



Makinti Napanangka
(Indigenous Australian (Pintupi), 1930 - 2011)

Biography

Senior Pintupi artist Makinti Napanangka was a renowned Australian First Nations artist from the Pintupi language group. She was born at Mangarri, near Lake Macdonald, on the border of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Makinti is widely celebrated for her vibrant, abstract paintings that reflect the rich traditions of her people and the sacred stories of her land.

Makinti Napanangka spent her early life living a traditional, nomadic lifestyle with her family, moving across the desert. It wasn't until the late 20th century that she settled in the community of Kintore, following the establishment of government settlements in the region.

She was one of the original women who joined in the mid-1990s the artistic movement at Papunya Tula Arts, the crucible of contemporary Indigenous painting. Developing from the painting assistance many women already provided to their male relatives in Balgo, Warmun and Utopia in the mid-1980s, some art centres began to encourage works made independently by female artists, almost twenty years after the expressions of the Western Desert artists.

The late flowering of female painting at Papunya was fostered by workshops and cultural exchanges between the women of the settlement at Walungurru (Kintore) and their kinswomen at Ikuntji Women's Centre at Haasts Bluff. Here, Napanangka and her peers pioneered a new form of Western Desert painting characterised by free-form expressive brushwork, strong saturated colours and richly textured surfaces. Diverging from the men's schematic and austere paintings of Dreaming Law, the women's vital and radiant paintings express the jubilation of ceremonies at sacred sites on Country, a daring second wave of artistic revolution.

Makinti Napanangka was quickly established as one of the most senior women painting with Papunya Tula, which she officially joined as a shareholder and independent artist in 1996. Throughout her career, Makinti exhibited widely, both nationally and internationally, becoming one of Australia's most respected contemporary artists.

Her work is held in major collections, including in 2000, where her innovative and energetic work was included in the major retrospective exhibition Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, and in 2003, in the Clemenger Contemporary Art Award at the National Gallery of Victoria. In 2008, Napanangka won the prestigious Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, her untitled painting of Lupulnga acclaimed by judge Judy Watson for its ‘inner light, and [it] outshines everything else.’

Makinti continued painting until her passing in 2011. Today, she is remembered for her significant contribution to the Western Desert art movement and her role in elevating Indigenous art on the global stage.

Selected Collections

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, Australia
Parliament House Collection, Australia
Macquarie Group Collection, Australia
Counihan Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
Charles Darwin University, Darwin, Australia
Griffith University Art Collection, Brisbane, Australia
Shell Aboriginal Art Fund Collection
The Henderson Family Collection, Sydney, Australia
Owen Wagner Collection of Australian Art
The Peter Elliot Collection, Sydney, Australia
Hank Ebes Collection, Melbourne, Australia
The Luczo Family Collection, USA
Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, USA
Corrigan Collection, Sydney, Australia
Kluge Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, Virginia, USA

Selected Exhibitions

2023
Pintupi Way, The Drill Hall Gallery, funded by the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
Papunya Tula WOMEN, Harvey Art Projects, Sun Valley, USA

2022
Innovation in Three Parts | Araluen Arts Collection, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
The Women's Show, Harvey Art Project, Sun Valley, USA
Irrititja Kuwarri Tjungu | Past & Present Together: 50 Years of Papunya Tula Artists, Part 2, Kluge-Ruhe Collection, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA

2021
Lineage & Legacy, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

2019
Desert Painters of Australia - from the Steve Martin & Anne Springfield Collections and Kluge-Ruhe Collection of the University of Virginia, Larry Gagosian Gallery, New York, USA
Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art: a curated selection, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2018
Pintupi – Paintings from the Masters Of the Western Desert, Harvey Art Projects USA, Sun Valley, USA

2016
Artist's Hand: Collectors' Eye - The Angel Gift, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Tarnanthi – Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

2012/13
Crossing Cultures, The Owen and Wagner collection of Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Art, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo; Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, USA

- 2013
Papunya Tula Artists: Masters Of the Western Desert, Harvey Art Projects
 USA, Sun Valley, USA
- 2012
Ancestral Modern, Australian Aboriginal Art from The Kalplan & Levi
 Collection, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, USA
*Crossing Cultures' The Owen and Wagner collection of Contemporary
 Aboriginal Australian Art*, Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, USA
All Our Relations, 18th Biennale of Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art,
 Sydney, Australia
PTA 40th Anniversary Show, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
*Unique Perspectives – Papunya Tula Artists And the Alice Springs
 Community*, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
- 2010
Papunya Tula Women's Art', Maitland Regional Gallery, Maitland, Australia
- 2009
Pro Community - Papunya Tula Artists, Kunstwerk, Eberdingen-Nussdorf; Art
 Bar71, Berlin; VDMA, Frankfurt; Artkelch, Freiburg, Germany
*Mythology & Reality: Contemporary Aboriginal Art From The Gabrielle Pizzi
 Collection*, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Australia
- 2008
Virtuosity: The Evolution of Painting at Papunya Tula, The Kluge-Ruhe
 Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA
- 2007
 Solo: *Makinti*, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
 Gifted: *Contemporary Aboriginal Art*, The Mollie Gowing Acquisition Fund,
 Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
- 2005/6
Luminous - Contemporary Art from The Australian Desert, Bathurst Regional
 Gallery, Bathurst; Manning Regional Art Gallery, Taree; Grafton Regional Art
 Gallery, Grafton; Manly Art Gallery and Museum, Sydney, Australia
- 2006
Dreaming Their Way, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, USA
Yawulyurru kapalilu palyara nintilpayi, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
- 2005
Aboriginal Vision in Contemporary Australian Art, Wright Exhibition Space,
 Seattle, USA
- 2004/5
*Celebrating 20 Years, Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art
 Award*, travelling exhibition, Wollongong City Art Gallery, Wollongong; Cairns
 Regional Gallery, Cairns; National Archives of Australia, Canberra; RMIT University,
 Melbourne, Australia
- 2004
Mythology & Reality, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, Australia
Colour Power - Aboriginal Art Post 1984, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne,
 Australia
- 2003
International Abstralaction: Making Painting Real, Seattle Art Museum,
 Seattle, USA
 Solo: *Makinti Napanangka – A Painter*, Utopia Art Sydney, Australia
- 2002
 Solo: *Recent Paintings*, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia
- 2001
Spirituality and Australian Aboriginal Art, Comunidad de Madrid touring
 exhibition, Spain
Dreamtime: the Dark and the Light, Kunst der Gegenwart, Sammlung Essl,
 Vienna, Austria
Dreamscapes-Contemporary Desert Art, Mostings Hus, Frederiksberg, Denmark
Desert Flowering, Manawatu Art Gallery, North Island, New Zealand
Aborigena, Palazzo Bricherasio, Turino, Italy
 Solo: *Makinti Napanangka: new paintings*, Utopia Art Sydney, Australia
- 2000
Papunya - Tula Genesis and Genius, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney,
 Australia
 Solo: *Makinti Napanangka: New Vision*, Utopia Art Sydney, Australia
- 1999
Moet & Chandon Touring Exhibition, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
- 1998
 14th Telstra NATSIAA, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
- 1997
 Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
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