



**Patrick Olodoodi Tjungurrayi**  
(Indigenous Australian (Manyjilyjarra, Kukatja), 1943 - 2017)

## Biography

Patrick Olodoodi Tjungurrayi, also known as Patrick Yala Uluturti, was a respected First Nations artist and senior law man of the Pintupi and Kukatja peoples in Australia's Western Desert. Born near Yalangerri, close to Jupiter Well in Western Australia, he spent his earliest years traversing deep desert landscapes along ancestral routes. He first encountered 'whitefellas' during a 1957 aerial survey when he and his family saw a helicopter approach, an image so foreign that he later recalled thinking it resembled a giant dragonfly.

Growing up between well-known Pintupi homelands, including Balgo, Kintore, and Kiwirrkurra, Patrick absorbed extensive traditional knowledge. As a child and young man, he walked with his family along the Canning Stock Route, moving from rockhole to well, carrying water, stories, songlines, and ceremonies. He spoke both Pintupi and Kukatja languages fluently. In his teenage years, he witnessed scenes of violence, a clash between cultures, but continued to hold fast to his own law and customs.

In the late 1970s, Patrick and his relatives, including his older brother Brandy and sister Elizabeth Nyumi, walked into the Balgo Catholic mission. He worked here on building stone houses and later helped construct the church, where he married Miriam Olodoodi, sister of artist Lucy Yukenbari.

Patrick's painting practice began in 1985, when the Palatine brothers first provided art materials at Balgo. A couple of years later, he joined the newly-formed Warlayirti Artists collective. Between Balgo and Kiwirrkurra, he and Brandy traveled to attend ceremonies, strengthening their ties to Country.

In the mid-1990s, Patrick moved permanently closer to his homeland at Kiwirrkurra and began painting with Papunya Tula Artists from around 1993. This period marked a stylistic leap: his earlier, more modest canvases gave way to powerful, large-scale works. These artworks combined intricate Pintupi mapping of ancestral Tingari paths and Rainbow Serpent ('Wanawarra') themes with bold colour palettes from the Balgo tradition, integrating reds, yellows, pinks, purples, and blues in dense, layered compositions. Critics say his work achieved a unique balance of formal precision and vivid energy, a "desert warmth" coupled with "flickering optical" movement.

Patrick's subjects drew from a wide range of cultural sites: Kallianku west of Jupiter Well, clay pans such as Warriya, and Men's Law grounds like Putinjana. These deeply mythic locations, markers of ancestral journeys, ceremonies, lightning and rain, were central to his identity as a 'Law Man' and ceremonial custodian.

By 2000, his inclusion in the major exhibition *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales marked national visibility. He participated in multiple Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (including entries in 1999, 2001, 2004, 2007) and exhibited widely across Australia between 1997 and 2010 in galleries like Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi (Melbourne), Scott Livesey (Melbourne), Utopia Art (Sydney), and internationally in Singapore and the UK.

In 2008, Patrick received the inaugural Western Australian Indigenous Art Award, a recognition for his compelling artistic voice. Around this time, his monumental canvases attracted strong commercial interest, often selling for more than AUD 80,000. His works are held by major institutions, including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of Western Australia, South Australian Museum, Artbank, and others.

Between 2007 and 2010, Patrick developed end-stage kidney failure. His personal battle coincided with his broader advocacy for better renal treatment 'on Country'. He painted and helped organize the 2000 *Kiwirrkurra Men's Painting*, a collaborative work that fundraised over AUD 1 million at a Sydney auction, enabling the creation of remote dialysis services through Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Aboriginal Corporation, also known as Purple House.

Despite this progress, initial policy barriers prevented him from accessing dialysis in Western Australia. Officials told him he'd need to travel hundreds of kilometres, to Kalgoorlie or Perth. He refused, citing a desire to remain on his own country, famously stating he would "rather die on his own Country than be sick on somebody else's". After persistent lobbying, he secured treatment in Alice Springs, leading to the opening of a two-chair dialysis unit at Kiwirrkurra in 2014. His painting also adorns the 'Purple Truck', a mobile dialysis unit proudly serving desert communities.

Patrick's actions significantly shed light on the renal health crisis among Indigenous Australians, who, due to remote living and systemic neglect, suffer rates of kidney failure up to 15–30 times higher than the national average.

Patrick remained engaged in health advocacy and art until the end.

He received dialysis in Alice Springs in 2017, and passed away that December from a heart attack at home in Kiwirrkurra. He died in hospital in Alice Springs. His passing prompted reflection from friends and communities on his powerful life, as artist, elder, and activist.

Patrick Olodoodi Tjungurrayi's life bridged cultures, embodying traditional Pintupi law, desert travel, ceremonial custodianship, and modern visual art.

His richly coloured canvases continue to speak of creation songlines, of water and lightning carved into the sand, and of the resilience of culture. Even as he faced his own mortality, he fought for the right of his people to remain on Country, and, in doing so, reshaped national attitudes toward Indigenous health care.

His legacy endures through his paintings held in public collections, the ongoing work of Purple House in remote Australia, the dialysis truck that bears his art, and the many artists and health advocates inspired by his example.

#### Selected Collections

Luciano Benetton Collection, Venice, Italy

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

Holmes a Court Collection, Perth, Australia

South Australian Museum, Adelaide, Australia

Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, USA

Artbank, Sydney, Australia

Hank Ebes Collection, Melbourne, Australia

The Luczo Family Collection, USA

Pat Corrigan Collection, Sydney, Australia

The Kelton Collection, Santa Monica, USA

Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, Australia

Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, USA

Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), Darwin, Australia

National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), Melbourne, Australia

Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth, Australia

Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia

## Selected Exhibitions

2025

*Tjukurrpa: The Dreaming*, SmithDavidson Gallery X UNIT London, London, United Kingdom

2022

*Irrititja Kuwarri Tjungu I Past & Present Together: 50 Years of Papunya Tula Artists, Part 2*, Kluge-Ruhe Collection, University of Virginia, Charlottesville VA, USA  
*Connection*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, Australia

2021/22

*The Purple House*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

2012/ 13

*Papunya Tula works on paper*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

2010

*Tradition & Innovation, Papunya Tula 2010*, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia  
*Wilkinkarralakutu – Journeys to Lake Mackay*, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia

2009

*Community – The Heart of Papunya Tula Artists*, Utopia Art, Sydney, Australia  
*Papunya Tula 2009, Senior Pintupi Artists*, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia  
Nganana Tjungurrinnganyi Tjukurrpa Nintintakitja: We Are Here Sharing Our Dreaming, 80 Washington Square East Galleries, New York City, USA  
*Wynne Landscape Prize*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

2008

*Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia  
*The Canning Stock Route Project*, Olympic Expo, Beijing, China  
*20 years of Papunya Tula Artists*, Utopia Art, Sydney, Australia  
*Ngurra yurru kulintjaku – Always remembering country*, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia

2007

Contemporary Aboriginal Art, The Mollie Gowing Acquisition Fund, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

2007

24th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award – Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia  
*Papunya Tula 2007*, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia

2006

*A World of Relations*, Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA

2005

*Papunya Tula Artists*, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia

2004

*21st Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin

2003

*Papunya Tula Artists, A Gift from the Desert*, Utopia Art, Sydney, Australia  
*Kintore-Kiwirrkura 2003*, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia

2001

*18th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia

2000

*Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

1999

*16th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia

1997

Utopia Art, Sydney, Australia  
*Papunya Tula Artists*, Alice Springs, Australia  
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

1993

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia