



Nancy Ross Nungurrayi

(Australian, 1935 - 2010)

Karrku (My Country)

Acrylic on canvas
122 x 90 cm / 48 x 35.4 inch

ABOUT

Nancy paints her 'Karrku' story. The word karrku refers to a large hill about 800 kilometers west of Alice Springs and to red ochre. Many of Nancy's paintings depict women grinding wangunu, a grass seed used to make traditional damper. Apart from the symbols used to represent the women (U-shapes) and their activities (concentric circles), Nancy depicts sand hills, (tali) and the rocky hills (puli) as a series of curved linear patterns. Nancy was included in the Kiwirrkura Women's project the result of which was a large painting auctioned to raise funds for the Kintore renal unit. This painting is published in the Papunya Tula's 'Genesis and Genius' book published by the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Nancy's stories include:

'Tunitjarra' kunkga tjuta or 'many women'

'Marrapinti' - A site where women gathered for ceremony during the time of creation. They gathered 'kumparapara', a native tomato. The dried fruit was ground to paste and baked in hot coals.

'Mamuttjulkku' - Nancy's (Tjapaltjarri) father's site

'Mantjintjalkara' - located in the Karrku area

'Wirunya' - ceremonial skirt worn by women

BIOGRAPHY

(Nancy Ross Nungurrayi)



Nancy Ross Nungurrayi was born in the desert at Karrku, a large hill about 800 kilometers west of Alice Springs. Nancy was the sister of Naata Nungurrayi and George Tjungurrayi, both well known artists. Until her death, Nancy and her family lived in Kintore.

Nancy painted complex series of patterns that depict the holy places from the "Dream Time" (Tjukurpa) around her traditional homeland. The concentric circles refer to specific locations that are used for ceremonies. The parallel lines that connect these circles are ancestral paths called "song lines" created by the mythical ancestors (Tingari) of the Aborigines.

One of the main sites, often painted by her sister Naata as well, is the rockhole site of "Marrapinti." Here, the women of the "Dream Time" gathered for various ceremonies during the creation of the earth. They were looking for a local kind of tomato called kumparapara, which they grinded into a paste and baked with hot coals. In Nancy's work, the women are represented by a "U" shape and the background colours and patterns represent different aspects of the landscape, like sand dunes and rocky outcrops called tali and puli respectively.

