

**GALLERY COPY**

CHARLIE  
TJARURU  
TJUNGURRAYI

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

This project has been made possible by the generous assistance of the following:

Orange City Council  
Orange Festival of Arts Ltd  
Annemarie Brody  
Margaret Carnegie OAM  
Katherine Christian  
Andrew Crocker  
Flinders University Art Museum  
Mr. Sam Gazal and Country Television Services  
Juraj Horniak  
Penny Marr  
Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory  
AV Playfair Pty Ltd  
Vessa Playfair  
Regional Galleries Association of New South Wales Ltd.  
through assistance from the N.S.W. Govt., Office of the Minister for the Arts  
Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi  
University Art Museum, University of Queensland  
Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council

## C O N T E N T S

Foreword	6
Preface	7
Introduction	10
Prologue	11
Tjaruru's Life	15
Western Desert Painting	17
Origins	17
Purpose of the Design	18
Symbols	20
Dots	21
Today's Issues	22
The Paintings from Bardon to 1986	25
Tjaruru's Paintings	27
Plates	28
Footnotes	90
Bibliography	91

## F O R E W O R D

The advent of a new gallery for the City of Orange brings with it many opportunities over and above the provision of high quality exhibitions designed to complement an award winning building.

This exhibition and its accompanying book are able to make a significant contribution to the growing recognition of Aboriginal culture in a nation about to celebrate a point in its history marked by two hundred years of European settlement.

This is the first ever retrospective exhibition of a living Aboriginal artist. It celebrates the life work of an individual and provides a window to a people who account for one of the richest sources of identifiable culture in Australian society. It will do much to foster a closer appreciation of Aboriginal people in recognition of their importance to a wider culture.

On behalf of the people of Orange, I wish to express our gratitude to all those involved in this project: to the artist himself, to those who have given support either financial or in kind, to those who have made available the works in the exhibition and to the staff of the Orange Regional Gallery for their efforts in bringing about the completion of this project.

Our sincerest appreciation also to Andrew Crocker whose experience and dedication has given this project a high level of inspiration and leadership.

*Tim Sullivan, Mayor*

## P R E F A C E

Some years have passed since aborigines at the Papunya settlement were introduced to the means by which certain of their visual practices could be more widely seen by all Australians and by the world at large. The introduction of Western materials in the early seventies served several purposes evident to the practitioners and administrators of the day, however the impact of that part of aboriginal culture marked by this small but significant moment in the long history of human habitation of this continent has only recently been the subject of the cultural and historical attention which it deserves.

This project has as its principal rationale two major purposes. The first concerns the well-established principle that by exposing the output of an individual artist in a purposefully selected retrospective exhibition and by the production of a carefully researched book, the value of that artist's contribution and its relevance to a cultural milieu can begin to be acknowledged and assessed.

The second purpose concerns this latter assessment in the context of cultures within a culture, originality and aboriginality within a diverse society intent upon developing in a mature and deliberate way. If this diversity is to be embraced and nurtured the process of recognising and responding to the needs of both present and future societies requires a single-minded commitment informed by both care and fact.

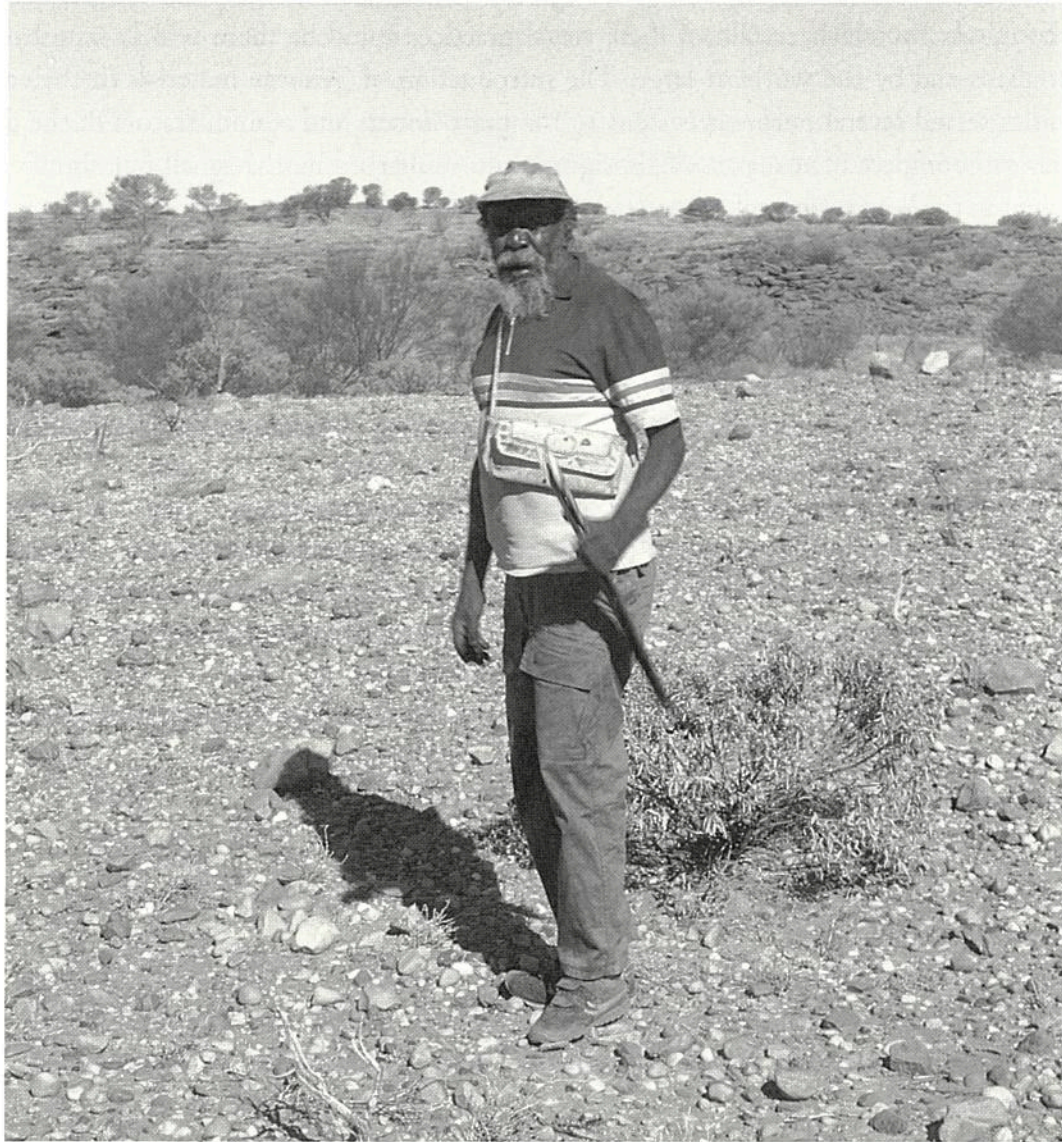
These purposes present challenges on many fronts. The European proposition of a retrospective as a touchstone of individual artistic contribution may not sit comfortably with an artist engaged in formulating a visual language shared by a wider group. Nevertheless, the work of Tjaruru and of many of his fellow artists exposes individualistic tendencies, attitudes and stylistic developments which mark them apart and which provide the signature necessary for individual recognition.

The paintings reproduced from this exhibition will carry Tjaruru's authorship for all time and as their visual signs are unravelled by time the condition of being aboriginal in the late twentieth century will unfold with greater clarity and, hopefully, with a more willing understanding.

Andrew Crocker's informed and passionate essay provides a focus on the history of a short span of aboriginal cultural activity attempting to find its place within a rapidly encroaching alien world. The story which he tells together with the rich source of Tjaruru's own spirit and that of his people will add to the accumulation of originality which in this decade seems to be a favoured touchstone of Australian cultural identity.

*Peter O'Neill, Director Orange Regional Gallery  
Exhibition Curator*

ABORIGINAL BOOK



AN APPRECIATION OF THE  
WORK OF THE PINTUPI PAINTER  
CHARLIE TJARURU TJUNGURRAYI

BY ANDREW CROCKER

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

In 1981 a well-known scholar of the arts was faced with the question of incorporating a collection of Western Desert painting in a comprehensive touring exhibition of AUSTRALIAN (sic) paintings in Europe. The idea got the thumbs-down and this scholar said to me that one of the problems with labelling these paintings "Fine Art" was that the painters could not mount a solo retro., apparently the touchstone of being considered a Fine Artist in European circles. Well, it is true that Western Desert painters do not maintain portfolios. They do not even collect paintings other than in their heads. In any event here is a retrospective. With a little effort it would be possible to do the same for most of the painters.

Why Tjaruru? Several reasons made him a good choice for this exhibition. In the first place I know him better than most of the other artists. This made it easier to communicate on certain crucial issues, which made me more confident in some of my deductions. Secondly, he is what one might describe as a middle-of-the-road painter. This makes him representative of many of the painters, which a retrospective for one of the well-known stars of the school would have failed to be. Thirdly, perhaps because of my special admiration of him I had kept an eye on his paintings and found them relatively easy to locate.

It almost goes without saying that it is not possible adequately to appraise an art form without considering the social context in which it arises. It simply does not happen in our own society. Further, where artists make certain assertions in their work I feel that we should pay the courtesy of listening to them if we patronise them. It seems to me more than distasteful to collect their work while turning a stony face to what they say or to their circumstances. Since I maintain that this is the case with Aborigines I dwell on this area. Inherent in this issue is the management of policy relating to Aboriginal art both in the private sector and in Government. For this reason I extend some comments in this direction.

## P R O L O G U E

"Old Man, why do you paint this story?" The Australian Aborigine sat on the ground beside his huge canvas. Despite the lateness of the day I had been summoned to his camp in the excitement surrounding the near-completion of his work. The last few dots still shone wet in the westering sun. It had taken several weeks and soon I would have to pay for it. I had just been told the bare bones of the story symbolised by the outwardly abstract design. Unusually, I had chosen to record our conversation. Only twice had this huge frame been used before and each time a stunning painting had materialised. I remember thinking, however far from Papunya lives the person who will buy this painting, they deserve to be closer to the artist, to hear his voice. I had hoped my question would provoke an answer expressing the need for an occupation, pleasure at painting or of earning money. His answer surprised me: "If I don't paint this story some whitefella might come and steal my country."<sup>(1)</sup>

It is hard for us to know fully why the desert Aborigines paint today. To get close to understanding we will, I think, have to wait for an explanation from someone like Professor F. Myers whose close contact, linguistic ability and pursuit of the subject place him in a far better position than most.<sup>(2)</sup> Meanwhile the painters explicitly and implicitly make clear to us that their work is a statement of their authority over certain territories, that is, their own traditional homelands. One has to keep in mind the context of Papunya, where and when the painting began. This was a Government-established settlement to which many Aborigines had been forcibly transported for "assimilation". Others had gravitated there with inducement and with false hopes. Away from their land and in great and often tragic discomfort they were having great difficulty coping with the new life. As it turned out they were eager to return to their homelands but lacked the means. In addition these people were nonliterate. It is both logical and clear that the discovery of European painting materials offered an undreamt-of avenue for asserting their identity and all that goes with it. Among other things it is this which makes sense of that anomaly which strikes those who visit the settlements: the apparently dismal adjustment to Australian suburban slum living contrasted with the beautiful paintings which emanated therefrom. In the latter case the Aborigines were doing something essentially Aboriginal and naturally enough were successful. It is entirely pertinent that, in submissions claiming traditional land, artefacts and the stories which feature in them have been submitted as evidence.

Nevertheless, those who deal in Aboriginal art as agents, managers, gallery owners and investors or patrons rarely if ever show sign of paying the blindest notice to what is a very

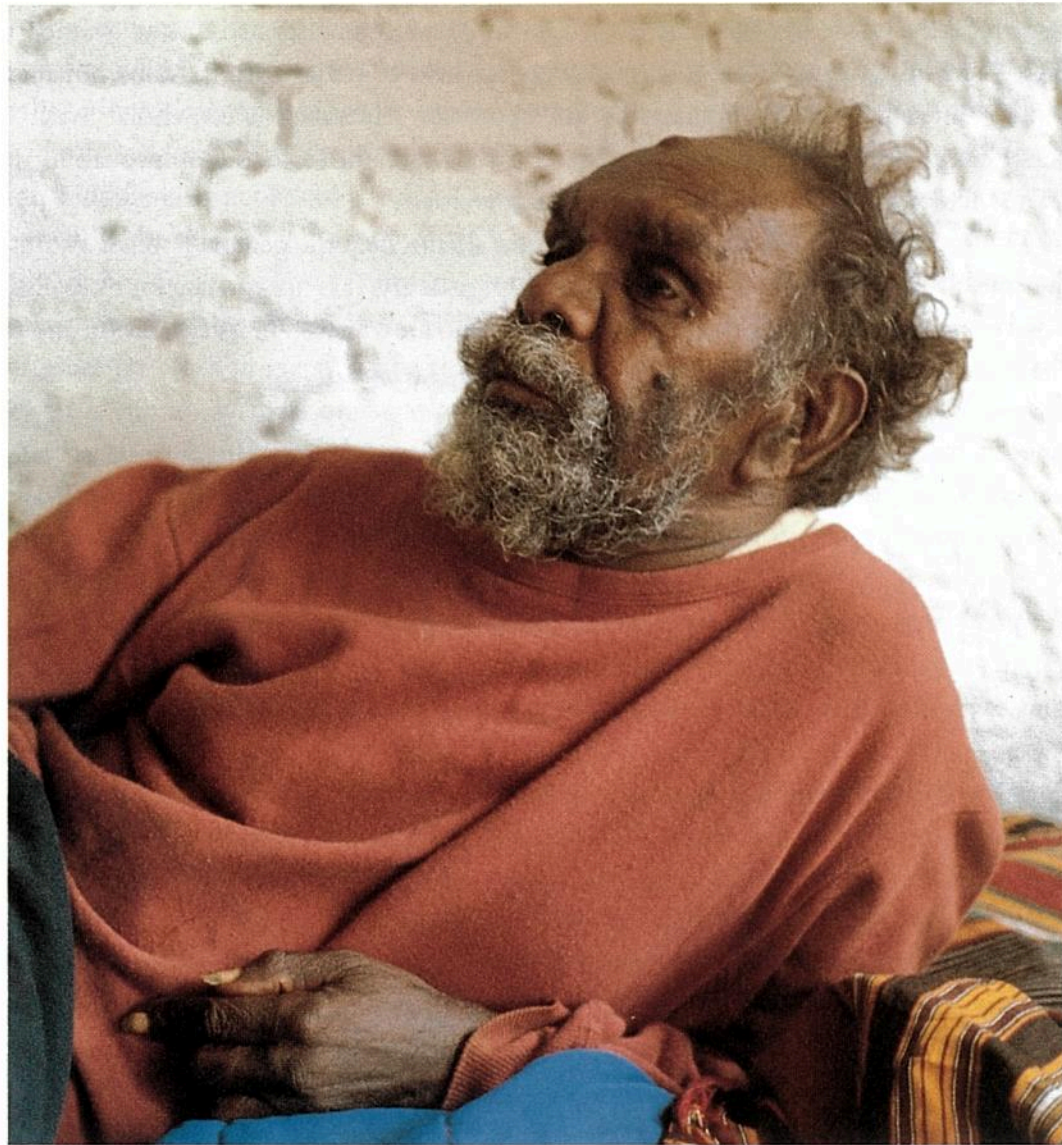
obvious statement within the art itself. Further they appear to pay little heed to the context or circumstances in which the artists find themselves and out of which the art is born. As a single instance, and far from the only one, the fact remains that to this day many of the artists and their families are denied recognition of their traditional territorial title. A huge cuckoo in the form of white (often not even Australian) pastoral enterprises sits in their rightful home. (Further usurpation of lands where there are traditional owners is effected by mines, towns and tourist resorts.) This scandal, supported as it is by state and federal legislation and national indifference applies to about 5,000 Aborigines in the Northern Territory alone. It is compounded by the fact that many of the pastoral operations are at best marginal and quite openly survive on the returns from their retail stores. Through these they recover the welfare payments received by Aborigines. Today it is a financial advantage to have a camp of Aborigines on one's property while they cannot claim the lands which were traditionally theirs. It is fair to say that some stations treat Aborigines with greater consideration than others: so they should but the underlying crime remains. This Government-supported colonialism sits quaintly with Australian protestations concerning other colonial adventures today. As the Times put it, "They have apparently forgotten that they were colonisers rather than colonised."<sup>(3)</sup>

I make no apologies for dwelling on this aspect before considerations of the art itself. It seems to me that these are ethical questions which far outweigh those of art markets, investment and stylistic analysis. They affect Aborigines: just as much they are telling indicators of our priorities.

It is rather eloquent of the concern of the self-styled supporters of Aboriginal enterprise that this dimension to their artistic output is ignored. If public support is absent, where at the very least is the public debate about the merit of benefiting from the output of people whose aspirations you are not prepared to air let alone support? This sort of two-faced exploitation puts me in mind of orchestras of inmates in concentration camps playing to the guards to stay alive. Just a matter of degree. It is hard to conceive of such blindness to the content or context in respect of European artists. In fact, in the case of literate and articulate artists, such matters are inescapable. The preamble to the report on the World Black Literature Conference at the University of Queensland in July 1986 begins "The result of the investigation was, not surprisingly, a great deal of informative and sometimes deeply moving discussion of Black writing in relation to the political and social context from which it arises."<sup>(4)</sup> May it not be the role of the visual arts to be equally provocative? Can it be that the claims of the more traditional artists are that much more undeniable, and in their denial more shameful? Is this why these questions are avoided in the course of dealings in

Aboriginal art? Paul Robeson is reported to have said when asked why he had changed the words of the Old Man River to a more pointedly political version "All art is political: the artist either works for his people or for those who would strangle them." The historian John Keegan recently wrote of "the role that high-minded imperialists had always claimed was theirs — returning to its original owners property held in trust, with its value not merely sustained but enhanced."<sup>(5)</sup> Perhaps as we approach Australia's bicentennial with our cocksure white perspective, we should be careful not to let our aesthetic sophistication and a selective memory blur the true nature of our achievement.

Remoteness and unfamiliarity, it is true, do not help the general public's awareness of the true circumstances surrounding much Aboriginal art. It is not too late for us to change this and to demand more information from those who are involved in its exhibition and sales so that we may understand better what the artists are saying to us.



## T J A R U R U ' S L I F E

Many landmarks of Tjaruru's life can be baldly related. He says that the first whites whom he met were filming at a place we call Mount Liebig, in the Northern Territory. He remembers some of their names. This was the 1932 Adelaide University expedition. At the time he was still a 'boy', that is to say uninitiated, living naked in the stone age culture of the desert. Thus Tjaruru's birth must have been around 1920.<sup>(6)</sup>



Before World War II his family gravitated towards the missions at Haasts Bluff and Hermannsburg. At the latter place Tjaruru was involved with building work and it was at the missions that he met Dr. Charles Duguid, a doughty Scot and notable battler against abuses of Aborigines. In his book 'Doctor and the Aborigines', Duguid (who died in December 1986 aged 102) includes a photograph of the

boy Tjaruru and describes him as 'one of the most intelligent human beings of any race whom I have ever met.' It was Duguid's Scots accent which caused Tjaruru to get the name 'Charlie'. When asked his name Duguid replied "Charlie" — in a rendition which sounded to the boy not unlike the Pintupi Tjaruru and he replied "Like me!"<sup>(7)</sup> During this time, camels were a major form of transport in the Northern Territory, and Tjaruru became acquainted with their handling.

During World War II Tjaruru formed part of the troop of Aborigines who laboured with the military at various places in the North. Mostly he worked at Adelaide River, south of Darwin, where he cut and loaded timber, manhandled equipment and buried the dead from the New Guinea campaign.

After the war, Tjaruru worked as a "dogger" out of Haasts Bluff. He would travel westward to Aboriginal homelands with other men and hunt dingoes — exchanging their scalps in a trade for rations, often from traders of "Afghan" descent. Sometimes the doggers

carried supplies on donkeys and hunted the dingoes with spears. Remember that at that time there was no dole for these Aborigines who were not even counted as Australian citizens until the late nineteen-sixties.

At this time there were still numerous Aborigines, many of them Tjaruru's relatives, living traditionally in the desert areas and he relates how he visited them on his own camels. He took them basic rations and told them of the availability of these goodies in mission settlements to the east. Gradually these people drifted in or were brought in to these places as a matter of policy. Papunya settlement was built and opened in the early 'sixties. Tjaruru assisted in its construction. The settlement in many ways proved a failure. It failed to turn Aborigines into the regulation white Aussie under the 'Assimilation Policy' of those days. It failed to teach a semi-nomadic people overnight to adjust to, and sometimes to even survive settlement life. It failed in that disparate tribal groups were lumped together in one small area. It failed to fit the Aborigines into a new economy. It failed to protect them from alcohol. Tjaruru himself, for several years in the '70s, was very susceptible to this novelty, a problem which he has now conquered although he lost his closest son from the effects of alcohol.

Eventually, in the late '70s and '80s many of the people at Papunya were able to move west towards their homelands. Tjaruru went with them and lives at Kintore Range (Warlungurru). This is not far from his principal hereditary site and birthplace, a rocky hill called Tjiturunga. Happily, Tjiturunga is just within the boundaries of Aboriginal lands as recognised by whites, even though it is just within Western Australia.

Within the last twelve months Tjaruru has finally obtained a modern dwelling house where he lives with two unmarried sons. Nearby are two of his daughters and his wife Tjatuli. Although their relations are cordial, they have for some years effectively been separated.

In 1982, Tjaruru visited me in England and also stayed in Hong Kong. The next year he visited the Performance Artists Ulay and Marina Abramovic in Amsterdam. With them he was involved in a performance and film called 'Nightsea Crossing'.

These facts, in themselves the signposts of an extraordinary life, do nothing to convey the warmth, humour, courtesy, all tinged with a touch of eccentricity, of the man. He still displays an insatiable curiosity about the world.

By comparison with many of the Pintupi painters, Tjaruru has a very long acquaintance with the world of Europeans. One of the more remarkable things about him is that he is thoroughly versed in traditional matters all the same. He is truly a man of two cultures. His beloved paintings are only one of the bridges between the two.

## WESTERN DESERT PAINTING

### ORIGINS

The story of how the Aborigines at Papunya and thereabouts came to paint using European materials has so often been related that only the briefest sketch is needed here. The first books mentioned in the bibliography tell this story more fully.

Evidence of the traditional art forms including body and ground designs had existed since the turn of the century, even in photographs. Interested Europeans had also obtained sketches of traditional images since the Second World War. It was only in the early seventies, however, that the right mixtures of circumstances combined to produce the cultural outpouring which we now know as the Papunya painting movement. A school teacher, Geoff Bardon, at the Government-established settlement of Papunya, 239 kilometres west of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, was receptive to the desires of initiated men to paint. He provided them with materials with which they soon became adept, despite their unfamiliarity. He helped them to dispose of the paintings, mostly small boards, and eventually a private, limited liability company belonging to the painting men was set up. The rest is 'Australian' art history.

Fifteen years or so have passed as have numerous commercial shows. Exhibitions have toured in Australia and elsewhere. Notable patrons have amassed and commissioned collections. The works are still in fashion and the painters' company is very successful. It seems to me there are a number of reasons for this and we will examine them. Also, the painting has changed in various ways and I will use the opportunity offered by a retrospective show to consider these changes. Finally, what the last fifteen years have also shown us is that this characteristic style of painting, and all that it implies, is not the sole prerogative of the men of Papunya. The inhabitants of a vast area of central Australia, from numerous linguistic groups, enjoy this tradition. Several of these groups far from Papunya have indeed now mobilised the substantial resources required to paint commercially. In addition women share the success and pleasure of painting.

From the outset the painting has combined abstract symbols with rather fewer recognisably figurative elements. It turned out that the last thing these paintings were was abstract, but it was the recurrent and dominant abstract symbols, the dots and arcs, circles and hatchings, the sinuous lines and repetitive infills which signalled unmistakably that the paintings were Aboriginal and thus, in a manner of speaking, Australian. We shall see, incidentally, how this fact affects the market for these works and also how it influences non-



Aboriginal painters to borrow these elements as signals of Australianness. First of all, though, we should recall that as Europeans we are accustomed to non-abstract art assuming a non-abstract or representational form. The discovery, therefore, that these dramatic visual images are not abstract in content even if they are so in form and that, moreover, the use of a limited vocabulary of symbols to convey an immense body of meaning meant that interpretation had to be subjective, by the painter alone, fascinated observers. Because it presented such an unaccustomed concept to non-Aboriginals and made difficult a proper understanding or explanation of what was being done, it led to a mystification of this art form. For that reason I believe it is worth spending a while trying to understand why these painters were doing what they were.

It is probably impossible to understand everything about the creative process but it is certainly possible to recognise a large proportion of the obvious ingredients which cause a particular style to emerge. I believe that is the case in this instance and in order to do so we must look at the painters before Geoff Bardon so accommodatingly arrived.

#### P U R P O S E O F T H E D E S I G N

The life-sustaining economy of the people we are considering was one of hunting and foraging. This occurred in an arid zone with few constant supplies of surface water. Such as there are of these and of food resources required that life be conducted by small bands, regularly traversing large but specific areas, using and often exhausting resources in those places where they could be expected. The key to life at this risky margin of human endurance was knowledge. . . knowledge of terrain and weather, of the location of resources, of rights of usufruct, of the time and preparation it would take to travel over dangerous ground between life-sustaining spots. That was not all. The very humanity of Aborigines ensured that they felt the common human impulses for cosmological rationalisation, for establishing an understanding of their existence, their past, their future and their purpose within the jumble of earthly phenomena. This was also a matter of knowledge which set out expectations and obligations during the course of a life. This same humanity accounts for the existence of aesthetic sensibilities which manifested themselves in song, dance and visual stimuli, as the world over.

The sum of the knowledge to which I have been referring is called by Aborigines their "law". This is an appropriate term in that it regulated their lives. Our own culture

might divide aspects of it into sectors approximating to our own "religion" and also "art". Be that as it may, the supremely important vehicle for conveying this knowledge was and is song. Given a non-literate society and the critical importance of learning this material this is the best method. (The study of Homeric epic poetry has shown that it is relatively easy to memorise sung verse in vast quantities.) All else is subsidiary to the knowledge and thus to the song that contains it.

The transfer of knowledge took (and indeed takes) place in a formalised and ceremonial context which constitutes not only the fulfilment of some of life's obligations but also offered the opportunity for celebration and artistic expression. Circumstances conspired to limit these opportunities. The most obvious reason is that the occasions on which sufficient people could find themselves in the right place at the right time with enough resources to live and construct ceremonial 'props' would perforce be few and largely dependent on climatic conditions.

As is now widely known, the visual images constructed by the Aboriginal "painters" took the form of body and ground decorations and the decorations of flat surfaces such as shields and cave walls. Ochres, vegetable and animal materials and three-dimensional implements were used. The only relatively permanent designs are stone arrangements, rock carvings and cave wall paintings.<sup>(8)</sup>

For our purposes we need only concentrate on two aspects of the knowledge that is transferred in ceremony. First, it largely takes the form of the doings and travels of ancestral beings across the face of the land leaving detailed traces and forming landscape features. What to the unknowledgeable is a relatively featureless or repetitively similar landscape, to the knowledgeable is animated by irrefutable visual evidence of stories related in song and depicted in ceremony. This is the way to memorise huge tracts in the absence of maps. It is also a suitable method of determining hereditary title in the absence of written deeds, since certain stories and ancestor beings are associated in a proprietary sense with contemporary individuals.

Second, each story is susceptible to various levels of interpretation as is each symbol within a painting. Thus at a primary or "easy" stage it relates to the mere narrative of events and to the topography. Subsequently there might emerge the quality of a cautionary tale or allegory, highlighting the obligation to observe the law. Finally, degrees of revelation are associated with access to certain powers, powers, that is, both within a community and generative powers. These levels of revelation are matched in contemporary paintings. Access to them depends upon degrees of initiation and prior knowledge.

The reason for dwelling on this area is that most activities fulfil a purpose. Thus they are suited to that purpose and its attainment will determine their character. Some understanding of the purpose makes clear the nature of the activity. So it is that we finally come to the painting itself.

## S Y M B O L S

Much has been written about the use of symbols, their evolution and interpretation and about the fact that they may have, in an unaltered form, various meanings, even within one painting. While the topic is a fascinating one I would suggest that the problem is diminished if we do not lose sight of the complementary, indeed secondary nature of the visual imagery. It is the knowledge conveyed in song that is paramount. Dance and design reinforce, dramatise and make more memorable and of course more pleasurable the experience which includes teaching and learning. Nor in traditional contexts would there have been a pressing need for a broader vocabulary of identifiable signs, nor of figurative elements. This was because the creation of designs was a joint enterprise carried out by a team which shared common knowledge. As they did it they sang the songs and this can still be witnessed when a painter is assisted by others on a large, modern canvas.

The evolution of symbols becomes more comprehensible in this light. They are usually rather remote approximations of natural features. Understandably there is a strong bias towards traces or tracks left on the sand. Aborigines were dependent for their existence on their ability to recognise and follow tracks and this is the way that a journey of mythological times or of today imprints itself upon landscape. By a process known as socialisation (essentially day-to-day acquaintance) each generation becomes familiar with those symbols that their elders take for granted as they do with language and the other aspects of their culture.

Once a ritual had become useful and established in the mists of time there was no need for change. In addition it is easy to see that where a given image had a variety of interpretations, not all of which were to be revealed, there was a great advantage in ambiguous abstractions over explicit figures.

Despite this, what did apparently happen was that certain designs themselves had attributed to them a force whose existence primarily derived outside the image. This fetishism is paralleled in other cultures not least in the case of Christian imagery. It caused

difficulty in the Western Desert when European materials started being used. At that point the designs stopped being impermanent and had a life which rendered them capable of being viewed far and wide, even by non-initiates. This was a possibility beyond the experience of the painters but when they tumbled to the danger they responded by deliberately suppressing such revelation, both by excluding such "dangerous" designs and by not relating secret content.

## D O T S

"Why all the dots?" viewers often ask. It seems that in the first instance the dotting is secondary to the cursive designs which establish formal layout and "narrative" content of the painting. It appears first as a gentle decorative fringe and gradually, over the years, comes to provide an almost inevitable, all-covering bed from which the cursive design stares out — "almost" inevitable because painters occasionally see merit in leaving the background coloured but undotted. On occasion the "gaps" between cursive design were occupied in early days with a background of hatching and other motifs. This is rare today and there is some evidence to suggest that these other symbols were too revealing of secret material and that the dots provided a safe alternative. Today, as far as design goes, I believe that for many painters the dots are still secondary; for the more talented they comprise an important part of the composition. There is a naturally felt "horror vacui" — a desire to fill the canvas and in addition enjoy the physical pleasure of painting. This so-called kinesthetic delight appears not to have been examined in depth in the case of Western Desert painters, certainly not by myself.

The origin of the dots can be found in the pre-1970 ceremonial design. It was dictated in large part by the materials to hand. Vegetable or animal down are applied to the body or ground in tufts, piece by piece. Similarly, wetted ochres are applied with fingertip or stick, dot by dot. An ochre "wash" effect is sometimes used on the body, but on the body and elsewhere the stippled effect of dotting is more satisfactorily uniform. Hatching would appear to be the only alternative for filling spaces. I am not privy to the ceremonies but I suspect that there also the dotted decoration is secondary to the cursive design in retelling the drama. On occasion the painters tell me that is to "make 'im flash" — in other words to dress up.

Two other things about dots. First, as is well known, both during painting and afterwards, the songs to which they pertain are often sung, hummed and no doubt kept in

mind. There is a certain rhythm to them not dissimilar to the rhythmic application of dots as the work takes shape. Even when it is finished the hands are worked along the course of the designs in a regular beat as the story is told. This suggests to me very strongly that there is some relationship between ceremonial song and dance movements and the painted stories, probably in crystallising but possibly also in forming design components of the style. A further clue to this is the apparent importance of the tracks left by dancers in the sand and their depiction in the paintings. This possibility has been suggested in other contexts, notably in the case of Northwest Coast American Indian art by Holm and Boas. Holm, in his masterly analysis, draws attention to the difficulty critics face in establishing categorically such a relationship, which may comprise visual and spatial and also sensory similarity, by virtue of their not actually participating in the song and dance.<sup>(9)</sup>

The second point is a word of advice for would-be counterfeiters. I have already seen a dramatic work which was offered (at a steep price) to a gallery as a piece of Western Desert art. It was, in fact, too good to be true and for a number of reasons was obviously a fake. The technique for producing these paintings is a very simple one and invites faking — hence the importance of reliable ascription at the source. In the case in question one of the tell-tales exemplifies what we have just been considering: dotting is secondary in importance and in time. This painting had cursive strokes which overlay dot patterns: a dead giveaway.

## T O D A Y ' S I S S U E S

One consequence of the relative anonymity of the painters, (an anonymity fostered, among other things, by block shows of solely Aboriginal work and by sheer numbers of such paintings, by the remoteness of the painters and by the staging of the shows in galleries restricted to primitive arts or Aboriginal arts and crafts) is that their status as artists or craftsmen is called into debate. I have yet to see a definition of art or craft in this context but the implication is that craft is worth less than art. With such notions circulating there is a real risk of depressing both the standing of the painters and the selling prices of the work.

It is probably true that demand for Aboriginal arts and crafts is virtually assured for the simple reason that they are the only non-derivative cultural items in Australia. They enjoy therefore an unrivalled position as symbols of Australia, if not exactly of Australian society: hence the mimicry by non-Aboriginal artists and designers seeking to exude Australianness. The temptation is therefore enormous to produce Aboriginal artefacts in unlimited numbers

and to lump the whole lot into the category of Aboriginal Art. The implied and sometimes explicit assertion here is that what is being offered is a piece of the past which somehow still survives — a sort of ethnographic living fossil. The chances of this being so are remote and getting more so. But the encouragement of this kind of production (often subsidised), coupled with misleading information about the lifestyle and aspirations of Aborigines at the marketing stage, make it hard for work of distinction to distance itself from the mass and threatens to discredit all of it.

Western Desert painting is as vulnerable as any. It enjoys great advantages over other forms. In that it is painted on canvas it has the flexibility both of matching European painting in dimension and also of ease of transportation. (This is absent from bark painting.) Derived as it is from a form whose function was to take part in dramatic enactments, it has a force which makes it so striking that other paintings alongside can appear lifeless. Attempts have been made to compare it to certain contemporary, non-Aboriginal art movements. Perhaps it would be safer to acknowledge that its acceptance and success was made that much easier by our previous acquaintance with a number of abstract art movements. These facts contribute to its attraction and fashionability.

One other advantage of the Western Desert style is simultaneously something of an Achilles heel. The technique of predominant dots, limited colour palette and symbols conveys an instantly recognisable signature. It does more than that. It enables run-of-the-mill and uninspired painting to pass muster as sufficiently pleasing, decorative work to sell somewhere or other. The technique involves sketching in cursive strokes the bare bones or format of the design. Subsequently it is decorated with dots. Where a broad expanse of infilling is to be dotted-in, this is often in alternate, regular bands of colour. The ensuing eye-teasing, optical-art effect can give life to otherwise humdrum paintings. This technique is not very demanding of anything save patience and is easily copied by those wishing to produce “Aboriginal” painting even though they may not have the traditional knowledge of subject matter nor of decoration. It allows a painter to produce with little effort workaday, saleable material and to shelter behind the proposition that it is “traditional” and that the most important consideration is the story (whether or not revealed). This, I would suggest, is the road to disrepute.

It may be that my concern is misplaced. My impression is that Aborigines’ painting work deteriorates with increased volume, however. European artists claim to paint better as they paint more. And yet a headline in an arts page recently hailed “Revelations of Mastery before the Repetitive Formula ruled.” It referred to the artist as someone who “settled into his formula, and settled for endless repetition of it, until even the least

artistically inclined could recognise it and accept his work as part of the decoration.’<sup>(10)</sup> Actually about Giacometti, it could as easily apply to a number of Aboriginal artists. The skilful and inspired painters appear to avoid excessive symmetry; they experiment with colours and aim at novelty and eye-teasing complication. It is worth noting, moreover, that if we really are looking for a definition of craft, it would probably include “the repetitive use of a well-tried technical formula.” There is a solution to this problem. It is not the technique itself which is at fault. I have witnessed a painter with no traditional experience of this art form learn from scratch and from rough beginnings and turn out dazzling, prize-winning work. Neither he nor the paintings are what most people thought them to be — close modern derivatives of an ancient tradition. It is simply that there is a limit to the variations possible or, indeed, appropriate to the traditional imagery. This problem most besets prolific but less inventive painters. The style imposes its own limitations to self-expression and there is a danger of repetitiveness. This is most marked with younger would-be painters, less steeped in tradition but who nevertheless feel they should comply with the traditional Aboriginal image as they see it to have become established and recognised.

The managers of Aboriginal Arts and Crafts enterprises have an influential role. They can encourage and discourage trends and have done so. As far as Aboriginal elders go, these managers (or art advisors or field officers as they are sometimes known) can control the volume of painting by limiting access to painting materials. They can only do this to a certain extent however. They can also inform the painters of the responses of the market. As far as exhibitions go the “best” (subject, of course, to the idiosyncrasies of the organiser) tends to be selected and less impressive work is sold in more pedestrian venues. The reality is that there is today a two-tier market in Aboriginal arts. The shame is, in my opinion, that vendors make little distinction between the two in their eagerness to sell as much as possible. It is at this point that I believe the scope, even the obligation, exists to personalise and make known the artists. I see no reason for treating them differently to, say, European artists and not exposing them to similar standards and scrutiny. Failure to do so is to suggest that they cannot withstand this.

It is true of course that if that happens there is little justification for restricting their work to the so-called Aboriginal galleries. The rather glaring conclusion from such restrictions is that the artists need this protected environment or leg-up because their work cannot stand the cold wind of unprivileged scrutiny. I suggest that nothing could be more patronising let alone damaging. I would also suggest it is unnecessary.

As for the future, I think we would do well to take our inspiration from other countries and to an extent from a number of enterprising, less traditional, urban Aboriginal

artists. These people have realised that the basis of contemporary fine art is technique. In no way has innovatory technique removed the ability to express identity nor pass social comment. If indeed “it has been part of the function of serious culture throughout the modern period to bear witness to a crisis of the self”<sup>(11)</sup> the work of Africans, Oceanians, North American Indians and others conform to this. It is achieved through subject matter. The great advantages are a freedom of choice conferred on the artists and freedom from having to pretend to a spurious cultural adherence. The way in which this is most readily achieved is through art schools. These, throughout Africa, in Papua Niugini and no doubt elsewhere, enable countries whose majority populations not long ago expressed themselves as tribal artists, to enjoy the full spectrum of contemporary media. More pertinently, the minority Indian society in the U.S.A. has for some time enjoyed the facilities of specialist Indian art schools with felicitous results. These include an enormous breadth of artistic endeavour side by side with an appropriate level of interest and scholarship. These in turn are reflected in exhibitions and journals which simply are not matched in Australia. True, a number of urbanised Aborigines are showing the way through their own resourcefulness but they are still a tiny minority.

If for no reason other than the enormous problems of acculturation which pose huge obstacles to employment for Aborigines in the wider community, it would be good to feel confident that the powers-that-be were lending serious consideration to the establishment of such facilities.

Let us hope that those who determine arts, education or Aboriginal policy may embrace a sufficiently visionary approach to enable such exciting possibilities to come about in Australia.

#### T H E P A I N T I N G S F R O M B A R D O N T O 1 9 8 6

The main differences between early and contemporary paintings are these: content, scale and facility (in all nuances) of technique. In a way, though, looking at the distinctions themselves is putting the cart before the horse: the paintings are the end-product of sets of circumstances which themselves change: if we consider these the distinctions make sense.

In the earliest days of painting at Papunya the work was mostly on very small boards. They bore no relation to the scale of body or group design. They called for meticulously miniaturised details, usually a compendium of the contents of ceremonial activity: relevant designs, perhaps the decorated participants and props, sacred boards,

“bullroarers” and the like. Eventually, for reasons of ritual law the content of the paintings was expurgated so that generally speaking we are left with the traditional designs alone and only those which may be viewed by non-initiates. At the same time the boards and canvases increased in size so that the scale of the work more closely matched the traditional contexts: perhaps for this reason dots increased in size and infilling between cursive design became the norm in harmony with ground and body decoration. Obviously it could be said that in this way the later paintings more readily approximate to traditional modes even though, paradoxically, it became the fashion to favour the earliest paintings as being more “traditional” or “pristine”. Eventually and predictably there arose two basic strands among the artists: an adventurous and experimental “vanguard” and a more conservative “old guard”. Some painters, and Tjaruru is a good example, tend to fluctuate between the two schools.

Most importantly, since those early days a huge volume of painting has taken place. Per capita it varies but it would seem commonsensical (given the relative ease of European materials and the financial stimulus as two reasons alone) that vastly more painting is done than in traditional times.<sup>(12)</sup> It is this facility which generates familiarity with the medium and technique, individuality, an appreciation of possibilities and, I would suggest, a gradual assumption that the practice of painting could be more or less distanced from its traditional confines. I would say that nowadays painting can certainly be seen by the painters as an end in itself and as a commercial activity.

Another substantial influence on the painters’ style is the criticism, appreciation and predilections of an “art adviser” in a community. As these have rotated so have changes occurred. The adviser is the person to please; who has, after all, the cheque book and a certain amount of personal authority; who tries to assess the market and rightly or wrongly conveys this feedback to the painters. I have seen it done and done it myself with the best intentions. It would be hard and perhaps invidious to pinpoint and attribute specific influences and changes so I will resist the temptation. Nevertheless they exist.

Conversely, it will be readily appreciated that the advisers have a key role as they link Aboriginal painters with the market. They are the painters’ sounding board for demand and public reaction. The ages old conflict facing all artists between commerce and creativity reaches out to the painters<sup>(13)</sup> through these advisers primarily, and secondarily through retail outlets, arts boards and even government. If commerce has the edge and if the official line is that the saleable commodity is “tradition” and that it should therefore be encouraged, the advisers’ influence will discourage evolution or change, not assist it.

## T J A R U R U ’ S P A I N T I N G S

Over the years Tjaruru has been a prolific painter. It is evident from the consignment lists kept by the Alice Springs gallery in early days that he was quite liable to dominate them by output volume alone. Ten years later it was the same. He enjoyed painting hugely. When materials were not allocated to him he would scavenge them and often have several paintings on the go at once. This restlessness was reflected in the way he painted: the composition often seemed to be precariously assembled until the very last minute. Then, extra dots or a further colour would exert their discipline and animate a coherence that was absent a few moments previously.

His paintings tell the mythologies of particular importance to him and his country, but he only relates as much of them as we non-initiates are allowed to know. In addition there is some evidence to suggest that details were deliberately obscured. For this reason I believe that annotated stories can be very misleading as well as incomplete. Because a Retrospective focuses on the durability and evolution of a painter I shall avoid the futile attempt to explain what I believe we cannot know for sure. In one instance alone I shall give a fuller explanation in order to convey something of the multiplicity of meanings present in a work.

The painting (Plate No. 22) tells the story of Mitukatjirri (shown as Ligertwood Cliffs on maps of the western Northern Territory). Here is a sacred cave in which, as the story goes, ancestors carried out ceremonies. No doubt these were re-enacted by their contemporary descendants. About a half mile from the cave is an array of unusual rocky outcrops. These are represented by the concentric circles: thus the painting has a topographic quality. The story continues that during the ceremonies the men were supposed to observe rules of celibacy but that they sneaked off and consorted with their women who were located at and, indeed, are represented by the selfsame rocky outcrops. Thus a narrative quality occupies the painting which has an aetiological purpose also: the story explains the origin of visible features. It will be readily apparent that this is a cautionary tale which draws attention to the dos and don’ts of traditional law while tempering the caution with a recognition of human weakness. A strong sexual element pervades this as many others of Tjaruru’s stories as is often glaringly evident in the design. Beyond what I have described it may be that there are further implications to this story with which I am unacquainted.

Of the design elements we have mentioned the concentric circles. The abutting U shapes are the people involved. That there are women present is indicated by the women’s “digging sticks” lying in parallel pairs. This beautifully ambiguous symbol can also be interpreted as the impression of female pudenda on the sand. There is not much ambiguity about the symbol which is mostly overlain by dots, although if pressed the artist will usually say it is a dancing pole. He remains reticent about the squiggly motifs which surround the painting.

The above, I think, is enough to convey some of the richness of this art form.

Plate Number: 1  
Subject: not specified  
Date: 1972

Medium: gouache on composition board

Dimensions: 40.5 x 45.5 cm

Collection: Margaret Carnegie

As in many of the early paintings  
no attempt is made to accommodate  
the design to a four-square surface.

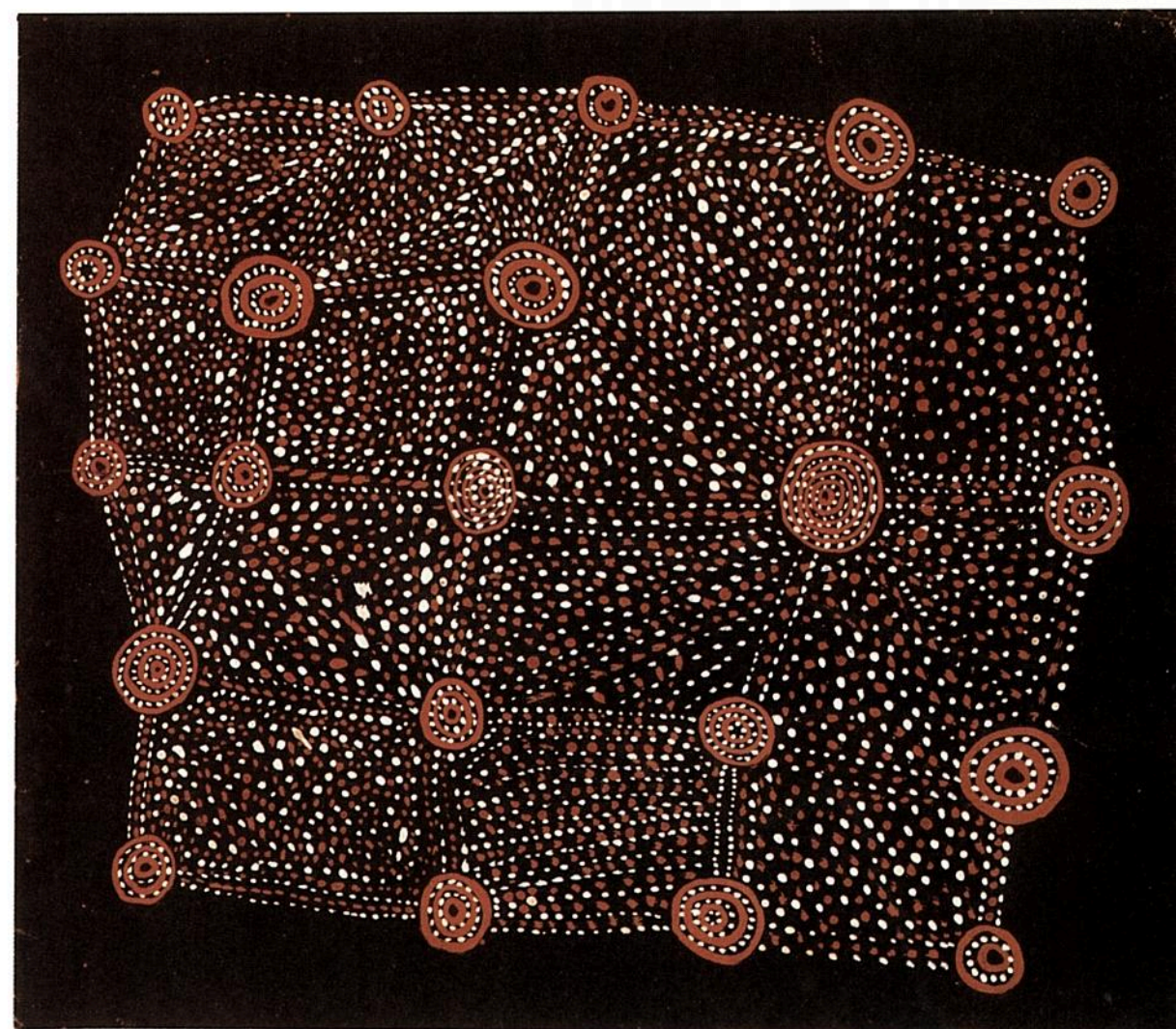


Plate Number: 2  
Subject: Mitukatjirri  
Date: 1972

Medium: gouache on composition board

Dimensions: 32.5 x 65 cm

Collection: Margaret Carnegie

Note that this is essentially a compendium of the design elements which are differently arranged in painting plate no. 22. In addition to ignoring the boundaries of a painting surface, the painter is flexible enough to accommodate a design to an awkward shape if the need arises.

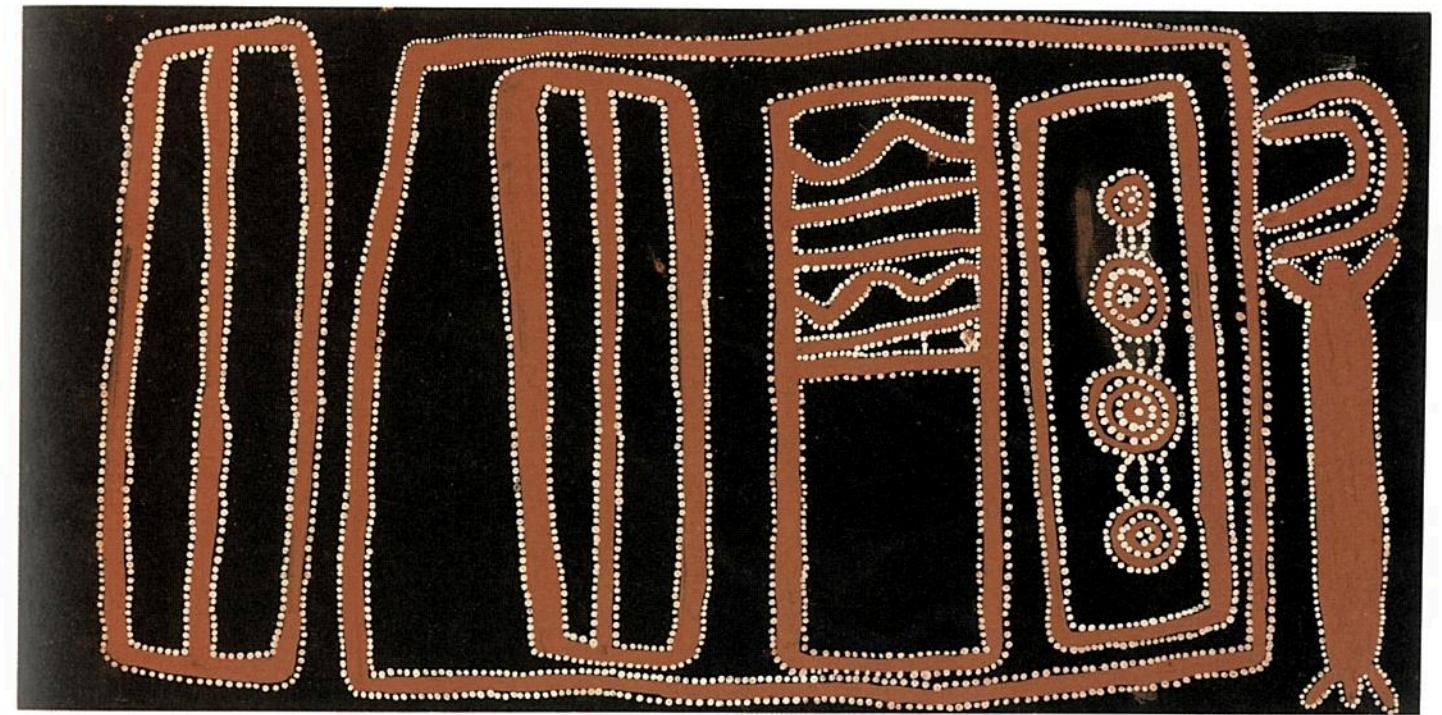


Plate Number: 3  
Subject: Old Man's Story  
Date: Pre 1978  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 61 x 51 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory

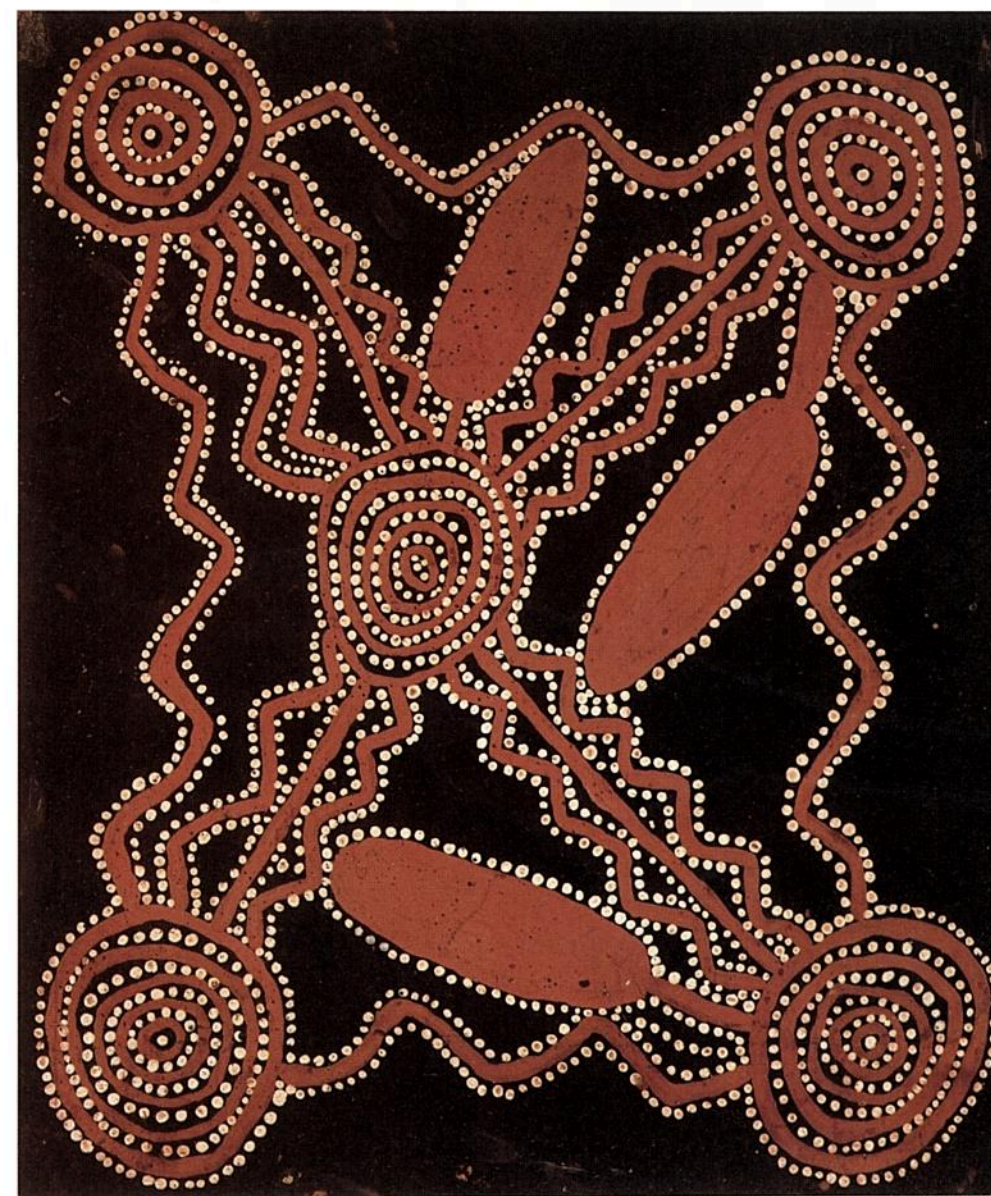




Plate Number: 4  
Subject: Emu story  
Date: 1972  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 83.5 x 25.5 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory  
see next page



Plate Number: 5  
Subject: Emu story  
Date: 1972

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 83.5 x 25.5 cm

Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory

This painting and the previous one are painted back to back and are the same story represented in a different manner. Perhaps more appropriately, different aspects of the same mythology are being shown.



Plate Number: 6  
Subject: Fear and Cold  
Date: Pre 1978

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas board  
Dimensions: 51 x 40.3 cm

Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory

This is a most unusual painting in which Tjaruru appears to deal with abstract concepts associated with "his" mythology of the Iceman at Tjiturunga. Although it is curious that he did not paint more along these lines this work is not the only one in this style. When in England in 1982 Tjaruru painted several in this manner and he attributed exceptional importance to them.



Plate Number: 7  
Subject: Wild Potato story  
Date: Pre 1972  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 69 x 22 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory



Plate Number: 8  
Subject: Water story  
Date: Pre 1972  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 61 x 35 cm  
Collection: Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences  
As this story concerns water and  
contains a visual element common to  
the Frog story (plate no. 23) it is quite likely that this is the same story.

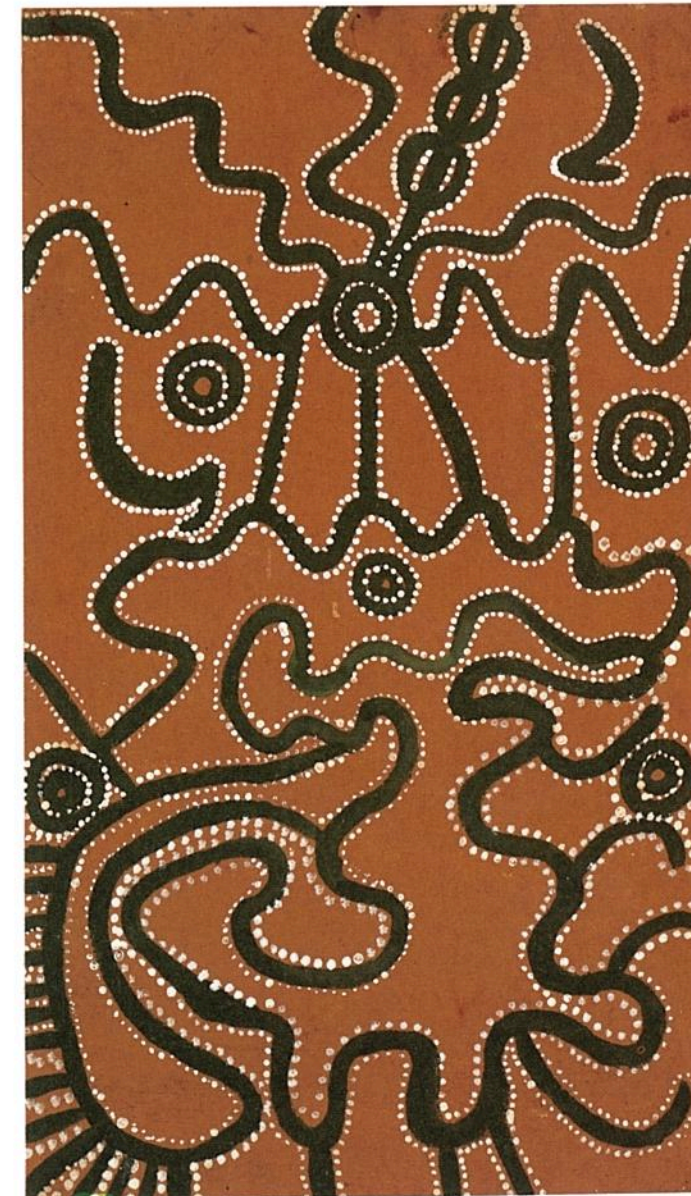


Plate Number: 9  
Subject: Cave ceremony  
Date: Pre 1972

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 53 x 46 cm

Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory

This is a classic miniaturised  
compendium of a ceremony and its  
constituents: as potent a statement of  
Aboriginal identity as could be  
in the last days of Assimilation Policy.

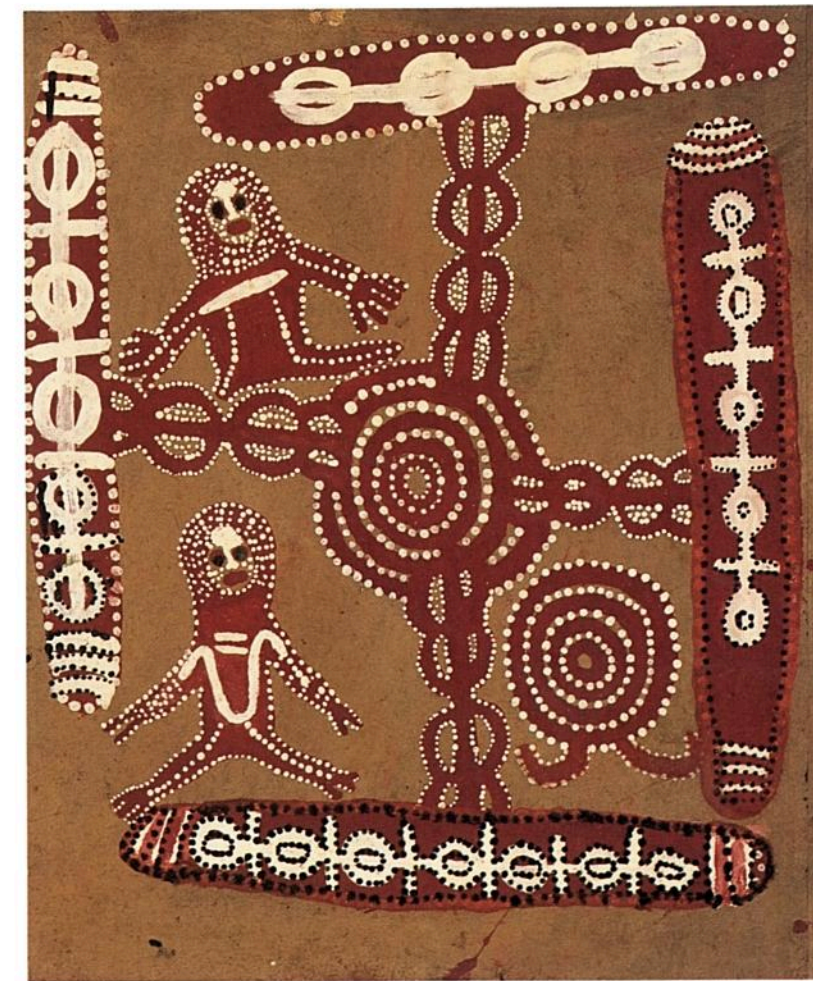


Plate Number: 10  
Subject: Wild Food story  
Date: Pre 1972  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on plywood  
Dimensions: 122 x 61 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory  
It is not clear whether this is a  
climbing vine or an underground  
spreading tuber.

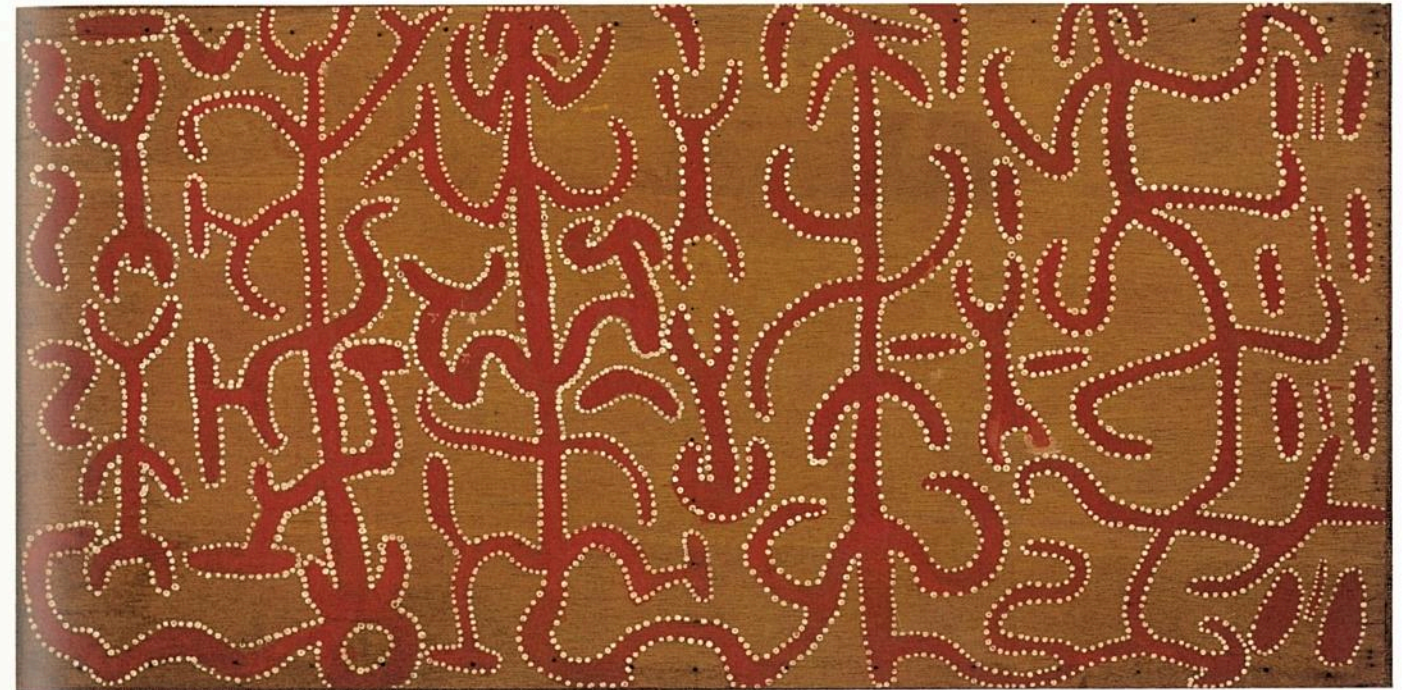


Plate Number: 11  
Subject: Wild Potato story  
Date: Pre 1972  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 83 x 36 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory





Plate Number: 12  
Subject: not specified — possible Wild Potato story.  
See plate no. 11.  
Date: Pre 1972  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on cardboard  
Dimensions: 54.5 x 24.5 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory

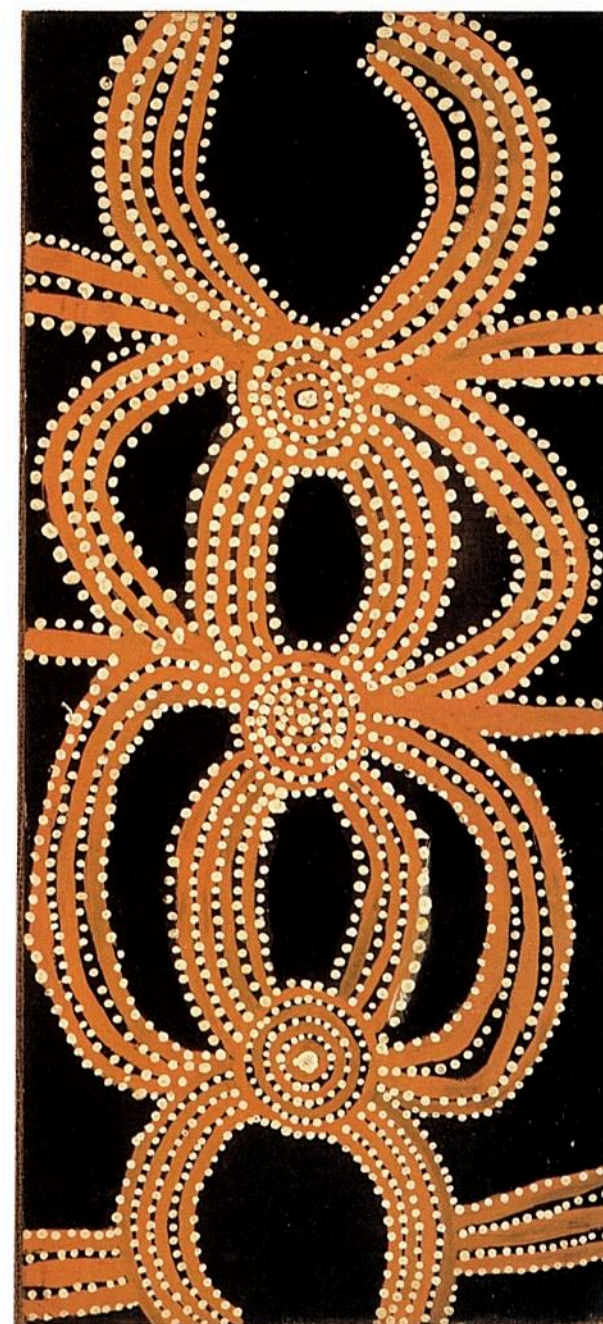


Plate Number: 13  
Subject: A number of stories dominated by Old Man's Story.  
Date: Pre 1972  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on plywood  
Dimensions: 91.5 x 37.5 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory  
The site is Nginganga, the first  
out-crop west of Tjiturunga.



Plate Number: 14  
Subject: Depiction of Ceremonial Ground Design  
Date: Pre 1972  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 61 x 42 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory  
There is no indication of the relevant mythology. The ground pattern is shown made up around the three-dimensional shields, six in number.

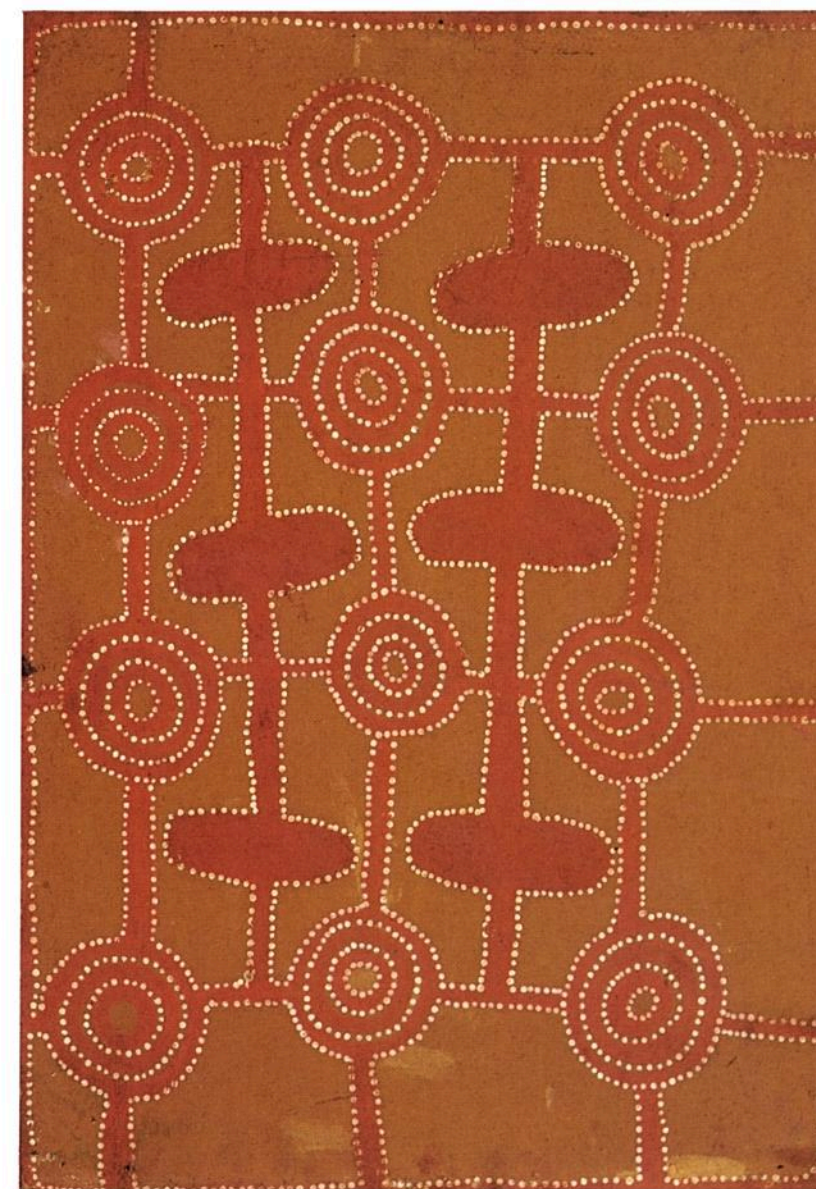


Plate Number: 15  
Subject: not specified  
Date: Pre 1978  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on plywood  
Dimensions: 57 x 43 cm  
Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory

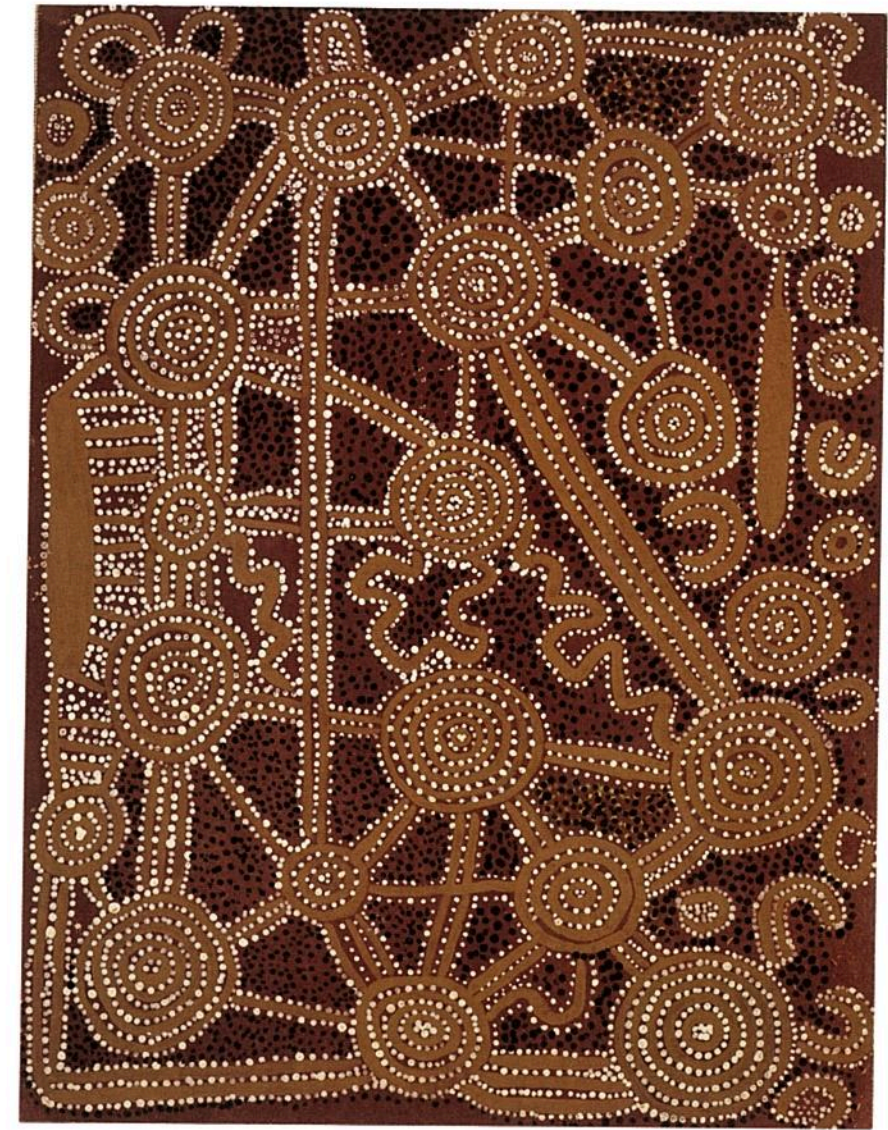


Plate Number: 16  
Subject: not specified  
Date: 1975

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas board

Dimensions: 45.4 x 35.3 cm

Collection: Flinders University Art Museum

Note the figurative barbed spear. This and the next five paintings are from the mid 70s.

Expurgation of sensitive subject matter prevails. Infilling is rather conservatively uniform and the painting surface filled with dots.

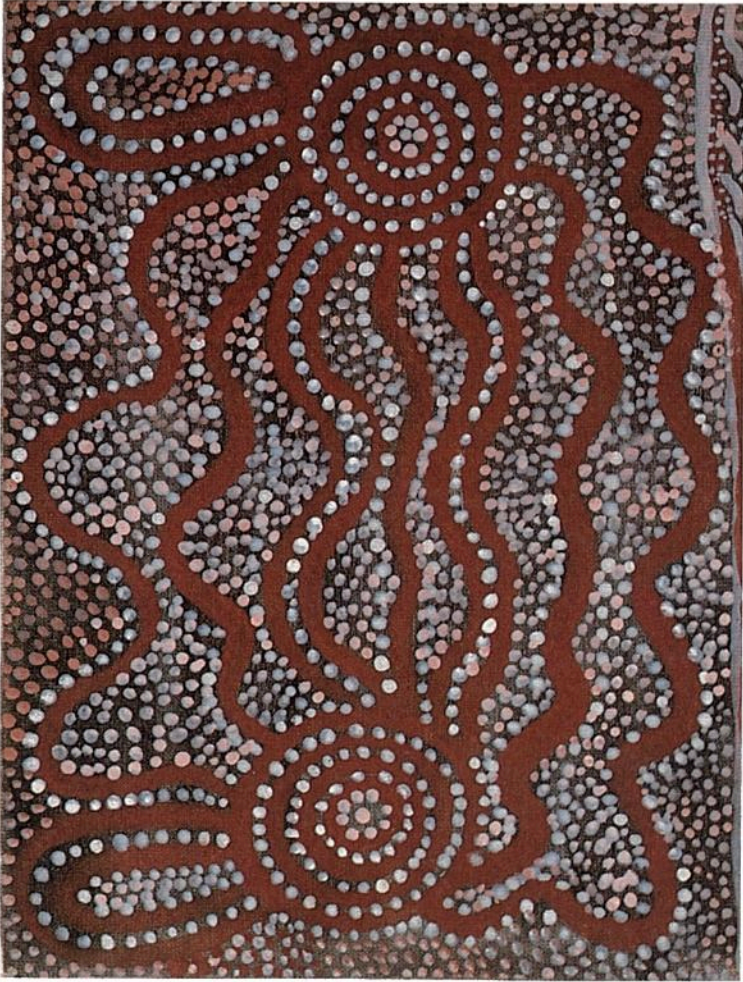


Plate Number: 17  
Subject: Water Snake and Two Women at Warlungurru (Kintore Range)  
Date: 1975  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas board  
Dimensions: 61 x 45.5 cm  
Collection: Flinders University Art Museum  
This is the same subject as paintings plate no. 29 and plate no. 31.

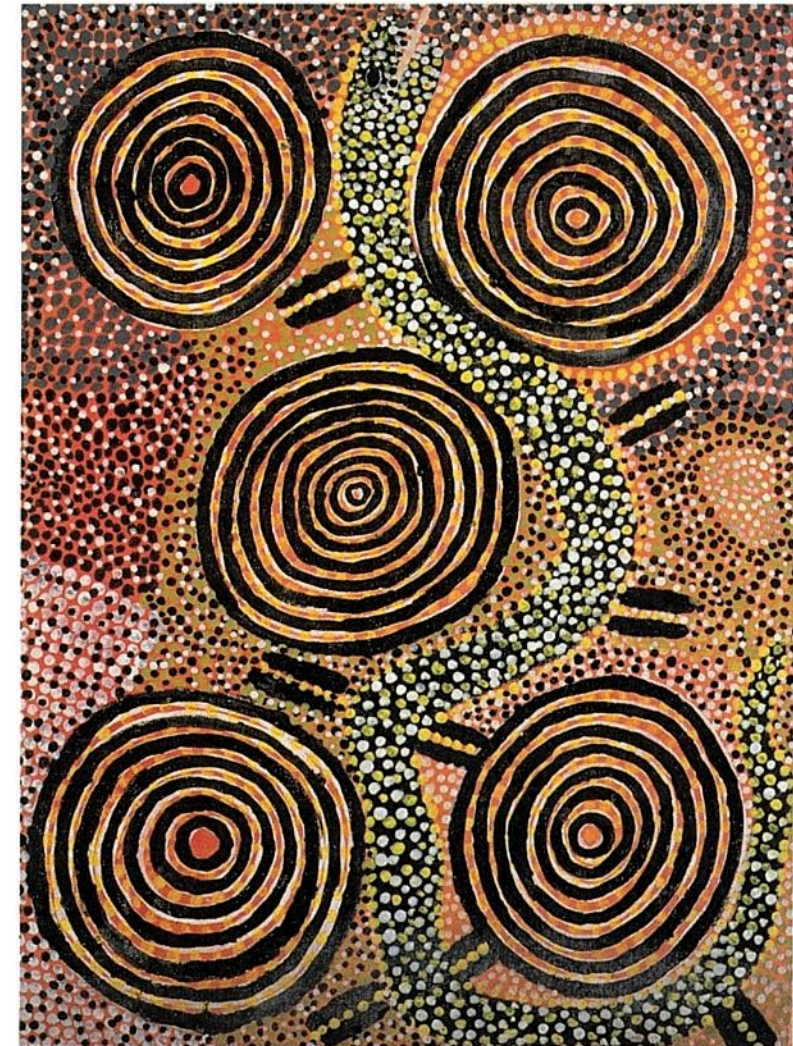


Plate Number: 18  
Subject: Old Man's Story  
Date: 1976  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 84.8 x 45.8 cm  
Collection: Flinders University Art Museum  
The Old Man's mythology covers a large area. The sector depicted here was not specified.

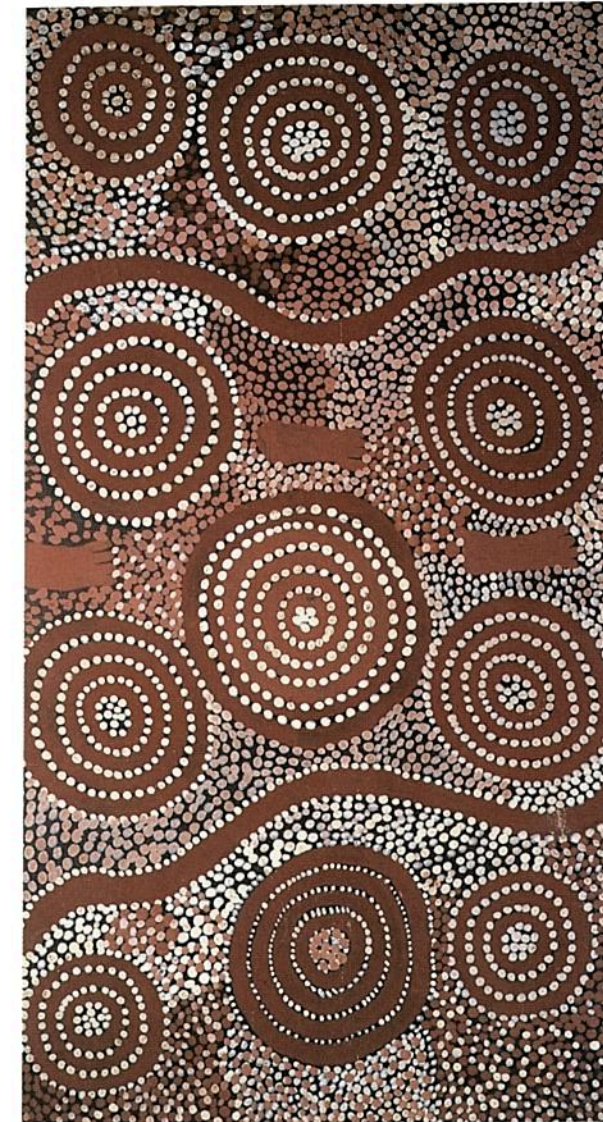


Plate Number: 19  
Subject: Tatipatarnga  
Date: 1975  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on cardboard  
Dimensions: 74.7 x 54.3 cm  
Collection: Flinders University Art Museum

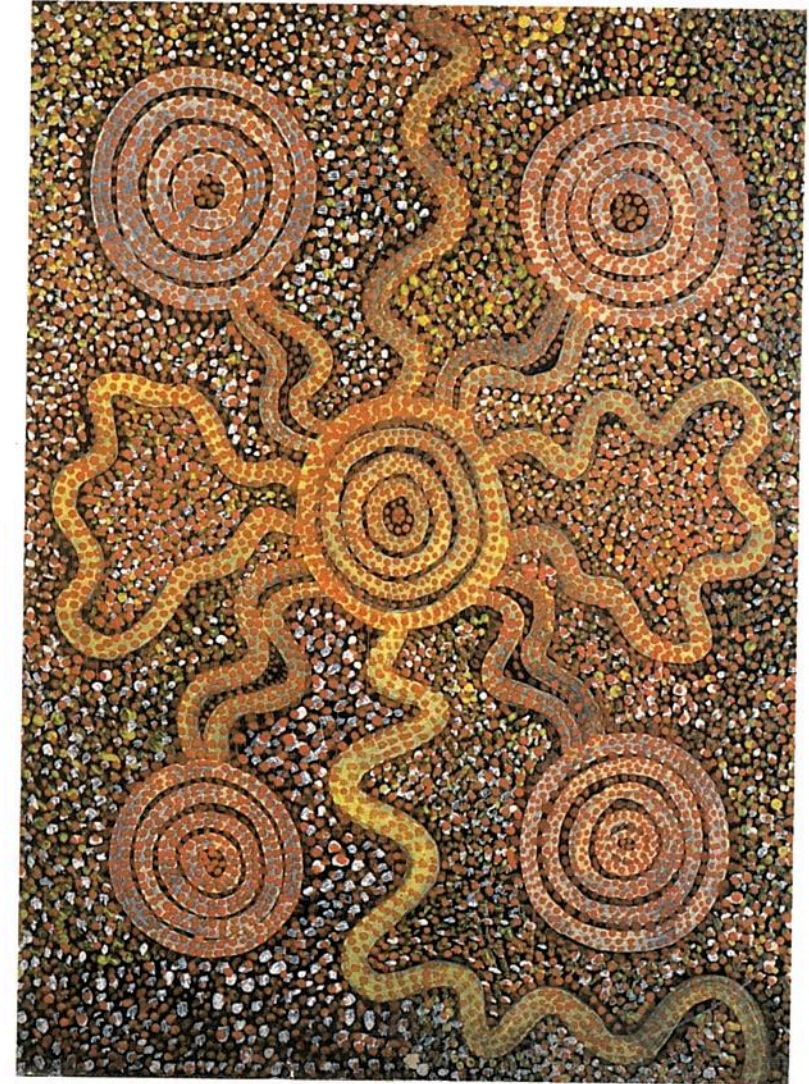




Plate Number: 20  
Subject: Manitjilpitji, a bird at Mt Liebig  
Date: 1975  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas board  
Dimensions: 61 x 51.5 cm  
Collection: Flinders University Art Museum

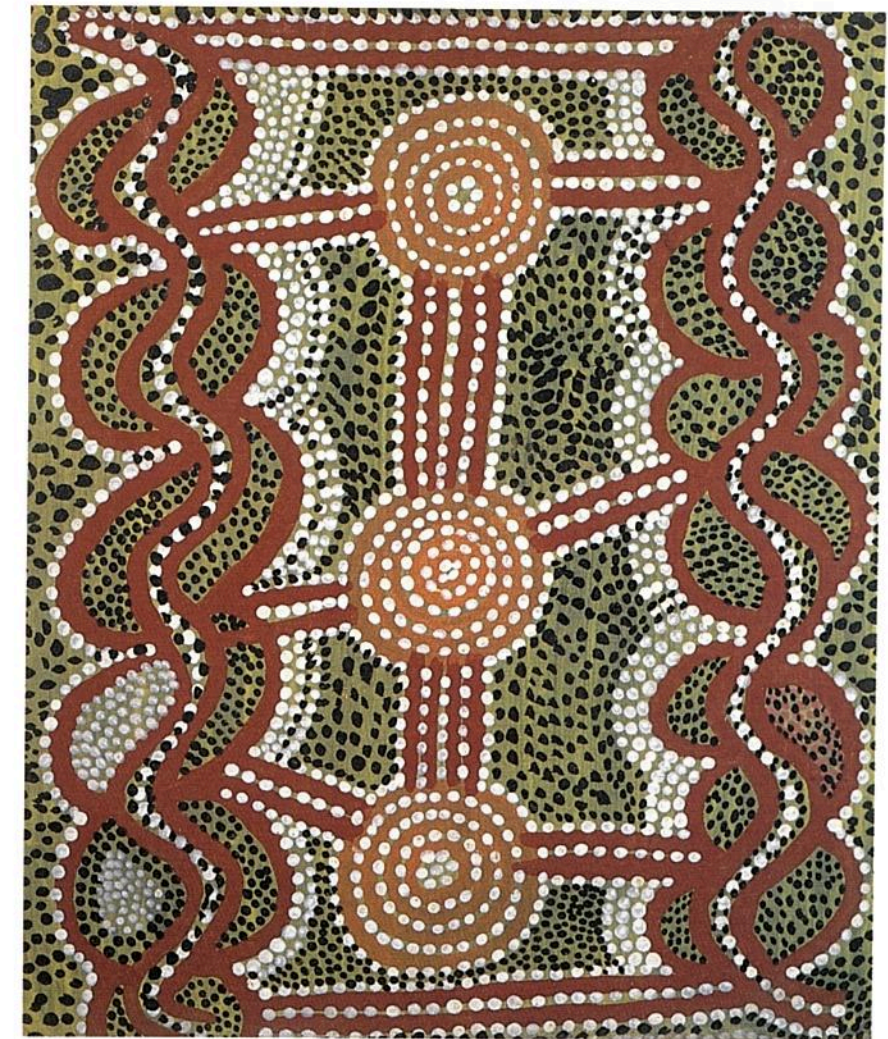


Plate Number: 21  
Subject: not specified  
Date: 1975  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas board  
Dimensions: 45.6 x 35.7 cm  
Collection: Flinders University Art Museum

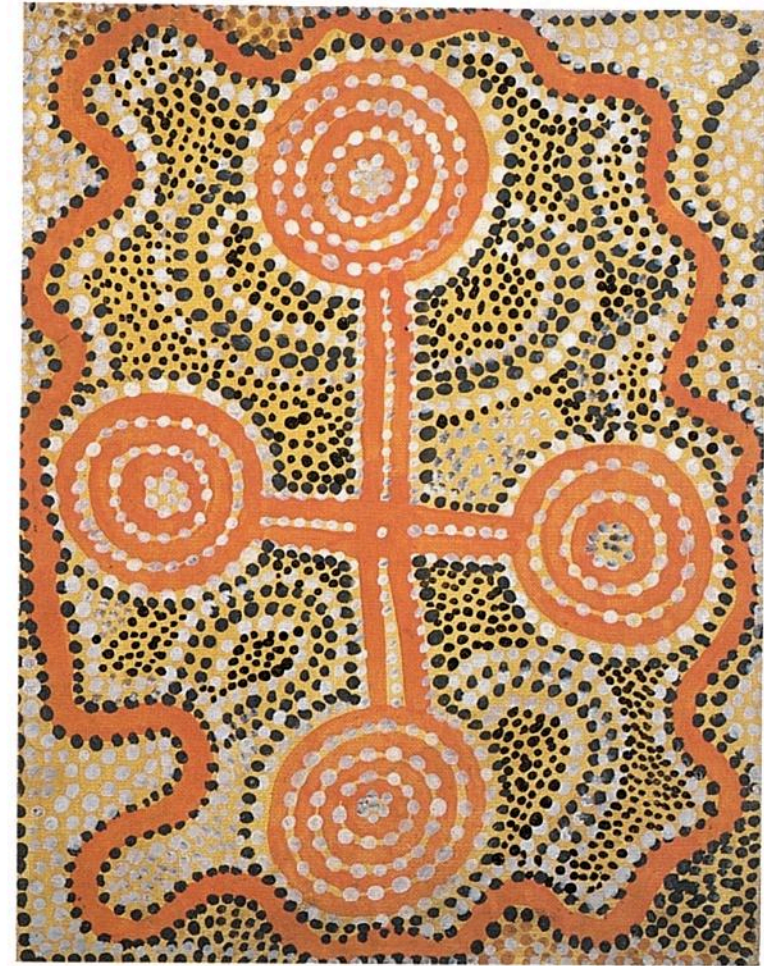


Plate Number: 22  
Subject: Mitukatjirri  
Date: 1980

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 90 x 122 cm  
Collection: The Artist



Plate Number: 23  
Subject: Frogs in Lake MacDonald  
Date: 1980  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on composition board  
Dimensions: 60.5 x 45.5 cm  
Collection: Margaret Carnegie and Roderick Carnegie  
Painted as a personal commission for Geoff Bardon.

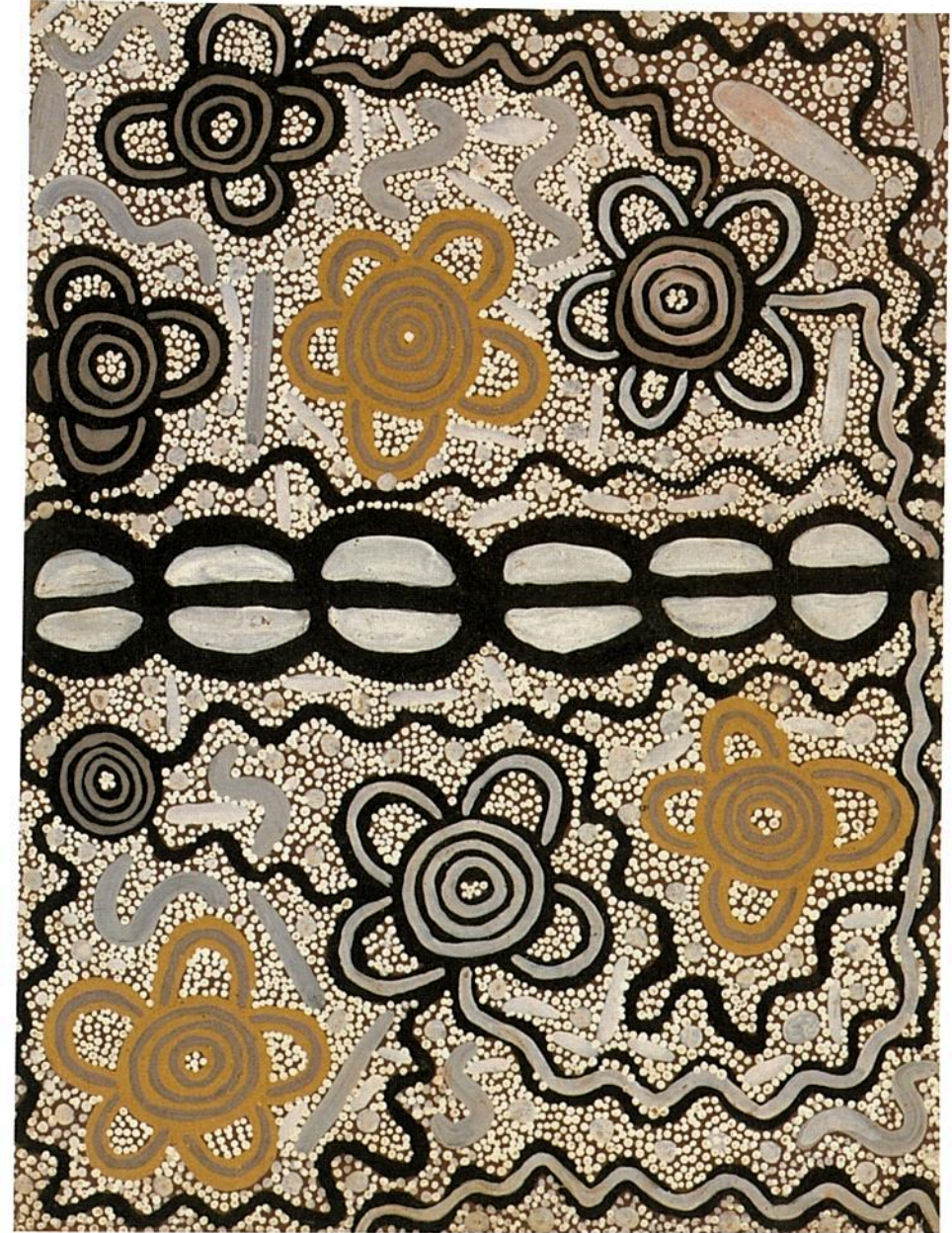


Plate Number: 24  
Subject: Tjiturunga  
Date: 1981

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Dimensions: 210 x 330 cm

Collection: Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory

A number of mythologies traverse this, ten artists' most important site. More than one are represented here.

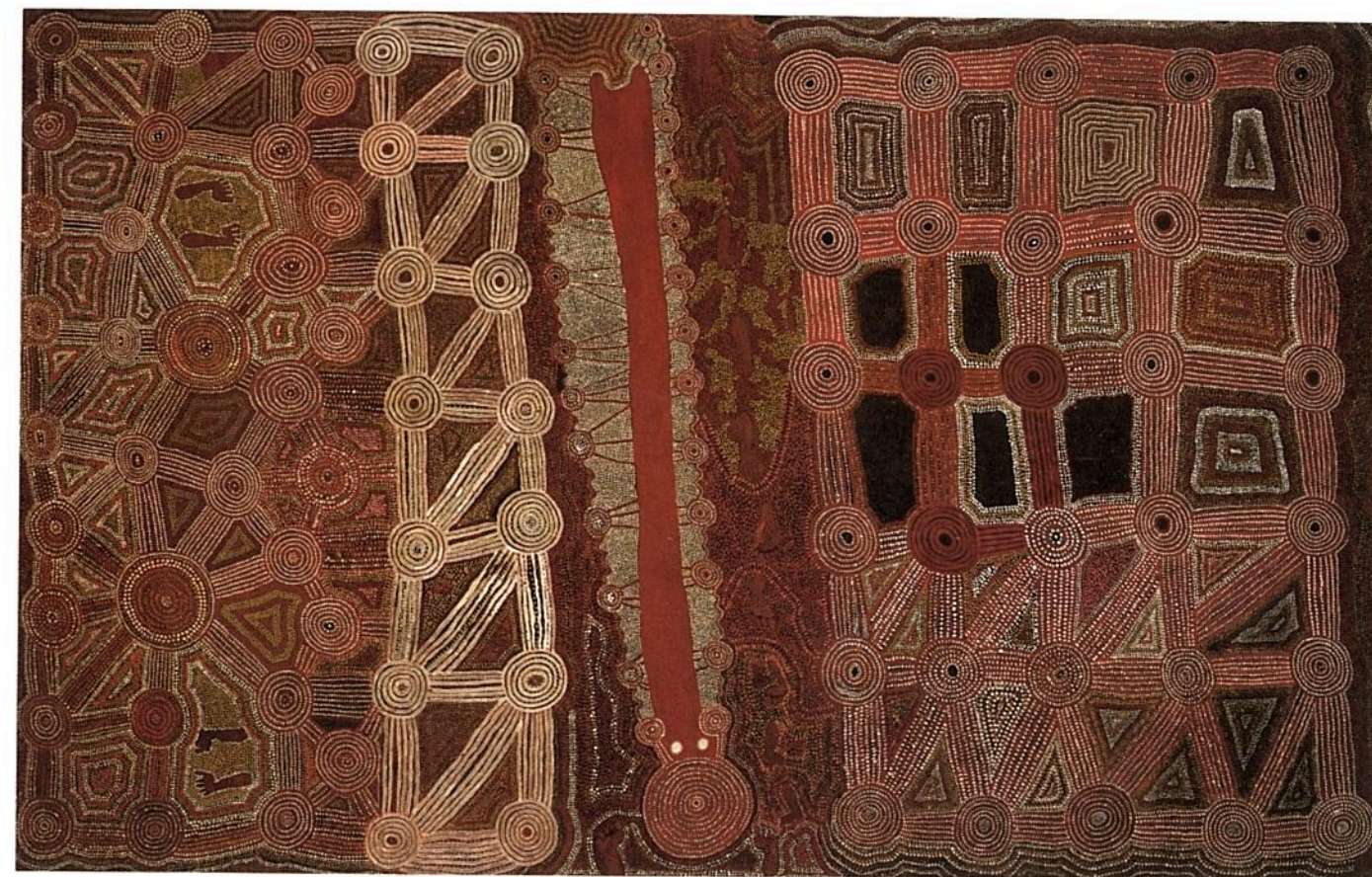


Plate Number: 26  
Subject: not specified  
Date: 1981  
Medium: screenprint  
Dimensions: 77 x 57 cm  
Collection: Katherine Christian

In 1981 Tjaruru and another Pintupi painter experimented in Melbourne with a printmaking process.  
This and the next plate were the upshot.

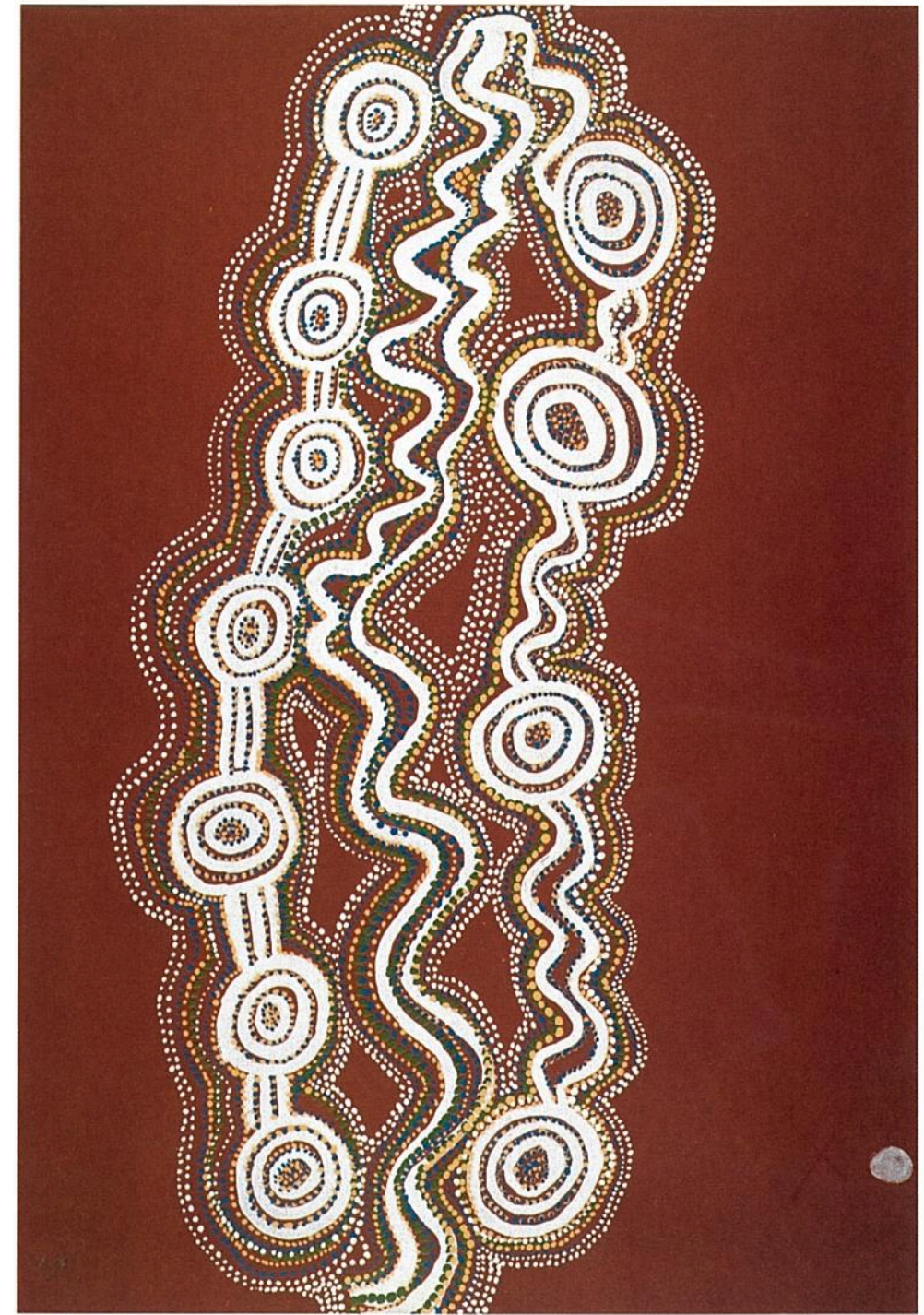


Plate Number: 27  
Subject: Pangkalangka  
Date: 1981  
Medium: screenprint  
Dimensions: 77 x 57 cm  
Collection: Katherine Christian

Pangkalangka is a sort of bogeyman-ogre who lives at Ngurrpalangu, a saltpan and cliff system not far west of Tjiturunga.

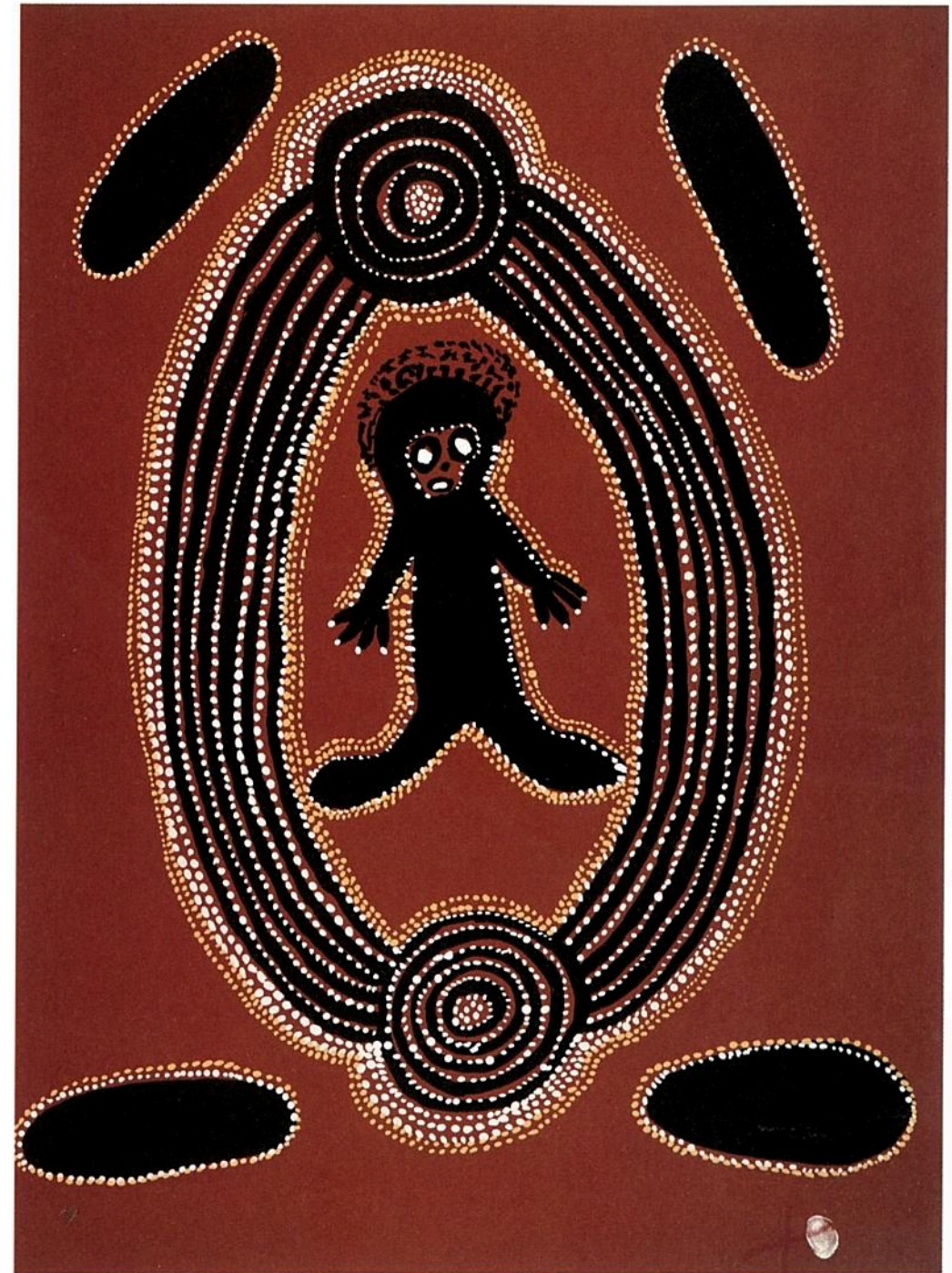


Plate Number: 28

Subject: Wilkiputa

Date: 1981

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on wood

Dimensions: 30 x 11.6 cm

Collection: The Artist

This charming depiction of a Wilkiputa worm, through whom we lose our teeth. My dentist tells me that a similar belief existed until recent times in more traditional areas of Europe.

Obviously Tjaruru and Wilkiputa have a long acquaintance.

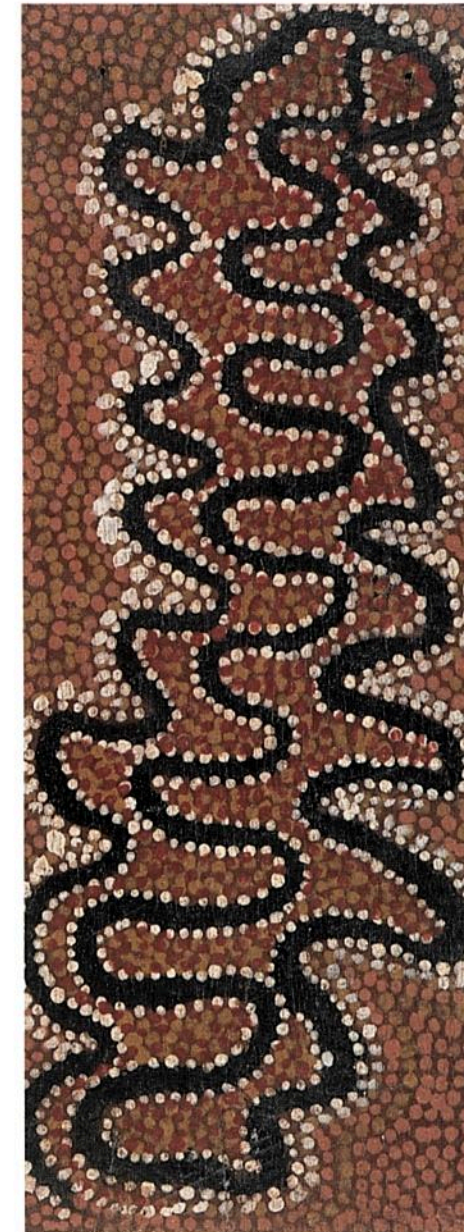




Plate Number: 29

Subject: Warlungurru

Date: 1983

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Dimensions: 122 x 91 cm

Collection: Vessa Playfair

See plates no. 17 and no. 31. This is one of Tjaruru's favourite subjects, possibly since he lives at Warlungurru. It is also one of his more risqué.



Plate Number: 30

Subject: Tikartika

Date: 1984

Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Dimensions: 123.5 x 184.5 cm

Collection: University Art Museum, University of Queensland

Another favourite of the artist's, the story tells of Kuninka, the marsupial cat, being cheated of his emu prey which had been stupefied at Tikartika waterhole using the Duboisia Hopwoodii plant.

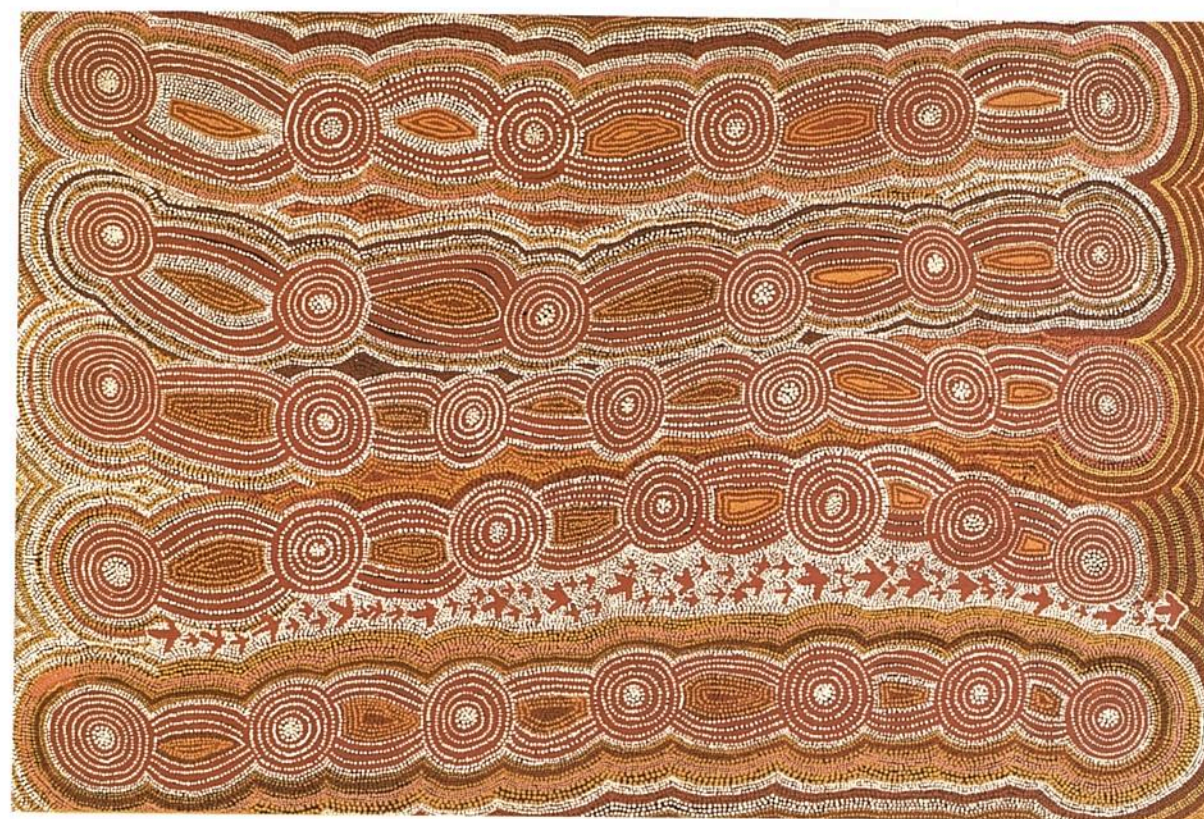
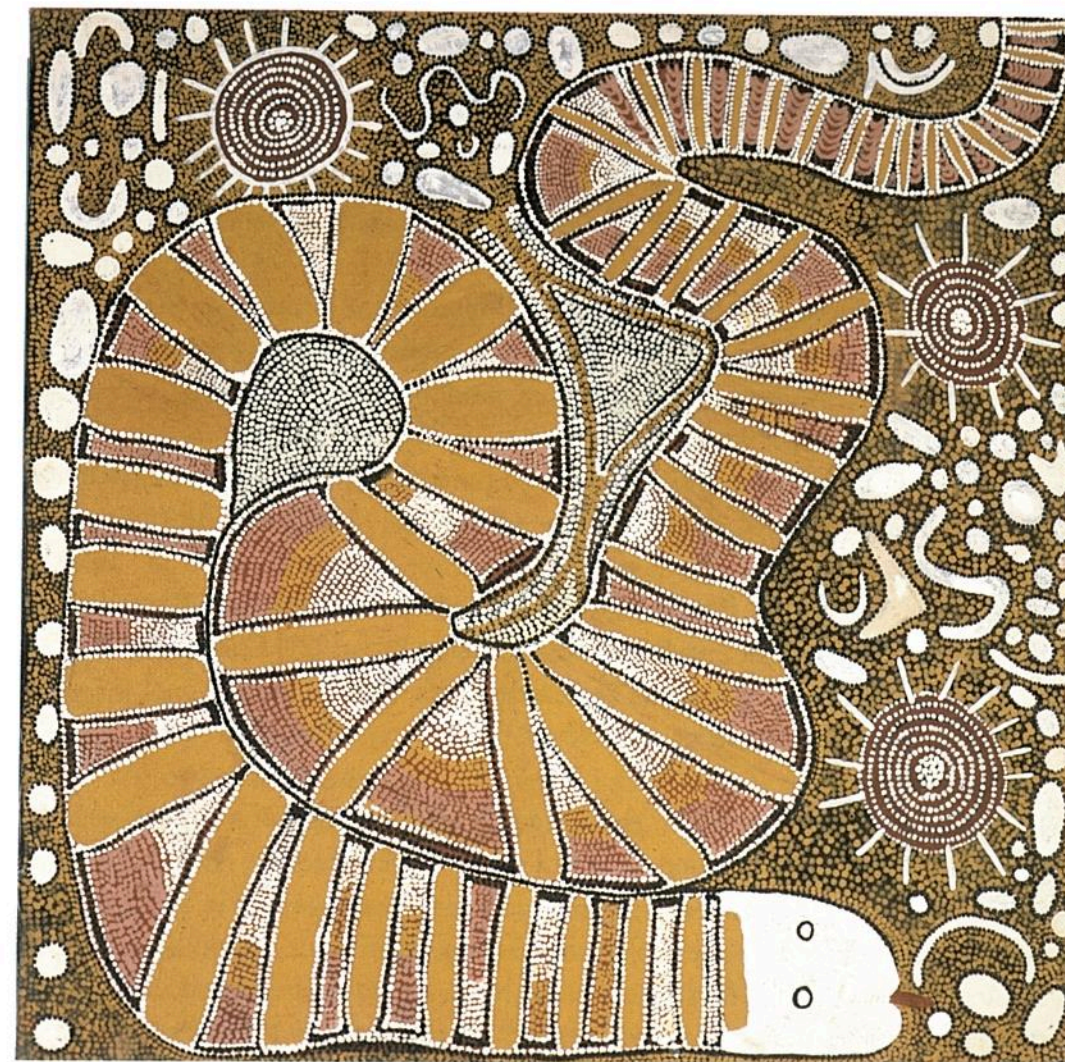


Plate Number: 31  
Subject: Warlungurru  
Date: 1985  
Medium: synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
Dimensions: 120 x 120 cm  
Collection: Margaret Carnegie  
Tjaruru appears to have abandoned his more formal style to indulge a little whimsy.



F O O T N O T E S

- (1) I still have the tape. The painting hangs in the National Gallery in Canberra. The last time I saw it the ascription was incorrect. The curatorial staff were apparently informed of the existence of the tape but as far as I know have shown no interest.
- (2) I know that he has broached the subject in writing.
- (3) Editorial, *The Times* 3 December 1986.
- (4) Lyndsay Smyth, *Radio National Breakfasttime*, 10 July 1986. Confirmed from transcript.
- (5) John Keegan, *Sunday Times* 21 July 1985 and private correspondence. Note that Australians still, (and presumably in character since they persist), justify their behaviour by a lie — that Australia was unoccupied when whites arrived. Contrast the rest of the British Empire, e.g. India, treated as an independent empire where British settlement was restricted.
- (6) This expedition made some remarkable films of the Aborigines they met in which it is quite possible that Tjaruru appears. As far as I know at time of writing he has not seen them.
- (7) Duguid told me this story in personal correspondence. Authorities tend to refer to "Charlie" because that is on the files. When not referred to as frequently happens, as "Tjungurrayi", his kinship classification, he is almost universally called by his nickname, "Watuma" (wötuma).
- (8) For a succinct description of the purpose and practice of such ceremonial activity see Nicolas Peterson: *Art of the Desert* in "Aboriginal Australia", Australian Gallery Directors' Council.
- (9) *Northwest Coast Indian Art*, Bill Holm, University of Washington Press 1965. 1982 edition pages 92, 93. Quoting *Primitive Art*, Franz Boas 1927, Oslo, page 335.
- (10) John Russell Taylor, *The Times* 23 September 1986.
- (11) "Between Identity and Politics — A New Art" by Gray Watson, *Artscribe*, April/May 1986, page 67.
- (12) The reality is as I have hinted in the text: among the hundreds of paintings which arise each year only a few tens stand out as excellent work. True, we have the problem of judging it by our own, non-Aboriginal standards. To a large extent this is an illusory problem. Analysis is only one tool of the critic: comparison is as useful. Once painting becomes an occupation which is more and more an end in itself I believe the painters' criteria become more Europeanised in tune with their market. At this point we should recognise the influences of subsidised production and sale, all but guaranteed markets and a more or less ignorant public when they arise. To what extent would such a combination really help the Aborigines? Moreover the whole art world recognises the selective skills of the exhibition curator and that a single show may not convey the overall picture. In Aboriginal art there is indeed a market of several tiers.

It remains for me to thank unreservedly those who entrusted us with their much-loved paintings. In addition I would like to thank Watuma and his family for their kindness to me over a long time. Long may they thrive. Especial thanks also to Peter O'Neill whose vision, enthusiasm and support made this project possible. The A.V. Playfair P.L. troupe shame me with the effort and ludicrously generous help they put into this publication. Thanks also to Mrs. Duguid for her kind offer to help and for bothering to communicate at all in trying times. Long may they all thrive.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

All publications on the topic seem to vie with one another in fulsomeness of bibliography: this one will be an exception. On the principle that it is pointless to bark if one keeps a dog I do not intend to refer to material already included in preceding publications.

The four publications which preceded this one and which deal directly with the "Papunya" painting movement are:-

Aboriginal Art of the Western Desert	G. Bardon	1979
Mr. Sandman Bring Me A Dream	A. Crocker	1981
The Face of the Centre	A. Brody	1985
Dot and Circle	V. Megaw	1986

Dr. Charles Duguid's books "No Dying Race" and "Doctor on Walkabout" refer briefly to Watuma and are fascinating, if depressing, about the treatment of Aborigines by Australians.

The field of Primitive Art (a technical term which recognises an element of inaccuracy but which continues to be used in the field of art history and analysis) and of Transitional Art is large, interesting and, judging by the volume of galleries, sales and publications, commercially attractive. "Useful introductory Textbook" is the way that the Royal Anthropological Institute's Teacher's Resource Guide describes "Art in Primitive Societies" by Richard L. Anderson, New York: Prentice-Hall 1979. I feel it is even more than that and it has an excellent bibliography.

Information on publications covering all aspects of Aborigines past and present can be obtained from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra. Material by F. Myers, D. Thomson, R. Tonkinson, R. Gould and M. Meggitt are especially recommended on the traditions of desert Aborigines.

I believe the best source on all aspects of contemporary Aboriginal problems is the Aboriginal Law Research Unit, University of N.S.W., P.O. Box 1, Kensington, N.S.W., Australia 2033.

All over Australia there are Aboriginal Land Councils and they are loosely federated and can provide much information. Try for example the Northern Land Council, P.O. Box 3046, Darwin N.T. 5794.

Those interested in the plight of indigenous minorities the world over can obtain information and suggestions for helping from organisations devoted to the question. Such are:- Survival International, 29 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NT, U.K.; I.W.G.I.A., Fiolstraede 10, DK1171 Copenhagen K. Denmark.

By way of contrast the Information Branch of the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs (D.A.A.), P.O. Box 17, Woden, A.C.T. 2606, seems to provide endlessly glowing and optimistic reports as the official line. No doubt the separate States' versions would do the same upon request. In addition, why not, in fairness to them, enquire of the Northern Territory Cattlemens' Association, 72 Carenagh Street, Darwin, N.T. (Tel: 089-81 5976) and of the Australian Mining Industry Council, 216 Northbourne Avenue, Braddon, A.C.T. (Tel: 062-49 8955), or the National Farmers Federation, N.F.F. House, Brisbane Avenue, Barton, A.C.T., (Tel.: 062-73 3855) about their view of Aboriginal rights and aspirations.

"The Arts of the North American Indian — Native Traditions in Evolution" by E.L. Wade published by Hudson Hills Press, New York in 1986 is a beautiful if expensive display of what can be achieved in a contemporary, transitional art movement.