



# Short St. Gallery

## Thomas Tjapaltjarri



**Born** 01/01/1964  
**Language Group** Pintupi  
**Region** NG Lands - Ngaayatarra

Thomas was born in the desert of Western Australia sometime in the 1960s. He and his family lived a traditional nomadic way of life on the western side of Lake Mackay. They had never come into contact with European society, Most other Pintupi families had been settled in remote towns to the east and west of their traditional country during the 1950s. Thomas' father Lanti (or "Joshua"), had lived for a short time at the mission in Balgo, but he had run away after getting into trouble for stealing food. It was his decision to stay in the desert and kept his family far away from the towns. Thomas' mother was named Nanu. He also had two other mothers, Papunya and Watjunka, who where his fathe'rs secondary wives. He has two younger sisters, Yalti and Yukultji, a younger half-brother walala, and four other "siblings" (cousins by blood relation). His father died sometime around 1980. The family finally came into contact with outsiders in October 1984 and were settled at Kiwirrkurra. The event was big news at the time, and the family became famously known as "the last nomads". Thomas was diagnosed with epilepsy shortly after this. Thomas began painting in December 1987, a few years after settling at Kiwirrkurra. His cousin Warlimpirnga had already made a name of himself as an artist and he encouraged Thomas to paint too. Thomas and Walala joined the Papunya Tula artist, and they and Warlimpirnga eventually gained fame internationally as the Tjapaltjarri Brothers. Although he normally paints using Tjapaltjarri as a surname, Thomas' skin name is Tjapangati. His painting depicts stories from the Pintupi dreaming. They are mostly about places and events in the Tingari cycle (a cycle of myths about the ancestors of the Pintupi). His designs are inspired by those painted on the body during ceremonies. He uses acrylic paints on canvas, sticking to earthy colours (black, white and ochres). He paints simple shapes with dotted lines, which is a style that his brothers also use.

**Themes:** Tingari

**Mediums:** Screenprint

## Groupe Exhibitions

2018

Short St Gallery Group Show