



*Ice*

*Dreaming*, c. 1971

1996.0002.006

Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi (1925-99)

Pintupi language group, Kintore ranges

Synthetic polymer on Masonite

Written by Abigail Connelly

In this painting, seven concentric circles are connected by curved black lines, some of which are outlined with a layer of red paint on one or both sides. Clusters of white dots adorn the background of the painting. The artist began with a layer of red paint as a base, followed by black, white, and then another layer of red. The earthy tones illustrated in this work are also represented in a majority of other Western Desert works from this period.

The dawn of the Papunya Tula Art Movement was centered around a group of male artists, guided by Geoffrey Bardon. Bardon commissioned a variety of pieces, including at least five known works titled *Ice Dreaming* painted by Charlie Tjaruru. This is the first *Ice Dreaming* he painted and is the 82nd painting in the artist's collective portfolio. John W. Kluge purchased this work from Museum Art International in 1996 and donated the work to the University of Virginia in 1997.

Upon close inspection, this work has been attributed to Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi (1925-99), whose name is also commonly spelled as Taruru, Tarawa, Wadama and Watuma. Tjaruru was born at Tjitururrnga, near Kintore in the Northern Territory, to parents Nuulyngu Tjapaltjarri and Karntintjungulnyu Nakamarra. His family was among some of the first people to move to the Haasts Bluff area, an area that housed a prominent Lutheran ration station run by missionaries. Charlie Tjaruru was given the name "Charlie" by Dr. Charles Duguid in 1936. After his father's death, Charlie Tjaruru was raised by Tjurti Tjapaltjarri, whose daughter Pantjiya Nungurrayi began painting for Papunya Tula Artists in the mid 1990s. Tjaruru worked as a builder and dingo hunter while also continuing to take rations to people still living "out bush" in the desert. He also claimed the position of spokesmen for young Pintupi men who had migrated to Haasts Bluff after 1960. He later met Uta Uta Tjangala, a fellow artist and brother of Tjaruru's future wife, Tatali Nangala. Tjaruru worked with a small group of Aboriginal men to found Papunya Tula Artists Ltd in 1971. Tjaruru was close with Geoffrey Bardon and Andrew Crocker, both of whom assisted greatly in the exhibition and advertisement of Aboriginal works and conservation in the early years of the movement.

The white dotting in that occupies the background is interpreted as ice, or rather frost (*nyiinnga*), when literally translated from Pintupi. It is unknown how the *Ice Dreaming* story connects to the imagery depicted in the painting, or moreover how this *Ice Dreaming* painting relates to other stories depicted by this artist. Bardon suggested that the concentric circles represented are the "sit-down places" or resting areas of ancestral beings, and that the lines connecting these circles represented traveling lines. He also describes the white dotting as a

representation of spinifex grass. However, contrary to Bardon's interpretation, Fred Myers suggests that the lines and circles look more like the roots of bush potatoes, which are common in the Australian desert. The roots of bush potatoes grow in various directions, similar to the artist's rendering of the lines in Charlie Tjaruru's *Ice Dreaming*. Myers is confident that the white dotted background represent the frost. Charlie Tjaruru commonly depicted weather occurrences in his work, frequently using hail and lightning as powerful elements in his design. Both Bardon and Myers have insisted that the title of the work holds literal meaning and have affirmed that Charlie Tjaruru was aware of the existence and role of ice in local weather conditions.

The painting is currently stored at the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection. The piece has been exhibited on two separate occasions Kluge-Ruhe, but it is not being displayed at this time. In efforts to conserve the condition of the painting, this work is stored in a climate controlled facility.

## Works Cited

### Print

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### **Artworks**

Tjaruru Tjungurrayi, Charlie. *Ice Dreaming*, 1971. Kluge-Ruhe Collection, Charlottesville.

Acc. 1996.0002.006

Tjaruru Tjungurrayi, Charlie. *Dreaming Story*, 1971. Kluge-Ruhe Collection, Charlottesville.

Acc. 1993.0008.012



Location: Storage 3/Cabinet 1/Drawer 2

ARTIST: Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi

Accession Number: 1996.0002.006

Title: Ice Dreaming

Creation Date: 1971

H:11.25" x W:11"

Other number on back of frame: 96 CT 002

**MAIN QUESTION:** We know this is the first of this artist's Ice Dreaming paintings. In addition to the circles and lines being important places and travelling lines, do you think there's a chance that this could be a literal representation of ice? Margo remembered that Mt Connor is a site she remembered being associated with ice – does that ring any bells for you?

I think it is very likely that the dotting of white represents ice, or more properly, "frost." The Pintupi word he used was nyiinnga (frost) or kuwarla (which is frost, but probably derived from Arrernte). I don't think there is much "travelling" here for the frost. It is from the place. I could not be sure what features the circles represent, but the shape of the lines looks more like the roots and such of bush potato, also identified with the place. It is Tjitururrnga. That is his own country, in the Buck Hills. I don't know anything about Mt Connor. Never mentioned anything about ice dreaming or frost connection to other places. But Tjitururrnga is associated with the punishment of wrongdoing, or some sort of payback, and I wonder if the frost is part of that.