

## Wentja Morgan Napaltjarri



Birth date: 1943

Birth place: Malparinga, NSW

Language: Pintupi

Wentja Napaltjarri was born at Malparinga about 1943, and grew up west of Kintore in her father's country, located in the Gibson Desert. Wentja is the daughter of one of the founders of the Desert painting movement, Shorty Lungkata Tjungarrayi and one of his wives, Napulu Nangala. Wentja Napaltjarri has several sisters who are also well known artists; including step-sister Linda Napaltjarri Syddick (born c. 1936), adopted by Shorty Lungkata as a young girl, when he married her widowed mother. When Wentja Napaltjarri was young, her father and uncle, along with their families including Wentja travelled east in the footsteps of the Ancestral Emu Men of Tingarri cycles, out of the desert. They travelled from water to water. It was hot weather time in the Gibson Desert and there was little water to be found. This area is dominated by high tali [sandhills], so knowledge of the exact location of kapi [water], whether hidden rockholes, claypans, natural springs, or soakages, was critical for survival. Wentja Napaltjarri and her family successfully navigated their journey out of the desert to join other relatives in settlements at Haasts Bluff Mission Outpost about 1948. The family then moved to Papunya around 1960. As with so many Pintupi families, Wentja's extended family established a strong artistic voice in Pintupi culture.

While at Haasts Bluff, Wentja met her husband, Ginger Tjakamarra, who was the son of the artist Makin Napanangka. The couple eventually moved to Papunya, where Shorty Langkata apprenticed each of his daughters. Wentja's first works were collaborative, helping out the men in the family with their work. While they painted the stories, Wentja did the dotting in-fill, characteristic of the Papunya Tula artists. Eventually, Wentja lived at Watiyawanu [New Bore], Mt Liebig with her husband and with her children. Wentja began her own career there, painting for Watiyawanu Artists. Wentja mostly paints Tingarri and Kapi Tjukurrpa, the iconography for which has been handed down to her by her father. She also paints Tali [sandhills], Puli [rockholes], Watiya Tjuta [Desert Oaks], and other landmarks central to her Country, and her father's Country.

Wentja has a very distinctive style and her work highly sought by the Australian and international art collectors. Her work has been exhibited in leading Australian and international exhibitions, including the 2003 exhibition Masterpieces from the Western Desert, in London. Wentja's artwork is represented in important collections in Australia and overseas including Art Bank Sydney, Homes a Court Collection, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Queensland Art Gallery, Kerry Stokes and Thomas Vroom Collections National Aboriginal Art and Culture Institute in Adelaide and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

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## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

### Solo Exhibitions

2006 Wentja Napaltjarri, Japingka Gallery Fremantle WA

2004 Ngapa Dreaming, Cooee Gallery Sydney NSW

### Group Exhibitions

2021 Guardian Spirit, Nanda Hobbs, Chippendale, NSW

2021 Place, Nanda Hobbs, Chippendale, NSW

2017/2018 Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia, Booker-Lowe Gallery Houston SCOMA Scottsdale, The Patricia and Robert Frost Art Museum Miami, The Phillips Collecti, Washington D.C, Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane New Orleans, USA

2017 Tangentyere Artists Gallery, Alice Springs NT Tangentyere Artists Christmas Exhibition

2017 Double Tree Hilton, Alice Springs Minister's Exhibition, NESA Conference

2017 Tandanya Cultural Centre Adelaide SA Tarnanthi Festival Art Fair

2017 Araluen Cultural Precinct Alice Springs NT Desert Mob

2017 Darwin Convention Centre Darwin NT Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair

2014 Australian Indigenous Painting: Abstraction & Sacred, Arts D'Australie, Paris, France

2014 Dot Code: Desert Artists Japingka Gallery Fremantle WA

2008 Watiyawanu Artists Japingka Gallery Fremantle WA

2007 Watiyawanu Artists of Amunturrngu Japingka Gallery Fremantle WA

2006 Australian Aboriginal Art Unknown

2006 John Gordon Gallery, NSW

2006 Towards Black and White Japingka Gallery Fremantle WA

2006 Finalist, NATSIAA Awards MAGNT Darwin NT

2006 Bond Aboriginal Art Adelaide SA

2006 Knud Grothe Gallery Copenhagen Denmark

2006 This is our Story – 8 selected works, Colliding Worlds Exhibition Tandanya SA

2006 Luminaries of the Desert Japingka Gallery Fremantle WA

2005 Watiyawanu Artists Japingka Gallery Fremantle WA

2005 Divas of the Desert Gallery Gondwana Alice Springs NT

2005 Cooee Gallery Sydney NSW

2004 Selected in the Alice Prize Araluen Cultural Precinct Alice Springs NT

2003 Masterpieces from the Western Desert, Gavin Graham Gallery London

2000 Chapel on Chapel Melbourne VIC

### AWARD EXHIBITONS - FINALIST

2007, 23rd Telstra NATSIAA Australian National Art Award

2006 Alice Springs Prize

2005, 25th Telstra NATSIAA Australian National Art Award selected Museum Art Gallery Nothern Territory

2002, 20th Telstra NATSIAA Australian National Art Award finalist Museum Art Gallery Nothern Territory

### Collections

Kerry Stokes Collection

Thomas Vroom Collection

Art Gallery of South Australia Adelaide

Tandanya National Aboriginal Art & Cultural Institute

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## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Flinders University Museum  
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth  
Queensland Art Gallery Brisbane

### **Publications**

2003, Masterpieces from the Western Desert  
2010, Desert Country, AGSA