

# THE PINTUPI NINE

OUT OF THE DESERT AND THE JOURNEY BEYOND

A SECONDARY EYE



Catalogue to accompany the exhibition marking the 40 year anniversary of the  
Pintupi Nine entering the community of Kiwirrkura in October 1984

A Secondary Eye  
101-103 Queen Street, Woollahra  
17 October - 8 November 2024

A Secondary Eye acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises  
the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this publication contains images  
and references to people who have passed away.



TIM KLINGENDER FINEART

# THE PINTUPI NINE

## OUT OF THE DESERT AND THE JOURNEY BEYOND

### 40 YEAR ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

## A SECONDARY EYE



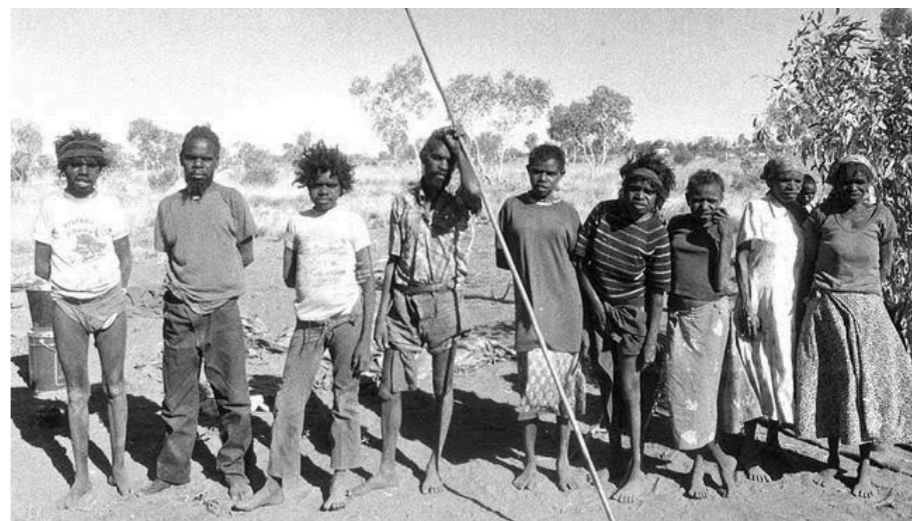
# FOREWORD

A Secondary Eye is pleased to present this exhibition commemorating the 40 year anniversary of the Pintupi Nine entering the community of Kiwirrkura from the Great Sandy Desert. This remarkable story captivated news outlets around the world but it was also the subsequent artworks created by the artists within this group that later caught the attention of international art audiences. This will be a non-commercial exhibition for the purpose of educating collectors and other interested parties about this moment in time with a view through the artworks and their stories.

It is difficult to believe that in 1984, after nearly 200 years of European occupation, there were still some of the original inhabitants of this country who had never encountered people outside of their small family group. The Great Sandy Desert has been home to the Pintupi people for millennia. It is one of the most remote and seemingly inhospitable parts of Australia. Survival in this challenging environment required a deep understanding of water and food sources, knowledge that had been cultivated over countless generations in response to the vagaries of drought and severe conditions.

The Pintupi, known as the People from the West, inhabit territory situated between Lake Mackay and Lake MacDonalld in the Great Sandy Desert and the Gibson Desert in Western Australia. Before European contact, the Pintupi led a subsistence lifestyle, but many began to leave their desert homelands due to drought and were often forcibly relocated to the settlement of Papunya.

In 1981, the Pintupi organized a return to their ancestral lands after new water bores were sunk and settlements were established at Walungurru (Kintore) and later Kiwirrkura. The last group to return, collectively known as the Pintupi Nine, included two older women, four young men, and three girls who lived in the desert until October 1984 (see Family Tree p.34-35).



**Members of the Pintupi Nine in 1984. Source: News Corp**

Seven of the nine family members from this group became artists. The Aboriginal-owned cooperative, Papunya Tula Artists, recognized their artistic aspirations and played a crucial role in facilitating the development and promotion of their careers. Through their paintings, these artists have depicted their desert homeland and illuminated the significance of these places for the Pintupi people. By expressing their ancient beliefs and stories with modern art materials, they provide us with a precious glimpse into a world that had nearly vanished—a generous gift of cultural exchange. All seven artists in the group have artwork represented in this exhibition

The centrepiece of the exhibition is an artwork by Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri from the collection of the late Tim Klingender. The painting was generously included by his wife Skye Klingender who still continues Tim Klingender Fine Art in Sydney. Tim Klingender Fine Art is a welcome partner in this exhibition who also recognises the importance of this historical event. We would also like to thank and acknowledge Papunya Tula Artists, based in Alice Springs, for their support towards this exhibition.

Apart from this unique presentation of artworks, which have been kindly lent by private clients of A Secondary Eye, a highlight of this exhibition will be a floor talk by founder of Gondwanaland Band and didgeridoo player Charlie McMahon. McMahon was the only non-indigenous person living in Kiwirrkurra at the time, being there under charge of the Federal Government to supervise building of the basic services of water and communications to establish the community. Charlie McMahon has written an account of the events in October 1984 including never before seen rare photographs, which we will post on our website.

The purpose of this exhibition is to acknowledge this fascinating chapter of Australian art history. The unique circumstances surrounding the creation of these artworks speak to the enduring legacy of the Pintupi Nine, capturing their profound connection to the land but also their resilience and creativity in the face of change. By showcasing these works, we invite viewers to appreciate the rich cultural heritage of the Pintupi people, the journey of this group of artists and the remarkable story that continues to resonate with audiences today.



Members of the Pintupi Nine in 2014. Source: BBC News

# WARLIMPIRRNGA TJAPALTJARRI

*Marawa, 2003*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. WT 0309057

183 x 152 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with Marawa, swamp with rock and soakage water, on the western side of Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay). In mythological times a large group of Tingari Men travelled to this site from the west and after arriving they went underground. Since events associate with the Tingari Cycle are of a secret nature non further detail was given. Generally, the Tingari are a group of mythical characters of the Dreaming who travelled over vast stretches of the country, performing rituals and creating and shaping particular sites. The Tingari Men were usually followed by Tingari Women and accompanied by novices and their travels and adventures are enshrined in a number of song cycles. These mythologies form part of the teachings of the post initiatory youths today as well as providing explanations for contemporary customs.



# NANYANU NANGALA

*Marrapinti, 1999*

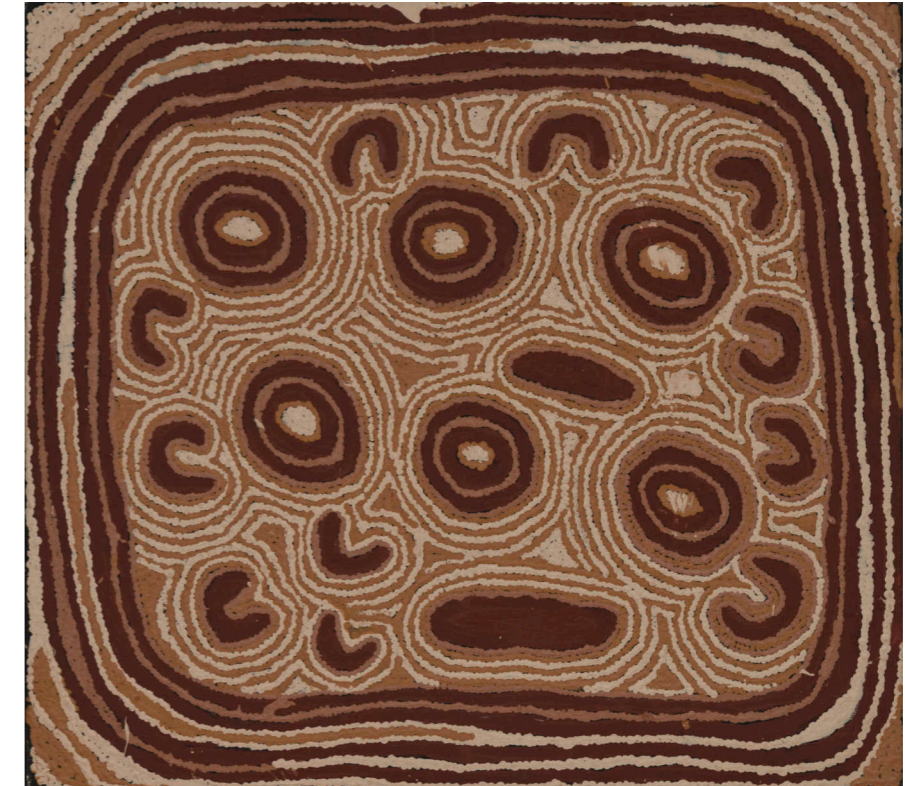
synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. NN 991036

55 x 61 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the rockhole and soakage site of Marrapinti, west of Kiwirrkurra community.

A large group of women camped at this site during their travels further east. While at the site the women made the nose bones, also known as the marrapinti, which are worn through a hole made in the nose web. The nose bone were originally used by both men and women but now only inserted by the older generation on ceremonial occasions.





# WARLIMPIRRNGA TJAPALTJARRI

*Kapali, 1991*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. WT 910731

137 x 91 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the site of Kapali on the southern boundary of Lake Mackay. In mythological times Tingari Men visit this site before travelling further west to Jupiter Well.



# WARLIMPIRRNGA TJAPALTJARRI

*Wampatangku, 1999*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. WT 990321

122 x 91 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the site of Wampatangku at Lake Mackay. In mythological time two Tingari Meen camped at this site hunting kangaroos.



# WARLIMPIRRNGA TJAPALTJARRI

*Kanapilya, 2000*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. WT 0011122

91 x 122 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the swamp and rockhole site of Kanapilya, just to the west of Lake Mackay. The Dingo Dreaming is associated with this site. In mythological time a large group of Tingari Men camped at this place to perform ceremonies before travelling to Lake Mackay.



## TAKARIYA NAPALJARRI

*Ngalpurru, 1997*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. TN 970476

58 x 64 cm



## YALTI NAPANGATI

*Ngaminya, 1996*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. YN 961198

92 x 63 cm



# YUKULTJI NAPANGATI

*Marrapinti, 2000*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. YN 0009080

91 x 122 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the rockhole and soakage site of Marrapinti, west of the Kiwirrkura community.

The 'U' shapes represent a group of women and children who are gathered around the two rockholes at the site. The lines in the background of the work represent the Sandhills surrounding the area. While in the area the women gathered the edible berries known as *kampurarrpa* or desert raisin from the small shrub *Solanum centrale*. They later travelled to Lake Mackay.



# YUKULTJI NAPANGATI

## *Marrapinti, 2009*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. YN 0902046

122 x 153 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the rockhole site of Marrapinti, west of the Pollack Hills in Western Australia. The lines in this painting depict the sandhills surrounding this site.

In ancestral times a group of women of the Nangala and Napangati kinship subsections camped at this site during the travels east. While at the site the women made the nose bones, also known as the marrapinti, which are worn through a hole made in the nose web. The nose bone were originally used by both men and women but now only inserted by the older generation on ceremonial occasions.

Upon completion of the ceremonies at Marrapinti the women continued their travels east passing through Wala Wala, Ngaminya and Wirrulnga, before completing their journey upon arrival at Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay).



## **(T) TJAPANGATI**

*Marrawa, 2024*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. TT 2407206

91 x 91 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the rockhole site of Marrawa, on the south-west side of Lake Mackay. In mythological time a large group of Tingari Men came from the west to this site carrying the Wetti Dreaming. Wetti is the foliage attached to the limbs of the men during the ceremonies.

The artist was tragically involved in a car accident and passed away in September 2024. Due to cultural sensitivities and the timing of this publication we have chosen not verbalise his name respecting the family's wishes as provided to us by Papunya Tula Artists.





# WALALA TJAPALTJARRI

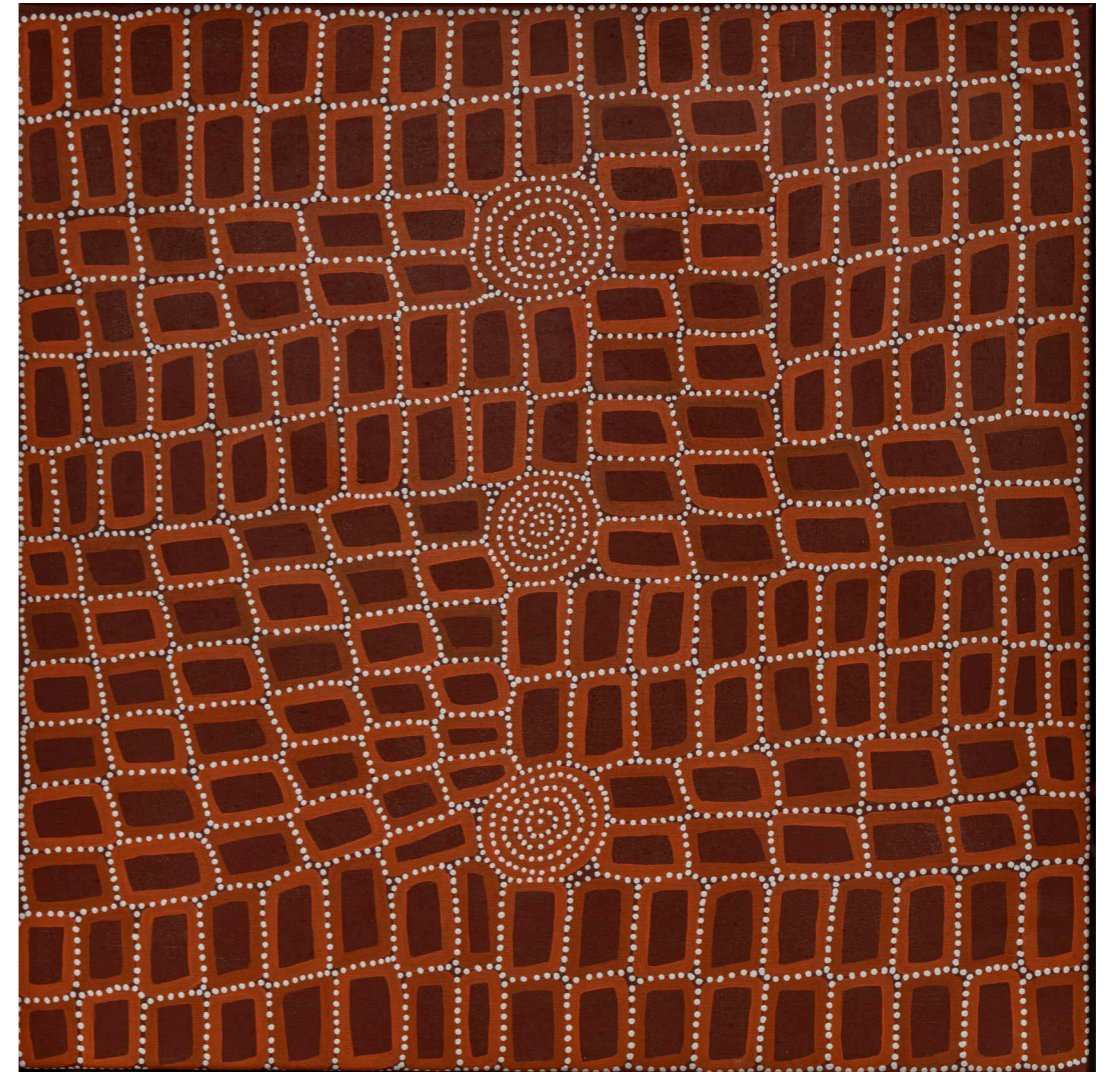
*Marawa, 2024*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

bears verso: artist's name, dimensions and Papunya Tula Artists cat.no. WT 2407205

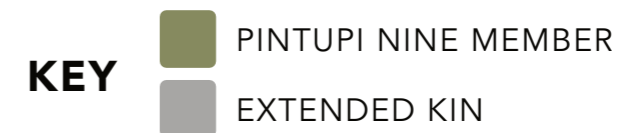
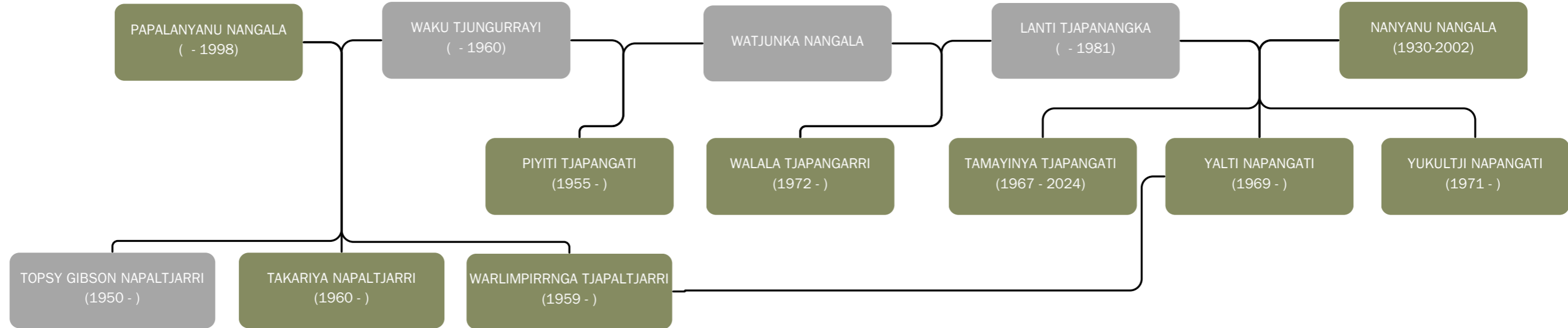
91 x 91 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the swamp and the rockhole site of Marawa, the west of Lake Mackay. In mythological times a group of Tingari Men travelled from the west, over the Sandhills, and made camp at this site before continuing on to Lake Mackay.





# PINTUPI NINE FAMILY TREE



## EPILOGUE

*...in 1996 we met up with anthropologist David Brooks who was working with the Kiwirrkura community on the preparation of a Native Title Claim. Brooks set off in three vehicles with a large number of men, women and children to survey the area to the north of Wilkinkarra and we arranged to meet at Marruwa next day.*

*For the next two days we followed Brooks' group over many sandhills to many soakages that had not been visited since the 'bush mob' 'came in' in 1984. At one, a partly-shaped boomerang was stuck in the branches of a tree, waiting for its owner to return and finish it; at another, a digging stick leant casually against the trunk of a mulga tree; on the very top of a big sandhill were branches shaped to form three shades, where the family had taken refuge from the big rains that had flooded all low-lying ground. One of the shades was for the single men - even in this extreme situation, the correct family relationships were observed. Most remarkable of all was the discovery of footprints left behind in a small claypan near a soakage called Parntatja. How they had survived the intervening last twelve years was astonishing enough, but as each footprint was found, their different owners were named.*

*On seeing these footprints still preserved after so many years, my incomprehensibility about how the owners of the prints had survived for so long in*

*this vastness without the support and contact of other kin, was, in some way, answered. If their footprints could last for at least twelve years exposed on a claypan, then the invincibility of the people who made them must have surely depended on powers far beyond the physical realm.*

**Jon Rhodes**

***Whichaway? Photographs from Kiwirrkurra 1974-1996***

**(Privately printed, 1998) pp 10—11**



**Sandhill shades, Parntatja, 1996. Source: Jon Rhodes**

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A Secondary Eye

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[www.asecondaryeye.com](http://www.asecondaryeye.com)

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