



Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri
(Indigenous Australian (Pintupi), born 1958)

Biography

Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri was born around 1958 east of Kiwirkurra in Western Australia. Until 1984, at an age of approx 25, Warlimpirrnga and his family lived a traditional nomadic life, with no contact to or knowledge of the outside world.

Late 1984, the international headlines were filled with the 'discovery' of this last group of Australian First Nations who until the late 20th century had managed to retain their traditional lifestyle in complete isolation. These so-called 'last of the nomads' or 'lost tribe' of nine Pintupi walked in from the bush west of Lake Owen that year and for the first time came into contact with western civilization.

Six of these nine First Nations became artists: Warlimpirrnga, Thomas, Walala, Yukultji, Yalti and Tjakaria. From these six Warlimpirrnga was the first who started painting after carefully observing other artists from the community at Kiwirkurra paint for a long time. Consequently, within three years, Warlimpirrnga transformed from a nomad with a simple traditional lifestyle to one of the leading artists from the Papunya Tula Artists collective. In 1987 he completed his first painting for Papunya Tula Artists and in 1988 he held his first exhibition in Melbourne, at Gabrielle Pizzi Gallery. The entire collection was purchased and donated to the National Gallery of Victoria.

Warlimpirrnga paints primarily in two styles; he makes extensive use of geometric shapes to depict the stories of the Tingari or he uses lines made up of carefully placed dots in his dreamings that depict holy Lake Mackay, a site of which he is one of the custodians. He uses the same dot-technique as other Pintupi artists like his brothers, Walala and Thomas. The Tingari are the mythical ancestors of the Pintupi from the 'Dream Time' in which they wandered the earth performing rituals giving life to and physically shaping the landscape. Everything on earth obeys the laws that have been formulated by the Tingari. The meaning of Tingari paintings are multiple, but remain largely a secret for non-insiders.

Despite the late start of his career, Warlimpirrnga is widely considered one of the most important contemporary First Nations artist. His work has appeared in several prominent galleries and museums in Australia and around the world, including the National Gallery of Victoria, Musée du quai Branly Paris and Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM). Warlimpirrnga travels back and forth between Alice Springs and his native land around Kiwirrkurra.

In Australian Indigenous terms the Tingari were a group of ancestral beings that emerged from the earth and conducted activities that led to the formation of the landscape and its inhabitants. The content of these ancient stories remains the exclusive knowledge of the initiated men. Warlimpirrnga's paintings often depicts *tali tjuta* (many sandhills) and *kapi* (clay pans) of the Maruwa area West of Lake McKay and Kalparti which lies further south.

In a minimal linear style, the artist depicts a particular site known as Minatapinya, a large swamp south of Maruwa which is where Tingari men camped as they travelled east towards Wilkinkarra (Lake McKay) in Western Australia. The area is known for the Water Snake that travelled through this way in the mythical creation time, the snake entered the water and now lives under ground. According to the artist, the wavy lines mark the watery areas that are found around Lake MacKay.

*"I tasted the sugar and it tasted so sweet,
like the Kulun Kulun flower."*

Selected Collections

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
The Kelton Foundation Collection, Santa Monica, USA
Macquarie Group Collection, Sydney, Australia
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Bank Art Museum Moree, Moree, Australia
Griffith University Art Collection, Queensland College of Art, Brisbane, Australia
Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, USA
Hank Ebes Collection, Melbourne, Australia
The Luczo Family Collection, USA
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
Art Bank, Sydney, Australia
Museo Sa Bassa Blanca, Mallorca, Spain
Musee National des Arts Africains et Oceaniens, Paris, France
Corrigan Collection, Sydney, Australia
Luciano Benetton Collection, Venice, Italy

Selected Exhibitions

2023

Dreaming with your Eyes Open, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam,
The Netherlands

2022

Origins, SmithDavidson Gallery, New York, USA

2021/22

Irrititja Kuwarri Tjungu (Past & Present Together): 50 years of Papunya Tula Artists,
Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville,
USA

2021

Papunya 50 Years, 1971 - 2021, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam,
The Netherlands
Aboriginalities, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium

2020

ORIGINS, Australian Aboriginal Art from the SmithDavidson Collection,
SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
*Mapa Wiya (Your Map's Not Needed): Australian Aboriginal Art from the Fondation
Opale*, The Menil Collection, Houston, USA

2019

No Boundaries, Sol Taplin Gallery & SmithDavidson Gallery, Miami USA
Desert Painters of Australia - paintings from the Steve Martin Collection, Gagosian
Galleries, New York and Los Angeles, USA

2017

Modern Masters, SmithDavidson Gallery, Miami, USA

2015/16

No Boundaries: Aboriginal Australian Contemporary Abstract Painting, Charles H.
Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit; Herbert F. Johnson Museum
of Art Cornell University, New York, Nevada Museum of Art; Portland Institute for
Contemporary Art; Perez Art Museum, Miami, USA

2015

Signs and Traces - Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Zamek Cultural Institute, Poznan,
Poland

2014
The 38th Alice Prize, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

2013
Recent Works, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Desert Mob 2013, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

2012
Visual Rhythm, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia
Unique Perspectives: Papunya Tula Artists and the Alice Springs Community, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
Desert Mob 2012, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
Dokumenta (13), Fridericianum Museum, Kassel, Germany

2011
Recent Pintupi Works, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

2010
Wilinkarralakutu - Journeys to Lake Mackay, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia

2009
Tjukurrpa Palurukutu, Kutjupawana Palyantjanya - Same Stories, A New Way, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Pro Community, Papunya Tula Artists, Kunstwerk, Nußdorf; ArtBar71, Berlin; VDMA, Frankfurt; Artkelch, Freiburg, Germany
Papunya 2009, Senior Pintupi Artists, Melbourne, Australia
Painting the Country, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia
Nganampatju Kanpatja Winki, Nganampatju Yara Winkii - All Our Paintings, All Our Stories, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

2008
Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art: Handle With Care, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

2007
Pintupi - Mixed Exhibition, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

2006
Land Marks, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

2005
Pintupi Artists, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
22nd Telstra NATSIAA, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia

2004
Talking About Abstraction, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Pintupi Artists, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Native Title Business - Contemporary Indigenous Art, Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne; Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale; Carnegie Gallery & Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart; Ararat Gallery, Ararat; University of Tasmania, Australia
Looking Closely at Country, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, College of Fine Arts, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

2002/03
Native Title Business - Contemporary Indigenous Art, Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, Queensland; Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville; Noosa Regional Gallery, Tewantin; National Museum of Australia, Canberra; Cooloolo Shire Public Gallery, Gympie; Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns; Queensland Museum, Brisbane; Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum, Gladstone; Duaringa Shire Art Gallery, Blackwater, Australia

2001
Pintupi Exhibition, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Dreamscapes - Contemporary Desert Art, Mostings Hus, Frederiksberg, Denmark

2000
Pintupi Men, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

1999
Exhibition with Ray James Tjangala, Melbourne, Australia

1996
C.A.A.A.C.E., Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

1991/92
Friendly Country, Friendly People, Touring Exhibition, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

1990
L'Été Australien à Montpellier, Musée Fabre Gallery, Montpellier, France

1989
Mythscales, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia