



Short St. Gallery

May Mayiwalku (May Wokka) Chapman

Birth Year 1940

Language Group Manyjilyjarra

Region Warralong: WA



Biography

Mayiwalku May Chapman is the eldest sister of fellow Martumili Artists Nancy Nyanjilpayi (Ngamjapayi) Chapman, Mulyatingki Marney and Marjorie Yates (dec.). Her mother was Warnman and her father was Manyjilyjarra. Mayiwalku was born to the East, in Yirmangarri, "where the two footprints lie". Her family's Country extends across the Punmu, Kunawarritji (Canning Stock Route Well 33) and Karlamilyi (Rudall River) regions. Following the death of both their parents, Mayiwalku and her sisters travelled alone between Punmu and Kunawarritji, occasionally meeting with other family groups. They later walked south into Karlamilyi, where they first saw a plane flying overhead. Petrified, they hid under spinifex grass until the plane had passed.

Following the construction of the Canning Stock Route in 1910, the family increasingly came into contact with Europeans and Martu working as cattle drovers along the route. Gradually men from Mayiwalku's family began to work seasonally at stations around Jigalong, but as a family group they remained living in the desert long after most Martu had moved to Jigalong Mission. Finally, in 1966, following a prolonged and severe drought, Mayiwalku and her sisters made the decision to walk to Balfour Downs, where they were collected by Jigalong Mission staff.

Mayiwalku lived for many years at Jigalong Mission before eventually relocating with her five children to Warralong, a community south east of Port Hedland. She continues to live in Warralong today with her daughter and equally renowned artist, Doreen Chapman. Mayiwalku was one of Martumili's pioneering artists, and is highly regarded for her technically sophisticated works. Her paintings depict her *ngurra* (home Country, camp); the Country she walked as a young woman, its animals, plants, waterholes and associated *Jukurpa* (Dreaming) narratives. Mayiwalku's work has been exhibited widely across Australia and internationally, and acquired by the National Museum of Australia.

Group Exhibitions



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2024	Spirits Of The Lands, Yaama Ganu, NSW
2024	Kujungka, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2024	Martumili Artists at Japingka Gallery, Fremantle
2023	Songlines– Peintures Aborigenes Du Desert Australien, Passage du Grand Cerf, Paris, France
2023	Dancing For Our Country, Yaama Ganu, Moree, NSW
2023	Desert Mob 2023, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs
2023	TDF Collect Presents: 'Martumili Artists', Collingwood, Vic
2023	We Didn't Get Tired. We Just Kept Going, FORM Gallery, Claremont, WA
2023	Mirrka (bushfoods), Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2023	Songlines - Centres dart du desert australien, IDAIA/ Australian Embassy, Paris, France
2023	Outsider Art fair, New York, USA
2022	Rawa - A long time, Aboriginal Contemporary, Sydney, NSW
2022	Tracks We Share
2021	Desert Mob 2021, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2021	Warralong, Yaama Ganu Gallery, Moree, NSW
2020	Matriarchs 2020, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2019	Punmukarti!, Yaama Gaanu, Moree, NSW
2019	Desert Mob 2019, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2019	Martu Wangka, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2018	Desert Mob 2019, Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, NT
2018	Martuku Ninti (Martu Knowledge), Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
2018	Pujiman, Martumili Artists and Spinifex Hill Artists, Port Hedland Courthouse Gallery, WA
2017	Art at the Heart, Martumili Gallery, Newman, WA
2017	Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters, touring exhibition from National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT
2016	Desert Mob, Araluen Art Center, Alice Springs, NT
2015	Martumili Artists, Paul Johnstone Gallery, Darwin, NT
2014	Martu Art From the Western Desert, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW
2014	Malya Yuturringu; be a star, State Theatre Centre, Perth, WA
2013	Martumili Art Show, Newman Visitors Centre, Newman, WA
2013	Painting It Martu Way, Art Mob, Hobart, TAS
2013	Revealed: emerging Aboriginal artists from Western Australia, Gallery Central, Perth, WA
2013	Selected works by the Martumili Artists, Raft Artspace, Alice Springs, NT



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2013 Strong Women Country, IDAIA - International Development for Australian Indigenous Art, Paris, France

2012 Martumili Artists 2012, Merenda Gallery, Perth, WA

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 Martumili Artists at Art Mob, Art Mob, Hobart, TAS

2011 Martumili Artists Recent Works, William Mora Gallery, Melbourne, VIC

2010 Living Water – Contemporary Art of the Far Western Desert, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, VIC

2009 Jakulpa laju kartyinpa (Bringing a message), Chapman Gallery, Canberra, ACT

2009 Before and After Science, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide Biennial, 2010 SA

2008 December Desert Mob, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT

2008 Warranpalampaju kayili yaninpa (Our Country travelling north), Raft Art Space, Darwin, NT

2007 Martumili Artists, Port Hedland Courthouse Arts Centre and Gallery, Port Hedland, WA

Collections

National Gallery of Victoria
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

Awards

2025 Finalist, The Jury Art Prize, The Courthouse Gallery, Port Hedland, WA

2021 Patron Award, The Jury Art Prize, The Courthouse Gallery, Port Hedland, WA

2021 Best Overall Pilbara Artist, Cossack Art Awards (Cossack, WA)