



George 'Hairbrush' Tjungarrayi
(Indigenous Australian, born 1947)

Biography

George Tjungarrayi was born around 1947 at Wala Wala, west of Kiwirrkura in Pintupi country in the Western Desert.

In 1962, he arrived in Papunya where he worked as a welfare patrol guide. During periods of intermittent work, George began painting for Papunya Tula Artists in 1976. Since his first two solo exhibitions in 1997 at the Utopia Art Gallery in Alice Springs and at the Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi in Melbourne in 1998, he has become one of the master painters of contemporary Pintupi art. George's early works from the 1970s and early 1980s depicted Tingari imagery by dotted grids on lines and circles in traditional ochres.

The Tingari describes a group of mythical, spiritual ancestors who shaped the landscape and sacred sites of the Western Desert.

In the mid-1980s, he experimented with new styles, including a wider range of colors in works that reflected ceremonies and stories about the journeys of his ancestors told through sacred songs of the Tingari. After his first prominent exhibition in Alice Springs in 1990, George moved away from figurative painting towards more abstract and linear work that depicts the traditional Tingari Dreaming Cycle. This is a collection of religious stories, ceremonies and laws that were transmitted to the inhabitants of the Western Desert by the Tingari. Through fine lines and beautiful geometric patterns, George portrays in an abstract style the major sacred sites of the Tingari, such as caves and sand hills, as well as their dreamtime stories. His works belong to the same genre as those of Ronnie Tjampitjinpa and Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula.



Artwork and technique

George has perfected a minimalist and abstracted style of painting that is characterised by intersecting parallel lines that bend with subtle optical rhythm. His works, based on his country and culture, symbolise ancestral journeys and ceremonial body paint.

In particular, George paints the Tingari stories of his ancestral country which covers the sites around Kiwirrkura, Lake Mackay, Kulkuta, Karku, Ngaluwinyamana and Kilpinya. It has been suggested that his imagery is drawn from the distinctive Western Desert style of 'fluted' carving; fine parallel lines incised into the wood and coated with ochres that were embellished on men's ceremonial boomerangs and shields.

The delicate fine lines and use of strong color with a limited palette not only provide a convincing impact but also lend his works an aura of spiritual strength. They often create a subtle optical illusion, infusing the work with liveliness and dynamism. His prominence today derives from the fundamentally abstract and modern nature of his works. It has been said of his works that "[t]hey have no focus but invite the viewer to enter a crucial cultural performance. The energy and life-force enacted onto the painted surface evokes sensations and sensibilities that must primarily be experienced and felt."



Selected Collections

Steve Martin & Anne Springfield Collections, USA
Kluge-Ruhe Collection of the University of Virginia, USA
Groninger Museum, Groningen, The Netherlands
Kelton Foundation, Los Angeles, USA
Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris, France
National Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
Queensland University, Brisbane, Australia
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
Artbank, Sydney, Australia
Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
The Holmes à Court Collection, Perth, Australia
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia
Dr Peter Elliot Collection, Sydney, Australia
Hank Ebes Collection, Melbourne, Australia
The Luczo Family Collection, USA
Museo Sa Bassa Blanca, Mallorca, Spain
Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Kaplan & Levi Collection, USA
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, USA
Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra, Australia
Kunstwerk Sammlung, Alison & Peter Klein Collection
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia
Sammlung Essel, Vienna, Austria
Corrigan Collection, Sydney, Australia
Luciano Benetton Collection, Venice, Italy

Selected Exhibitions

2021

Papunya 50 Years, 1971 - 2021, SmithDavidson Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
38th Telstra NATSIAA, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia

2020

Desert Painters of Australia - Two Generations, Gagosian Gallery, Hong Kong, China
Reflections on Emily and Papunya, High Line Nine, New York, USA

2019

Desert Painters of Australia, Gagosian Gallery, New York;
Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles, USA - from the Steve Martin & Anne Springfield Collections and Kluge-Ruhe Collection of the University of Virginia, USA

2018

Superposition: Equilibrium and Engagement, 21st Biennale of Sydney, Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia

2016

Wynne Prize 2016 for 'the best landscape painting of Australian scenery in oils or watercolours by Australian artists', Finalist.

2015

Signs and Traces. Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Zamek Cultural Centre, Poznan, Poland 2014/2015 'ART & INTERIOR Modern Aboriginal Art', Marcel Wolterinck, Laren, The Netherlands

2014

Sublime Point: the Landscape in Painting, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Hazelhurst, Australia

2013

No Boundaries, Bayside Arts & Cultural Centre, Melbourne, Australia

2012

Volume One: MCA Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Ancestral Modern: Australian Aboriginal Art from the Kaplan & Levi Collection, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Australia

Unique Perspectives: Papunya Tula Artists and the Alice Springs Community, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

2011

28th Telstra NATSIAA, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
Sister, Brother Nyarrumparra, Papunya Tula Artist Gallery, Alice Springs, Australia

2010

27th Telstra NATSIAA, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
Desert Country, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia
The Desert Mob Art Show, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
Wilkinkaralaku - Journeys to Lake Mackay, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia
Tradition & Innovation - Papunya Tula 2010, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia

2009

26th Telstra NATSIAA, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
Papunya 2009: Senior Pintupi Artists, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia
Painting the Country, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia
Nganampatju Kanpatja Winki, Nganampatju Yara Winkii - All Our Paintings, All Our Stories, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

2008

Ngurra Yurru Kulintjaku - Always Remembering Country, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia
The Desert Art Mob Show, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
TogArt Contemporary Art Award, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

2007

24th Telstra NATSIAA, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
Papunya Tula 2007, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia
Recent Paintings 2007, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin, Australia
Pintupi - Mixed Exhibitions, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs Australia

2006

Western Desert Satellites, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia
Yawulyurru kapalilu paylara nintilpayi, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

2005

Pintupi Artists, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Papunta Tula Artists, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia

2004

Papunta Tula Artists, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia
Talking About Abstraction, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, College of Fine Arts - University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
The Inner and The Outer, Stadtgalerie Bamberg, Villa Dessauer, Bamberg, Germany
Looking Closely at Country, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, College of Fine Arts - University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Pintupi Artists, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Mythology & Reality, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, Australia

2003

20th Telstra NATSIAA, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
Pintupi Artists, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Painters from Mamultjulkulnga and Kirrimalunya, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia

2002

Meridian: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art, Museum Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Structures of Difference, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, USA
Pintupi Artists, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

2001

Dreamtime: The Dark and The Light, Kunst der Gegenwart, Sammlung Essl, Vienna, Austria
Kintore, Kiwirrkura, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia
Art Aborigene, Musee Olympic, Lausanne, Switzerland
Pintupi Exhibition, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
In Concert, Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, Australia
Aborigena, Palazzo Bricherasio, Torino, Italy

2000

Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Aboriginal Art, Aboriginal Art Gallery Bahr, Spreyer, Germany
Pintupi Men, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

1999

New Horizons 2000, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia

1998

Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia

1997

Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia
Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

1996

C.A.A.A.C.E., Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia
Pintupi Painters, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia
Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Australia
Fringe Festival, Adelaide, Australia

1995

Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia

1994

Group Show, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia
Groninger Museum, Groningen, The Netherlands
Pintupi Artists, Papunya Tula Artists, Alice Springs, Australia

1990

Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Australia

Selected Art Fairs

EXPO Chicago, Chicago, USA
Art Cologne, Cologne, Germany
Art Miami, Miami, USA
Art New York, New York, USA