nod to the market for which his work was

intended, Kaapa frames his designs with a dotted line, to signal that his painting is ready to be hung on a wall in a domestic setting. Significantly, the border is of a comparable dimension to the ‘framing margin’ that he had observed the Hermannsburg landscape painters mark out with pencil to define the perimeter of the image area before the first watercolour washes were applied. This framing device signifies the conviction with which Kaapa worked, certain that his paintings would be of value to those outside his culture.

Bardon listed *Sandhill Dancing Dreaming* as ‘Painting 40’ in his 2004 opus, indicating it was produced shortly after Bardon met the artist.⁴ While Bardon’s title implies the action of dancing, it does not disclose the ancestral subject that Kaapa envisaged. Fortunately, the iconography is so clearly delineated that the painting can be compared with other works by Kaapa and his countrymen. Kaapa (and his cousin Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri) were related to Kwatye (Gwoya) Tjungurrayi, aka One Pound Jimmy, the man who was stereotyped as



LEFT Kaapa Tjampitjinpa painting a shield, circa 1979, photo Philip Batty

BELOW Australian Aborigine (Kwatye Tjungurrayi), postage 2/6d, in circulation 1950–1966



the Australian Aborigine on the 2/6d and 81/2d postage stamps.⁵ In 1956, Kwatye guided Charles Mountford around Mt Wedge Station, situated to Papunya's immediate north. Kwatye revealed several flat oval objects during their journey, upon which the anthropologist placed fine sheets of paper that were then rubbed with carbon to record the designs incised into the objects' surfaces.⁶ Kwatye also produced several freehand drawings of related designs. Mountford noted that several of these icons related to the Woma Python (*Aspidites ramsayi*), a songline associated with the site Mamadarabi, near the Mt Wedge homestead. Significantly, Kaapa's design is almost identical to one of the Mountford rubbings, and is likely to refer to a different site along the same songline. Kwatye interpreted the design for Mountford, telling him that the parallel line at the centre of his crayon drawing represented the snake's back.⁷ The adjacent bars refer to the snake's ribs, while the semicircles suggest the serpent's movement, evoking the track created as it traversed the land.

The clarity with which Kaapa reproduced the Woma Python icon is a powerful indicator of the rigour with which he approached his art. From the outset, Kaapa's intention was to communicate the beauty of his culture with those willing to spend time appreciating its iconography.

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1. Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2004, p. 117.
 2. Vivien Johnson, *Once Upon a Time in Papunya*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2010, pp. 11–43.
 3. John Kean, *Dot, Circle and Frame: The Making of Papunya Tula Art*, Upswell Publishing, Perth, 2023, pp. 221–239.
 4. Bardon and Bardon 2004, p. 117.
 5. Kean 2023, pp. 181–182.
 6. Journal of C.P. Mountford, August 1965, Mountford–Sheard Collection, State Library of South Australia.
 7. Kwatye/Gwoya, (One Pound) Jimmy Tjungurrayi, *Drawing no 17*, Journal of C.P. Mountford, August 1965, Mountford–Sheard Collection, State Library of South Australia.





OLD WALTER TJAMPITJINPA

circa 1912 – 1981
Pintupi language group

Untitled – Snake Dreaming

1971/1972
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
38 × 40 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1971/1972
Stuart Art Centre, Alice
Springs, cat. no. 9006
Private Collection
Christie's, South Kensington, 1992
Patrick Corbally Stourton,
United Kingdom
Private Collection, London
Important Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 7 June 2011, lot 12
Private Collection, Melbourne

EXHIBITED

*Tjukurrjtjanu: Origins of Western
Desert Art*, The Ian Potter Centre:
NGV Australia, Melbourne,
30 September 2011 – 12 February 2012
Tjukurrjtjanu touring exhibition
at Musée du quai Branly, Paris,
9 October 2012 – 2 January 2013

LITERATURE

Patrick Corbally Stourton, *Songlines
and Dreamings: Contemporary
Australian Aboriginal Paintings*,
Lund Humphries, London, 1996
Judith Ryan and Philip Batty,
*Tjukurrjtjanu: Origins of Western
Desert Art*, National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne, 2011, p. 117 (illus.)

AUD 80,000

During the first two years of painting at Papunya, Talpulpa/Walter Tjampitjinpa (known as Old Walter) was a prolific contributor. Best known for his depictions of the Water Dreaming at Kalipinyapa, he also painted Dingo, Possum, Snake, Women and Yala (wild potato).

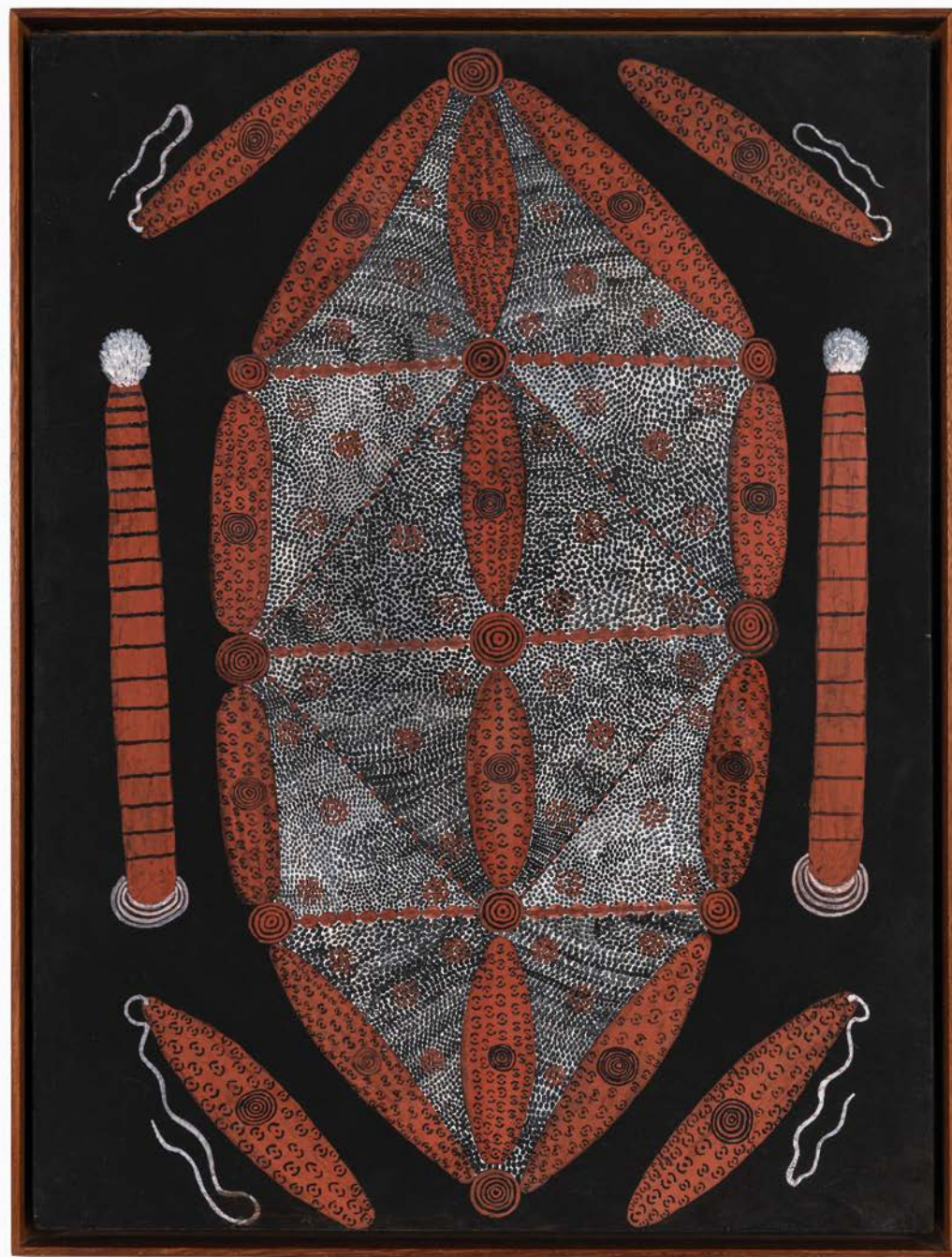
Snake Dreaming 1971/1972 is a powerful representation of the westward passage of Lirru, a treacherous western brown snake (*Pseudonaja mengdeni*). Talpulpa's countrymen Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra, Dick Pantimus Tjupurrula and Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula also painted Lirru in this phase of his epic journey across Pintupi Country.

The serpent's journey commenced, as a python, far to the east, before it undertook a series of terrifying transformations, at times flying and at other times travelling underneath or across the surface of the land. While in the midst of sandhill country, to the north-west of Papunya, the formerly 'quiet' python turned into a fearsome lirru. The current painting recalls another work by the artist, *Snake in a Bush* 1972 (Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory), with both paintings deriving their energy from the snake's movement, more specifically referring to the tracks Lirru created

while propelling itself with a powerful looping motion. The intimacy of Talpulpa's finger-width meanders can be compared with Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra, *Travels of the Snake Larru Larru* 1978 (Art Gallery of New South Wales), in which Lirru's tracks are shown more formally, in a ceremonial form, as if recreated and embellished on the earth as a ground mosaic. In contrast, *Snake Dreaming* was painted as a private meditation.

The four small roundels on the right hand margin of *Untitled – Snake Dreaming* are likely to represent key sites through which Lirru travelled. These roundels are embedded in a complex of sinuous white lines and rib-like crossbars. The track of another smaller snake (which travelled with Lirru before heading to the north) can be discerned among the network of lines, its sinuous path and contrapuntal curves echoing those of the larger serpent.

Talpupa's paintings derive their unassuming eloquence from the fluency of the artist's gesture – each line applied with confidence. *Untitled – Snake Dreaming* possesses a particular spontaneity; we can follow the artist's brush as it moves with purpose across the board – seamlessly, like the serpent itself.

**TIM LEURA TJPALTJARRI**

circa 1934 – 1984
Anmatyerr language group

Honey Ant Dreaming
(Version 4)

1972
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
60 × 45 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1972
Geoffrey Bardon, Sydney
George Lindstrom, acquired
from the above
Private Collection, Sydney
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, 31 July 2006, lot 90
The Le Pley Collection,
Western Australia

EXHIBITED

*Tjukurrjtjanu: Origins of Western
Desert Art*, The Ian Potter Centre:
NGV Australia, Melbourne, 30
September 2011 – 12 February 2012
Tjukurrjtjanu touring exhibition at
Musée du quai Branly, Paris,
9 October 2012 – 2 January 2013

LITERATURE

Geoffrey Bardon and James
Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made
After the Story: The Beginnings
of the Western Desert Painting
Movement*, The Miegunyah Press,
Melbourne, 2004, p. 336 (illus.)
Judith Ryan and Philip Batty,
*Tjukurrjtjanu: Origins of Western
Desert Art*, National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne, 2011, p. 186 (illus.)

AUD 240,000

Tim Leura's *Honey Ant Dreaming* 1972 depicts a ceremony for Yerrampe (honey ant, *Camponotus inflatus*). The cultural significance afforded honey ants vastly outweighs their size or the lowly status accorded invertebrates in European culture. In the desiccated environment of Central Australia, the honey ant's liquid sweetness, while hard won, signifies the bounty of the land.

During the late 1950s, a new settlement was established at Papunya, already a major totemic centre for the Honey Ant ancestors. Like spokes in a great wheel, songlines radiate from Papunya to related sites at all points of the compass. One of those songlines runs north-east through Leura's Country on what is now Napperby Station. Leura's association with the songline of the Yerrampe ancestors gave him political influence at Papunya, where he made his camp to the north-east of the settlement, towards Warumpi, a rounded hill he understood to be the body of the original Honey Ant sire.

This version of the Honey Ant Dreaming was painted under the vaulted dome of the Men's Painting Room at Papunya. Geoffrey Bardon notes that unlike most of the painters, who sat cross-legged, boards held in their laps, Tim Leura and his cousin Kaapa Tjampitjinpa sat on chairs and used tables, so they could paint with precision.¹ Amid the excitement of the Men's Painting Room, where most artists explored the diversity of their inherited songlines and riffed on a variety of painting styles that pulsed through the room, Leura and Kaapa worked with particular rigour, developing compositional ideas that continue to influence desert painting. The clearest statement of their singular intent can be found in the incremental development of Kaapa's *Budgerigar* and Leura's *Honey Ant* paintings, series that were painted concurrently and with the artists in dialogue.²

The ceremony to which Leura's *Honey Ant Dreaming* refers comprises complex fabrications in which designs on the ground are integrated

with decorated three-dimensional objects to create an 'architectural' space into which performers enter. Leura's challenge was to formulate the representation of sacred objects, ceremonial poles and bullroarers on a two-dimensional board – a visual interpretation of the traditional celebration of the Honey Ant ancestors. The medium of opaque paint, applied with fine sable brushes on hardboard, enabled Leura to articulate both semantic and material relationships to evoke the esoteric power of ceremony.

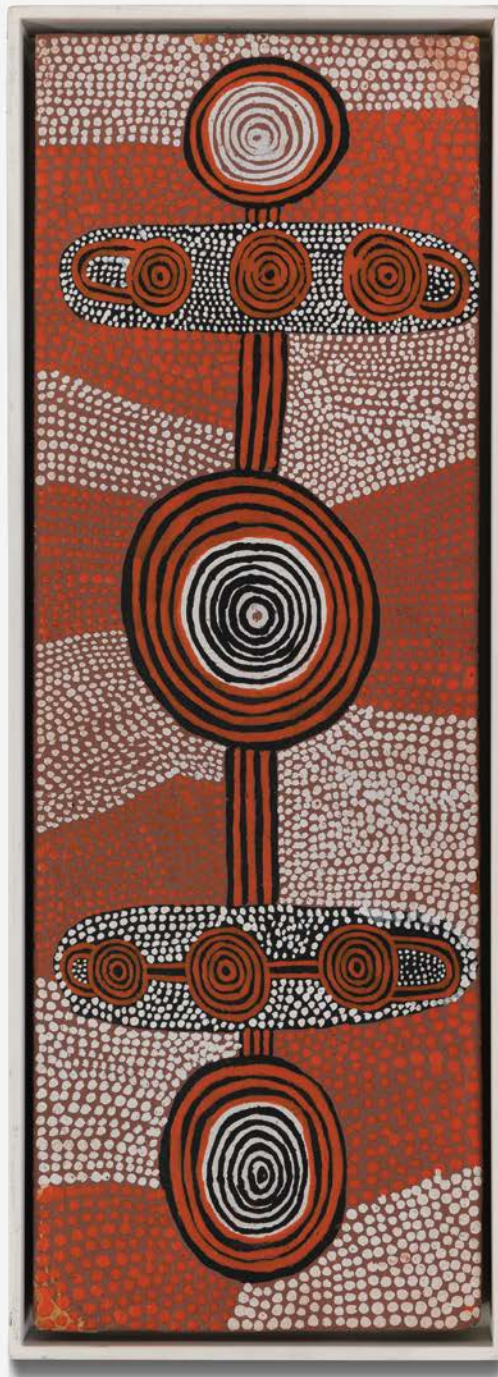
Bardon recorded that Leura created eight versions of *Honey Ant Dreaming*, between April and July 1972.³ This composition comprises four *tywerrenge* (sacred objects) positioned end-to-end to define a central axis. Similar 'strings' of smaller oval objects are placed end-to-end, creating a meta-oval – the *apwelhe* (ceremonial ground). The ceremonial ground is charged with black dots to signify its standing as a site of totemic potency. In contrast, the space outside the meta-oval is unadorned.

1. Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2004, pp. 334–337.

2. John Kean, *Dot, Circle and Frame: The Making of Papunya Tula Art*, Upswell Publishing, Perth, 2023, pp. 226–232.

3. See proposed sequence of Tim Leura's *Honey Ant Dreaming* series, 1972, Kean 2023, p. 347.





ANATJARI TJAKAMARRA

circa 1938 – 1992
Ngaatjatjarra and Pintupi
language groups

*Untitled – Corroboree
for Doctor Men*
1972

synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
45 × 15.5 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1972
Stuart Art Centre, Northern Territory,
painting 14 Consignment 15
Private Collection
10th Anniversary Auction, Sotheby's,
Melbourne, July 2006, lot 83
Tineriba Fine Arts, South Australia
Private Collection, Melbourne

AUD 45,000

Anatjari was born near Kulkuta (Kurlkurta) in Western Australia, approximately 120 kilometres west of the Northern Territory border, in some of the most inaccessible desert country on the continent. Anatjari and his extended family lived at one of several water places, including Kulkuta and Yawulyurru, major ceremonial sites he would later celebrate on canvas. As countrymen departed for Warburton and Balgo Hills missions or the government settlements at Haasts Bluff, Papunya and Jigalong, Anatjari's desert heartland became an increasingly lonely place. Eventually, in 1966, Anatjari and his family set off on foot towards Papunya, approximately 500 kilometres to the east. The group were picked up by a Weapons Research Establishment truck and transported to the newly established settlement at Papunya, where they joined their relatives, who struggled to adjust to a confronting intercultural regime.

Five years later, in 1971, Anatjari, along with twenty other Papunya-based men, commenced painting on scraps of paper and salvaged board. From the outset, Anatjari was the most punctilious of the Pintupi artists, producing encyclopaedic representations of the ritual objects used in men's ceremony. Initially Anatjari was influenced by Kaapa Tjampitjinpa, the entrepreneurial Anmatyerr man behind the formation of the painting movement at Papunya. Despite their contrasting

personalities, both men were dedicated to achieving graphic perfection.¹

The current painting, *Untitled – Corroboree for Doctor Men* 1972, is painted on a small offcut from a larger sheet of particle board, its proportions roughly echoing the scale of sacred boards used by Western Desert men. The Doctor Men referred to in the painting's title are the Wati Kutjarra (Two Men) of the Dreaming. The anthropologist Fred Myers writes that the Wati Kutjarra were charismatic and much-admired heroes: 'filled with magical power, these two youths travelled all over the Western Desert, destroying many threatening demons'.² The Wati Kutjarra, however, are not benevolent heroes. They could be lustful, vengeful, indulgent and erratic, just as young men are to this day. In this work, the 'wild, uncontrolled and somewhat antisocial' aspect of their personalities is communicated via the uneasy balance of the iconographic elements juxtaposed against a boldly asymmetrical patchwork of red and white background dots.

1. Based on a biographical entry in John Kean, *Anatjari Tjakamarra: Travels of the Tingari*, Greer Adams Fine Art, Woollahra, 2020, p. 1.

2. Fred Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC, 1986, p. 239.



ANATJARI TJAKAMARRA

circa 1938 – 1992
Ngaatjatjarra and Pintupi
language groups

Untitled

1972
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
54 × 49 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1972
Private Collection, Northern Territory
Private Collection, Hong Kong,
acquired from the above
*Important Aboriginal + Oceanic
Art*, Deutscher and Hackett,
Melbourne, 6 October 2010, lot 19
Private Collection, Melbourne

A gift to the vendor from his brother,
an aeronautical engineer who was
employed at the satellite tracking
station near Alice Springs in the
1980s. This work was acquired from
a Telstra worker who had previously
been employed in Aboriginal
communities in the 1970s and had
acquired works at that time.

EXHIBITED

*Tjukurrjtjanu: Origins of Western
Desert Art*, The Ian Potter Centre:
NGV Australia, Melbourne,
30 September 2011 – 12 February 2012
Tjukurrjtjanu touring exhibition
at Musée du quai Branly, Paris,
9 October 2012 – 20 January 2013

LITERATURE

Judith Ryan and Philip Batty,
*Tjukurrjtjanu: Origins of Western
Desert Art*, National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne, 2011, p. 79 (illus.)

Related Works:

F.R. Myers, *Painting Culture: The
Making of an Aboriginal High Art*,
Duke University Press, Durham
and London, 2002, pp. 86–106, for
a detailed analysis of the artist's
(referred to as Yantajari Tjakamarra)
early paintings in relation to his
exploration of the ritual Tingarri cycle.

AUD 120,000

From late 1971, Anatjari Tjakamarra created detailed depictions of ritual regalia on small sheets of particle board. The precision of his representation was unsurpassed among his Pintupi peers. Having mastered the replication of ceremonial objects, Anatjari's interest soon turned to the animation of ritual action. Rather than reproducing the detail of three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional plain, Anatjari sought to evoke the sensory experience of being 'in' ceremony. *Untitled* 1972 is emblematic of this second phase of Anatjari's development.

In February 1972, Anatjari was one of twenty men, speaking in several different languages, who gathered to paint in the northern end of the Papunya Town Hall. The Men's Painting Room, as it came to be known, is now recognised as one of Australia's most significant ateliers – with successive themes and approaches to composition

and ornamentation pulsing through the space. For months on end, the Men's Painting Room was filled with song as artists worked, cross-legged, under the vaulted ceiling of the old Nissen Hut.

Geoffrey Bardon was a regular caller at the Men's Painting Room during the first half of 1972, and supplied artists with a variety of boards, as well as judiciously mixing paints in traditional colours – red ochre, yellow ochre, white and black. When paintings were complete, Bardon interviewed the artists and made quick sketches of iconographic elements; in doing so, he established the precedent for the practice of recording details of works. Sensing the value of their work, the artists began to demand a prompt and meaningful return for their efforts. The pressure from the men intensified and Bardon left the community in August.

Experimentation flourished in the absence of non-Indigenous supervision. Indeed, the boards

produced during the interregnum, between Bardon's departure and the employment of Peter Fannin as art advisor/coordinator in December 1972, are among the most exciting works to have been created at Papunya. Whereas the majority of paintings produced in the interregnum were swept up as Consignment 19 by the gallerist Pat Hogan, others, including Anatjari Tjakamarra's *Untitled* 1972, were sold to settlement officials or the occasional non-Aboriginal visitor. Unlike the boards assembled by Bardon or Hogan, the back of the current board does not show consignment numbers.

Instead, Anatjari Tjakamarra's *Untitled* 1972 bears critical hallmarks common to paintings created during the interregnum. *Untitled* is painted on a radically asymmetrical board that, I suggest, was cut under the direction of Len Jackson at the Manual Training Centre, about 100 metres to the south of the Men's Painting Room.¹ The painting also possesses key stylistic attributes that Pintupi artists employed (see, in particular, contemporaneous works by John Tjakamarra), including its explosive radial composition and a limited palette (usually just three colours). Most notable is the dynamic contrapuntal design, in which contrasting light and dark background patches compete for attention with the work's linear iconography; similar configurations can be found in works by Shorty Lungkarta Tjungurrayi and Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri.²

The painting has previously been linked to the Wati Kutjarra (Two Men) site Pakarangananya, presumably because of its radial composition. However, a close analysis of sketches, made in the field by Fred Myers (in 1973–1975), suggest the proposition is not necessarily correct. Anatjari

used comparable propeller-like compositions when describing ceremonies of celebration for both the Wati Kutjarra and Tingarri epics. Rather than trying to identify exactly to which site, or songline, the painting refers, it may be more useful to consider the artist's dynamic intent.

Myers and I recently conferred about the painting's probable meaning, concluding that the black bars with overlaying white slashes are most likely a reference to the dynamic centrifugal force of a bullroarer being spun from the painting's compressed epicentre. Bullroarers are frequently used to signal the commencement of ritual – their uncanny thrumming a warning to the uninitiated to stay well away from the ceremonial ground. The U-shape figures facing each other from the painting's corners could be interpreted as the Wati Kutjarra (redoubled, for emphasis) or participants in a Tingarri ceremony.³

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1. It is unlikely that the radically asymmetrical boards came about accidentally. The Manual Training Centre is the logical place for full sheets of particle board to have been cut, especially as the facility was equipped with efficient bench saws. Len Jackson was an enthusiastic collector of Papunya boards. He showed a keen interest in the nascent movement, and would have been aware that the notion of artists painting on scraps of salvaged materials added to their mystique. I contend, therefore, that boards produced in the interregnum were cut asymmetrically to emphasise the sense of spontaneity and authenticity intrinsic to the Papunya painting movement.

2. See, for instance, numerous Consignment 19 works in Luke Scholes (ed.), *Tjungunutja: From Having Come Together*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 2017, pp. 228–246.

3. Email correspondence with Fred Myers, 4–6 March 2023.





**Attributed to TIMMY
PAYUNGKA TJPANGATI**

circa 1935 – 2000
Pintupi language group

Untitled

1972
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board (Masonite)
71.5 × 68 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1972
Seddell McLean, Victoria,
acquired in the late 1970s
By descent in 2010
Private Collection, Victoria

AUD 225,000

This intriguing painting was most likely created at Papunya, in a period that the scholar Vivien Johnson has characterised as the ‘interregnum’.¹ The interregnum commences in August 1972, with the departure of Geoffrey Bardon, a teacher widely attributed with facilitating the emergence of painting at Papunya, and concludes with the employment of Peter Fannin as the first art advisor under the Papunya Tula Artists banner in December of that year.

Paintings produced during the interregnum are frequently experimental. The artists were working in advance of the conventions that came to characterise Papunya Tula painting, which coalesced to form a recognisable style in the mid 1970s. Moreover, the artists worked in the Men’s Painting Room for several months without the intervention of a non-Aboriginal advisor.² Excited, and painting with freedom, the artists invented diverse approaches to the articulation of icons and decorative aspects. Some elements of these early Papunya paintings, most notably the imbrication of the background to form an expansive overall pattern, were used for a short period, before being abandoned in favour of the now-familiar dotted infill. Working as a collective, the artists called on elements drawn from ceremonial life, while taking inspiration from their peers – and the period resulted in a ‘blooming of a hundred flowers’.³

Many works created during the interregnum were subsequently documented and dispatched by Patricia Hogan, director of the Stuart Art Centre

in Alice Springs, who at that time was the sole representative of the Papunya collective. Thus, most paintings produced during the period were lumped into Consignment 19, the largest and most diverse of the early consignments to have left Papunya. The stylistic mysteries of the consignment have yet to be fully disentangled and this painting will compel scholars to reconsider its scope.

The humble materials used in this work are typical of the interregnum. The Masonite substrate was a proprietary product used in many buildings in the community. The artists, with Bardon’s assistance, had developed the restricted palette distinctive of paintings produced at Papunya. The paint and colours in this work – black, deep red-oxide and white – are typical of works produced in the Men’s Painting Room in 1972. Notably, each line and dot is created with a stroke of carefully thinned paint. Despite having painted for such a short period, the artists approached their task with extraordinary confidence. A close examination of any detail of the work reveals the direction and pressure of each stroke, typical of the most proficient of the early Papunya artists.

This painting’s unique iconography is especially intriguing. The general form and striated decoration of the pear-shaped object corresponded with the character and incised treatment of a pearl shell pendant, such as those traded across the desert from Broome to be used as objects of power in rainmaking ceremonies. The painting’s background treatment and the conjunction between its expansive



LEFT Timmy Payungka Tjapangati, 1972, photo Allan Scott

underlying zigzag pattern and the pearl shell motif reinforce its likely subject being a Water Dreaming and point towards Timmy Payungka Tjapangati as the likely artist.

Of other possible artists, Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri painted several Water Dreaming subjects, although he tended to utilise a form of relaxed symmetry that is absent in this painting. In contrast, Timmy Payungka Tjapangati always sought verity in his subject matter over a search for aesthetic resolution. Like Namarari, Timmy Tjapangati created Water Dreaming paintings during the period in question. Further, Timmy Tjapangati painted with unique individuality, a defining characteristic of this work. Giving further weight to Timmy Tjapangati being a probable artist is the painting's combination of geometric elements from the Western Desert with the more familiar dotted treatments, an identifiable property of several of Timmy Tjapangati's early boards.

Returning for a moment to the painting's curious 'pearl shell' element, the organic shape of the associated hairstring 'belt' is reminiscent of several biomorphic figures in Tjapangati's paintings and painted artefacts. In summary, the proficiency, subject matter – together with the combination of

disparate stylistic traditions – and the eccentricity exhibited in this work are distinguishing attributes that are typical of Timmy Tjapangati's paintings of the 1970s.

Timmy Payungka Tjapangati was a mercurial figure, making his home to the west of Papunya, though frequently decamping to stay with relatives in Balgo for extended periods. Tjapangati was a proud man of a high degree, as well as being an exceptional artist who did not paint in a consistent style until the last phase of his career. While difficult to corral into a neat category, his edgy paintings are quite unlike those of any other Pintupi artist. The eccentricity of this work, which in all probability represents Water Dreaming, suggests that it was painted by a singular artist who, even within the experimental excitement of the Men's Painting Room, was brave enough to stretch the emerging conventions of Papunya painting.

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1. Vivien Johnson, *Once Upon a Time in Papunya*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2010.
 2. See Bardon's description of his own interventions in Geoffrey Bardon and James Bardon, *Papunya: A Place Made After the Story: The Beginnings of the Western Desert Painting Movement*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2004.
 3. See Kean 2023, Johnson 2010, Bardon 2004, Scholes 2017.





**YALA YALA GIBBS
TJUNGURRAYI**

circa 1924 – 1998
Pintupi language group

Untitled – Piti
1978

natural earth pigments and synthetic
polymer paint on carved wood
50.5 × 23 × 15 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1978
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern Territory
Joan Kean, Melbourne
Private Collection, Melbourne,
and thence by descent
John Kean, Melbourne

EXHIBITIONS

*Papunya Painting: Out of the
Desert*, National Museum
of Australia, 28 November
2006 – 3 February 2007

LITERATURE

Vivien Johnson, *Papunya Painting:
Out of the Desert*, National Museum of
Australia, Canberra, 2007, p. 126 (illus.)

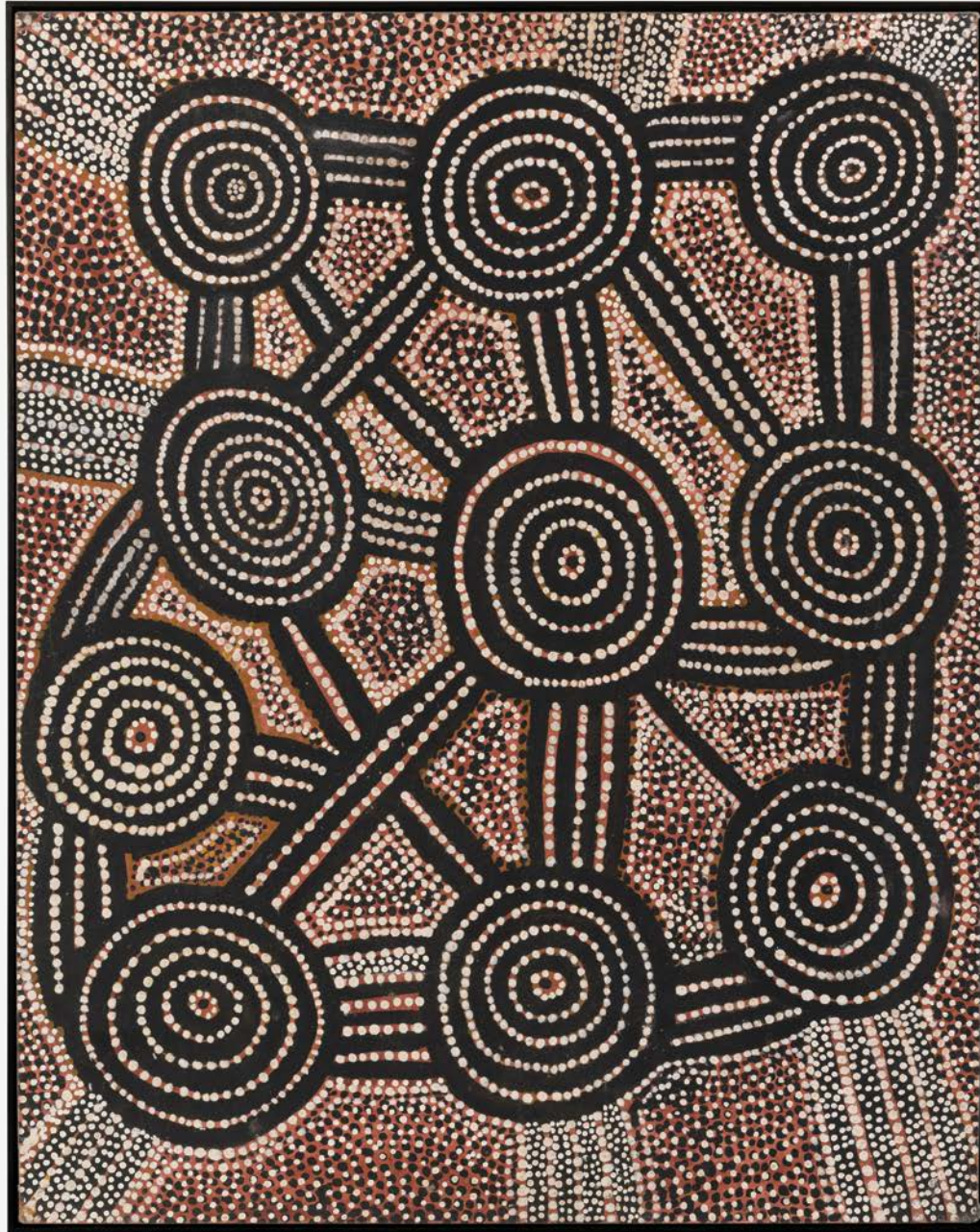
AUD 14,000

This unique vessel was purchased from Yala Yala Gibbs Tjungurrayi at Yaiyai in 1978. Water-carrying vessels such as this piti recall a time when desert people's movement was governed by the availability of water, either from permanent wells or, after rain, from ephemeral sources, such as a shallow lens of water that can settle on the surface of a claypan, or within a crevice in a rocky outcrop. Water from these sources was scooped up in a wira (a smaller wooden vessel), then poured into a piti to be carried back to camp. Alternately, the piti would be lined with grass, to stabilise the water, and skilfully balanced on the carrier's head for the long march to the next camp.

In the 1970s, before the demand for Papunya painting increased, artists frequently carved vessels from the softwood ininti (*Erythrina vespertilio*), painting them as they waited for the next commission on canvas. In contrast, this piti is carved from itara, the root of a river red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), a dense timber that requires time and patience to fashion into a hollow vessel. Perhaps Yala Yala spent many hours adzing the hollow form of this piti, or alternately, the vessel is an older object, repurposed as an artefact suitable for the transcultural market.

Because the timber is so hard, the final form of the object is determined as much by the selection of the root from which the vessel is carved as it is by the tools of the maker. Like a classical sculptor who seeks to release a figure from within a block of marble, the task of making a piti is approached with economy and grace. In this instance, the resulting vessel, though subtly asymmetrical, is beautifully balanced – for it must be carried on the head for long distances. Like finely crafted boomerangs and spear throwers, water-carrying vessels, as well as being utilitarian, are objects of aesthetic refinement and purity of form.

Yala Yala has approached the painting of this piti with a particular lightness of touch. Initially red ochre was applied to the surface of the bowl before sacred signs were applied with yellow ochre. These designs were then highlighted with rows of white dots, then yellow ochre dots were applied as infill. The design on the vessel's inner surface is composed of site-travel motifs that are most often associated with the travelling Tingarri ancestors, while the roundels of the vessel's outer surface expand, unconstrained, within a field of dots.



**CHARLIE TARAWA
TJUNGURRAYI**

circa 1925 – 1999
Pintupi language group

Old Man and His Testes
1975

synthetic polymer paint
on artist's board
81 × 63 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1975
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. 75315
Aboriginal Arts Board,
Australia Council, Sydney
The Kelton Collection, United States
of America, acquired from the above
Private Collection, Switzerland

EXHIBITED

*Past and Present Art of the
Australian Aborigines*, from The
Kelton Foundation Collection,
Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA,
24 September 1980 – 4 January 1981
*Dreamtime: Art of the Australian
Aborigine, Pt. 1 Land and Tradition*,
California State University, Northridge,
CA, 12 September – 14 October 1988
*Abstract Reality: Australian Dreamtime
Art*, Modern Museum of Art, Santa
Ana, CA, 17 January – 16 April 1989

AUD 18,000

Charlie Tarawa (Wartuma) Tjungurrayi frequently painted the tragi-comic epic of Yina – an ‘Old Man’ of the Dreaming possessed by an overactive and self-serving libido. This version, *Old Man and His Testes*, was created at Yaiyai, a large outstation sixty kilometres to the west of Papunya, and used by the Pintupi as a staging post for their return to Country in 1981.

Wartuma and fellow custodian Uta Uta Tjangala told the story with knowing mirth, conscious that Yina’s sex-driven amorality may shock European interlocuters.¹ *Old Man and His Testes* depicts an excerpt from a much longer songline. The painting was documented by Papunya Tula art advisor Peter Fannin at an ephemeral artists’ camp established in the shade of the river red gums adjacent to Yaiyai creek.

This shows part of the ‘Old Man’ Dreaming at Wilinya, a large rockhole west of the Ehrenberg Range. Here he [the Old Man] lay down and his testes wandered off a distance where they were trod on by a dog who told them to go back.

The old man was ready to leave and called his testes who rejoined him and he left [continued travelling].²

This visceral episode is emblematic of Yina’s absurdist escapades as he trudged from Kampurarrpa (near the Ehrenberg Ranges) to Umari (just west of the Northern Territory/Western Australian border). Yina’s uncontrollable sexual desire was eventually sated in the most abject way possible – with his umari (mother-in-law) at the site of that name (most frequently painted by Uta Uta Tjangala).

The painting *Old Man and His Testes* is as interesting for its distinguishing stylistic attributes as it is for the narrative it represents. While the bold site-path iconography is superficially similar to that used by other Pintupi artists (particularly when painting the ceremonies of the Tingarri; see subsequent essay, Freddy West Tjakamarra *Untitled – Kampangutjananya* 1978), certain diagnostic characteristics make the artist’s hand instantly recognisable. Wartuma’s compositions are always

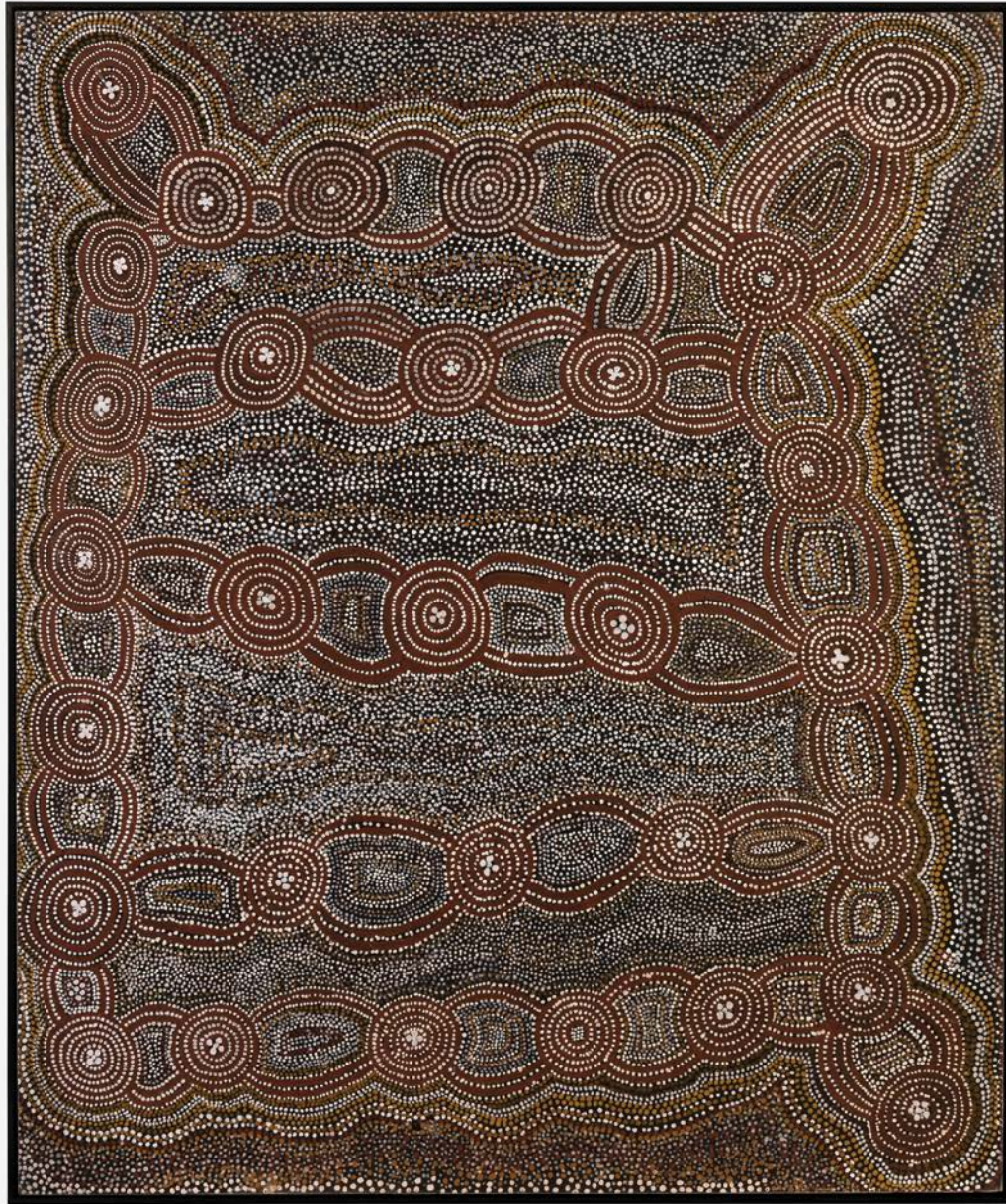
bold and uncontrived – they come forward, towards the viewer, while vigorously pushing out towards the edges of the substrate. Looking closer, the dots that embellish the major icons are applied particularly forcefully. Also, from the mid 1970s, when this work was painted, Wartuma laid down rows of dots that tend to overlap ever so slightly, giving his work its compelling compressed energy.

Wartuma was a key Pintupi leader, always willing to bridge the intercultural divide.³ His tendency to step forward as an interpreter of Pintupi culture made him an ideal subject for an eponymous retrospective, *Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi* (1987), a first for a Western Desert artist.⁴ Despite being perplexed by his encounters with European artists – including a tutelage by Marina Abramović that resulted in the four-day performance piece *Nightsea Crossing Conjunction* (1983) – Wartuma retained an abiding interest in non-Indigenous culture.⁵ Wartuma's profound understanding of the human condition drove his search for an appropriate means to communicate

with the non-Indigenous people who came into his orbit – a quality that made him central to the foundation of Papunya Tula painting – not just as a painter but as a go-between in the mercurial art of cultural exchange.

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1. Fred Myers, *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal High Art*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002, pp. 39–43 and 112–117.
 2. Peter Fannin, 'CT 75315, Old Man and His Testes', Papunya Tula Art, Yaiyai, 18 April 1975, unpublished documentation.
 3. Vivien Johnson, 'The Intelligence of Pintupi Painting', in Roger Benjamin and Andrew Weislogel (eds.), *Icons of the Desert: Early Aboriginal Paintings from Papunya*, Cornell University Press, New York, 2009, pp. 65–69.
 4. Andrew Crocker, *Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi: A Retrospective*, Orange Regional Gallery, Orange NSW, 1987.
 5. One evening in 1985, at his home at Kintore, Wartuma reached into a tea-chest full of cloths and memorabilia and pulled out his documentation for *Nightsea Crossing Conjunction*, then proceeded to tell me about his perceptions of the artists and the event – my introduction to the work of Abramović.





**CHARLIE TARAWA
TJUNGARRAYI**

circa 1925 – 1999
Pintupi language group

Untitled – Women's Dreaming
1978

synthetic polymer paint on linen
200 × 180 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1975
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern Territory, cat. no. CT781109
Aboriginal Arts Board, Australia Council, Sydney
The Kelton Collection, United States of America, acquired from the above Private Collection, Switzerland

EXHIBITED

Past and Present Art of the Australian Aborigines, from The Kelton Foundation Collection, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA, 24 September 1980 – 4 January 1981
Dreamtime: Art of the Australian Aborigine, Pt. 1 Land and Tradition, California State University, Northridge, CA, 12 September – 14 October 1988
Abstract Reality: Australian Dreamtime Art, Modern Museum of Art, Santa Ana, CA, 17 January – 16 April 1989

LITERATURE

Vivien Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2008, p. 57

AUD 65,000

Charlie Tarawa (Wartuma) Tjungurrayi's *Women's Dreaming* 1978 is a painting of historical import, for it was created at a critical juncture in the destiny of the Pintupi people. The painting's gritty intensity conveys Wartuma's conviction to return to the Country of his birth.

I was fortunate to be the Papunya Tula Artists advisor in the late 1970s, which was when I commissioned Wartuma to paint this canvas. It was created when the artist was perched at a tiny camp on the western flank of Yamunturrngu/Mt Liebig, with a windbreak constructed of mulga branches and a few sheets of corrugated iron the family's only shelter.¹ The sand and insects lodged in the painting's surface speak of the exposed conditions during the painting's creation. Significantly, Wartuma chose to paint the events at Putja, a reliable water source located in a fissure in a rocky rise on an otherwise cryptic plain. Putja is on the journey of the Tutju Kutjarra (Two Women) as they travel north to Walanguru, where the Kintore community was eventually established. But that was the future. At the time, what I understood was that the painting referred to a rarely visited site 300 kilometres west of Papunya.

Wartuma had grown up drinking the water from Putja and Walanguru, before relocating to the Haasts Bluff ration station in the mid 1930s. Despite their inaccessibility, Wartuma maintained an active connection with his ancestral lands. Most often, he returned with a couple of camels, as a 'dogger' hunting dingo whose ears could be redeemed for a bounty of £1 per 'scalp'. Later, but less frequently, he travelled west with anthropologists and filmmakers as a guide and cultural interpreter. These occasional visits, however, did not assuage the yearnings Wartuma and his countrymen had for a permanent return to their ancestral homelands.

Women's Dreaming was painted in late November 1978, and within a month of its completion, and following urgings by Wartuma and his Pintupi countrymen, Papunya-based outstation coordinator Allen Jenkins mounted an impromptu expedition.

In the heat of summer, a couple of days after Christmas 1978, three Toyota Land Cruisers (including the Papunya Tula Artists vehicle), set out on what is now known as the Kintore Road, but in the late 1970s, it was no more than an ungraded track. Our party of thirty men, women and children



LEFT Tjakara at Putja, 1984,
photo John Kean

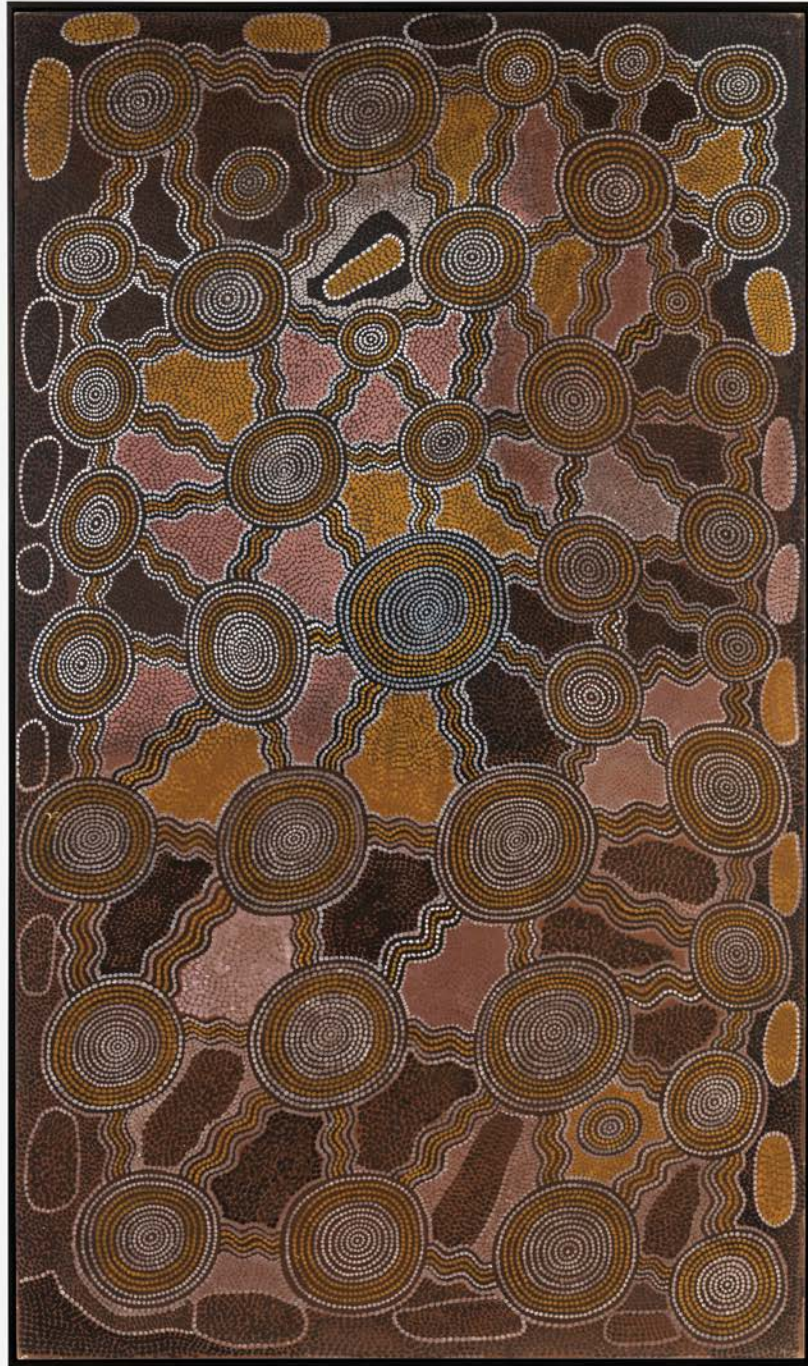
camped at Ilpili, a spring in the Ehrenberg Ranges. As we left Ilpili, the track became less distinct, no more than a pair of tyre tracks separated by a strip of high grass, but we were excited to be following the path of Yina (the old man described in the previous essay *Old Man and His Testes* 1975). After a couple of hours, we reached Sandy Blight Junction, then turned south towards the trail of the Two Women. Here the faint track disappeared among a jumble of gravel and boulders. It was too hot to walk into Walungurru, so it was decided that we should return to the 'main road' via the rock outcrop Ngutjulnga. From Sandy Blight we turned west again, and despite the 40 degrees plus heat, we pressed on towards Tjiterrulpa, the site of Wartuma's conception. It had been a wet spring and the grass on this section of the track flailed wildly as we advanced towards a setting sun. The lead vehicles soon overheated, their radiators packed full of seed and chaff. Into the early hours of New Year's Eve, we removed radiators and poked out seeds with the prongs of hastily modified forks. Despite these frustrations, we had returned to the heart of Pintupi Country – the kids lit small grass fires, while the older men told stories of their youth – and an atmosphere of deep contentment settled on the trackside camp.

As history proves, our faltering trip was a critical prelude to the establishment of permanent communities on Pintupi Country. Immediately on his return, Jenkins wrote a submission for a drilling program. A couple of years later, artesian water was located at Walungurru and an innovative hand pump fitted. In 1981, Wartuma was among the first of his people to return to their homeland. The mural-scaled painting *Women's Dreaming* was a step in the Pintupi people's heroic return to Country. The painting signifies Wartuma's determination to bring his life full circle and return to the land of his ancestors.

The author acknowledges the assistance of Allen Jenkins in reconstructing the historic events described above.

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1. While I was commissioning this canvas, Wartuma told me of a sequence of strange events he experienced at Mt Liebig during his family's exodus from the desert. It was only later that I learned that Wartuma was among a party of approximately one hundred Pintupi, Kukatja and Ngaliya people who camped at Mt Liebig for several weeks in 1932. The group had been assembled and fed, as subjects of the University of Adelaide Anthropological Expedition. The records from this bizarre encounter are housed in the archives of the South Australian Museum.



**FREDDY WEST****TJAKAMARRA**

circa 1940 – 1994
Pintupi language group

*Tingarri at
Kampangutjananya*
1978

synthetic polymer paint on linen
174 × 104 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1975
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern Territory, cat. no. FW781104
Aboriginal Arts Board, Australia Council, Sydney
The Kelton Collection, United States of America, acquired from the above Private Collection, Switzerland

EXHIBITED

Past and Present Art of the Australian Aborigines, from The Kelton Foundation Collection, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA, 24 September 1980 – 4 January 1981
Dreamtime: Art of the Australian Aborigine, Pt. 1 Land and Tradition, California State University, Northridge, CA, 12 September – 14 October 1988
Abstract Reality: Australian Dreamtime Art, Modern Museum of Art, Santa Ana, CA, 17 January – 16 April 1989
The Evolving Dreamtime: Contemporary Art by Indigenous Australians – Part I, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA, 3 August 1994 – 22 January 1995

AUD 45,000

Freddy West Tjakamarra was raised in the bush; his first contact with Europeans, in 1961, was with a National Mapping Survey team. Highly regarded as a tracker, Tjakamarra possessed an extraordinary knowledge of the Gibson Desert and the southern section of the Great Sandy Desert.¹ Paintings such as *Tingarri at Kampangutjananya* 1978 show how cosmology and cartographic knowledge are intimately intertwined in desert culture – people, history and topography are integrated to create a seamless whole.

Meaning in paintings of the Tingarri ancestors is multi-levelled and interpreted according to the experience and authority of the viewer. At its most straightforward, the 'site-path' designs, typical of paintings of the Tingarri ancestors, refer to the micro-topography of a particular area: in this instance, the area around Kampangutjananya (translates literally as 'it burned them'). At a second level, the patterns refer to designs that adorn the torsos of a horde of Tingarri men who are gathered to perform ceremonies of instruction for the initiates with whom they are travelling. In this instance, the symbols painted on the bodies of the group of men coalesce to form a single

pattern that exemplifies the shared purpose of the assembled Tingarri Tjuta (many Tingarri). A third level represents the original narrative – events that occurred at Kampangutjananya. It is at this level that the subtle modulations in the surface of an otherwise abstract design come into play. The anthropologist Fred Myers, who camped with Pintupi at Yaiyai outstation in the mid 1970s, and who spend many hours in conversation with the painter, describes how Tingarri men arrived from the north-west, writing:

At nyakinnga, the tingarri ground up some grass seeds known as tjirpirinpa and tried to cook the seed cakes in the fire, but the tjirpirinpa (which is not supposed to be cooked but eaten as a wet paste) caught fire and burned the men, so they travelled on southward to tutjulkurrunya, a small waterhole in the sandhills where they again threw fire on the novices.²

The burning or smoking of initiates is a recurrent theme in the Tingarri cycle; however, the smoke is not always produced by the Tingarri themselves. Other fires are started by a variety of ancestral heroes encountered by the travelling Tingarri.

Either way, novices are routinely burnt/smoked in the concluding phase of Tingarri rituals.

Tjakamarra is a meticulous painter, his canvases reflecting his dedication to ceremony. Each of Tjakamarra's circles are perfectly formed and every dot is applied with the same perpendicular pressure. Because the patterning of his surfaces is so precise, any irregularities, such as the oval form in the top third of the work, catch the eye. In this instance, the oval represents a stone on which tjirpirinpa seeds were ground into a paste. This canvas was painted at a small outstation at Yilkipi, just thirty kilometres north-west of Papunya, where Tjakamarra camped for a short period in 1978.

The author acknowledges the advice and assistance of Professor Fred Myers in preparing this essay.

1. Vivien Johnson, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2008, p. 78.

2. Fred Myers, 'To Have and to Hold: A Study of Persistence and Change in Pintupi Social Life', PhD thesis, Bryn Mawr College, 1976, p. 199.





**CLIFFORD POSSUM
TJAPALTJARRI**

circa 1933 – 2002
Anmatyerr language group

*Possum Dreaming at
Napperby*
1979

synthetic polymer paint on linen
152.5 × 183 cm

PROVENANCE

Painted at Papunya, 1979
Papunya Tula Artists, Northern
Territory, cat. no. CP791224
Dr Vivien Johnson, Northern Territory
The Estates of Professor Peter
and Mrs Jane Johnson
Aboriginal Art, Sotheby's, Melbourne,
24 November 2009, lot 58
The Le Pley Collection,
Western Australia

EXHIBITED

*The Painted Dream: Contemporary
Aboriginal Paintings from the Tim and
Vivien Johnson Collection*, Auckland
City Art Gallery, Auckland, and at
the Te Whare Taonga o Aotearoa
National Art Gallery and Museum,
Wellington, New Zealand, 1991
Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, Art
Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide,
31 October 2003 – 26 January
2004; National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne, 24 March – 3 May 2004;
Art Gallery of New South Wales,
Sydney, 14 May – 11 July 2004;
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane,
7 August – 24 October 2004

LITERATURE

Tim Johnson and Vivien Johnson,
*The Painted Dream: Contemporary
Aboriginal Paintings from the Tim
and Vivien Johnson Collection*,
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Auckland, New Zealand, 1991
Vivien Johnson, *The Art of Clifford
Possum Tjapaltjarri*, Gordon
and Breach Arts International,
Sydney, 1994, p. 77, plate 23
Vivien Johnson, *Clifford Possum
Tjapaltjarri*, Art Gallery of South
Australia, Adelaide, 2003,
p. 121 and p. 237, plate 24

For a comparison with three other
major works from the period in which
this painting was created, see *Two
Men Fighting* 1978 and *Dreamings
of Napperby Station* 1980, the latter
in the Holmes à Court Collection, in
Johnson 1994, p. 76, plate 22, and
p. 90, plate 30, and in Johnson 2003,
p. 119 and p. 125 respectively; and
Possum Dreaming (Yalkuti) 1981, also
in the Holmes à Court Collection, in
Johnson 1994, p. 88, plate 28. See
also *Yuutjutiyungu* 1979, in Johnson
1994, pp. 70–71, plate 20, and
Johnson 2003, pp. 108–109 (illus.).

AUD 250,000

Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's *Possum Dreaming at Napperby* was painted in December 1979, just weeks before I left my role as art advisor to Papunya Tula Artists. It was the final work I commissioned from the artist and, though I was not aware at the time, the painting signified an inflection in Possum's artistic trajectory.

Possum had completed six expansive canvases during the three years I was at Papunya. He used each large commission to map the intersecting songlines of western Anmatyerr and northern

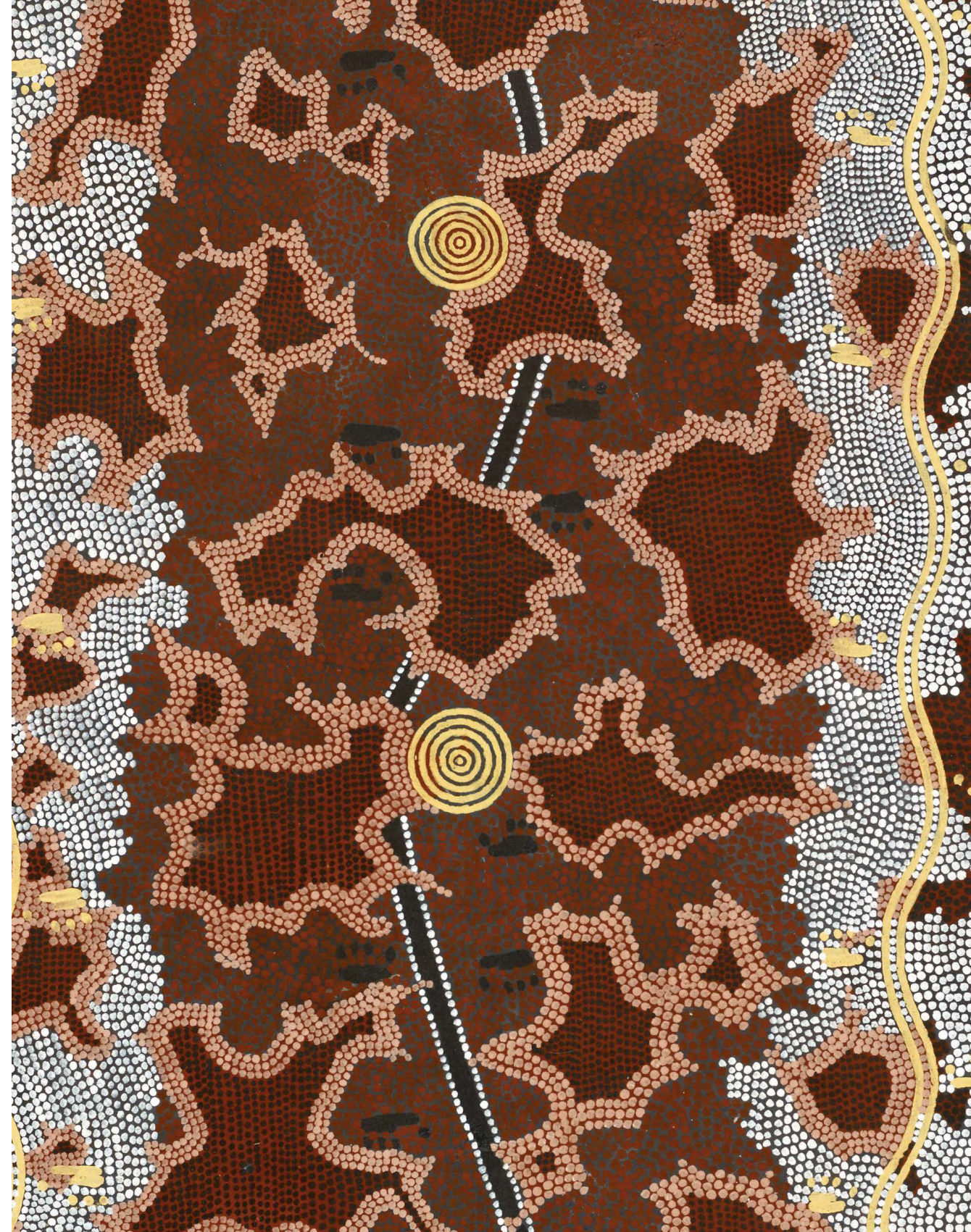
Kukatja Country. The series includes acclaimed masterpieces of desert art – *Warlugulong* 1977 (National Gallery of Australia), *Man's Love Story* 1978 (Art Gallery of South Australia) and *Yuutjutiyungu* 1979 (Kelton/Raschle Collection, Switzerland) – creations of unprecedented geographic scope and pictorial ambition. Reflecting on the series, Possum joked that he was 'thinking too much',¹ for not only did the map paintings call on his encyclopaedic knowledge of the totemic landscape, they also stretched reciprocal

relationships with those with whom he shared responsibilities for Country. *Possum Dreaming at Napperby* marks a significant departure from the map series. This painting, and subsequent works created during the 1980s, would pull the focus from the wider landscape to a specific locale. Rather than defining the passage of several ancestors, the artist determined to illustrate the actions of particular protagonists. Although more limited in scope, these works are no less intellectually rigorous, for each work calls on a suite of well-considered signs to describe space and time. Despite his obvious use of mirroring, repetition and rhythmic patterning, these compositions unfold like cryptograms. More than any other desert artists with whom I have worked, Clifford Possum challenges us to follow and comprehend the movement of particular totemic ancestors.

Under the ground – that’s the one. Everybody knows about this – some Dreaming go underneath then come out again here. Oh yes, well. These people, they gotta school their eyes. They gotta think about it. Some Dreaming you can follow: this one, then go to another soakage, then stop, then keep going. And sometime, Dreaming go underground. All the way – just walking right through and then come out again.²

In this instance, Clifford Possum highlights the passage of his personal ancestor, Rrpwamper (brush-tail possum, *Trichosurus vulpecula*), at Tjuirri (also called Irriltja) near Gidyea Bore on Napperby Station. Rrpwamper live in the river red gums that line the mostly dry creek beds in Central Australia, from where they descend each evening to forage among ironwood trees that dominate the adjacent flood plains. Look carefully and you will see the Naples yellow tracks of the Rrpwamper ancestors, their perfectly formed paw prints astride sinuous traces of their sweeping tails. The more stylised black possum track, which bisects the centre of the painting, is shown moving up and down through the principal landmarks (roundels), on occasion disappearing into the ground at locations marked by the irregular patches of black dots contained within a band of pink dots.

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1. Vivien Johnson, *Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2003, p. 111.
 2. Clifford Possum cited in Johnston, 2003, p. 74.





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ABOUT

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

ETHICS

Our mission is to create a transparent and sustainable marketplace for Australian Indigenous 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.

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS VISUAL ARTS (NEIVA)

The National Endowment for Indigenous Visual Arts (NEIVA) is an independent charitable trust fund established to centralise and distribute proceeds from art sales back to Australian Indigenous artists and their working communities.

D'Lan Contemporary allocates 30% of annual net profits to NEIVA.

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 Indigenous art is:

CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS ART (1980–PRESENT)

All contemporary Australian Indigenous 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 INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN 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 Scougal – 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.

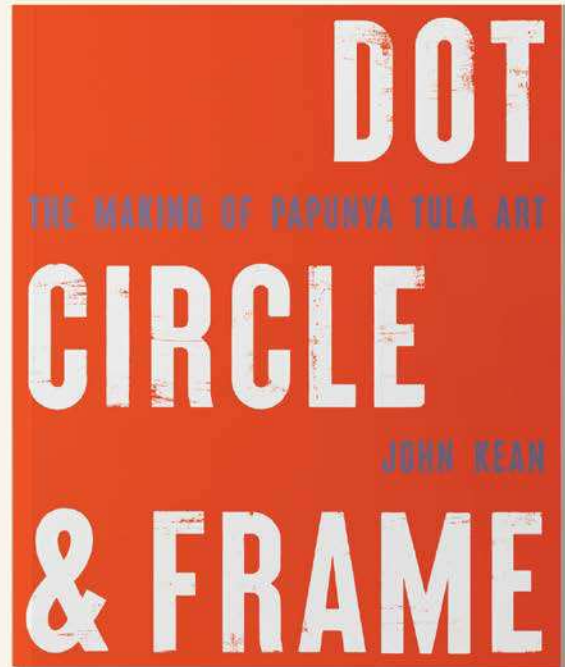
The Australian Government administers the PMCH Act through the Ministry for the Arts. The PMCH Act regulates the export of Australia's most significant cultural heritage objects by implementing export controls for objects defined as 'Australian Protected Objects'.

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A dazzling and richly illustrated book tracking the origins and the innovation of the Papunya Tula art movement.

UPSWELL PUBLISHING



The course of Australian art changed in 1971. Kaapa Tjampitjinpa, Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri, Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri and Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula were central to the formulation of a radical new form of desert art. *Dot, Circle & Frame* leads the reader to a deeper understanding of a critical juncture, as four artists claimed a pivotal space in the history of Australian art.

—
JOHN KEAN has published extensively on First Nations art, and the representation of nature in Australian museums. John is a regular visitor to Papunya and adjacent First Nations communities, where he maintains ongoing relationships with the descendants of the founding Papunya Tula artists. His most recent book: *DOT, CIRCLE & FRAME: The Making of Papunya Tula Art* was released in May 2023.

John Kean was Art Advisor at Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd, (1977–1979), inaugural Exhibition Coordinator at Tandanya: the National Aboriginal Cultural Institute (1989–1992), Exhibition Coordinator at Fremantle Arts Centre (1993–1996), Producer with Museum Victoria (1996–2010). John was the Thomas Ramsay Science and Humanities Fellow 2004, Museum Victoria. John was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy (Art History) at University of Melbourne in 2020.

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