

In the Beginning: Paintings by Senior Artists of the Spinifex Arts Project

This exhibition presents the work of internationally renowned artists from the Spinifex Arts Project, a collective of Pitjantjatjara men and women living in Tjuntjuntjara, 800 miles east of Perth in the Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia. The Spinifex Arts Project began in 1997 when the artists realized that painting would be an instrumental tool in lobbying the Western Australian government to recognize their ongoing connection to their sacred Country.

The Spinifex People were among hundreds of people who were displaced from their homelands when the British government performed atomic bomb and rocket testing at Maralinga in the northwest of South Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. The Spinifex People had been relocated to Cundeelee Mission during this time, but they returned to their Country in the early 1980s and chose to settle in Tjuntjuntjara. Spinifex artists are renowned for creating large-scale, collaborative paintings—powerfully citing their Tjukurpa (ancestral stories and beliefs) and enduring connections to their land. They used these paintings as evidence in what became the first successful Native Title claim in Western Australia,

with the Federal Court awarding Native Title to the Spinifex People in 2000. As they continued to paint the collaborative canvases for which they are known, the artists also developed innovative, individual artistic practices.

Their bold, dynamic paintings depict grand narratives about specific locations within Spinifex Country and how they came into being. The narratives are shared among artists, yet each individual artist interlays their own innate connection to these sites within their work. Connections can include the place where they were born, the Tjukurpa over which they have inherited custodianship, or an obligation to care for and maintain their Country in the physical and spiritual sense.

This exhibition has been curated in consultation with senior Spinifex artists and the art center due to the deeply sensitive cultural knowledge contained within the works. In accordance with Spinifex Law, men's and women's paintings have been separated into different galleries.

Curated by Katina Davidson (Kullilli & Yuggera)

This exhibition was made possible thanks to a multi-year gift beginning in 2021 of 35 paintings from the collection of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown. A collaborative painting is also on loan from exhibition partner Fondation Opale, located in Lens, Switzerland.



Parents Program



Important Men's Stories

Among the murmuring fields of color in these paintings are the grand narratives of important men's stories. The Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa) aligns with other men's stories depicted by Kunmanara (Lawrence) Pennington (dec), Ned Grant, Patju Presley, Lennard Walker, and Noli Rictor.

Tjukurpa, as explained by the Spinifex Arts Project, is:

[The] concept for describing the formative creation where ancestral beings create the world. These beings are Anangu [Spinifex People's] ancestors, who can take the form of people, plants, or animals. They traverse the Country, forming the world we live in, creating the waterholes, the trees, the clay pans, the rocky outcrops, the sand hills, and the spinifex plains. These land formations are the physical manifestation of the creation energy and tangible evidence that this Tjukurpa is true.

The Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa narrative underpins much of the work by Spinifex artists, attesting to its importance in their Law. This Tjukurpa is so large that it covers many sites, including the "big," powerful site of Pukara. Each painting focuses on a different stage of the ancestral beings' journeys. Hidden within some of the works are serpent beings shown as they form valleys, dunes, and lakes.

Some of the paintings are flooded with detail while others are more restrained. This restraint, which allows us to focus on important points of the narrative, could also be read as an act of censorship in the depiction of powerful sites. Much of the story is not public knowledge as it is only for initiated Anangu men to know, share, and continue. The information that the artists have provided is as much as we are allowed to understand.

The Land is Law

Spinifex painting practice is rooted in collaboration and the shared Tjukurpa that each artist paints, which is evidenced in the grand, collaborative painting *Palyani Tjungula* (2018) created by eight senior men. The artists have negotiated the positioning of their Tjukurpa relative to one another, creating a metaphysical map of Spinifex territory as determined by the ancestral narratives that govern them.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—the original Australians—Western definitions and relationships between law and land ownership do not translate in the same way, especially in relation to artistic and cultural practice. As defined by prominent Kombumerri and Wakka Wakka Elder and philosopher, Adjunct Associate Professor Mary Graham, “Aboriginal Law refers to a complex relationship between humanity and land which extends to cover every aspect of life. . . . The Law is both a science and a religion, in Western terms.” Through this Aboriginal worldview, Spinifex artists share paintings of their Country, allowing outsiders a brief glimpse into their lives and culture.

The paintings in this gallery showcase the unique styles of the artists—listed in order of seniority—Simon Hogan, Mark Anderson (dec), Roy Underwood (dec), Kunmanara (Fred) Grant (dec), and Timo Hogan. Whether working alone or in collaboration, each artist uses his own color palette, techniques, forms, and textures to tell multilayered stories.

The artists have painted culturally significant sites, such as their birthplaces, as well as seasonal changes to those locations, including the brilliant, yellow blooms at Ukatatjara. The journeys of ancestral beings along songlines—or spiritual arteries that crisscross Australia—connect sites throughout Spinifex Country. Along the pathways are the sandhills, trees, and flowers depicted in these paintings.

Women's Business

In this gallery are works by senior Spinifex women artists—Inyika Estelle Hogan (dec), Kunmanara (Myrtle) Pennington (dec), Ngantiri Anne Hogan (dec), Ngalpingka Simms, and Tjaruwa Woods (dec)—many of whom were instrumental in the establishment of the Spinifex Arts Project and the beginnings of the painting movement within this community.

These women were born on their ancestral Country and have inherited custodianship of Tjukurpa that cover vast tracts of land. Many of these special places and stories are embodied in their vibrant, expressive paintings. While the artists have worked collaboratively on grand narratives, these paintings demonstrate the variety of their artistic practices, which developed over decades.

Each artist has a signature style, technique, and color palette. When the sky blue, burnt earth tones, and vibrant yellows are painted in unison, they allude to what outsiders may not otherwise see, hear, or notice: arid deserts teeming with life. Compared to the men, the women paint more freely with gestural fields of color. Some leave hints of the canvas bare while others dollop paint so thickly that it dries into tiny peaks and troughs.

The artists utilize a circular shape to depict rockholes, depressions in a rocky outcropping where rainwater collects that can be as small as a car tire. In the desert, rockholes and also soakages, places where groundwater seeps to the surface, are essential sources of hydration. They are religiously maintained, and their locations are etched into the minds-eye of each Anangu (Spinifex Person) custodian. Within these metaphysical maps of Country, scale is not important; what matters is the relation of one water source to another.

By sharing their stories—and their own deeply personal relationships to important places—these senior Spinifex artists have not only cemented the histories of their community into the art history of Australia, but of the world. They have gifted the next generation of Spinifex creatives a visual language that enables them to speak about where they come from and to tell the stories of their Elders.

FAR LEFT:

This painting depicts the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa), a story of the utmost importance to Spinifex Country that outlines the topography of the region as well as spiritual and social practices. In the story, a father and son in the form of Wanampi (Water Serpents) travel together on initiation and ceremonial business. At a place called Pukara, a group of Anangu children sneak into the camp while the father is sleeping and tease the son by saying his eyes bulge like eggs. In a fit of anger, the son kills the children and eats them one at a time. He later becomes unwell and the color of the rocks at this site are said to depict his vomit.

Kunmanara Pennington shares events that occur at Pukara, which is miil-miilpa (a dangerously sacred place). Only the details we are allowed to know of this powerful and secret story have been painted, such as the general locations of rockholes. By not oversharing or disclosing restricted information, Mr. Pennington adheres to Spinifex Law and keeps the viewer spiritually safe. He devoted decades to his art practice and over time his paintings became increasingly minimalistic with purposeful, gestural lines like those seen here.

KUNMANARA (LAWRENCE) PENNINGTON

c. 1934 – 2024

(Ulu, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Wati Kutjara Pukaralanguṛu (Two Men from Pukara) 2015

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2022

2022.0006.001

LEFT:

The Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa) is a narrative that extends across a large geographical area. In this painting, Ned Grant shares part of the story that occurs at Pukara, a site of great power and spiritual significance. The Wati Kutjara are depicted as serpents with human traits and behaviors. According to Mr. Grant, the two serpents are a father and his adult son, who was recently initiated into manhood. They are shown on their journey toward Pukara, which is represented by the large circle near their heads. Along their journey, they create formations within the land and pass wanari (mulga trees)—depicted in a similar style to those seen in Roy Underwood’s painting in the next gallery—with branches unfurling from a central trunk.

One evening during their journey, the son leaves his sleeping father and finds an Anangu family camping nearby that he attacks and eats. Upon waking, the father knows that something bad has happened overnight. He goes searching for his missing son by following his tracks, only to find him wounded. The son had been speared during the attack by a man who was attempting to save the people. The fate of the son remains unknown as that information is not publicly shared. We are left to ponder the outcome of that fateful evening at Pukara in this moody painting colored in the shades of the desert at night.

NED GRANT

Born c. 1941

(Papatatjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Wati Kutjara at Pukara 2012

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2023

2023.0012.003

In this multilayered painting, Lennard Walker shares the spiritual significance of his birthplace. The golden dotting in the background evokes the golden blooms of *kaliny-kalinypa* (honey grevillea), a flowering shrub that favors arid regions such as Spinifex Country. During the late winter to spring months, hundreds of thin petals unfold from their stalks to create conical flowers that are rich with a sweet nectar. The plant yields a popular and refreshing beverage when the nectar is mixed with water. *Kaliny-kalinypa* is associated with the site of Pukara, where the Wati Kutjara (Two Men) get energy from feasting on the flower.

The *kaliny-kalinypa* are represented in the upper left of the canvas by a central stalk around which the leaves curl. They bloom among the *waṅari* (mulga trees), one of the other plants repeatedly depicted in the painting as a circular trunk with angled branches. *Waṅari* cover most of the arid central desert of Australia. Like *kaliny-kalinypa*, they have a brilliant yellow flower when in bloom. While the flowers of *waṅari* cannot be eaten, other parts of the tree are of great use to Anangu. Their seeds can be ground into an edible paste and the hardwood of the trunk, roots, and branches is used to make tools.

LENNARD WALKER

Born c. 1946

(Tjukaltjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Kaliny-Kalinyapa (Honey Grevillea) 2006

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2024

2024.0003.003

Like sheets of rain soaking the desert, the vibrant fields of color that move across the surface of this painting represent the territory of the Nyulu Tjukurpa (Golden Bandicoot Tjukurpa). Located to the north of Spinifex Country, this area is characterized by an outcrop of smooth granite. While considered a “men’s story,” this Tjukurpa involves many men, women, and children in the form of Nyulu (Golden Bandicoots). Patju Presley is one of the custodians for this important Tjukurpa and his intimate knowledge and responsibility for his Country are mapped in this work. Mr. Presley introduced his unique style of painting to the Spinifex Arts Project in 2014, fifteen years after senior artists there started painting on canvas. Prior to this, he was a founding member of what is now Minyma Kutjara Arts Project, which was established in 2002 in Irrunytju, a community 300 miles northeast of Tjuntjuntjara.

PATJU PRESLEY

Born c. 1945

(Itaratjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Tjutalpu 2015

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2023

2023.0012.007

The site called Kamanti holds deep personal and spiritual significance for Noli Rictor and is one of his favorite subjects. The rich red and cool blue fields of shimmering color animate this site in the north of Spinifex Country, where the desert sands meet the seemingly endless sky. This magnificent diptych portrays part of the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa), the epic tale that follows the movements of a father and son who take the form of serpents. Together they traverse large expanses of land on ceremonial business. Mr. Rictor's distinctive style of dotting obscures any sensitive information in this story, which is highly secret and not shared with uninitiated outsiders. This sophisticated painting evokes pockets of arid desert overlaid with knowledge and culture that together form an intricate metaphysical map. In 2024, Mr. Rictor won the prestigious grand prize at the annual National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award (NATSIAA) for a painting of the same site.

NOLI RICTOR

Born c. 1965

(Kulinmara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Kamanti 2021

Acrylic on linen

Promised gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown

Tjaruwa Woods learned to paint on canvas by collaborating with her then husband, Mark Anderson. In time, Mrs. Woods developed a unique style of her own and had a flourishing artistic career. A collaboration between spouses is the only instance in which Spinifex men's and women's stories are told on the same canvas. Men and women artists otherwise paint in separate groups, which is how the paintings have been displayed in this exhibition.

The site of Kamanti is known for its manifestation of the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa), so it is typically interpreted by men, including Mrs. Woods' brother Noli Rictor whose painting is on view in the next gallery. However, this is a place where Mrs. Woods spent time in her childhood, so she can share some unrestricted information, including the presence of waterholes at the site. With her energetic use of texture, pattern, and vibrant color, Mrs. Woods celebrates the beauty and importance of this site while respecting the boundaries of gendered knowledge.

TJARUWA WOODS

c. 1954 – 2019

(Warutjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Kamanti 2019

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2021

2021.0010.001

Inyika Estelle Hogan began painting with the Spinifex Arts Project in 1997. While developing her individual practice, she was also a constant contributor to the collaborative women's canvases. Mrs. Hogan created this painting when she returned to the Spinifex Arts Project after a break from her artistic practice. She portrays a place called Paltatatjara, which is known for the many rockholes she has painted here in blue on fields of lilac and earthy red. Although Paltatatjara is a men's area that is secret and sacred in nature, Mrs. Hogan had certain obligations related to the site because she was born there. She was allowed to paint the rockholes without sharing more information.

INYIKA ESTELLE HOGAN

c. 1937 – 2017

(Paltatatjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Paltatatjara 2011

Acrylic on canvas

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2023

2023.0012.001

LEFT:

*Nyangatja ngayuku ngura Mulpulya ka tjitji
kulyunpa walytjatjara kapi kutjupa kutjupa ankupai.*

*This is the country where I grew up and it is called
Mulpulya. When I was a young child, my family and I
would walk from rockhole to rockhole.*

— KUNMAṆARA PENNINGTON

Kunmaṇara Pennington grew up in Mulpulya, a location that she consistently recalled in her paintings. Mulpulya is home to the Pititjaḷili Tjukurpa (Scorpion Tjukurpa), a story that can only be hinted at within the painting but not elaborated upon. Within this terrain are salt lakes and large sandhills represented by the brilliant white fields and deep red veins that run vertically through the work. A number of rockholes and soakages that the artist visited as a child are plotted across the top of the painting. The thick layers of paint on the surface of the canvas bring these places to life and allude to the texture of the ground upon which Mrs. Pennington once walked.

KUNMAṆARA (MYRTLE) PENNINGTON

c. 1939 – 2022

(Kanpaa, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Mulpulya 2017

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2022

2022.0006.003

Ngalpingka Simms was born hundreds of miles north of the Spinifex homelands at Wayiyul, which is located in the northern Ngaanyatjarra lands in the Gibson Desert. She was born at a sacred site that contains the Minyma Tjuṯa Tjukurpa (Seven Sisters Tjukurpa). Her first language is Ngaanyatjarra, a Western Desert dialect belonging to a region that neighbors Spinifex Country where people speak Pitjantjatjara. Mrs. Simms is married to Lennard Walker—who has a painting on view in the next gallery—and has been accepted with open arms by women at the Spinifex Arts Project.

According to the story, the Minyma Tjuṯa (Seven Sisters) camp at Wayiyul and then continue traveling to Tika Tika, where there is a cluster of rockholes. The sisters are being followed by the amorous Wati Nyiru, an old man who hopes to steal one of them to be his wife. As they flee, the sisters camp at different rockholes, which are portrayed in this painting as a grid of interconnected circles. Ultimately, the Minyma Tjuṯa escape to the sky and take the physical form of the Pleiades star cluster. They are followed by Wati Nyiru, who continues to pursue them through the sky as a star in the constellation of Orion. A father and son in the form of serpents are also shown as they pass through a neighboring site. Mrs. Simms' Country is especially sacred as it holds the Minyma Tjuṯa Tjukurpa as well as the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa).

NGALPINGKA SIMMS

Born c. 1945

(Wayiyul, Gibson Desert, Western Australia)

Ngaanyatjarra / Pitjantjatjara

Tika Tika 2008

Acrylic on canvas

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2022

2022.0006.007

RIGHT:

Ngayuku ngura Tjintilkara. Kapi tjuṯa tjukula. Kulapi, Pilitjara, Putlutjara, Unpupuntjara ka iriti panya walytjangkuni ankupai nyangapa ngura tjutilakutu.

This is my homeland Tjintilkara. There are many rock holes; Kulapi, Pilitjara, Putlutjara and Unpupuntjara where we would travel for water and camp for a while.

— NGANTIRI ANNE HOGAN

Ngantiri Anne Hogan began painting with the Spinifex Arts Project in 2001 and participated in several collaborative women's canvases. She then moved to Kalka, a community that lies 300 miles northwest of Tjuntjuntjara, where she continued painting at Ninuku Arts with her son, Timo Hogan, whose work is also in this exhibition. When she returned to the Spinifex Arts Project, she brought back a wealth of painting styles that were developing in neighboring communities. In this painting, she brings the rockholes of her Country into focus by leaving swathes of the canvas black, which emphasizes the circular form of each rockhole and its location relative to the others. She uses rich earth tones characteristic of the desert to depict the area where she spent much of her childhood.

NGANTIRI ANNE HOGAN

c. 1945 – 2014

(Tjulapi, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Ngayuku Ngura 2012

Acrylic on canvas

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2023

2023.0012.005

Mark Anderson depicts a rockhole called Karnu and a number of neighboring areas. Karnu is rarely spoken about outside of the circle of senior Anangu men who are tasked with its maintenance and care. We can therefore assume that it is an extraordinarily secret and sacred site. Roy Underwood also paints this site in *Nayirparta and Karnu* (2009)—on view in this gallery—and he is equally sparing with detail. The Kaḷaya Tjukurpa (Emu Tjukurpa) is present within this area, however, that is not a story on which the men can elaborate.

The geographic area for which Mr. Anderson was responsible contains thirty-eight sites in total. Due to the knowledge that he possessed across those sites, he was regarded as a prominent Law man and community leader. At the time this painting was made, Mr. Anderson was in his 80s and he was painting increasingly sparse depictions of Spinifex Country that became more minimal and abstract over time. Within this bright red landscape, black branching lines and repeated circles are outlined in dots of brilliant white. He depicts these important Spinifex sites without overcomplicated embellishments or patterns, which gives them the silence and space they deserve.

MARK ANDERSON

c. 1933 – 2014

(Pula Pula, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Karnu 2013

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2021

2021.0010.006

Simon Hogan was born between the rockholes of Paltju and Lingka. In this painting he has depicted Lingka, a location that he revisits time and time again, both in person and through his painting practice. Within this painting is evidence of the wanari (mulga tree). Its branches unfurl from the central void, a rockhole that is the center of life for the region and holder of part of the Waḷawuru Tjukurpa (Wedge-Tailed Eagle Tjukurpa). Mulga are strong, resilient trees that slowly grow between nine and twelve feet tall in the arid environment of the Western Desert. Here, they are a pronounced part of the composition, reverberating with dotted outlines in the red sands from which they grow.

Mr. Hogan is renowned as a cultural leader and pioneer of his community's Native Title movement. He has been a member of the Spinifex Arts Project since its inception in 1997. The same year that this painting was created, Mr. Hogan visited Lingka by air. He recorded the coordinates of flora and fauna, which no doubt informed and reinforced his understanding of this place and the songlines that it holds.

SIMON HOGAN

Born c. 1930

(Paltju / Lingka, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Lingka 2017

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2021

2021.0010.003

Nestled between sand dunes at the rockhole called Ukatjatjara, wildflowers known as tjuḷpun-tjuḷpun (golden everlasting) carpet the ground after a deep soaking of rain, which leaves little of the red, sandy earth visible beneath them. This is the place where Kunmaṅara Grant was born, in the northeast of Spinifex homelands, and a site that he painted throughout his career.

The location where a Spinifex person is born is of great importance. Along with other factors, it determines who makes decisions regarding the ongoing care of that area. Mr. Grant has painted his Country during a moment of abundance. There are four seasons according to Spinifex People—nyinninga (cold time), inuntji (blossom time), kuti (hot time), and itjanu (green time)—and in this work he shows Ukatjatjara in full bloom.

This place is criss-crossed with tracks between neighboring sites of significance. These pathways, known as songlines, are the routes taken by ancestral beings. Mr. Grant's paintings map interconnected sites in a way that is reminiscent of the Native Title paintings created in 1998, which show the extent of Spinifex homelands by mapping the birthplaces of senior Aṅangu.

KUNMAṅARA (FRED) GRANT

c. 1943 – 2022

(Ukatjatjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Ukatjatjara 2005

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2023

2023.0012.004

Roy Underwood was a highly regarded senior artist who spearheaded the iconic “mulga tree” painting style, with pronged branches reaching across the surface of his paintings. This style has been adopted by many artists, including Simon Hogan and Lennard Walker as seen in their paintings in this gallery. In this work, Mr. Underwood has depicted two sites related to the Kaḷaya Tjukurpa (Emu Tjukurpa). Emus, represented by large footprints with three prominent toes, are shown zigzagging through sandhills and past mulga trees. Emus are tall, flightless birds found across most of Australia. Adults are usually seen in pairs or in a family group with a solitary father caring for his young. This painting references a place called Pipirl in sandhill country, where a mob of emus were tricked into consuming wild tobacco and became “drunk.” Due to the secret and sacred nature of this story, Mr. Underwood does not provide any further details.

ROY UNDERWOOD

c. 1937 – 2018

(Tjutajara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Nyirpata, Karnu 2009

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2024

2024.0003.004

This is my Grandfather's Country and it is called Lake Baker. There is a big salt lake here with a rockhole on the edge, some sand dunes and bush. It is a place where a powerful Waṅampī (Water Serpent) lives. It is a special place, a sacred place. One must approach this area carefully because that man can be dangerous.

—TIMO HOGAN

Timo Hogan paints Lake Baker almost exclusively. He refers to himself as the “boss” of this place, having inherited responsibility for its ongoing care from his late father, Neville McArthur, who also painted with the Spinifex Arts Project. Mr. Hogan’s artistic output is prolific as he paints and repaints this important site. This is an earlier painting in which he has experimented with color, technique, and scale in an elongated format. Inspired by the sands of the arid desert, Mr. Hogan applies a rich red color with gestural brush strokes. The green foliage—painted in the style of Roy Underwood—and red earth emphasize how brilliantly white the dried saltpan of Lake Baker is during dry season. A green Waṅampī (Water Serpent) moves toward its waterhole.

TIMO HOGAN

Born 1973

(Kalgoorlie, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Lake Baker 2017

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2021

2021.0010.004

Timo Hogan is part of the next generation of painters at the Spinifex Arts Project. He arrived in Tjuntjuntjara in 2013 after first testing out painting at Ninuku Arts. In this work, Mr. Hogan depicts Lake Baker, the power and importance of which he reinforces by repeatedly depicting the same site and narrative.

Compared to Mr. Hogan's earlier painting in this gallery, here he has pared back detail and color. The simplicity of elements in this monochromatic masterpiece evidence the growth of his visual language. In his retelling of part of the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa), Mr. Hogan depicts the salt lake by slathering white paint onto the canvas and paints the Waṅampī (Water Serpent) slithering along the edge. The Waṅampī is returning from a hunting excursion to his home in the rockhole. The Wati Kutjara (Two Men), represented by the two circles and dotted tracks, watch from a distance, both wary of the possible danger.

TIMO HOGAN

Born 1973

(Kalgoorlie, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Lake Baker 2020

Acrylic on linen

Gift of Greg Castillo and Gary Brown, 2023

2023.0012.008

KUNMANARA (FRED) GRANT

c. 1943 – 2022

(Ukatjatjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

NED GRANT

Born c. 1941

(Mulpulya, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

BYRON BROOKS

Born c. 1951

(Tjawarr / Tjintirkara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

SIMON HOGAN

Born c. 1930

(Paltju / Lingka, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

KUNMANARA (LAWRENCE) PENNINGTON

c. 1934 – 2024

(Urlu, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

LENNARD WALKER

Born c. 1946

(Tjukaltjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

PATJU PRESLEY

Born c. 1945

(Itaratjara, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

IAN RICTOR

Born c. 1962

(Artulin / Tuwan, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia)

Pitjantjatjara

Palyani Tjungula 2018

Acrylic on linen

Private Collection of Bérengère Primat

Courtesy of Fondation Opale, Lens, Switzerland

This men's collaborative painting was created twenty years after the Native Title paintings on which senior men and women artists collaborated. Much like the paintings that were used as evidence in the Spinifex People's Native Title claim, this canvas maps the extent of Spinifex Country to demonstrate the artists' undying connections to their land.

Eight artists' hands were involved in creating this sophisticated, large-scale canvas. Before the painting commenced, each artist's contribution was predetermined by their knowledge of Tjukurpa, seniority, and interpersonal relationships with other artists. Such collaborative paintings are typically created while the men sing the Tjukurpa to life as they record ancestral narratives in paint.

In this epic narrative containing important flora and fauna of the desert, senior Spinifex men overlay thousands of generations of knowledge.



1. Often the leader on collaborative paintings, **Kunmanara (Fred) Grant** would determine the overall composition and placement of the major sites. Starting on the top right of this painting, Mr. Grant depicts a site called Kupanya, which holds part of the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa). The boundaries of this site are defined by the red circles that are connected by a matrix of tracks.

2. Clockwise, his brother **Ned Grant** paints ngalta (desert kurrajong trees) that spread out like twisted root systems seeking water at Nyuwiyin, the site of the Waḷawuru Tjukurpa (Wedge-Tailed Eagle Tjukurpa).

3. This connects to the concentric circles painted by **Byron Brooks** in the bottom right corner. He depicts a series of sites related to the Minyma Kaṅka Tjukurpa (Crow Women Tjukurpa).

4. Reaching across a sprawling white ground are the branches of waṅari (mulga trees) by **Simon Hogan**. Pictured here are a number of rockholes—including Lingka and Paltju between which he was born—represented by the black voids.

5. With gestural strokes in the lower left corner, **Kunmanara (Lawrence) Pennington** shares the site of Nyumun and the Waḷawuru Tjukurpa (Wedge-Tailed Eagle Tjukurpa) that it holds.

6. In the upper left, **Lennard Walker** has painted para (marble gum tree) saplings as they come to life along the flanks of the conjoined tjintjira (claypans) present at Kulyuru.

7. Flickering sparks of orange and red seem to fall from the sky in the signature dotted fields of color painted by **Patju Presley**. He depicts Tjukinara, a site of the Wati Kipara Tjukurpa (Bush Turkey Tjukurpa) that relates to the distribution of fire.

8. At the top right, **Ian Rictor** also paints ngalta (desert kurrajong trees) at Kaman, another site of the Wati Kutjara Tjukurpa (Two Men Tjukurpa). These rare trees—one in red and the other in blue—are known as compass trees because the intense afternoon sun makes the bark rough on the west side of the trunk.