

EDUCATION RESOURCE

# THREE ECHOES

WESTERN DESERT ART



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this Education Resource contains the names of deceased persons.**

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For information on the national tour of the exhibition, *Three Echoes – Western Desert Art*, go to the M&G QLD website, <https://magsq.com.au/touring-exhibitions/three-echoes/>

Cover image:

**Tjunkiya Napaltjarri**

(born c.1927 – 2009)

Pintupi language group

*Untitled*, 2004, acrylic

on linen, 91 x 91 cm.

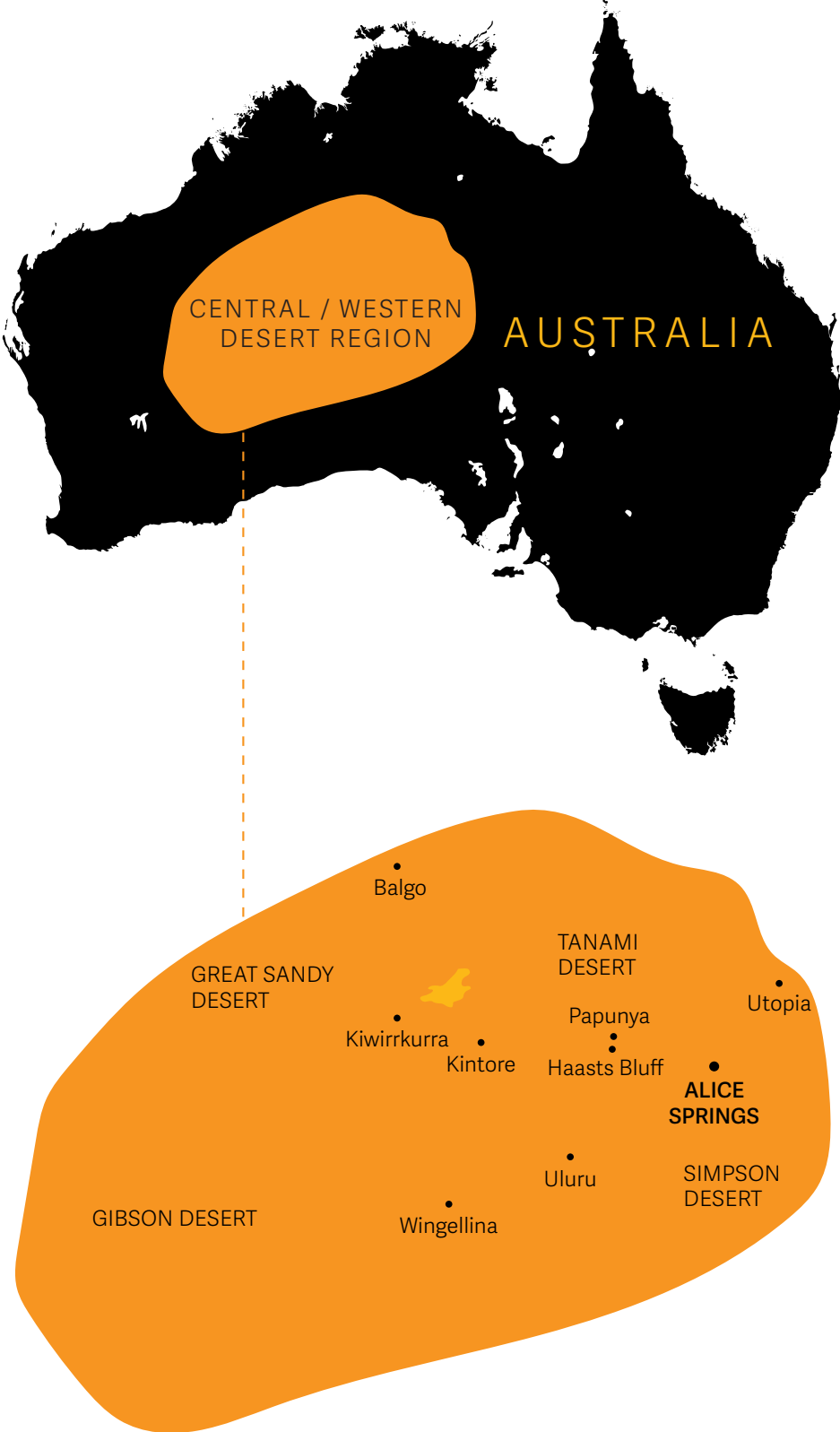
Photograph by Andrew Curtis.

© Tjunkiya Napaltjarri | Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd

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# MAP OF WESTERN DESERT



# NOTES

For Teachers, Arts Educators and Gallery Staff

*Three Echoes – Western Desert Art is a touring exhibition of Australian Aboriginal art that spans around thirty years of the Western Desert Art Movement. This Education Resource contains content grouped into five themes:*

- **Painting Politics**
- **Tjukurrpa (Dreaming)**
- **Stories inspire images**
- **Landscape**
- **Painting as a therapeutic act**

It then takes a deeper look at three of the exhibition's Ikuntji artists: Narputta Nangala Jugadai (1933–2010), Long Tom Tjapanangka (1929–2006) and Daisy Napaltjarri Jugadai (1955–2008).

Teachers, educators and students are encouraged to use the information provided in this Resource to explore the outlined themes and to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the richness and significance of Australian First Nations peoples, cultures and communities.

This Education Resource connects with the **Australian Curriculum (V9) learning area 'Visual Arts'**<sup>1</sup> and follows the four interrelated strands of:

- **Exploring and responding** – this strand supports students to learn as artists and as audience.
- **Developing practices and skills** – this strand develops creative and critical practices through play, imagination and experimentation.
- **Creating and making** – this strand encourages students to make new works using visual conventions, creative processes and materials.
- **Presenting and performing** – this strand is about sharing artists' work and ideas with audiences in an appropriate way. It encourages students to plan and to share their work through a diversity of means including formal, informal, physical or virtual spaces.

This Resource also aligns with the **Australian Curriculum (V9) General Capabilities:**

- **Critical and creative thinking**
- **Personal and social capability**
- **Intercultural understanding**
- **Ethical understanding**
- **Literacy**

and the **Cross-curriculum Priority Area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures**<sup>2</sup>.

This Resource encourages teachers and students to recognise and respect the importance of Aboriginal art, its significance and purpose.

<sup>1</sup> [The Arts | V9 Australian Curriculum](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures | V9 Australian Curriculum](#)

## PROTOCOLS FOR ENGAGING FIRST NATIONS AUSTRALIANS

When planning teaching activities involving engagement with First Nations Australians and/or artworks or cultural expressions created by First Nations Australians, teachers should follow protocols that describe principles, procedures and behaviours for recognising and respecting First Nations Australians and their intellectual and cultural property.

Teachers should use approved resources, appropriate to their location, such as those that may be provided by their state or territory school system, or First Nations Australians education consultative groups, or other protocols accredited by First Nations Australians; for example, information about Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and protocols for respecting these rights in Australia is available on the [Australia Council for the Arts website](#)<sup>3</sup>.

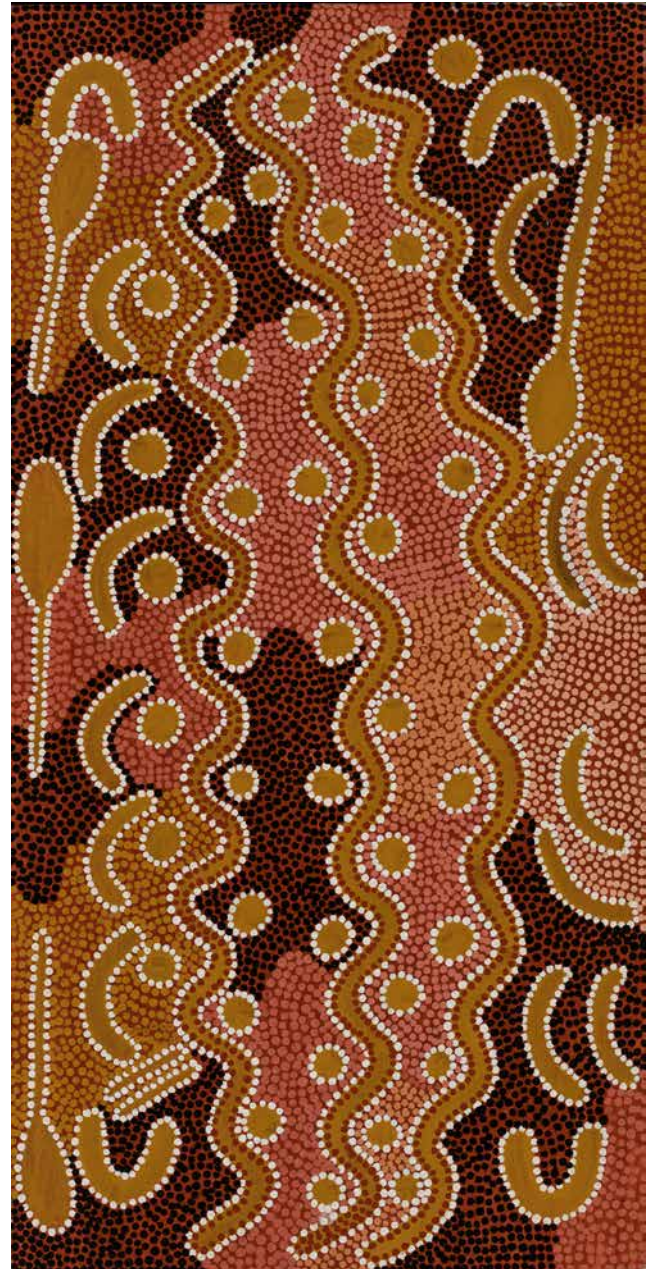
When reading this Resource, the words 'First Nations', 'First Peoples', and 'Indigenous' are sometimes used interchangeably, but all are intended to refer respectfully to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture.

Teachers and educators are encouraged to select and adapt activities in this Resource to suit the learning needs of their students.

Teachers are also encouraged to invite local Traditional Owners or community members to share appropriate knowledge with the students about their culture and Country.

Additional Australian First Nations Curriculum resources are available from the AIATSIS website, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/education/curriculum-resources>.

<sup>3</sup> [The Arts | V9 Australian Curriculum](#)



**Maudie Petersen Nungurrayi**

(born c.1937 – 2006)

Warlpiri language group

*Women's Ceremonial Design*, 1984, synthetic polymer powder paint on composition board, 68 x 30.5 cm.

Photograph by Andrew Curtis.

© Maudie Petersen Nungurrayi | Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd

# FROM THE CURATOR

*Three Echoes – Western Desert Art, Dion Mundine*

*In the early 1970s, my father once told me of how, when he was a child in Bandjalung country, people coming along the river or through the woods would ‘Coo-ee’ to announce their presence at certain places where their voice would echo repeatedly, reverberating into the distance; to which the receiver would, ‘chant-like’, respond.*

An echo is a sound caused when a noise is reflected off a surface, such as a cliff face, bank of a river, or a solid object such as walls of a space. If a sound echoes it can be heard again, after the original sound has stopped. Such a projected sound is used to calculate, from the time taken for reflected reception, how far away the receiving party is; and, from the signal's strength or distortion, to possibly identify the material that the reflective body is made of and whether the signal has had any effect on it. I was told that an echo is a sentiment, sensation, or thought carried, that brings back memories.

Metaphorically as well as metaphonically, we can echo a thought, a sentiment, or a consciousness. In the first two years of the 1970s, the ceremonial elders living at Papunya Aboriginal Government settlement located north west of Alice Springs were inspired to transfer, in scale and materials, the creation stories of the land and people. Formerly, these were formally constructed as large coloured ground and fibre compositions, using lyrical poetics as mnemonic devices to relate the means and actions of creation and conception of the social mores of living in the world. At these times the next generation is exposed to these repetitive, chanting, performative rituals that then come to echo through all aspects of their lives.

Previously an action that was restricted by gender and age, these new portal compositions were now, with various veils and aesthetic visual screens, projected publicly to the world to await response. It would take a decade for an echo to really return, indicating acknowledgement of a reading of some form.

In 1978, Bernice Murphy, curator for foreign exhibitions for the Australian Gallery Directors' Council, included a desert painting on canvas by Billy Stockman Tjapaltjarri, and a bark painting by Ramingining artist, Charlie Djota, in an exhibition sent to Indonesia,

*Landscape and Image.* Three ‘desert’ paintings by Papunya male artists – Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri; another with Clifford collaborating with his brother Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri (*Napperby Dreaming*); and a third large collaborative painting by a larger set of Pintupi language artists, *Tingarri Cycle*; all from the collection of the Aboriginal Arts Board – were included in Murphy's first *Australian Perspecta 1981* exhibition for the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Then in 1982, a related group of male artists from Lajamanu were included in William Wright's 1982 Biennale of Sydney, where they installed a sand and fibre composition.

This return echo was slightly distorted. Insertion of Aboriginal art into the western art canon was attacked within the contemporary art world by racist conservatives in Australian art who could not accept these beautiful creations as intellectual emotional thoughts; they still viewed these artworks as ‘primitive’ art. It had never been seen widely as ‘art’ but as a kind of craft practice or folk art – ethnographic expression. Simple primitive objects created by simple primitive people; fairy-tale people living in fairy-tale places. An expression of an emotionally and intellectually underdeveloped human expression. The ‘left’ view was of a similar bent in a different wrapping; how could ‘we’ modern westerners commodify these powerful, spiritual conceptions, and destroy these pure simple people by giving them money. Some Aboriginal artists also had this view and railed against the ‘commercialisation’ of a spiritual expression; a cosmology of man and the universe.

*“Save your pity for those who have no dreaming.”*

Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula, in *The Australian*, 1997.

There was also the beginning of the 'western desert dot and circle' painting on canvas movement at Papunya, north west of Alice Springs, from the early 1970s on. It is the time of the Whitlam government, the time of a type of 'jingoism', a nationalism, and a liberalism in the arts and society. It was also the time of the Australian parody-comic figure 'Bazza McKenzie' (created by Australian satirist Barry Humphries), and attitudes and government policies toward Aboriginal people were still essentially assimilationist. I felt that the Australian population's feelings were: 'Why wouldn't Aborigines want to become part of Australian society, God's own country?'

Although anthropologists and others had collected drawings on paper, cardboard and other flat surfaces for some time, these paintings and drawings persisted to be seen as curiosities, and not innovation or 'art'. In the early 1970s, as the male artists of Papunya moved from ochre paints and mashed plant fibre, and discarded carpenters' off-cuts to acrylic commercial paints, art board, and fine canvases, they were sold as 'art', if somewhat unsuccessfully at the time.

The central debate in this time in the 'white' Australian art world, was the fierce argument of figurative art against abstract and conceptual art. It was very personal and intense.

By the end of the 1970s, the Aboriginal artists were working on large-scale, fine canvas compositions. Another discussion arose around the question of what to 'name' this art movement. Attempts were made to define the movement as pointillist, religious, spiritual, narrative, abstract, and have now fallen back on 'modernist', but without really fitting the description suitably. Nothing is ever concluded – it just is art!<sup>1</sup> As such, it is included in various major exhibitions, although it pulls the rug out from under notions of 'landscape painting' and concepts of relationships to land and history. The form of acrylic paint on canvas and similar (but different) to popular 'pointillism' of the late 1800s that had captured the imagination of the 'educated public', makes the art a very marketable product in a commercial sense. Its development is still unfolding and being played out. The 'dot and circle' painting movement became more widespread, exciting and popular in the market and, more importantly I would suggest, was the most significant Australian art movement of the twentieth century. All other movements have come to Australia from somewhere else. Several non-Aboriginal artists struggled to find a middle ground (Imants Tillers, *White Aborigines*, 1983 and *The Nine Shots*, 1985; and Michael Nelson and Tim Johnson).

*evening  
waves come into the cove  
one at a time*<sup>2</sup>

Echoes like little waves or pulses in your sleep. Some may take time to reach their end or response.

The sound sent out from Papunya echoed not only in 'white Australian' middle-class dinner parties, but also around campfires in the desert communities of central Australia. As the Papunya movement had grown from the seed of a school teacher (Geoffrey Bardon), the Yuendumu echo was directed by an Adult Education Project; an enabling translation to allow senior art practitioners to transmit across generations in new form of instruction. The headmaster of the then bi-lingual school commissioned local elders to paint major mural compositions onto the doors of the school – a form of 'the doors of perception', or perhaps the Ghiberti Baptistery Doors in Florence. At the time in 1984, Terry Smith in *The Sydney Morning Herald* called this the 'Renaissance in Aboriginal Art'.

A second echo occurred when non-Aboriginal Australian artist, Marina Strocchi, and fellow artist partner Wayne Eager, came to Haasts Bluff (Ikuntji) in August 1992 to hold painting workshops for Aboriginal women in the community and for those of nearby Papunya and, at the invitation of the community, to set up the Ikuntji Art Centre. Both were practising artists from Melbourne; in Wayne's case influenced by the 1948 COBRA painting movement of Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. This latter post-WWII European painting movement refused to be defined as surreal, abstract and other western art definitions; an attempt to mentally and emotionally break free after the war and occupation, an attempt to redefine themselves and their societies. This personal self-definition was embodied within the Aboriginal painting movement, a freedom to self-express and self-define against the oppression of distance, the disempowerment of language, disempowerment of racism, and colonisation, and lack of intellect in their western audiences.

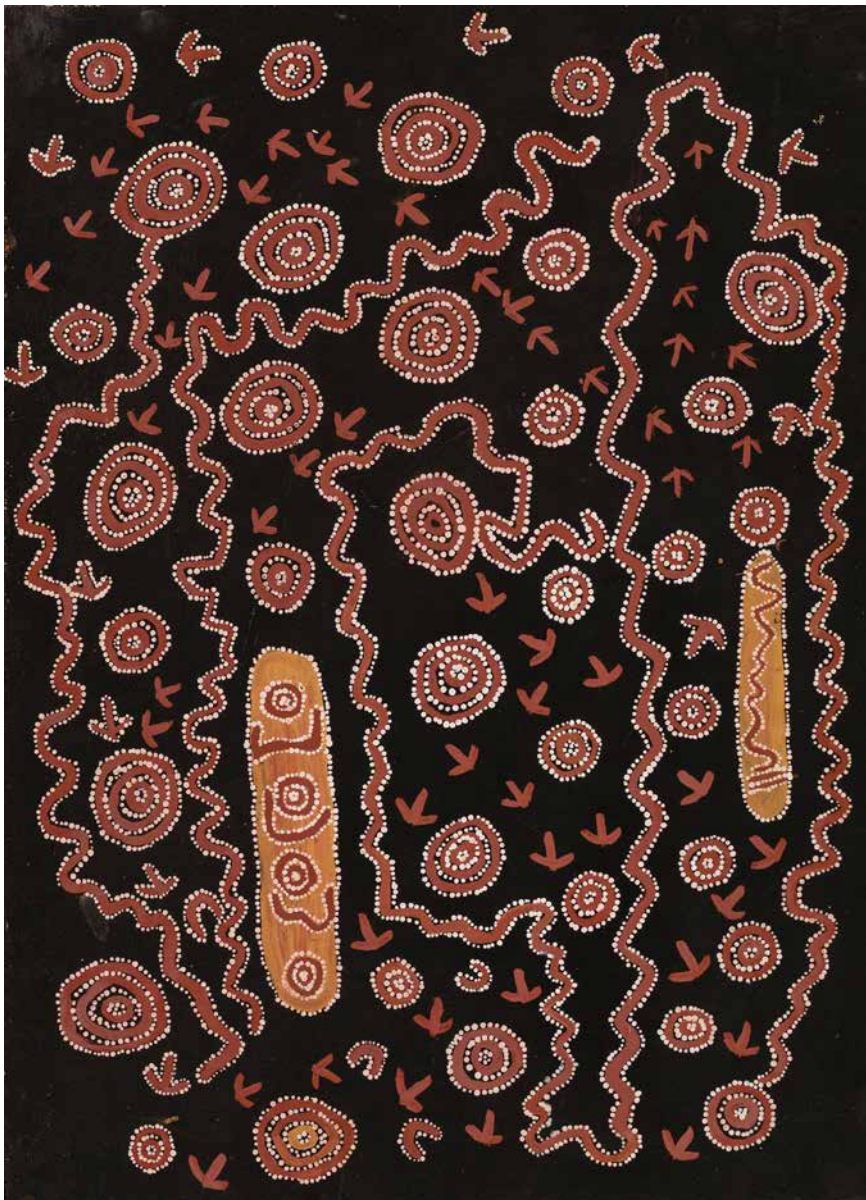
Another 'Coo-ee' was sent out to the wider world when Rodney Gooch carried out 'A Summer Project' over 1988–89, following the 1988 *UTOPIA: A Picture Story* of 88 silk batiks from Utopia commissioned by The Holmes à Court Collection. This motivated the men and women of Utopia to move out of, and away from, any entrapment of lesser 'western art world' designations of 'craft' to painting that intensely echoed back, cracking the reflecting wall forever.



The London Underground Tube Map, a schematic map in a form of circles joined by lines, was designed by Harry Beck in 1931. It now exists in various forms in many maps of many cities across the world. At The Hayward Gallery, London, at the *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians* exhibition (1994), touring Yuendumu senior artist Dolly Granites struggled with being peppered with questions from the London press – what are these ‘dots, circles connected by waves and straight lines’? To cut through this knot I asked, ‘Could she sing of the painted subject?’, and she movingly complied to silence the room. The curious audience could use the London Underground Tube Map to get to the Hayward Gallery, but seemingly couldn’t accept that Aboriginal people could construct such a mental concept.

The third ‘foundational’ echo (for this collection) was the aforementioned signal call sent out by Aboriginal activists Gary Foley, Charles ‘Chicka’ Dixon and Europeans, Bernhard Luthi and Ulrich Krempel, who organised the only Aboriginal-led major touring exhibition of Aboriginal art, *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians*, including a significant number of ‘desert paintings’ on canvas. This would tour to Dusseldorf in Germany; London in England; and to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, in Denmark. It was here it would be heard, to impress and inspire Karin Schack and Andrew Arnott to begin their own collection; the return echo that we hear and see here.

- 1 “For better or worse, it is the strongest and most beautiful show of abstract paintings I have seen in a long time.” Terence Maloon, ‘Aboriginal paintings: Strong and beautiful abstracts survive the cultural dislocation’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 January 1982.
- 2 *Writing and Enjoying Haiku: A Hands-on Guide*, Jane Reichhold, Kodansha International, Tokyo, New York, London, 2002, p. 61.



**Charlie Tarawa (Tjaruru) Tjungurrayi**  
(born c.1921 – 1999)

Pintupi language group

*Emu Dreaming*, 1972, synthetic polymer powder paint on composition board, 65 x 46 cm.

Photograph by Andrew Curtis.  
© Charlie Tarawa (Tjaruru) Tjungurrayi | Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd

# INTRODUCTION

by Marina Stocchi

*The artworks in Three Echoes are from the Central Desert region of Australia, often called Central Australia. Painting and other forms of art and craft have been part of the culture of the First Nations desert people for tens of thousands of years.*

The arts are intricately connected to the land, or Country. The land is the key to survival – it is where the food comes from, it is where water is found. The main cultural force of desert people is to look after the Country and to honour the memories of their ancestors who created the land and from whom they inherited it. Looking after nature seems like an obvious concept when the culture lives closely with nature. Land or Country is the subject matter for the arts.

The phenomenon of Central Desert art has led to exhibitions in Madison Avenue, New York; Beyoncé has a painting by Yukultji Napangati on her Instagram account, and Steve Martin has a huge collection of desert art which he speaks about regularly. This phenomenon is unique in the world of First Nations peoples. It is the most important art movement to come out of Australia and is being recognised internationally.

## THE CENTRAL DESERT: A BRIEF HISTORY LESSON

In 1788, Britain claimed Australia as a colony of settlement and *Terra Nullius* was declared even though it was very clear that people already lived in Australia. Colonisation is also referred to as Invasion and started with the arrival of the First Fleet. The arrival of Europeans in Australia destabilised life for the First Nations people who had occupied the mainland of Australia for at least 65,000 years. That means that they were in Australia long before the settlement of Europe and The Americas. The destabilisation was late in affecting the Central Desert people because Europeans tended to cling to the coastline. The deserts were not considered useful for farming or maintaining the lifestyle brought with them from overseas.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans started to make an impact on the Central Desert

region. There was direct and indirect pressure on the First Nations people to move from their traditional Central Desert lands. The Pintupi, Pitjantjatjara, Luritja, Ngaatjatjarra, Warlpiri and Kukatja people were affected by the impact of Europeans at this time. The settlers brought cattle to the Central Desert, reducing the availability of the native grasses which were a staple in the diet of the desert people. In the early part of the twentieth century, gold diggers dynamited a very important rock hole, named Ilpili, west of Ikuntji<sup>1</sup> destroying a major water supply for the people of that area. In 1928 there was a massacre of over 100 First Nations people at Coniston Station Well. This led to a major migration of many Warlpiri people south, to the Ikuntji area, which had become known as a safe haven. In 1929 a bad drought compounded the problems of the desert people. Hundreds of desert people migrated east into the Christian Hermannsburg Mission. Ration Depots were established in the surrounding areas, including one at Ikuntji, which became a permanent mission base in 1935. In 1941 Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Reserve was established, protecting the land from pastoral leases and mining permits. By 1959 the Papunya Government Settlement had been established, 250 kilometres west of Mparntwe<sup>2</sup> and just 40 kilometres from Ikuntji. More and more desert people “came in” from the desert. Between 1950 and 1960, government patrols continued to bring in the nomadic people who lived off the land and generally travelled vast distances by foot. One can assume that most of the recent arrivals at the settlement were adversely affected by the new sedentary lifestyle. Disease, foreign food and medicines, new and inexplicable laws which inadvertently made them break their own laws all created anxiety and distress. They “worried” deeply for their Country and were homesick. It was by all accounts a very miserable life. Many people died. Some people moved closer to their Country and set up camps west of Papunya, going back to their previous lifestyles as much as possible.

In 1972 the Whitlam Government brought new hope to First Nations people by passing Land Rights

legislation. The need for First Nations Australians to live on their own Country was finally addressed in the Australian Parliament. Country and responsibility to “look after country” are the foundations of *tjukurrpa*.

In time, this led to the creation of new communities: Mt Liebig, Kintore and, just over the Western Australian border, Kiwirrkura.

Land Rights and Native Title are central to reconciliation. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was first read in May 2017 and is the most recent plea for Constitutional recognition by the Referendum Council.

## PAINTING POLITICS

Painting in the Central Desert is a political act because every time a painting is done it is an affirmation of land rights. Every time someone paints their story, they are laying claim to what is theirs by birth. They inherited the land and the responsibilities of looking after that land. In this respect a painting then becomes like a deed of title. When a Central Desert artist paints, they sometimes sing the song that goes with the story of that Country. They might tell that story for the document that is written to go with the painting. This is sometimes called a “Certificate of Authenticity”. The painting usually is of a place that is connected to the artist through their *tjukurrpa*.

## TJUKURRPA

*Tjukurrpa* has been translated as “Dreaming”. *Tjukurrpa* is hard to define in one English word. It means many things. It is law and mythology. It is Country and the basis of First Nations peoples’ lives. It is a complex system encompassing First Nations law, travels of ancestral beings, their journeys and how they made the Country and its features. People inherit their *tjukurrpa* from their mother, father, grandmother and grandfather. They acquire another *tjukurrpa* from the place where their mother first feels the quickening (the first stirrings of a baby in utero). *Tjukurrpa* comes from the place where they are born and where they die, or where their relatives die. *Tjukurrpa* can also be a story. It is also the inspiration for artists and forms the basis of their work.

## STORIES INSPIRE IMAGES

Humans have used images to communicate or tell stories ever since they started painting and drawing. The paintings, prints and batiks in *Three Echoes* all tell a story or give us information about the land and its inhabitants: plants, animals including humans, insects and birds too. Some artists represent these

stories using symbols and abstraction while others use more literal and illustrative modes of depiction. Some artists depict the same story in more than one way, changing the emphasis of the image and the story.

## LANDSCAPE

Landscape can be painted as you see it, as in a photo, or it can be painted any way you like. Flattening out the perspective is a way to get a bird’s-eye view of landscape as well as creating distance. Flattening out the landscape and tipping the plain upwards is like hanging a mat on the wall. The artists in *Three Echoes* have represented their Country and *tjukurrpa* in many different ways. Some artists have adopted an aerial perspective, while others use a more Western representation of the landscape which includes the horizon line. Some works are highly symbolic and, through patterning and repetition, create abstract interpretations of the landscape. Long Tom Tjapanangka expresses the vast space of the desert through flat areas of colour. He abstracted the landscape, simplifying the shapes and forms for visual impact. The same story or *tjukurrpa* can be told in many different but related ways.

Mapping the landscape and marking significant sites is a key part of First Nations art in Central Australia. The artworks in *Three Echoes* are all essentially about the land; they reflect the artists’ strong connection to their Country which comes through living every day in their Country. Travelling through Country hunting, gathering bush foods and medicines, performances and ceremonies all reinforce the connection to Country.

The Central Desert region is sprinkled with rocky outcrops, dry creek beds, countless lines of sandhills. The larger trees become sparse in the sandhill country west of Mparntwe which is dotted with spinifex and small bushes that flower after rain. Water is found in rock holes and springs or in soakage areas dug into the creek beds or other places where water is known to exist. Wells were also dug by hand and maintained while people were living in the area. This Country is one of the oldest geographical areas in the world. The hills are the cores of what were once huge mountains.

First Nations people have lived in this area for tens of thousands of years and have accumulated knowledge from their forebears to assist them in the delicate art of surviving in this desert. They generally lived on bush damper (which was made from flour that was ground from grass seeds), lizards, small marsupials, kangaroos, emus, bush turkeys, budgerigars, and even frogs that are found buried deep in the sand, only coming to the surface when there was good rain.

They also have knowledge of “bush medicine” which involves using plants and animals to make remedies. People had methods of cauterising wounds with ash (carbon being the purist element) and setting broken limbs.

## PAPUNYA TULA ARTISTS

In 1971, at the Papunya Government Settlement, there were around a thousand people from the different surrounding tribal areas who were living there under duress. They were in a form of “holding camp” in an alien environment. It was in this time of sadness and homesickness that a small group of older men began painting. There was support from the schoolteacher, Geoffrey Bardon, and a mural was painted for the children at the school. They painted *tjukurrpa* and it was a mode of cultural affirmation.

The men gathered in an old Nissen hut and painted on scraps of Masonite, lino tiles or bits of chipboard. The more they painted, the more they wanted to paint. There were some censorship issues and a debate ensued about how much of this significant knowledge should be shared with a wider audience. Some early work included information that is restricted to men who are privy to a certain degree of knowledge and was not suitable for a wider audience that would include women and children.

*Tjukurrpa* imagery is used in ceremonies and is painted with natural ochres onto bodies, ceremonial objects, painted or carved into rocks or caves or depicted in ground paintings. Acrylic paint was a new medium which created a new method of cultural affirmation and maintenance. The artists would “sing up” their Country, which means they sang the song cycles that were associated with the *tjukurrpa* while they were painting.

In 1972 the Papunya Tula Artists company was formed to manage exhibiting and selling the works that were produced. It is fully owned by the artists and shareholders. It was the first Central Desert organisation to service artists of that region; at that time, it was exclusively a men’s company.

There were other arts enterprises in the Central Desert region that developed in time.

## BATIK

In 1977, a group of Alyawarr and Anmatyerr women from the Utopia area were introduced to the techniques of making batik fabric in a series of government-funded workshops led by Jenny Green. The following year the Utopia Women’s Batik Group was formed and, for the next five years, Julia Murray

was the coordinator. There are six women included in *Three Echoes* who are from that original group; though they moved on to painting and printmaking, they started out with batik.



**Rosie Pwerle**  
(born c.1950)

Anmatyerre language group  
*Untitled*, 1997, batik on silk,  
285 x 114 cm.

Photograph by Mark Ashkanasy.  
© Rosie Pwerle | Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd

Batik is an Indonesian method of decorating cloth by applying hot wax to the surface of fabric as a resistance to the dyes. The process can be repeated several times, adding to the richness of the designs, creating layering after each different coloured dye bath. The wax is removed with boiling water and chemicals are added to keep the dyes fast.

The money raised through the sale of their early batiks assisted with the successful claim for Alyawarr and Anmatyerr freehold title over the Utopia Pastoral Lease in 1979. In addition to providing a source of income, the batiks were also used in conjunction with ceremony, as evidence of the women's ownership of Country, during the land claim hearings.

During the 1980s, awareness of the Utopia Women's Batik Group artwork grew and in 1987, Rodney Gooch became the art coordinator.

He was working at Central Australian Media Association and had a vision for big projects. Soon the Holmes à Court family became patrons and by 1988 the women began to paint. The shift from batik to canvas was interesting in that the skills that the women had developed using the Indonesian hot wax tool were then used on paintings. This led to a very distinctive style of work, with fine, fluid lines and lots of layering, most notably the work of Emily Kame Kngwarreye, who is considered one of the most prominent and successful artists in Australian history. Printmaking was another method of artistic expression for this group of women.

For more detailed information, look at the Museums Victoria Collections website <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/14272>

## IKUNTJI

Papunya Tula field workers travelled to Ikuntji up until 1986 to deliver and pick up paintings from a few artists who were living there. It is 40 kilometres from Papunya and there are strong family connections.

Marina Strocchi visited Ikuntji in January 1992 and did some informal workshops using inks and screen printing, with the support of Northern Territory Open College. Ester and Daisy Jugadai befriended her as did the Multa family. Ester and Daisy visited Marina in Melbourne for a week later in 1992 and then she was invited back in August of that year to start working with the women. There was an empty building which had never been used, and some capital works funding in the bank. The community expressed a desire to paint "like they do at Papunya". Marina was employed on a Council wage which had previously been allocated to employ an electrician. She travelled to the community with her partner, Wayne Eager, who is an artist and had useful experience as he was a

founding member of Roar Studios, which was the first artist run gallery in Australia, established in 1982 in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria.

The women and men started to paint. There was also screen printing of t-shirts and fabrics, but from the very start painting took on its own momentum. The Ikuntji artists use elements of abstraction and patterning in their work. They are distinguished by not having a "house style" as can be seen in the publication *Ikuntji: Paintings from Haasts Bluff 1992–1994*<sup>3</sup>.

In the artworks you will see all the principles of design such as balance (symmetry and asymmetry), line, shape and colour. Marlee Napurrula and Mitjili Napurrula, through their use of repetition of lines and shapes, create highly patterned works with a strong sense of cohesion. Both artists have abstracted the elements in their work and they use contrasting colours or tones to make their work more dynamic.

Marlee Napurrula's paintings used a riot of colours and randomly placed motifs. Mitjili Napurrula's work used repetitive motifs of trees which have evolved over the years. At times she worked with a large motif, and at other times she reduced the size and works on the patterning element to create her distinctive works. Daisy Napaltjarri Jugadai also used pattern, but in a more illustrative manner. Through the repetition of trees, clouds, grasses and hills, her distinctive and descriptive works also pay homage to Albert Namatjira, who once lived and painted in her community.

## PAPUNYA TULA WOMEN<sup>4</sup>

A personal account by Marina Strocchi

The people at Haasts Bluff have many relatives at Kintore and there is regular travel between the communities. Through their frequent trips to Haasts Bluff, many of the older women from Kintore saw the activities at the Ikuntji Art Centre there, which I had been employed to establish in August 1992. They befriended me whilst visiting their relatives who lived there, and I always enjoyed going to Kintore where there was a lively atmosphere and a strong group of elders who vigilantly worked to keep their lives as stable as possible. It was a contrast to the turmoil of life at Haasts Bluff, so close to Alice Springs.

On my first trip to Kintore in December 1992, I saw the Ngintaka Women's Centre and was struck by the bold designs covering all four outer walls. They were tentative yet strong, open and beckoning images, the sort of aesthetic that I would dream of seeing. The murals had the familiar desert symbols – 'U' shapes, sequential dots, circles and windbreaks, often seen in contemporary Western Desert paintings. These



**Wintjiya Napaltjarri**  
(born c.1932 – 2014)

Pintupi language group

*Untitled*, 2005, acrylic on linen, 168 x 46 cm.

Photograph by Andrew Curtis.

© Wintjiya Napaltjarri | Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd

symbols are found in rock art, ground paintings, body paintings, sand drawings, and the sacred objects that hold the power of the law; an ancient law that gives structure to the lives of Pintupi people.

The murals were possibly the first attempts in acrylic paint by these Pintupi women, who were born into a nomadic life that had, until recently, changed very little for thousands of years. It was the sincerity of every stroke and dot in the murals that gave them intensity. Two elderly ladies, Tjunkiya Napaltjarri and Wintjiya Napaltjarri, held my hands and walked me around, talking, singing and gesturing to the murals. I felt as if I was being woven into the moment. It was a very gentle way to make friends. They were the mothers of Turkey Tolson, who was chairperson of Papunya Tula at the time. The next time I visited Kintore the murals had gone. They had been painted over out of respect for a woman who had died. There was a 1950s feel to the Ngintaka Women's Centre, which was managed in the early 1990s by Sister Frankie. Cling-wrapped plastic bowls of murky food were delivered to the oldies including the then frail Charlie Tarawa Watuma (Handbag) Tjungurrayi. Sister Frankie also coordinated the shower program. There were no regular art and craft programs being run there, though the women were always busy in their camps making *ininti* seed necklaces and spindles of hair string, and carving often unidentifiable wooden creatures with *punu* markings. For some time, there was talk of an opening ceremony for the Ikuntji Art Centre in Haasts Bluff and, in April 1993, a group of about sixty women from Kintore, Papunya and Mt Liebig arrived there. The women made camp at the back of the centre and sang and danced for three days and four nights. In between, they queued with their clothes and blankets to use the washing machine, a rare commodity in the Western Desert. I requested the Haasts Bluff Council to kill a bullock; it was, after all, a celebration.

In a quiet moment I sat with some women from Kintore, and the gregarious and exuberant Nyurapayia Nampitjinpa pulled out a very neat piece of pre-primed cotton duck from her lightweight shoulder bag. It was roughly two metres square unfolded. I stepped back to take in the Jurassic-era version of what I call a 'tourist' painting: gigantic honey ants, witchetty grubs, snakes, lizards and footprints, a cacophony with the lot, painted with scrounged bits of muddy acrylic. Nyurapayia left it with me. I sold it, flattened out and wiped clean, to the schoolteachers on her behalf. Nyurapayia is a storyteller, with larger-than-life facial expressions and voice; she is also quite a comic. She gave me a theatrical account of her first sighting of Europeans. As a child, she was playing on a sand hill around the Tjukurla area when she heard thunder coming from the other side of the dune. She clambered up to see what the noise was. Seeing what she thought were two huge animals leaving strange

unbroken tracks, she ran back to her family, terrified – she had sighted two trucks driving by.

In the 1990s, many women in the surrounding desert communities were painting daily within an art enterprise, but not at Kintore. As seen in *Three Echoes*, there were the occasional paintings done by women at Papunya Tula. At that time, Papunya Tula was known as a Men's Company, though there were a handful of women living at Papunya who did paint for the company. There was one that Wintjiya Napaltjarri did in 1986 and some works by women at Papunya through the 1980s and 1990s. The women from Kintore wanted to paint. Born in the bush and deeply imbued with customary law and culture, their enthusiasm to paint could be interpreted as a natural extension of maintaining their cultural responsibilities. During meetings at Kintore to discuss a combined Haasts Bluff/Kintore canvas project, the senior women would break into song and speak of their Country and the associated *tjukurrpa* which was to be painted; they would jump at any opportunity to sing, dance, go hunting, gather seeds, or go for a picnic to see Country or visit relatives. I secured funding from the Aboriginal Development Unit of the Education Department and letters of support from the two community Councils and from Faye Bell, then manager of Papunya Tula Artists, and the Kintore/Haasts Bluff Canvas Project unfolded in two painting workshops for women who are now some of the most highly regarded female artists of that era. The first was held behind the Kintore women's mountain for a week in June 1994; the second took place at Haasts Bluff for two weeks in the second quarter of 1995. During the first camp, Wintjiya was nearly blind; she perched herself on the edge of the three-metre square of Napaltjarri canvas and gave instructions. Tjunkiya's constant companion, she was loyal and warm, with a dry wit. Speaking virtually no English, she managed a perfectly mimicked "See you tomorrow". The inquisitive peering squint that Wintjiya developed when she was blind has never left her. Tjunkiya also had failing vision with advanced cataracts, but soldiered on. In late August 1994, at least four people from Kintore had cataracts removed: Pinta Pinta Tjapanangka, Benny Tjapaltjarri, and Tjunkiya and Wintjiya. They flew on the air force cargo plane known as the 'army plane' and returned like celebrities, flash in their 1970s retro clothing and black wrap-around sunglasses, smiles all around. I happened to be at Kintore after returning from Tjukurla where there had been a huge gathering for law and culture. The community was excited and happy for them and perceived their restored vision as a miracle. They had been given a new lease on life and a future as painters.

## PAINTING AS A THERAPEUTIC ACT

Painting and art making helps those people who have experienced trauma. In First Nations communities people experience many types of traumas; intergenerational trauma from the sudden and harsh changes that came from colonisation as well as epigenetic, acute and chronic trauma.

Research developments in neuroscience show that creative pursuits are beneficial in communities where there has been or is trauma. If you spend time getting absorbed in a creative activity that takes you outside of your normal mindset and get into what is called the "zone", you will come away with a feeling of well-being. Your neuropathways have been strengthened in a positive way. You feel refreshed and stronger, lighter. You have expressed yourself in a non-verbal way, which is beneficial as so often it is extremely hard to speak about trauma because it is so upsetting, and perhaps you don't really understand it well enough to speak about it. Painting is often accompanied by singing of the *tjukurrpa* which relates to the painting. It is a form of cultural maintenance which further adds to the sense of well-being. First Nations communities often miss out on the level of health care afforded to those people who live in big cities. Art Centres provide a place for people to gather and work as a community. People who are painting or creating with the support of the art centre are working on their mental health as well as creating meaningful employment. The forum that has been built by First Nations artists is one where they can maintain the traditions of the past as well as creating a link to the wider world.

1 Haasts Bluff

2 Alice Springs

3 Marina Strocchi, *Ikuntji: Paintings from Haasts Bluff 1992–1994*. Published by IAD Press, Northern Territory, 1995, ISBN 094965986X

4 Marina Strocchi, 'Family Connections – Walungurru Women in Action', *Irrititja Kuwarri Tjungu (Past and Present Together): Fifty Years of Papunya Tula Artists*, Edited by Fred Myers and Henry Skerritt, January 2022, ISBN: 9781735326924

# A DEEPER LOOK AT THREE IKUNTJI ARTISTS

## NARPUTTA NANGALA

c.1933–2010

Narputta Nangala was born around 1933 at Karrkurutintja (Lake MacDonald), south-west of Kintore. Her Country is Lampintja, a claypan depression close to the south of Lake MacDonald.

*“My Country is Lampintja, kurrkati (sand goanna) tjukurrpa (dreaming) and my father’s Country is Karrkurutintja, kuniya kutjarra (two carpet snakes, two brothers, two tjangalas) tjukurrpa. The Country also belongs to my grandparents. I was born at Karrkurutintja, beside the lake. My father’s name was Talaku Tjampitjinpa. My brothers were Tiwil Tjangala and Mulgilnga Tjangala. My grandmother’s name was Mantuwa Nungurrayi and my grandfather was Tiwil Tjangala.”*

Narputta Nangala  
*Ikuntji: Paintings from Haasts Bluff*

Narputta was quick to take up painting when the Ikuntji Women’s Centre opened at Haasts Bluff in August 1992, later to be renamed as the Ikuntji Art Centre. Narputta excelled at an original mode of expression to paint her *tjukurrpa*. She referred often to the Country of her ancestors; her father’s Country and her mother’s Country. Narputta would sing while she painted her complex works that came from the heart, expressing her love of Country and love of culture.

“I got a lotta stories.”

I remember Narputta being preoccupied with “looking after”. She would remind me that she was “looking after” me, I would reply “I am looking after you, too” which she would reply with, “You gotta look after me, you’re my daughter”.

As well as a daily painting routine, Narputta looked after 17 grandchildren, most of whom lived with her, and numerous family members who would orbit closely around her. There are many demands on a Pintupi woman who lives on the frontline of two cultures. There was always family to “find out” about in hospital. Much time is spent travelling to “sorry business” or funerals.

Painting was always a positive action to return to after such trips. It seemed to make her strong as well as keeping her *tjukurrpa* front and foremost of the conversation. Narputta would sing while she painted, and sometimes cast a rueful eye at paintings that were rolled up to be sent away.

The hallmark of a dedicated painter is someone who really extends in one’s work. This was Narputta. She has produced series after series of works on linen and on paper. She would develop an idea and paint her way through it and around it, then abandoning it to take a fresh angle and start again with a new series of paintings.

After returning from a trip to her Country, Karrkurutintja, her level of inspiration was high. The paintings poured out of her as did the songs and the soulful looks at her canvases. The sincerity with which Narputta painted was a reflection of how she saw her family and Country. She was a strong woman with “a lot of strong dreaming”.

Narputta was married to Timmy Jugadai who painted in the mid-1970s and intermittently in the 1980s for Papunya Tula. Her two brothers, Riley Major and George Tjangala, also painted for Papunya Tula.

She was somehow separated from her family when she was a little girl. As a young girl she and Riley Major travelled back and forth to Jay Creek from Haasts Bluff, collecting dingo scalps to trade. She also supervised moving a herd of goats from a community east of Alice Springs to Haasts Bluff, as well as spending some time at The Bungalow in Alice Springs. Her children by birth were Johnny, Suparkra, Cynthia, Sonia, Jill, Daisy and Molly. Narputta was also an expert *ngangkari* (traditional healer).

Narputta was a key figure in the “Kintore/Haasts Bluff *Minyma Tjukurrpa* Big Canvas Project” which I facilitated between 1993–1995.



## LONG TOM TJAPANANGKA

b. Lupul 01.11.1929 d. Papunya 18.07.2006

"Lupul, I bin born along this place."<sup>i</sup> A place rich in bush tucker, punctuated by gentle, rolling sand hills and laced with desert oaks and native grasses, there are many subtle signs that the Ngaatjatjarra people used this place well. They call this place home. Lupul, south-west of Alice Springs, near the Western Australian border, was Long Tom's other name.

Long Tom was a boy when he made his first long journey by foot from Lupul to Areyonga, then a place "little bit, no building"<sup>ii</sup> (a mission ration depot had been established there, west of Alice Springs). He and his family walked back to their Country a couple of times. At some point Long Tom's parents were murdered at Areyonga and he was "grown up" by (the late) Inkitjili Nampitjinpa, who he referred to as "mother". Long Tom went through the law at Lupul and became a man. (He continued in the law and became a senior man.)

Long Tom went to live at Haasts Bluff, where he had family. He spent a year doing prison time with some other young fellows, fencing around the Haasts Bluff area. "We bin cause a lot of trouble. Kungka [women] business."<sup>iii</sup> Haasts Bluff had been established as a cattle station in 1954 and soon Long Tom was working as a drover and tracker.

Long Tom was asked to train and work as a policeman at Harts Range and later at Alice Springs. It was about this time that he was sent out to catch an armed white criminal who was hiding in the desert. Long Tom had nothing more than a length of rope. He tracked him, waited for him to go to sleep, caught him and brought him back to the other policemen.

He returned to Haasts Bluff to work as a stockman and to live with Marlee Napurrula. They walked from Haasts Bluff south to Tarrawarra, taking their swag, billycan and water, to be "new married". They had two children, Ena Napangati Fly (born 1957) and Freddie Tjapangati Fly (1962–2006).

In 1956 Long Tom and some others made a camel journey to Kintore<sup>iv</sup>, where they met relatives known as the "new Pintupi", who later settled at Papunya. Long Tom and a companion walked several hundreds of kilometres from Tinki Rockhole, near Kintore, to return to Haasts Bluff.

The Papunya settlement was established in 1959. There were "just about a thousand people...Pintupi people...just come back from bush"<sup>v</sup>. Long Tom worked as a butcher at Five Mile (near Papunya) and then as a cook at Papunya. By this stage he had Mitjili Napurrula as his second wife. It was not long before he was back in the police force, at Papunya this time.

Anthropologist Fred Myers<sup>vi</sup> speaks of Long Tom in the 1970s: "He kept somewhat apart from the others, with his clean trousers and RM Williams' boots, quite the village councillor and probably not too closely identified with 'the Pintupi' as the wild mob they were seen to be at Papunya."

The first time I saw Long Tom was when he, Mitjili, Marlee and her second husband Brian walked Indian-file in front of our house at Haasts Bluff. That was early 1993. We were having cups of tea on "cheque day" and someone said, "Look, there goes Long Tom, Ena's father, 'all in black.'" I had not heard of someone's first wife having a second husband until then.

Sometime after this, they all walked into the Ikuntji Art Centre where I was busy at work. Long Tom was tall, with a slim build, silver-white Buffalo Bill moustache and long silver-white hair poking out from under his black cowboy hat. He looked like a character from a Sergio Leone film. Mitjili, with a demure Mona Lisa smile, and Marlee, strong and witty, wanted to paint. So they started. Long Tom was not interested in painting at this stage. "Wiya, wiya [no, no], too dangerous." He recalled the trouble at Papunya when the men started painting in 1971 and initially used secret sacred imagery.

Soon they settled down at Haasts Bluff. They had been living on the edge of Alice Springs at a place called "The Block". Long Tom took great interest in the paintings being done around him, and mentioned having seen Albert Namatjira at Haasts Bluff in the 1950s. Long Tom was a lively character, full of enthusiasm and new ideas. He often told funny stories about his life and drew emus in the sand. One day Wayne Eager<sup>vii</sup> said, "Why don't you do them on canvas". Many months later, on a Sunday morning, he came around and said, "You better get me canvas, boy, right now". He would have been 64 years old then.

By Monday morning he had done his first work, *Tjakipirri kutjarra tjukurrpa* (Two Emus Story). This was November 1993. The next day this was followed by two landscapes, *Pulikamu watiya* (Trees and hills), where his bold shapes appear representing the mountains. His use of flat, painterly shapes and strong, bright colour was signature from the start.

On Christmas Day 1993, Long Tom wanted more canvas. The cupboards were bare and there was only a slim scrap of cotton duck. He used the shape to paint a long, animated mountain range west of Papunya, *Irantji*. The range was framed by sparkling yellow and white matted dotting, with the addition of red to denote the foreground. He managed a flat perspective but maintained a sense of foreground and background.

By June 1994 he had two major works in the Australian National Gallery. Long Tom had an appetite to paint. "Painting makes me happy; I was sitting down lonely before." There were long periods of time when Long Tom would paint every day. He was also keen to tell his life story for a book we were doing, turning up at odd hours with an additional anecdote.

Long Tom created a way of referring to his Country and its embedded mythology through a personal, lyrical narrative, without employing traditional symbols, therefore avoiding any danger. Long Tom's work captured the essence of the desert from which he came. His paintings reflect his acute observation and sharp wit, combining a playful naïve quality with sophisticated minimalism.

His work was first exhibited at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi in March 1994, in Ikuntji's inaugural group show. During the time that he worked at Haasts Bluff, Long Tom had three solo shows in Melbourne, Victoria (Niagara Galleries) and one at the Gold Coast, Queensland (Art Galleries Schubert).

On the evening of his first solo show, he said many times how truly happy he was to see his first body of work up on the walls of the white gallery space. That night we booked into a large Victorian hotel, with long corridors and a bathroom down the hall. He and Mitjili were in the room next to mine. In the morning there was a knock at the door. "I bin get lost last night...I bin knock'em about all the doors, I bin frighten'em properly all the whitefellas." He couldn't stop laughing and retelling the story.

The National Gallery of Victoria acquired a seminal work, *Ayers Rock and Tarrawarra*, in 1995. It is sublime, evoking a searing hot, dry desert landscape and his ancient connection to it. The day Long Tom knocked on the door (another Sunday in 1994) and said "Come and look" is etched in my memory. To see a work of such power within minutes of it being finished, still wet, was a privilege. Wayne Eager and I were bursting with excitement. We told him that it bore a striking similarity to the work of an American painter by the name of Rothko. On a trip to Melbourne, we visited Judith Ryan at the National Gallery of Victoria and we all went to see the Rothko artwork. He placed his hand on the work as a mark of deep respect. "I know this one, American one."

He won the 16th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards in 1999. On accepting the award, he danced a light-hearted jig with joy. He had his cataracts removed that year and gradually spent more time in town with a number of private dealers.

Long Tom had a marvellous sense of the ridiculous. He found the strange little city lap dogs very entertaining; he would imitate their walks and somehow mimic their personalities. He even saw the humour in the "toy" food and cutlery on the airplanes he flew on to attend his exhibition openings.

In 1997, Long Tom and Mitjili had left the tiny Haasts Bluff outstation Autilly because of the death of a dear friend. They were living in the breezeway of our house. He did not speak or eat for days and became sick with scurvy. I was fussing over what he could eat. "Don't worry about me, *yuntalpa* [daughter], there's plenty more people coming behind."

i Marina Strocchi, *Ikuntji: Paintings from Haasts Bluff* (first edition), IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1994.

ii Ibid.

iii Ibid.

iv Kintore (Walungurru) was established as part of the move back to Country in 1982. Referring to Kintore in 1956 in *Ikuntji: Paintings from Haasts Bluff*, Long Tom says: "Kintore, no settlement, no road, nothing...proper nothing only desert".

v Marina Strocchi, *Ikuntji: Paintings from Haasts Bluff* (first edition), IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1994.

vi American anthropologist living at Yayayi (west of Papunya) between 1973 and 1975.

vii My husband. Together we established the Ikuntji Art Centre at Haasts Bluff in August 1992.

## DAISY NAPALTJARRI JUGADAI

1955–2008

Daisy painted a lush landscape, fresh after recent rain. Through her eyes, the desert was a tapestry in full bloom; a fantastic technicolour world. Dry creek beds and stands of trees and bushes sparkle with life; an intense palette and keen attention to detail were her tools. These paintings were of places the artist loved and visited throughout her early life, her Country around Haasts Bluff. Daisy was familiar with the work of Albert Namatjira and the local stockmen who used watercolours and board so deftly and, for me, although she used acrylic on linen and painted on a large scale, her work relates to this school of painting. Daisy's best paintings are infinitely complex in colour and structure, though are often referred to as naïve.

Born at Haasts Bluff, Daisy grew up in this Central Desert community and at a nearby camp known as Five Mile, spending her early school days at the government settlement of Papunya. The painter Narputta Nangala Jugadai is Daisy's mother and her father was the late Timmy Tjungurrayi Jugadai, who was head stockman during the cattle years of Haasts Bluff. Daisy married Kelly Multa and lived at the outstation of Kungkayunti (Brown's Bore) until his early death, when she and their daughter Agnes moved back east to Haasts Bluff.

I met Daisy at Haasts Bluff in January 1992. She sat with me on a dusty doorstep and flicked through my recent gouache works. Using my paints, she completed an Ernabella-style floral motif. Later she studiously added fluffy white clouds to my blue expansive skies. I still have the sketchbook. These clouds made their appearance in many of Daisy's paintings; they take on different forms, sometimes gentle, sometimes perplexed.

Not long after meeting Daisy I returned to my St Kilda flat in Victoria where I received daily phone calls from Haasts Bluff. Often it was Daisy, juggling coins, and cutting out after the beeps. I would ring back. After years of only radio communication, the public phone at Haasts Bluff had recently been installed. The new phone box had three phone numbers scrawled on the wall and one of them was mine. So the friendship began.

Daisy promised to come and visit me. One phone call – which didn't cut out – was from an Alice Springs bureaucrat. He asked me what was planned for the Haasts Bluff women's study tour of Melbourne. I assumed that he was referring to Daisy's visit, so I quickly ran through the names of a few art galleries and museums.

Daisy arrived with four family members. They slept in front of the art deco fireplace, which doubled as a barbecue in the cold winter. We completed a tour

of artists' studios and exhibitions and, of course, some shopping. There were more phone calls after the group's return to the desert. The next 'official' communication was from the community adviser at Haasts Bluff. He told me that there had been a community meeting and I was invited to work there. Daisy and her late sister Ester had lobbied for me to be employed to help set up the Ikuntji Art Centre. The community at Haasts Bluff was in constant chaos, but Daisy came to work every day. Her persistence and enthusiasm to paint gave the very early days of the art centre some stability and continuity.

Daisy thrived with her daily painting routine and loved a big canvas. Much time was spent laying the structure in blocks of colour: Naples yellow creek beds, burnt orange hills and a range of sienna browns and oxides to mark in the Country. A day would pass while Daisy mixed up to a dozen greens to meticulously record the vegetation of specific sites, aided by a trimmed, round brush. Fine details such as pollen were added with a matchstick. The background sky colour was often reworked in the last stages of the painting; the final touches were always the clouds.

Daisy's love of the telephone continued, and through regular calls to the Elcho Island public phone box she made a 'friend'. An opportunity arose for Daisy to travel to Darwin, which enabled her to meet her telephone buddy. Greeted on the tarmac by a crowd of his relatives, she was whisked off to the island to be married. This led to a life of coming and going which ultimately took its toll on Daisy's work and health.

In 1993 Daisy was awarded a Northern Territory Women's Fellowship, and in 2000 she was a section winner at the 17th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards in Darwin. Daisy's paintings were in high demand; she is well represented in both public and private collections and, not surprisingly, members of her family have been influenced by her unique way of painting Country. Extended family and friends gathered at her farewell, for which the little corrugated iron church at Haasts Bluff overflowed. Slow, sad Luritja hymns, a crackling microphone and the tragic Casio galvanised the atmosphere, as it does at every funeral for someone from the desert who has died before their time.

# RESPONDING & MAKING ACTIVITIES

Look at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Map of Indigenous Australia to identify what Country you are on. <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>

Research the term 'Country' and what this means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Sit quietly with an artwork in the touring exhibition, *Three Echoes – Western Desert Art*, and look at it for a period of time. Think about the artist's use of colour, line and composition. How does this quiet contemplation make you feel?

If you were presenting a guided tour of this exhibition, how would you describe your chosen artwork to your audience? Think about the different elements and composition of the artwork?

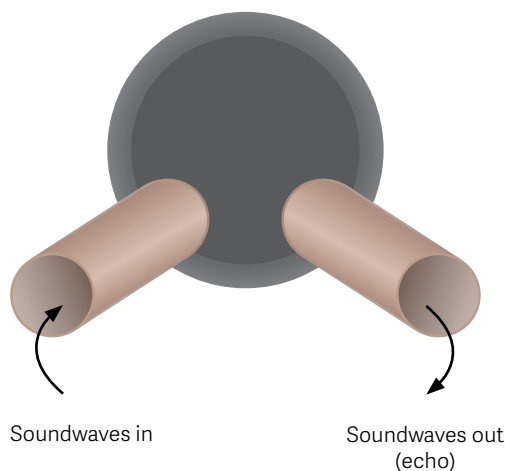
Song and dance are important ways of telling stories for Australian First Nations Peoples. In his essay (on pages 7–9 of this Education Resource), *Three Echoes'* Curator, Djon Mundine OAM FAHA, said that he asked Yuendumu senior artist Dolly Granites to sing of her painted subject. Why might he have done this? Discuss.

Write a poem about something important to you. It could be about your friends or family, favourite hobby or place. Then try performing this to a friend. Compared to reading, does singing the words of your poem change their meaning or make you feel differently?

Make a drawing of your song/poem. Think about the thickness and colours of your lines to evoke different movements or feelings.

Give each student two slips of paper and ask them to look at and contemplate the same selected artwork for one minute. At the end of the minute, ask them to write down a word, or series of words, in response to the artwork on each piece of paper. Place the slips of paper into a hat. Randomly draw out five slips and arrange the words/phrases to create a poem. Have one of the students read the poem out loud. Try replacing one of the slips with a different one drawn from the hat. Do these new/introduced words alter the meaning of the poem? Ask the students if this activity makes them feel or respond differently about the artwork? Discuss.

This exhibition is based on ideas of 'Echoes'. Try making an echo in your classroom by using a cake baking tin and two cardboard tubes. Prop the cake tin up so that it is vertical on a table. Next, position a cardboard tube on a slight angle, facing the tin. Fix it in place with some sticky-tape or 'Blu Tack'. Place the second tube angled the opposite way, but also facing the baking tin and fix in place. Have one student place their ear against one of the tubes while another student speaks quietly into the other tube. The soundwaves created by speaking travel through the tube, bounce off the baking tin and then travel back through the other tube, creating an echo!



Research 'echolocation' and discuss with your classmates how this occurs in nature.

Use a map or the internet to locate the Western Desert Region of Australia.

Research the history of the Papunya Tula Art Centre, Inkuntji Art Centre and Utopia Art Centre. Select one of these and write a 200–300 word article for an international arts journal focussed on Western Desert Art.

Artists from Papunya and Haasts Bluff predominantly speak the language of Pintupi. Download the Pintupi language chart from the Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre's website <https://wangka.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Pintupi-alphabet-chart-v1.1.pdf>

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Look at the groups of artworks in the *Three Echoes* exhibition by Papunya Tula Men and by Papunya Tula Women. What differences or similarities can you see? Discuss.

Narputta Nangala Jugadai's painting, *Tjaluka Tjampitjinpa (artist's father) at Karrkurutintja*, 1997, is the only work in this exhibition to contain a human figure. Looking at this work, consider the relationship of the man (her father) to the landscape, to Country. Consider the significance of the man's position within the composition. Discuss what this might mean.

Kinship is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Think about the importance of family and your connections to family, e.g. your parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. Choose a colour that you think best reflects your family. On a printed outlined map of Australia, place dots in this colour to mark where your family is located on the map. Are these dots close together or are they spread apart? Use your imagination and try joining these dots to make a picture. What does your picture represent?

Research the artist Long Tom Tjapanangka. When did he start painting?

Compare the work of Long Tom Tjapanangka with the work of American artist Mark Rothko. Make lists of the similarities and differences you can find.

Daisy Napaltjarri Jugadai's painting, *The Mereenie Range*, 2000 (image on page 22), uses brightly coloured repetitive shapes and patterns to depict the native flora and landscape of her Country. Look up images of the Mereenie Range on the internet and use these as inspiration to create your own landscape. Try to suggest the topography and landscape's details rather than create a literal interpretation.

Long Tom Tjapanangka also painted the Mereenie Range. Find his painting, *Mereenie Range with Sacred Tree and Snake*, 1996, in the *Three Echoes* exhibition, or look at the image on page 22. Contrast this with Daisy Napaltjarri Jugadai's painting, *The Mereenie Range*, 2000. Discuss the differences between these works and why the artists may have chosen to depict the landscape in these ways. Consider the time of year, e.g. one may be painted in summer and the other painted in spring when the desert's native flora blooms; the artists' use of perspective; composition; etc.

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Gather different coloured plant leaves, flowers and bark from your garden or school and, working in pairs, arrange these on the ground to create an artwork. Consider how you group colours and arrange different shaped foliage to create patterns. Photograph your finished artwork and collate this with your classmates' photographs to share as a PowerPoint presentation.



**Narputta Nangala Jugadai**

(born c.1933 – 2010)

Pintupi/Pitjantjatjara language groups  
*Tjaluka Tjampitjinpa (artist's father) at  
Karrkurutintja*, 1997, acrylic on linen,  
122 x 167 cm.

Photograph by Mark Ashkanasy.  
© Narputta Nangala Jugadai | Copyright Agency,  
2022



**Long Tom Tjapanangka**

(born 1929 – 2006)

Pintupi/Ngaatjatjarra language groups

*Mereenie Range with Sacred Tree and Snake*, 1996, acrylic on linen, 152 x 198 cm.

Photograph by Mark Ashkanasy.  
© Long Tom Tjapanangka | Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd



**Daisy Napaltjarri Jugadai**

(born 1955 – 2008)

Pintupi/Luritja/Warlpiri/Pitjantjatjara language groups

*The Mereenie Range*, 2000, acrylic on linen, 71 x 168 cm.

Photograph by Mark Ashkanasy.  
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In the exhibition find Joy Petyarre's two etchings, both titled *Pencil Yam*, 1997, or look at the images on page 24. One is a line etching and the other uses aquatint to create a tonal effect. List other similarities and differences you can find between these two works.

Fold an A3-size piece of paper into quarters and make a line drawing of a natural object e.g. leaf, seedpod, shell, flower etc. in each section using the instructions below.

Create a line drawing using a 2B pencil	Create a line drawing using a paint brush
Create a line drawing using charcoal	Create a line drawing using a warm and a cool colour crayon

In groups, discuss what effect the different materials made to your line when drawing. Does using a different material create a different mood or make you feel differently about the object?

Now try the same exercise but, instead of using line, use blocks of tone or colour to draw your object. How does this change the overall look of your finished drawings? Discuss.

Create a tonal drawing using a 2B pencil	Create a tonal image using a paint brush
Create a tonal drawing using charcoal	Create a tonal drawing using a warm and a cool colour crayon



**Joy Petyarre**

(born c.1965)

Anmatyerre language group

*Pencil Yam*, 1997, limited edition etching, 21.5 x 20.5 cm (image).

© Joy Petyarre I  
Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd



**Joy Petyarre**

(born c.1965)

Anmatyerre language group

*Pencil Yam*, 1997, limited edition etching, 24.5 x 21 cm (image).

© Joy Petyarre I  
Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd



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Select one work in the *Three Echoes* exhibition which shows an aerial view (view from above) of the landscape, and a second work which shows a horizon line. What visual clues do you have that both artworks are of the landscape? Why do think each of the artists has chosen to represent the landscape in these ways? Discuss with your classmates.

Imagine you are flying over your school and looking down on the buildings and students. Paint an aerial view of what you imagine your school looks like. Think about what colours and shapes you would use to represent different buildings, roads, pathways, trees, playground, handball courts, seats etc.

Research historical and contemporary artists' representations of the landscape e.g. artworks by John Constable, Vincent van Gogh, David Hockney, Ansel Adams, Andy Goldsworthy, Arthur Streeton, Fred Williams, Lucy Culliton, Judy Watson, Clarice Beckett, Grace Cossington Smith. Select three artists' works from your research and discuss:

- How has each artist chosen to represent or respond to the landscape? What ideas might the artists be trying to communicate?
- Do these works capture a particular moment in time? If yes, what visual clues do the artists provide?
- What are the similarities and what are the differences between each of these works?

Thinking about the works in *Three Echoes*, discuss with your classmates the importance and/or significance of landscape for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists.

In class, ask each student to close their eyes and to think about an outdoor location that means something to them. Prompt them to recall as many details as possible e.g. what they were doing there; whether it was hot or cold; who was with them; what was in the foreground, middle ground and background. Then ask the students to open their eyes and to draw their recollections of this place. Display the drawings so that the class can view each other's works.

Look at different cultures that use symbols in their art e.g. Egyptian, ancient Greece and Inca cultures. Discuss the importance of cultural symbols to convey stories and to record histories. Create your own symbols to make an artwork that tells the story of 'you'.

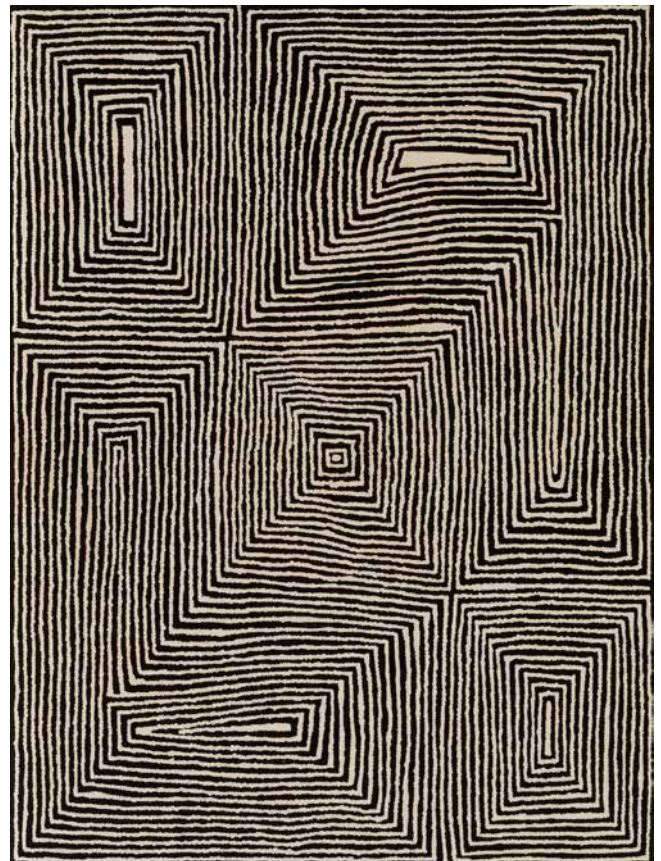
Think of a route you regularly take to go to school, the shops, or to a sporting activity. Think about how you might communicate this journey using lines and

symbols and make a drawing of this. Show it to your classmates to see if they can figure out where you are going to and from.

Think about how artists use geometry, using shapes to create new shapes and to form patterns. Cut pieces of coloured card or paper into different geometric shapes and arrange these to create an abstracted landscape. How does using geometric shapes influence your creative processes? Discuss.

Next, paste your geometric/abstracted landscape onto a sheet of paper, 20 x 20 cm square. Using strips of card or paper 10 cm wide, attach all of your classmates' geometric squares/artworks in a grid formation to make a paper quilt. Display this in a public area of your school to inspire discussion and share with other students.

Compare the work *Untitled*, 2002, by Elizabeth Marks Nakamarra with the work of Op Art artists like Bridget Riley or Victor Vasarely. Discuss the similarities and differences of these works. What happens when you look at these works for a period of time?



**Elizabeth Marks Nakamarra**  
(born c.1935 – 2019)

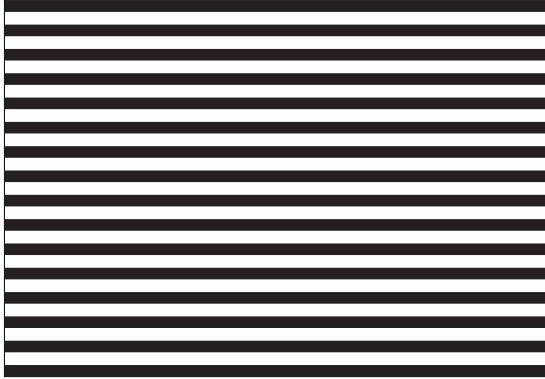
Pintupi/Luritja/Warlpiri language groups

*Untitled*, 2002, acrylic on linen, 122 x 91 cm.

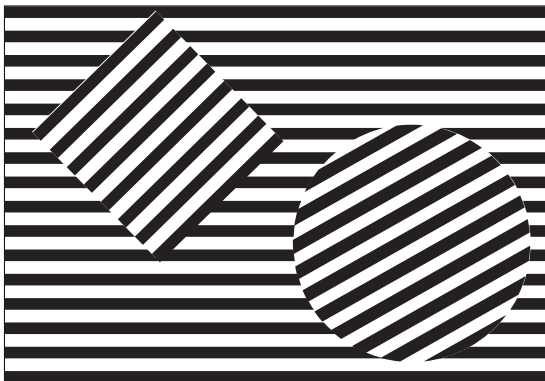
Photograph by Andrew Curtis. © Elizabeth Marks  
Nakamarra | Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd

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Make your own 'Op Art' work by drawing a series of black lines equal distance apart on a white sheet of paper. Repeat this process so that you have two pieces of paper with black lines.



Next, turn one sheet of the striped paper over and draw different shapes onto the back of the paper to cut out. You might like to trace around different objects such as a glass, a dice, bottle cap, wooden building block etc. to create different shapes, e.g. circle, triangle, square. Once these have been cut out, glue them onto the other sheet of striped paper, face-up at different angles.



Now try making your own 'Op Art' work using computer generated patterns. To increase the optical effect, try using complementary or contrasting colours.

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Emily Kame Kngwarreye is one of Australia's most significant contemporary artists. Research the evolving art practices of Emily Kame Kngwarreye from batik to painting. Write 250 words about how her art practice changed over time.

What is batik? Research its origins and connection to Western Desert Art.

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Create a batik-like artwork by drawing a picture using wax crayons on paper. Cover your paper entirely with your crayon drawing so that there is no paper showing through. Next scrunch your drawing up into a tight ball. This makes the batik-like cracks. Then carefully flatten out the paper, placing it onto a piece of newspaper. Apply a thin dark-coloured watercolour or ink wash over your drawing using a sponge or a wide paint brush. Use a clean damp sponge or paper towel to remove any excess paint. With the assistance of an adult, and while your paper is still damp, place it between two sheets of clean paper towel or blotting paper on an ironing board, and iron to flatten and dry your drawing. Make a display of your final artworks in your classroom.

Create your own Toothpaste Batik using the instructions found at [Toothpaste and Paint Batik Art Lesson Plan for Children. KinderArt.com](https://www.kinderart.com/lesson-plans/toothpaste-batik-lesson-plan-for-children)

Identify artworks in the *Three Echoes* exhibition that refer to or depict rock holes. Research the importance of rock holes for Australian First Nations peoples. Discuss.

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Research an Australian native plant that is a food source, e.g. bush plum, bush tomato, wattle seeds, yams. Draw a life cycle of this plant, first depicting it as a seed; then as the seed starts to germinate; as it grows into a plant; as it flowers; and finally depict the seed or fruit it produces.

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How are art and politics interlinked? Discuss. You might focus upon a specific area such as: how politics might influence/shape art, or how art might influence/shape politics; whether art can serve as political propaganda; or whether art has the power to create social change or influence society.

How can art be used to create a greater understanding of political and social justice issues? Discuss.

Research one of the following and discuss its importance in relation to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and 'Truth-Telling' of Australia's history:

- **1967** – The 1967 Referendum
- **1972** – Aboriginal Tent Embassy (made permanent in 1992)
- **1992** – The Mabo Decision
- **2008** – *Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples*
- **2017** – The release of 'The Uluru Statement from the Heart'

Research other artists who use painting to make a political statement e.g. Francisco Goya, Pablo Picasso, Barbara Kruger, Frida Kahlo, Banksy, Ai WeiWei, Tony Albert, Tracey Moffatt.

Research Australian First Nations activists. Select one of these people and present your findings in class.

Research the 'Fake Art Harms Culture' campaign. Discuss how fake art causes harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture.

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Make an informational poster that reflects a cultural or social justice issue. Consider, do you use symbols or words or a combination of both to communicate your message?