

# Short St. Gallery

## Jakayu Biljabu

**Born** 1936  
**Language** Manyjilyjarra  
**Region** Punmu: WA



## Biography

*"I was born in Pitu (Separation Well). Alongside that water place, Pitu, is where I grew up. I became an adult in the desert before I went to Jigalong"*

*"I'm really happy when I'm painting my Country. I'm proud as I follow my Country, I'm holding onto my Country. That's my water in the East. I'm painting my Country."*

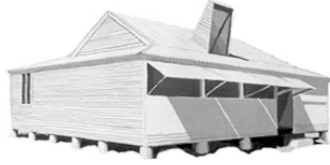
*"It's not someone else's, it's my Country. I'm looking after my Country. I'm showing my family the Country. I feel privileged that I can see it. As I watch my children I'm really happy for them. I'm watching them all while they're working, on the Country. I'm so proud of them. I'm looking after them and now I feel fulfilled."*

- Jakayu Biljabu as translated by Kanyiminpa Jukurpa

Jakayu is a Manyjilyjarra woman born in the mid 1930s just north of Pitu (Separation Well), an important cultural site and large soak located *yulparirra* (south) of Wuranu (Canning Stock Route Well 29). Jakayu lived a *pujiman* (traditional, desert dwelling) lifestyle in her youth, moving through the Country surrounding Kunawarritji (Canning Stock Route Well 33), Wikiri, Rarrki (Canning Stock Route Well 27), Wantili (Wantili, Canning Stock Route Well 25), Pitu, Nylangkurr and Nyinyari. During this time Jakayu's family would regularly meet and travel with the families of fellow Martumili Artists Bugai Whyoulter and Ngamaru Bidu.

Jakayu's early contact with whitefellas occurred at wells along the Canning Stock Route, when occasionally drovers would slaughter a bullock and share the meat with her family. Despite these interactions, Jakayu's father was very wary of the Europeans who travelled along the route in increasing numbers, having heard of the sometimes violent and cruel methods employed by Alfred Canning's group when the Stock Route was chartered. As such, Jakayu's family waited longer than most *pujimanpa* (traditional, desert dwellers) before leaving their traditional life.

Jakayu was travelling with her husband (also the husband of her sister), two children and extended family in 1963 when they encountered the surveyor Len Beadell, who was then



# Short St. Gallery

grading roads through the Western Desert for the Woomera Missile Testing Range. He notified staff at Jigalong Mission of their whereabouts, and consequently they were tracked; *"Two men from Jigalong caught up with us. They had been following our tracks. They said we should go back and wait at Pamngurr rockhole and they would come and pick us up and take us to Jigalong, where we could see all our family who we had not seen for a long time. So we did, we went and stayed in Pamngurr"* (Jakayu Biljabu, as translated by Ngalangka Nola Taylor). Jakayu was one of the last Martu to leave the desert.

Jakayu worked as a baker at the Jigalong Mission and then several other stations before moving to the newly Aboriginal owned Strelley station for a time. In 1982, during the 'Return to Country' movement, she relocated with her family to Punmu Aboriginal community, where she continues to live today with her children and grandchildren.

Jakayu is a senior Martumili Artist, known for her bold, painterly style and beautiful compositions, deeply entrenched in the *Jukurpa* (Dreaming) narratives associated with her Country. She frequently depicts the sandhills, claypans and salt lakes of the Manyjilyjarra desert regions she travelled through to young adulthood, and views painting as an important means of passing cultural knowledge to younger Martu generations. Of recent times, Jakayu has worked on several collaborative paintings with young Martumili Artist Corban Williams. Jakayu is a much acclaimed and awarded artist. Her work has been selected for the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards, and she has exhibited widely across Australia and internationally. Jakayu's work has been acquired by several major institutions in Australia, including The National Museum of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, and Queensland Art Gallery's Gallery of Modern Art.

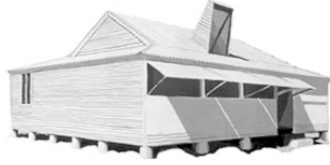
## Group Exhibitions

2021	Pukurlpa (happy inside), Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2020	What Now? The Good Shed, Claremont, WA
2020	Belonging to Martu, Harvey Arts Project, Idaho, US
2020	Ngurra Means Home, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2020	Strong Country, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2020	Matriarchs 2020, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2020	Kujungka- Young and Old Together, Aboriginal Signature, Brussels, Belgium
2019	Desert Mob 2019, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2019	Nyumma (burnt Country), Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2019	Martu Wangka, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2018	Desert Mob 2019, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2018	Warla Tuwa, Aboriginal Contemporary, Bronte, NSW
2018	Martuku Ninti (Martu Knowledge), Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, VIC



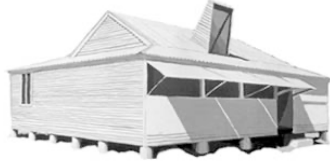
# Short St. Gallery

- 2018 Pujiman, Martumili Artists and Spinifex Hill Artists, Port Hedland Courthouse Gallery, NT
- 2018 Voice of the custodians of the Homeland: Martumili, Aboriginal Signature Estrangin Gallery, Bruxelles
- 2017 Art at the Heart, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2017 Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters, touring exhibition from National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT
- 2017 Desert Mob, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
- 2017 Community Life, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2017 After The Rains, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
- 2017 Flight: Aboriginal Perspectives from the Sky, FORM Gallery, Perth, WA
- 2017 Constellation, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
- 2017 Women of Martu, Suzanne OConnell Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
- 2016 Martumili Artists – Nylangkurr, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
- 2016 Scratching the Surface, Alliance Francaise de Sydney, Sydney, NSW
- 2016 Desert Mob, Araluen Art Center, Alice Springs, NT
- 2016 Summer Salon and Art Parade, Whistlewood, McCulloch and McCulloch, Mornington Peninsula, VIC
- 2015 We Don't Need a Map - A Martu Experience of the Western Desert, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
- 2015 Three Deserts Singing, Frewen Arts, Piccadilly, Mayfair, London
- 2015 Palya, Martumili Artists, Tjarlirli Art and Warakurna Artists, Vivien Anderson Gallery, Brightspace, VIC
- 2015 We Don't Need a Map - A Martu Experience of the Western Desert, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Gold Coast, QLD
- 2015 Desert Mob, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
- 2015 We Don't Need a Map - A Martu Experience of the Western Desert, McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery, Langwarrin, VIC
- 2015 Hedland Art Award, The Courthouse Gallery, Port Hedland, WA
- 2015 NATSIAA The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award, The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, NT
- 2015 Martumili Artists, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
- 2015 Pukuripa - Good Inside, Yaama Ganu Gallery, Moree, NSW
- 2015 We Don't Need a Map - A Martu Experience of the Western Desert, Moree Plains Gallery, Moree, NSW
- 2015 Together as One Martu - Art from the far Western Desert, The Gallery Shop, Waverley, NSW
- 2015 We Don't Need a Map - A Martu Experience of the Western Desert, Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo, NSW
- 2015 The Summer Collectors Show 2015, McCulloch & McCulluch Gallery, Mornington Peninsula, VIC



# Short St. Gallery

- 2014 Martumili, Harvey Art Projects, USA We Don't Need a Map - A Martu Experience of the Western Desert, Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Katoomba, NSW
- 2014 WaterMark – The signature of life, IDAIA – International Development for Australian Indigenous Art, at the Arts House, Singapore
- 2014 Martu Art From the Western Desert, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW
- 2014 Desert Mob, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
- 2014 Salon Des Refuses, Outstation, Darwin, NT
- 2014 Malya Yuturingu; be a star, State Theatre Centre, Perth, WA
- 2014 Right Now, Boomalli Gallery, Leichardt, VIC
- 2013 Martumili Art Show, Newman Visitors Centre, Newman, WA
- 2013 Ngayunlu-laju partumparakula kujungka: Old people painting together, Paul Johnston Gallery, Darwin, NT
- 2013 Painting It Martu Way, Art Mob, Hobart, TAS
- 2013 Selected works by the Martumili Artists, Raft Artspace, Alice Springs, NT
- 2013 The Great Sandy Desert, Yaama Ganu Gallery, Moree, NSW
- 2012 We Don t Need A Map: a Martu experience of the Western Desert, WA
- 2012 We Don't Need a Map - A Martu Experience of the Western Desert, Fremantle Art Centre, Perth, WA
- 2012 Martumili Artists 2012, Merenda Gallery, Perth, WA
- 2012 Deserts & Rivers, FORM Gallery, Perth, WA
- 2012 Desert Mob, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT Watermark - The signature of life, IDAIA - International Development for Australian Indigenous Art, The Space, Hong Kong
- 2012 Martumili Artists, IDAIA - International Development for Australian Indigenous Art, Galerie Kungka, Saint Avertin, France
- 2012 Warla: an explanation of the salt lakes in the Great Sandy Desert, Short Street Gallery, Broome, WA
- 2012 Decrochage de l'exposition des Martumili Artists, Galerie Kungka, France
- 2012 Martumili Artists at Art Mob, Art Mob, Hobart, TAS
- 2012 Strong Women Country, IDAIA - International Development for Australian Indigenous Art, Paris, France
- 2011 Martumili Artists Recent Works, William Mora Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
- 2010 Yiwarra Kuju – One Road, One People, Perth Convention Exhibition Centre, Perth, WA
- 2010 Yiwarra Kuju – One Road, One People, Australian Museum, Sydney, NSW
- 2010 Waru! Holding Fire in Australia's Western Desert, Thomas Welton Stanford Art Gallery, Stanford University, San Francisco



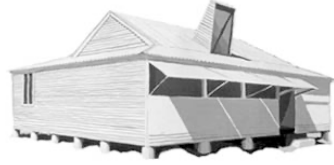
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2010	Living Water – Contemporary Art of the Far Western Desert, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, VIC
2010	Martumili Artists, Outback Fusion Festival, Newman, WA
2010	Revealed – Emerging Aboriginal Artists from Western Australia, Gallery Central, Perth, WA
2010	Desert Mob, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2009	Before and After Science, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide Biennial 2010, SA
2009	Yiwarra Kuju – One Road, One People, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT
2009	Jakulpa laju kartyinpa (Bringing a message), Chapman Gallery, Canberra, ACT
2009	Martumili Group Exhibition, AP Bond Gallery, Adelaide, SA
2009	Edge of the Lake, Short Street Gallery, Broome, WA
2009	Shalom Gamarada Ngiyani Yana (We walk together as friends), Waterhole Art, Sydney, NSW
2008	Yankuni Laju Kamkani Kujungka (We are travelling together by air), Red Dot Gallery, Singapore
2008	Nintijunu (Teaching), Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney, NSW
2008	Puntu kumu (Belongs to the people), Newman Visitors Centre, Newman, WA
2008	Warranpalampaju kayili yaninpa (Our Country travelling north), Raft Art Space, Darwin, NT
2007	Martumili Artists Recent Works, William Mora Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
2007	Laltu tujuparaku, yulpalpa yimaparaku (Lots of women, little bit men), Aboriginal and Pacific Art, Sydney, NSW
2007	Jitirangu (Rainbow), Randell Lane Gallery, Perth, WA
2007	Ngurra waltja wakami (We are painting country), Short St Gallery, Broome, WA
2007	Martumili Artists, Port Hedland Courthouse Arts Centre and Gallery, Port Hedland, WA
2006	Martu-la wakamu kuwarri wiyaju (Martu painting together first time), William Mora Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
2005	Pamngurr Artists, Stanford University, California

## Awards

2015	Finalist, Hedland Art Award
2015	Finalist, Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
2013	Finalist, Glencore Art Centre Award
2013	Finalist, Hedland Art Award

## Collections



# Short St. Gallery

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Art Gallery of Western Australia

Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland Art Gallery

Museum of Contemporary Art

National Gallery of Victoria

National Museum of Australia