



**Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri**  
(Indigenous Australian, born 1958)

## Biography

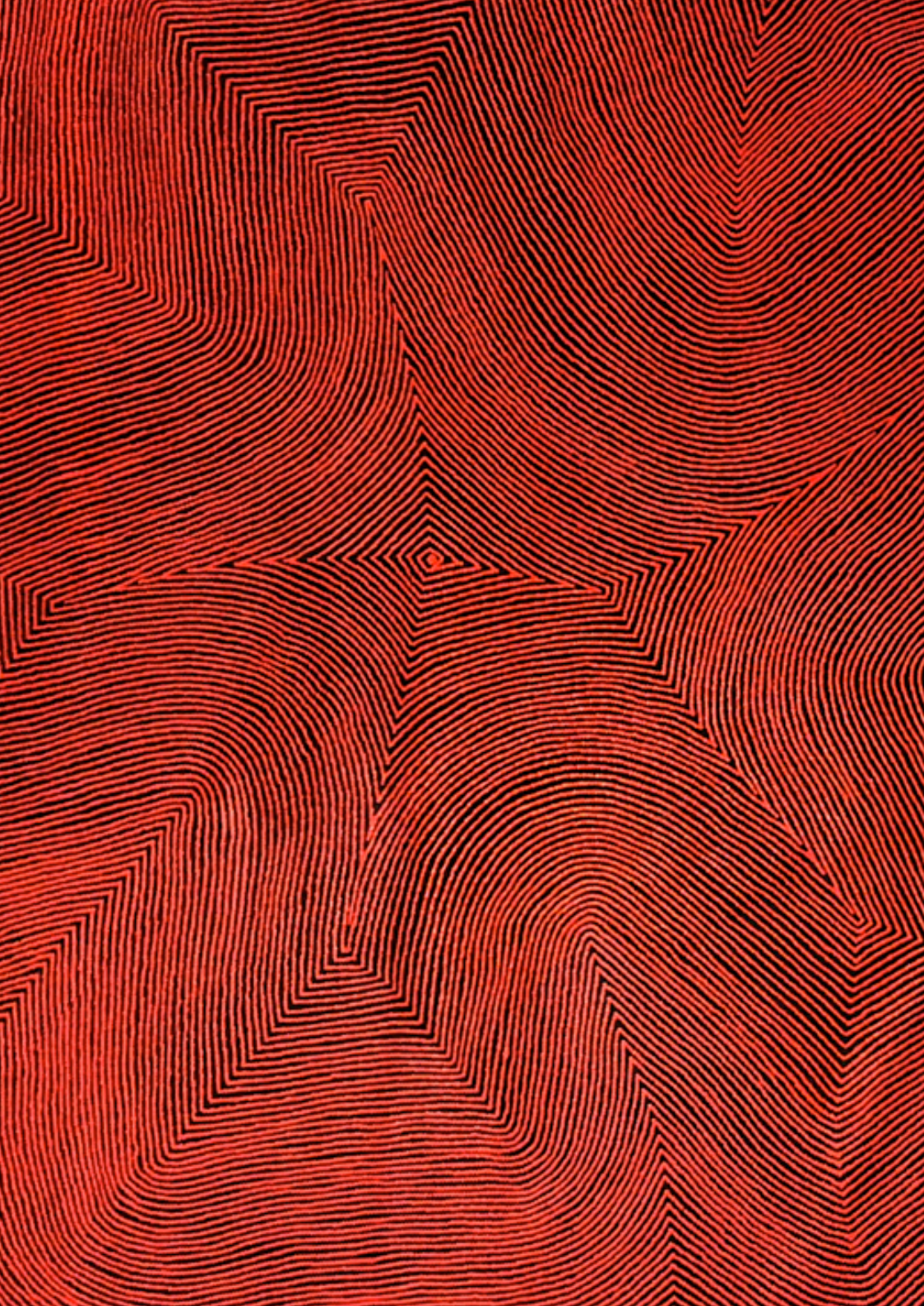
Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri was born around 1958 east of Kiwirkurra in Western Australia. Until 1984, Warlimpirrnga and his family lived a traditional nomadic life, with no contact to or knowledge of the outside world at all.

Late 1984, the international headlines were filled with the 'discovery' of this last group of Australian Aboriginals who until the late 20th century had managed to retain their traditional lifestyle in complete isolation. These so-called 'last of the nomads' or 'lost tribe' of nine Pintupi walked in from the bush west of Lake Owen that year and for the first time came into contact with western civilization.

Six of these nine Aboriginals became artists: Warlimpirrnga, Thomas, Walala, Yukultji, Yalti and Tjakaria. From these six Warlimpirrnga was the first who started painting after carefully observing other artists from the community at Kiwirkurra paint for a long time. Consequently, within three years, Warlimpirrnga transformed from a nomad with a simple traditional lifestyle to one of the leading artists from the Papunya Tula Artists collective. In 1987 he completed his first painting for Papunya Tula Artists and in 1988 he held his first exhibition in Melbourne, at Gabrielle Pizzi Gallery. The entire collection was purchased and donated to the National Gallery of Victoria.

Warlimpirrnga paints primarily in two styles; he makes extensive use of geometric shapes to depict the stories of the Tingari or he uses lines made up of carefully placed dots in his dreamings that depict holy Lake Mackay, a site of which he is one of the custodians. Warlimpirrnga uses the same dot-technique as other Pintupi artists like his brothers, Walala and Thomas, but also like George Tjungurrayi. The Tingari are the mythical ancestors of the Pintupi from the 'Dream Time' in which they wandered the earth performing rituals giving life to and physically shaping the landscape. Everything on earth obeys the laws that have been formulated by the Tingari. The meaning of Tingari paintings are multiple, but remain largely a secret for non-insiders.





Despite the late start of his career, Warlimpirrnga is widely considered one of the most important contemporary Aboriginal artists and one of central Australia's most well-known indigenous artists. His work has appeared in several prominent galleries and museums in Australia and around the world, including the National Gallery of Victoria and Musée du Quai Branly in Paris and the Perez Museum in Miami. Warlimpirrnga travels back and forth between Alice Springs and his native land around Kiwirrkurra.

#### Iconography

In Aboriginal terms the Tingari were a group of ancestral beings that emerged from the earth and conducted activities that led to the formation of the landscape and its inhabitants. The content of these ancient stories remains the exclusive knowledge of the initiated men. Warlimpirrnga's paintings often depicts "tali tjuta" - many sandhills and 'kapi' or clay pans of the Maruwa area West of Lake McKay and Kalpartu which lies further south.

In a minimal linear style, the artist depicts a particular site known as Minatapinya, a large swamp south of Maruwa which is where Tingari men camped as they travelled east towards Wilkinkarra (Lake McKay) in Western Australia. The area is known for the Water Snake that travelled through this way in the mythical creation time, the snake entered the water and now lives under ground. According to the artist, the wavy lines mark the watery areas that are found around Lake MacKay.

### Selected Exhibitions

2022

*Origins*, SmithDavidson Gallery, New York, USA

2021-2022

*Irrititja Kuwarri Tjungu (Past & Present Together): 50 years of Papunya Tula Artists'*, Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA

2021

*Papunya 50 Years, 1971 - 2021*, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2020

*ORIGINS, Australian Aboriginal Art from the SmithDavidson Collection*, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam

2019

*No Boundaries*, Sol Taplin Gallery & SmithDavidson Gallery, Miami USA

2015

*No Boundaries: Aboriginal Australian Contemporary Abstract Painting*, Perez Art Museum, Miami, USA  
*Signs and Traces - Contemporary Aboriginal Art*, Zamek Cultural Institute, Poznan, Poland

2012

*Dokumenta (13)*, Fridericianum Museum, Kassel, Germany

2010

*Desert Icons Australasian Arts Project*, Singapore

2003

Kintore Kiwirrkurra, Melbourne, Australia

2002-2005

*Native Title Business - Contemporary Indigenous Art*, an Australian national travelling exhibition

1999

Exhibition with Ray James Tjangala, Gabrielle Pizzi Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

1993

Aboriginal Art Exhibition, Kung Gubunga, Oasis Gallery, Broadbeach, Australia

1991-1992

*Friendly Country, Friendly People*, Touring Exhibition, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

1990

*l'Été Australien à Montpellier*, Musée Fabre Gallery, Montpellier, France

1989

*Mythscapes*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

### Selected Collections

Kelton Foundation Collection, California, USA

Macquarie Bank Collection, Sydney, Australia

Musée du Quai Branly (former Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens), Paris, France

Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

National Gallery in Canberra, Canberra, Australia

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

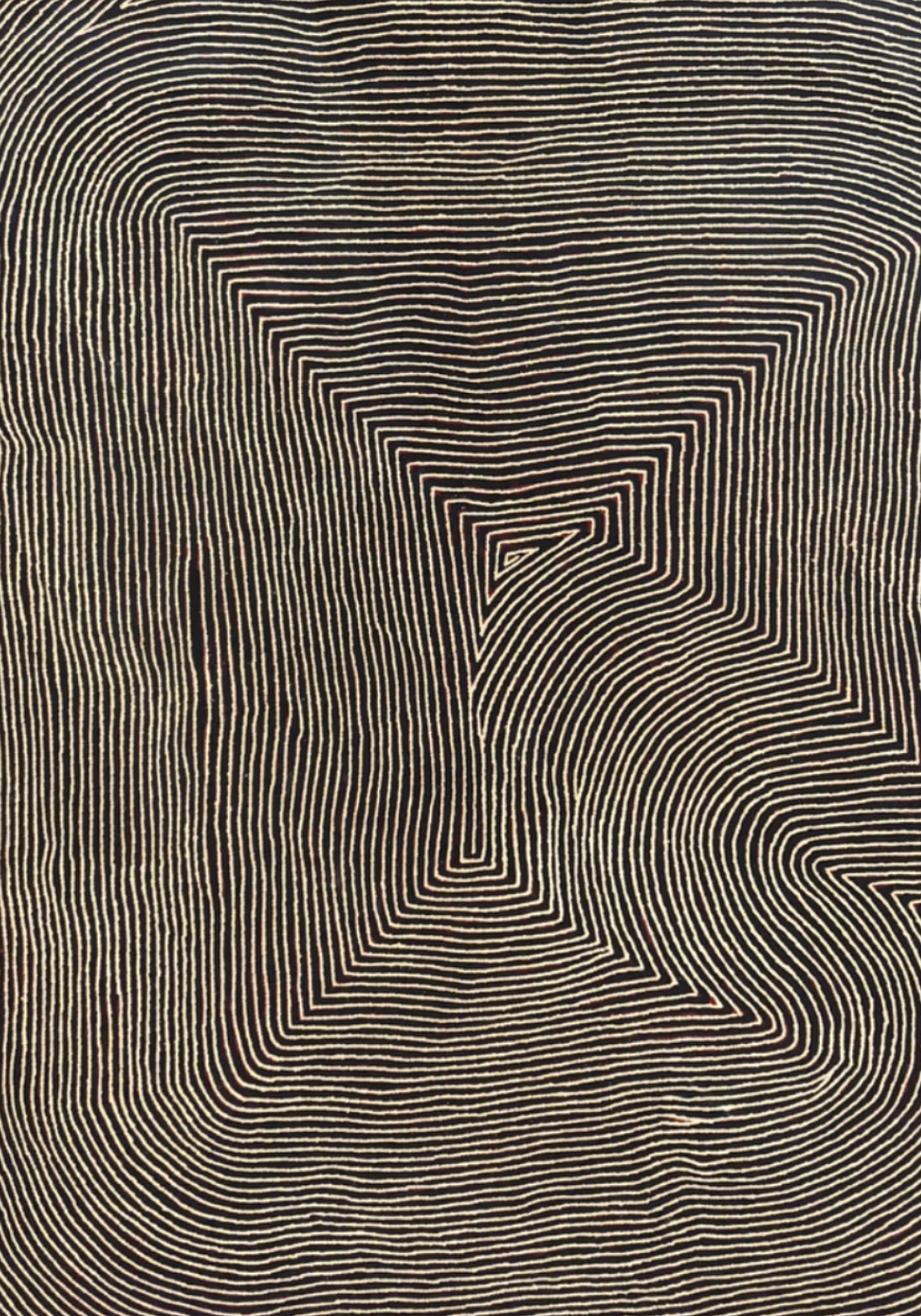
Collection of Steve Martin & Anne Stringfield, New York, USA

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Miami, USA,

Collection of Beyoncé Knowles & Jay Z,

and many private collections world wide





#### Selected literature

Hetti Perkins, *Art + Soul*, Miegunyah Press, 2011, p. 76

Paul Toohey, 'The Last Nomads', *The Bulletin*, 4 May 2004, p. 28–35

Joan Winter, *Native Title Business*, Contemporary Indigenous Art Keeira Press, Queensland, 2002

P. Corbally Stourton, *Songlines and dreamings: contemporary Australian aboriginal painting*, Lund Humphries, 1996, p. 177

Vivian Johnson, *The Dictionary of Western Desert Artists*, Craftsman House, East Roseville, New South Wales, 1994

F. Dussart, *La Peinture des Aborigines D'Australie*, Editions Parentheses, Marseille, 1993;

S. Crossman and J-P. Barou, *L'ete Australien a Montpellier: 100 Chefs d'Oevre de la Peinture Australienne*, Musee Fabre, Montpellier, France, 1990;

J. Ryan, *Mythsapes Aboriginal Art of the Desert from the National Gallery of Victoria*, exhib. cat., National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1989. 016:

*Singing Up Country | Kudditji Kngwarreye*, Kate Owen Gallery, Sydney

#### Selected Art Fairs

Art New York, New York, USA

EXPO Chicago, Chicago, USA

Art Miami, Miami, USA

The Armory Show, New York, USA

Art Cologne, Cologne, Germany

Zona Maco, Mexico-City, Mexico

PAN Amsterdam, Amsterdam, NL