



Short St. Gallery

Tjunkaya Tapaya

Birth Year 1947
Language Group Pitjantjatjara
Region Western / Central Desert



Biography

Tjunkaya grew up at the Ernabella Mission. In mission days, the building which is now the art centre was originally used as a food hall by the missionaries. In 1948 it became the Craft Room, where the first work was by women, spinning wool and rug making. Most of the senior artists painting on the APY Lands today have passed through this building across more than one of its incarnations.

Tjunkaya began work in the Craft Room making weavings, later excelling in the medium of batik, and became one of the outstanding artists with work in several public collections. Her work was featured on the cover of Judith Ryan's 'Across the Desert: Aboriginal Batik from Central Australia.'

Tjunkaya also works in ceramics, tjampi, punu, print making, spinning and mukata making and her work in these mediums has been seen in numerous exhibitions in Australia and internationally since 1971, in public and private galleries. Her works are held in many national and international collections, including the National Museum of Scotland, National Museum of Australia, National Gallery of Australia and the Museum of Ethnology, Osaka.

Since 2015, Tjunkaya has chosen to concentrate on painting and tjampi sculpture. This focus has seen her become one of the most in demand female artists on the APY Lands and increasingly recognised in these two mediums. In 2010 and 2011 she was collected by Artbank, and in 2011 and 2012 selected as a finalist in the Togart Contemporary Art Award. In 2012 her tjulpu (bird) tjampi sculptures were selected for exhibition in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (the Telstras). 2011 marked the commencement of Tjunkaya's 5th decade of working at Ernabella Arts. Her first solo show was in 2012 at Alcaston Gallery in Melbourne, where Tjunkaya exhibited a mix of paintings and tjampi sculpture.



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She was the Deputy Chair of the art centre and the leader of the Nintintjaku Project, an inter-generational teaching project working with Ernabella Anangu School and the Ernabella NPY youth team. She has also recently recommenced work in the ceramics studio, exhibiting ceramics again for the first time in a number of years. Tjunkaya is also a prolific writer in Pitjantjatjara. She is currently developing a bi-lingual children's book. She also has essays published in a number of exhibition catalogues, including the Desert Mob 2017 catalogue and the catalogue for the 2017 Tarnanthi: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art.

In 2016 Tjunkaya took part in a collaborative project, a tjanpi (woven) sculpture called Minyma Tjirilyanya Ngaltujara Pikatjara (Echidna Woman Hurt and Sick). This tells an ancient story of the Echidna Woman. This work was listed as a finalist in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award.

In 2018 Tjunkaya's life's work as a representative for her people, an artist and a writer was recognised and she received the Gladys Elphick Award for Lifetime Achievement.

In 2020 Tjunkaya was awarded an Order of Australia, General Division in the Queen's Birthday Honour.

Themes

Kungkarangkalpa (Seven Sisters)
Kutungu Tjukurpa (Kutungus Story)
Mantatjara, Nguratjara (Country and home camps)
Minyma Kutjara (Two Women)
Tji Tji Tjuta (Many Children)

Solo Exhibitions

2021	Kungkarangkalpa: Seven Sisters – Sabbia Gallery, Sydney, NSW
2012	Nintinjaku – Teaching, Showing, Passing On, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, VIC

Group Exhibitions

2022	Short Street Gallery, Broome, WA – Manta Tjula – Soft Earth
2021	Aboriginal Signature, Bruxelles, Belgium - Caress the Earth: Manta Ngura Atuntju Kanyini
2021	Everywhen Artspace, Mornington Peninsular, VIC - Three Ladies from Ernabella: Minyma Mankurpa Ernabella la Nguru
2021	Sabbia Gallery, Sydney, NSW - PREVIEW - Sydney Contemporary
2021	Araleun Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT - Desert Mob 30



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2021	Artitja Fine Art Gallery, South Fremantle, WA - Ananyi Nyurakutu- Going Home
2020	McCulloch and McCulloch, Everywhen Artspace, VIC - Always Was, Always Will be
2020	Metro Arts, Queensland - Pattern and Place
2020	Artitja Fine Art, South Fremantle - Cultural Connections: the gift of story
2020	Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, SA - Tamarthi Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art: Open Hands
2020	Artitja Fine Art, York, WA - Spring Salon Art
2020	Short Street Gallery, Broome, WA - Nganampa Tjukurpa Ananyi Wilurara (Our Stories Going West)
2020	Aboriginal Contemporary, Sydney, NSW - Nganampa Tjukurpa Ananyi Kakarara (Our Stories Going East)
2020	Talapi Gallery, Alice Springs, NT - Flying Colours
2019	JamFactory Craft and Design Centre, Adelaide, VIC - Wanapari - in a line, following one another
2019	Everywhen Space, McCulloch and McCulloch, VIC - ReGeneration: Showing, teaching, passing down
2019	Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, NT - Desert Mob 2019
2019	Talapi Gallery, Alice Springs, NT - Desert Colour featuring Ernabella ceramics
2018	ARTKELCH, Freiburg, Germany - Offen für Kunst
2018	Araluen Art Centre - Desert Mob 2018
2018	Artitja Fine Art, South Fremantle - Knowing Country
2017	In These Hands: Mara Nyanganka, Sturt Gallery, Mittagong NSW
2017	Desert Mob 2017, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs NT
2017	Our Country in Clay, Nomad Art, Darwin NT
2017	Ngura Kutjupa, Walytia Kutju: Different Communities, One Family, Tangentyere Artists, Alice Springs, NT, 2017
2017	Relative Colours, Aboriginal Contemporary, Sydney, NSW
2016	Jganampa Kilpil: Our Stars, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre,
2016	Inheritance, Salt Contemporary, Queenscliff, VIC
2016	Point Of Difference - Desert To The Sea , Artitja Fine Art, Fremantle, WA
2016	All About Colour, Summer Show + Art Parade, Mcculloch & Mcculloch/Salt Contemporary Art
2016	Tjukurpa Kunpa/Strong Culture Holiday Show 2015-2016 , Harvey Art Projects, Usa
2015	Desert Colour, Talapai Gallery, Alice Springs NT
2015	Kuruntu Mukuringkula Kulira Palyantja (Stories Straight From The Heart), Short Street Gallery, Broome
2015	Bold And The Beautiful, Talapi, Alice Springs
2014	Masters; Interpretation Of Land, Mcculloch & Mcculloch/Salt, Contemporary Art, Queenscliff, VIC
2014	Desert Mob, Araluen Arts Centre



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2014	Spring Salon + Art Parade, Mcculloch & Mcculloch - Shoreham Victoria,
2014	Pilanypa, Harvey Art Projects, Idaho USA
2014	Autumn Salon + Art Parade, Mcculloch & Mcculloch - Shoreham Victoria
2014	Bold And The Beautiful, Talapi, Alice Springs
2014	Eastern Apy Lands: Artkelch, Touring Freiburg, Munich, Hamburg And Bodensee, Germany
2014	The Summer Collectors Show, Mcculloch & Mcculloch – Shoreham Victoria
2013	Tjukurpa Nganampa Kunpa Kanyintjaku: Keeping Our Stories Strong Harvey Art Projects, Idaho USA
2013	A Salon Show For Indigenous Literacy, Mcculloch & Mcculloch - Dmcpr Media, Leichhardt, NSW
2013	Heartland, Contemporary Art From South Australia, Art Gallery Of South Australia, Adelaide SA
2013	Regeneration: Established & Emerging Talents Of Indigenous Art, Mcculloch & Mcculloch, Shoreham, VIC
2013	Nyingga: The Cold Tome Of The Year, Harvey Arts Projects, Idaho USA
2013	Desert Mob, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs NT
2013	String Theory: Focus On Contemporary Australian Art, Museum Of Contemporary Art, Sydney NSW
2013	Australian Vision, Naidoc 2013, Australian High Commission, Singapore
2012	Tjamuku Kamiku Tjukurpa, Outstation Gallery, Darwin NT
2012	Tjukurpa Mulapa (True Storeis), Redot Fine Art Gallery, Singapore
2012	Dead!: In-Between Heaven And Hell, Tandanya, Adelaide SA
2012	Indigenous Ceramic Art Award, Shepparton Art Museum, Shepparton VIC
2012	Desert Mob, Araluen Arts Centre
2012	Kapi Ukalinganyi, Aboriginal And Pacific Art Gallery, Sydney NSW
2012	Ngayuku Ngura, Ngayuku Tjukurpa, Sa Museum, Adelaide, SA
2012	Natsiaas, Museum And Art Gallery Of The Northern Territory, Darwin NT
2012	Togart Contemporary Art Award, Chan Contemporary Art Space, Darwin NT
2011	Desert Mob, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs NT
2011	Togart Contemporary Art Award, Chan Contemporary Arts Space, Darwin NT
2011	We Know Our Land, We Keep Our Land, Raft Artspace, Alice Springs NT
2011	The Kings School Art Prize
2011	The Kings School, Parramatta, NSW
2011	Emabella Arts Kuwari, Chapman Gallery, Canberra ACT
2011	Emabella Undiscovered, Turnbridge Gallery, Margaret Rover, WA
2011	Our Mob 2010 On Tour, National Travelling Exhibition
2011	Tjukurpa Nyangatja Ngananala Unngu Ngaranyi, Aboriginal And Pacific Art, Sydney NSW
2011	Ngura Kutju, Tjukurpa Pulkatjara, Short St Gallery, Broome WA
2010	Ngura Nganampa (Our Country), Outstation Gallery, Darwin NT
2010	Our Mob, Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide SA



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- 2010 Recent Paintings: Ernabella Arts, Chapman Gallery, Canberra Act
2010 Kayili And Ernabella 2010, Aboriginal And Pacific Art, Sydney NSW
2010 Ara Irititja Munu Ara Kuwaritja Ernabella-La, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne VIC
2010 Ngura Nganampa (Our Country), Jamfactory, Adelaide SA
2010 Desert Mob, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs NT
2010 Womens Exhibition, Randell Lane Fine Art, Perth WA
2009 Ernabella Ceramics, Birrung Gallery, Sydney, NSW (Ceramics Triennial)
2008 Across The Desert: Aboriginal Batik From Central Australia, National Gallery Of Victoria, Melbourne. VIC

2008 Desert Mob, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2008 Nganampa Warka Wiru (Our Work Is Beautiful), Cudgegong Gallery, Gulgong, NSW

2008 Anangu Backyard, Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide SA
2008 Kiti Art: New Batik From Ernabella, Fabric Of Life, Adelaide Fringe Festival, Adelaide, SA

2007 A Way Of Seeing, Gallery Gondwana, Sydney, NSW
2007 Australian Contemporary-New Works From Ernabella, Hermannsburg And Tiwi Islands, Sofa, Chicago, USA

2007 Ernabella - A Collection Of New Works, Australia Dreaming Art, Melbourne, VIC
2007 Desert Mob, Araluen Cultural Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2007 Desert Diversity, Flinders Lane Gallery, Adelaide, SA
2007 Visions Of Country, Seymour College, Adelaide, SA
2007 Divas Of The Desert, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs NT
2006 Homeland Heartland, Jam Factory Contemporary Craft & Design, Adelaide, SA
2006 Let The Earth Speak, Fabric Of Life, Adelaide Fringe Festival, Adelaide, SA
1998 Warka Irititja Munu Kuwaritja (Work From The Past And Present), Tandanya, Adelaide, SA

1997 Warka Ernabella / Ernabella Design, Multitjulu Cultural Centre, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, NT

1997 Purnululu, Raintree Aboriginal Fine Art Gallery, Darwin, NT
1996 Painting The Land, National Museum Of Australia, Canberra, ACT (Then Touring Until 1999)

1994 Peter Ballas Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
1994 Ernabellaku :Tjukurpa Wiru, Nganampa Tjukurpa, Museum Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia

1993 Lizards, Snakes & Cattle Dogs - Australian Contemporary Textiles German Textile Museum, Krefeld, Germany
1993 The Children's Gift, Tandanya, Adelaide, SA
1989 Araluen Art Centre for Culture and Entertainment, Alice Springs, NT
1988 Wirutjuta, Karnta, Throughout South East Asia
1988 Texas International Festival, Texas, USA
1986 Textiles of The Commonwealth (Touring Exhibition) UK



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1976 Grace Bros. Chatswood, Sydney NSW Also 1977 & 1982, 1976
1971 Argyle Arts Centre, Sydney, NSW

Collections

ARALUEN ARTS CENTRE
ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE, SA
ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, COLLABORATIVE TJANPI WORK, 2012 ARTBANK,
2010, 2011
AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES
(AIATSIS), CANBERRA ACT
CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTION, DARWIN, NT 2021
JANET HOLMES À COURT COLLECTION
LEEUEWIN ESTATE, 2012
MUSEUM OF ETHNOLOGY, OSAKA, JAPAN
NATIONAL GALLERY AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, ACT
NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, 2004
NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA, 2014
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND, UK
NORTHERN TERRITORY CRAFTS COUNCIL, DARWIN, NT
QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY, BRISBANE, QLD

Awards

2021 Finalist, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award
2018 Perpetual Gladys Elphick Award (lifetime achievement)
2016 Finalist (Collaborative), National Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Art Award
2009 Me and My Toyota Art Prize - Toyota Australia

Bibliography

2014 ARTKELOCH, Robyn Kelch: Eastern APY Lands, exhibition catalogue Pro
Community 2014, Freiburg, Germany
2014 Highlights Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection, Nici Cumpston, Art
Gallery of South Australia, p 73
2013 Togart Contemporary Art Award Prof. Sasha Grishin, Craft Arts International
No.87, P.3
2012 Togart Contemporary Art Award Catalogue, P.90
2012 Tjanpi Desert Weavers, Penny Watson, Macmillan
2012 Tjanpi Desert Weavers Macmillan Mini-Art Series #19



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- 2012 Deadly: In-Between Heaven and Hell Pp 62-71 Tjanpi Desert Weavers
Paarpakani: Tjanpi Desert Weavers Take Flight Fulvia Mantelli And Renee Johnson
- 2011 Threads. Contemporary Textiles and The Social Fabric. Bruce Mclean,
Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art P.133
- 2011 Indigenous Ceramic Art Award, Shepparton Art Museum, P.40-41
- 2011 Togart Contemporary Art Award Catalogue
- 2009 Bravura. 21st Century Australian Craft. Robert Reason, Art Gallery of South
Australia, P.2, P.28
- 2008 Across the Desert: Aboriginal Batik From Central Australia Judith Ryan, NGV
(Artists Work On Cove And Featured Inside)