



Water Dreaming, August 1972

1993.0006.009

Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula

Luritja language group

Acrylic on board

This painting features a concentric circle in the center, which is surrounded by a peach-colored line filled with white dots. The painting is divided into many sections by lines filled with unique patterns of parallel lines or crosshatching. Parts of these lines balloon off into round areas filled with similar patterns. These irregular sections vary in color and pattern; some are solid colors, and some have areas of dots and hatching. A few of these peach-colored sections appear to be only partially or completely unfilled with pattern, appearing unfinished. The painting is characterized by its somewhat muted or pastel palette. Some parts of the painting have areas of gray paint that show through the layers of colored pattern.

Peter Fannin, an influential figure in the birth of the Western Desert art movement, first acquired this painting at Papunya after it was made and kept it in his personal collection for an unknown period of time. This collection was then sold to Margaret Carnegie who then sold it to John W. Kluge in 1993. This work was donated by Kluge to the museum in his initial gift in 1997.

The museum's documentation includes a transcript of scholar Howard Morphy discussing art center manager Geoffrey Bardon's description of this painting. In it, Bardon explains the meanings of some of the symbols, presumably relayed to him by Johnny himself: "Concentric circles are caves. Lines are mostly watercourses, but sometimes 'roads' and occasionally areas of 'bush tucker.'" It also says the painting depicts Kalipinypa, Johnny Warangkula's home and a common subject of his paintings.

Based on our research, we confirmed that this painting represents Kalipinypa. Heavy rainfall in 1972 inspired many local artists to paint Dreaming narratives about water. For Johnny Warangkula, these heavy floods confirmed his identity as the Rainmaker and inspired him to paint about the Lightning Ancestor who created storms at Kalipinypa. Although it is difficult to definitively know what the symbols in the painting represent, scholar Luke Scholes believes that "the large sinuous lines possibly depict either above or below ground waterways which suggests that the connected balloon like shapes might depict waterholes or soakage waters into which the water is running." However, Fred Myers disagreed, stating that the bulbous balloon shapes "...are not conventional representation of waterholes." This may indicate that these shapes actually represent vegetable or bush tucker growing in the area. Some sections of the painting did not contain as much detail as others, leading us to believe the painting may be unfinished. It is possible that leaving these spaces empty was a stylistic choice, as several other paintings by Johnny have this unfinished appearance as well. There is no way for us to know for certain, but it would be interesting to research this painting further and come to a conclusion. Analyzing the layers of paint may provide some clues, as well as extensive comparison to other works by Johnny.

The amount of detail in this painting leads us to believe it is by Johnny Warangkula. It is stylistically similar to his other water dreaming paintings during 1972, which were also very busy and full of pattern. The unusually bright color palette is common in many of his works.

The original documentation for this painting listed the date as 1972, which was confirmed by our research. The painting's subject matter is consistent with other paintings by Johnny from 1972, since the heavy rains mentioned above inspired him and many other artists to illustrate this subject. The colors used were also common in his paintings at this time, as evidenced by the shared peach hues and pastel yellows in paintings such as *Water Dreaming at Kalipinyapa* (1972) from the museum.

Bibliography

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Corresepondence:

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Dear Laura and Gauri,

Thank you for your email and your very interesting questions. First of all I should apologise for the length of a couple of my responses, too much information I know, but hopefully gives you plenty to consider. Please note that I have delved into some speculation below, but hopefully if you can respond to some of the questions I have asked, some of this speculation might make some sense.

I hope this assists you with the work you are doing. I look forward to responding any further questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Luke