

Iluwanti Ken, Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken
& Tjungkara Ken
Minyma Kungkaralpa ngulu wirtjapakanu

16 July – 3 August 2024

Jan Murphy Gallery is pleased to present 'Minyma Kungkaralpa ngulu wirtjapakanu', a new exhibition by acclaimed senior Indigenous artists Iluwanti Ken, Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken and Tjungkara Ken. Based in Amata in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands of South Australia, the artists share a close familial lineage - Iluwanti is the mother of Sylvia and Aunt of Tjungkara. The artists often paint alongside each other as they depict their individual expression of Anangu culture and 'Tjukurpa' (ancestral knowledge and law).

"In each work, across distinct visions and different techniques, Tjala women artists climb layers of time - near and deep, conceptual and physical - to constantly reimagine and reinterpret the subject matter, making something new, something meaningful for tomorrow. In art making, Anangu are remembering what the ancestors did and what the ancestors taught them. Bringing the stories up to the surface and making them alive in peoples minds." (Genevieve O'Callaghan, edited by Tjala Arts, Nganampa Kampatjangka Unngu: Beneath the canvas, the lives and stories of the Tjala Artists, 2015, Wakefield Press, P.262).

The exhibition title translates to 'Women running away into the stars in the Milky Way', referencing the Seven Sisters creation story that features prominently in Anangu culture and art. The story follows a well-known ancestral narrative of the Pleiades constellations (the sisters) and a sinister man who followed them across the night sky. The punctuation of dots painted across the vast surfaces, creates a rhythm and an immersive topography that invites you to travel through the remote desert landscape, following the journey of the Seven Sisters as they evade the traps of their menacing pursuer, known here as Wati Nyiru.

Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken and Tjungkara Ken both paint with a punu stick in a signature palette of warm reds, purple, orange, yellow and white, the layering of dots depicting the rock holes, waterholes, and significant places that the story traverses.

"I paint my family's side of the country where the Sisters travelled through Cave Hill and Alkunyunta, all the way through to Kuli. My right to paint this part of the Dreaming is established. Tjukurpa amula means a really important and true story." – Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken

"I do paintings about my country. That's ngura: rockholes and the land, the hills and big creek beds. Sometimes I do stories about the Seven Sisters and about country. I only paint with punu sticks and not a brush... When we do paintings it's like looking down from the top, like looking from an aeroplane." – Tjungkara Ken

"I paint the stories of my father's country – Walawuru Tjukurpa – the story of the eagles. This is my tjukurpa and all of my children's tjukurpa too." – Iluwanti Ken

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Iluwanti Ken (born 1944) is a Pitjantjatjara artist, originally from Watarru and now living in Amata, in the APY Lands in South Australia. Iluwanti was the winner of the 37th Telstra NATSIAA Works on Paper Award (2020), finalist in the Sulman Prize (2023, 2024), finalist of the Dobell Drawing Prize (2021), and National Works on Paper Prize (2020). Her work has been featured in the NGV Triennial (2023) and Tarnanthi 2020: Open Hands at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Her work is held in numerous public collections including the Art Gallery of South Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, QAGOMA, Artbank and the Singapore Art Museum.

Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken was born in Amata (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands of South Australia) and has been painting since 1999. In 2019, Ken was awarded the Wynne Prize for her landscape *Seven Sisters* from the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She has been a finalist in the Telstra National Indigenous Art Award (2013, 2014, 2018), The Hadleys Art Prize (2019) and the Wynne Prize (2018, 2019, 2021). In 2022, work by Ken was included in *CHAOS: CALM*, Bangkok Art Biennale, Thailand and her work is currently held in significant national and international collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, QAGOMA, National Gallery of Victoria and Artbank.

Tjungkara Ken was born in Amata (SA) in 1969 and was one of the first young artists to begin working with Tjala Arts (in 1997). This year Ken is a finalist in the Gold Award at Rockhampton Museum of Art. As part of the Ken Sisters Collaborative (along with Yaritji Young, Freda Brady, Maringka Tunkin and Sandra Ken), she was awarded the Wynne Prize in 2016. She has been a finalist in the Archibald Prize (2017) and a repeat finalist in the Wynne Prize (2019, 2021) and the Telstra Award (2022, 2017, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2010). Tjungkara Ken has exhibited widely throughout Australia and her work is represented in collections including Artbank, Art Gallery of South Australia, National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria and QAGOMA.