

Short St. Gallery



HELICOPTER TJUNGARRAYI

Born	1947
Language Group	Kukatja; Wangkajunga
Region	Balgo

Helicopter Joey Tjungurrayi is well recognised as one of Warlayirti Artists' leading artists and is a great ambassador for the Art Centre, painting with Warlayirti Artists since the early 'nineties. Born at Nynmi, west of Kiwirrkurra in Western Australia, Helicopter was brought up in a traditional nomadic lifestyle, learning from childhood the location of water sources and how to hunt for bush food. The time spent moving through country as a young boy has had a profound and lasting effect on Helicopter's artistic process and practice. As James Cowan writes in Balgo: New Directions 1999 of Balgo Hills' artists "... their work is grounded in a quintessential act of reverie." Helicopter's approach and dedication to the act of painting is evidence of the reverence which he holds for his country.

My father got [my spirit] from [Nyakin], and my mother too... They were just taking me around them Countries, my mother and father. They took me everywhere.¹

In 1957, the young Tjungurrayi became seriously ill while walking with his family on country: he was taken to the old Balgo mission for medical attention in a helicopter that had been doing mining exploration work in the area. The first helicopter that many of the people had seen, this important event is how he got his very memorable name.

Helicopter worked at the mission in Balgo, drilling for water, cutting timber for fencing and fixing the windmill. He travelled widely during those days to pick up supplies from the Kimberley ports. It was also at Balgo mission that Helicopter met and married Napanangka Yukenbarri. Together they had six children and grew up another two of Napanangka's children from her first husband. They were together until Napanangka died in 2003.

In the early 1990s Helicopter painted with Napanangka, not seeking any acknowledgement, and then in 1994 Helicopter started painting in his own distinctive linear style. Emanating from the central feature of a tjumu (soak water), Helicopter's works are predominantly created through a rhythmical and methodical application of thick paint, as the artist dots and drags the brush along the linen, creating extended lines, parallel lines that represent the tall (sand hills) that dominate his father and mother's country.



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Tjungurrayi can be found on most days sitting on the Art Centre veranda facing in the direction of his country. He gazes southward between brush strokes as if those distant tjumu and tali were visible shimmering on the horizon. When asked about his painting, he will often motion fondly towards the Great Sandy Desert "good country, my country".

In recent years Helicopter developed cataracts on his right eye, which had a profound effect on his eyesight. His vision deteriorated but his dedication to recording culture and creating art remained steadfast: he walked each morning to the art centre escorted by his pack of dogs and felt his way into his chair. As he painted, he instinctively pulled the brush across the linen as if singing the paint into tali and tjumu, feeling the colours echo his memory of country.

Towards the end of last year Helicopter travelled away from Balgo for eye surgery. It was successful in restoring a good part of his vision, and with his clearer vision returned, so did a more defined application of paint. In the first bush trip after his operation, Helicopter exclaimed at the trees, which he could see for the first time in a couple of years, and wondered at the greens, all the different greens beckoned to him, and he strode away into the bush with his walking stick looking at the multitude of hues before him.

Helicopter's palette traditionally favoured deep contrasting desert colours but the period after his rehabilitation saw him briefly turn to using subdued tones: pale earthy greens alongside musky pinks and burnt oranges. Perhaps the change can be contributed to his joy at being able to distinguish the subtlety of colours.

Helicopter has travelled interstate and overseas for exhibitions of his paintings, including London, Amsterdam, and a trip to Tokyo, Japan in 2010 where he lead a team of Warlayirti's artists to paint a brand new Audi as part of the Motika project. This is Helicopter's first solo exhibition in a number of years and Warlayirti Artists is proud to represent such a dedicated cultural ambassador and Senior artist. Significantly, Helicopter is a Mapam (traditional healer) and is an active Senior Lawman and Singer.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2016 Helicopter, Short St Gallery, Broome, WA
- 2009 Wangkartu Dreaming, Whitford Fine Art, London
- 2004 Helicopter Tjungurrayi, Alcaston Gallery @ Depot Gallery, Sydney.
- 2003 Always Together Painting, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Vic
- 1999 Tjurnu: Living Water, Alcaston Gallery , Melbourne, Vic

Group Exhibitions

- 2019 Desert River Sea: Kimberley Art Then & Now - Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
- 2018 Desert Mob - Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs
- 2018 Flying Colours - Talapi Gallery, Alice Springs
- 2018 WAU! Focus in Western Australia - Rovaniemi Museum, Finland
- 2017 Balgo - Jacktman Gallery, Canberra



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- 2017 Continuing Culture - Artitja Fine Art, Perth
2017 TARNANTHI FESTIVAL - Art Gallery of SA, Adelaide
2017 Flight: Aboriginal perspectives from the sky - FORM Art Gallery, Perth
2016 Desert Mob - Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs
2016 Kings and Queens - Yaama Ganu Gallery, Moree, NS
2015 Warlayirti Artists, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, Darwin
2015 Warlayirti Artists, Desert Mob Exhibition, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs
2015 Warlayirti 2015, Art Atrium Gallery, Sydney
2014-15 Warlayirti: The Art of Balgo Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs
2014 Warlayirti: The Art of Balgo RMIT Gallery, Melbourne
2014 Balgo 14, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
2014 Yaninpala Yirwarrawanna Kutjupa Ngurrarrakutu – Walking the Path, Nomad Art, Darwin

2014 Balgo: Past & Present, Cooee Gallery, Sydney
2014 Summer Collectors Show, Susan McCulloch, Mornington Peninsula
2014 Warlayirti Artists, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, Darwin
2014 Warlayirti Artists, Desert Mob Exhibition, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs
2013-14 In Print 20/20, Celebrating 20 years of prints & printmaking, Charles Darwin University Art Collection & Northern Editions Printmaking Studio

2013 Convergence, Warlayirti Artists @ Short St Gallery, Broome
2013 Kuralka Tjanu Tjukurpa: Kuwarri Marr Ku (Old Stories: New Creations), Northern Editions, Charles Darwin University, Darwin Festival Exhibitions, Darwin

2013 Marrka Wangka- Warlayirti Artist, Yaama Ganu Gallery & Café Gali, Moree 2013
Re-generation, Susan McCulloch, Melbourne

2013 Seoul Open Arts Fair, Korea. (Group Exhibition via Desart, Alice Springs.) 2013
Sun Flying, Payla Art, Australian Embassy, Berlin, Germany

2013 Balgo Survey, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
2013 Fresh, McCulloch & McCulloch, Salt Contemporary Queenscliff, Vic
2013 Nora Wompi & Friends, Suzanne O'Connell, Brisbane, Qld
2012-13 Gestuelles – The Art of Transmission by Aboriginal Desert Women, IDAIA – International Development for Australian Indigenous Art, Alliances Francaises in Australia

2013 Warlayirti Artists, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, Darwin
2013 Warlayirti Artists, Desert Mob Exhibition, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs
2013 Balgo Survey, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Victoria
2012 Convergence: Two Worlds, Void Gallery, Broome
2012 Watermark - the Signature of Life, IDAIA, Hong Kong
2012 Warlayirti Artists, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, Darwin
2012 Warlayirti Artists, Desert Mob Exhibition, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs
2012 Wangkartu, Winpurpurla Soakwaters Continuing Through Time, Alcaston Gallery



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- 2012 Warlayirti Artists, Artkelch Pro Community, Freiburg, Grassi Museum Leipzig, Fabrik Der Kunste, Hamburg and Galerie Gunzoburg Bodensee (Lake Constance), Germany
- 2011 Warlayirti Artists, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, Darwin
- 2011 Warlayirti Artists, Desert Mob Exhibition, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs
- 2010 Balgo Survey, Rheinfelden/Baden, Haus Salmegg, Coolamon Aboriginal Art Gallery Schopfheim, Germany
- 2010 Balgo Survey, ReDot Gallery, Singapore
- 2010 Ingalimpa Tjuntu - Singing Songs "We sing the country and that's how we find the way", ReDot Fine Art Galleries, Audi Forum Building, Tokyo
- 2010 Balgo Prints, Northern Editions, Darwin
- 2009 Lamparrta Tjanu Nyarni , Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne
- 2008 Balgo 2008, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
- 2008 Men's Exhibition, Wooloongabba, Art Gallery, Brisbane
- 2008 Mixed Show, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi , Melbourne
- 2007 Balgo Survey , Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
- 2007 New Balgo Prints & Glass, Northern Editions, Darwin
- 2007 Best of the Best, Framed Gallery, Darwin
- 2007 Valid Editions - They might be Giants, A La Trobe University Art Museum, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre
- 2007 My country: Abstract interpretations of Australian Landscape, LaTrobe University travelling exhibition. Ateneo Art Gallery, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
- 2007 Survey, They Might be Giants, Wooloongabba Art gallery , Brisbane
- 2006 Helicopter Tjungurrayi, Christine Yukenbarri, Imelda (guguman) Yukenbarri, Carmel Yukenbarri, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne
- 2005 Glass from the Sand Country, Alcaston Gallery , Melbourne
- 2006 Survey , ShortstGallery , Broome , WA
- 2004 Balgo a go go , Grant Pirrie, Sydney
- 2003 Eight by Three, Scott Livesey Art Dealer, Melbourne, Vic
- 2003 Desert Mob, Araluen Centre for Arts, Alice Springs, NT
- 2003 Purlatjanirri Kamu Warmala, Framed Gallery, Darwin, NT
- 2003 Balgo Brilliance, Art Mob, Hobart, Tas
- 2003 Palya Minyiri, Thornquest Gallery, Gold Coast, QLD
- 2002 Balgo Hills, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Vic
- 2002 19th NATSIAA, Museum and Art Gallery of NT, Darwin, NT
- 2002 Balgo Hills Artists 2002, Art Mob, Aboriginal Fine Art, Tas
- 2002 Art from Balgo, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs, NT
- 2002 Kutjungka, Passing it On: Works from Balgo Hills, Coomalie Cultural Centre, Batchelor, WA
- 2002 Big Colour My Country, Thornquest Gallery, Gold Coast, QLD
- 2002 Balgo Hills: an artist's survey, Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, NSW



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- 2001 Short on Size, Short st. Gallery, Broome, WA
2001 Balgo Men, Framed Gallery, Darwin, NT
2001 All About Art, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Vic
2001 Kutjungka, Bett Gallery, Hobart, Tas
2001 Balgo Works, Staedtische Gallery, Wolsfburg, Germany
2001 New paintings from Balgo, Cutcliffe Gallery, Sydney, NSW
2001 Recent Works by Artists from Balgo Hills, Ochre Gallery, Collingwood, Vic
2001 Balgo Artists Return to Country, Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, Vic
2001 Spirituality and Australian Aboriginal Art, Alcaston Gallery, Madrid, Spain
2001 Yvonnou Balgo Exhibition, AMG Gallery, Paris, France
2001 Past Modern: an exhibition of Kimberley Landscapes, Short st. Gallery @ Australia Square, Sydney, NSW
- 2000 The Westside: Images in Ochre and Colour, Coe-ee II Exhibiting Gallery, Yuwayi Art Precinct, World Square, Sydney, NSW
- 2000 Olympic Exhibition, Coe-ee Exhibiting Gallery, Yuwayi Art Precinct, World Square, Sydney
- 2000 Past, Present and Future, Gallery East, Sydney, NSW
2000 Balgo Hills, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Vic
2000 Marking the Paper: limited edition prints on paper, DesArt, Sydney, NSW
2000 Melbourne Artfair
2000 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, Vic
2000 Waltja-Family, Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, NSW
2000 Hot Press: Recent Prints from Central Australia and the Kimberley, Beaver Galleries, Canberra, ACT
- 2000 Peintures des Aborigenes d'Australie, Palais des Congres et des Expositions, Paris, France
- 2000 Balgo Art, Gondwana Gallery, Alice Springs, NT
2000 Balgo Hills Aboriginal Paintings, Bett Gallery, Hobart, Tas
- 1999 Aboriginal Art, IHK, Wurzburg, Germany
1999 Dreaming in Colour: Australian Aboriginal Art from Balgo, University of Virginia, USA
1999 16th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT
- 1999 East Kimberley Art Awards, Kununurra Arts Council, Kununurra, WA
1999 Desert Mob '99, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
1999 30th Alice Prize, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
1999 Mularrpa (True) Balgo, Framed, the Gallery, Darwin, NT
1999 Miliynyin, Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, NSW
1999 Miliynyin, Japingka Gallery, Fremantle, WA
1998 Culture Store, Art Gallery, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
1998 Ngurrara: My Own Country, Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, NSW
1998 Dreamings, Spazio Pitti Arte, Florence, Italy
1998 Balgo Men, Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, Vic



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- 1998 Hilton Hotel Art Gallery, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- 1998 Dreamings, Vlaams-Europeesch Conferentiecentrum, Brussels, Belgium
- 1997 Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs, NT
- 1997 New Paintings from Balgo Artists, Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, Vic
- 1997 Big Balgos: Recent Paintings by Warlayirti Artists, Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, NSW
- 1997 Balgo Paintings, Seywald Gallery, Salzburg, Austria
- 1997 Dreamings, Arnhem, The Netherlands
- 1997 nnenseite: Projektgruppe Stoffwechsel, Kassel & Gottingen, Germany
- 1997 Desert Country, Matso's, Broome, WA
- 1996 Balgo Hills: Art of the Place, Derek Simpkins Gallery of Tribal Art, Vancouver, BC, Canada
- 1995 Two Men Dreaming: New Art from Balgo Hills, Coo-ee Aboriginal Art Gallery, Sydney

Collections

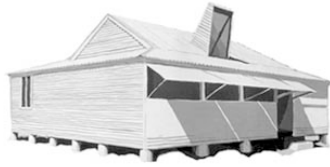
National Gallery of Australia
Art Gallery of New South Wales
National Gallery of Victoria
Kluge Ruhe Collection, USA
Gantner Myer Collection
Lavery Collection
Edith Cowan University
Harland Collection
Revue du Louvre, Paris
Aboriginal Art Museum, Utrecht, The Netherlands
Ken Thompson and Pierre Marecaux Collection, Spain

Awards

- 1999 Special Commendation, East Kimberley Art Awards, Kununurra Arts Council, Kununurra
- 2001 Tjumu painting translated into a mosaic that adorns the courtyard of the Aboriginal Art Museum Utrecht, Netherlands

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Australian Heritage Commission (Ed.), 2000, The Fifth National Indigenous Heritage Art Award.
The Art of Place. Canberra Cowan, James, 1999, Balgo new directions. Craftsman House, Sydney



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Galerie B, Speyer, Kulturabteilung Bayer, Leverkusen, Bayer Australia, Sydney (Hrsg.), 2000, Das Verborgene im Sichtbaren. The Unseen in Scene. Aboriginal Art Speyer, Stockholm
ISAACS, Jennifer, 1999, Spirit Country. Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art. Hardie Grant Books, Melbourne, Fine Arts & Museums of San Francisco
Kleinert, S. und Neale, M. (Ed.). 2000, The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture. Oxford Univ. Press, Melbourne, Meeuwsen, Franca. 2000, Aboriginal Kunst, de verhalen vertellen, Zwolle,
Murname, Gerald, 2002 Sista brevet till en brorsdotter. In: Artes. Tidskrift fLitteratur, Konst och Musik, Nr 4/2002, Arg. 28, Musée Olympic (Ed.), 2001, Art Aborigène, Jouvence millénaire, .
Aboriginal Art, An Immemorial Fountain of Youth, Lausanne Outback discovering the people & culture of Australia's heartland, www.incword.com, 2007 pg 41, 42, 43, 59
Winter, Joan G., (Ed), 2002, Native Title Business. Contemporary Indigenous Art. Keearia Press, Southport