

Naata Nungurrayi

Language: Pintupi

Naata Nungurrayi was born around 1932 at the rock-hole site of Kumil, which is near Pollock Hills, about 100 kilometres west of Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay), not far from the current community of Kiwirrkurra. Beginning about this time there was a steady flow of Anangu (people of the Western Desert cultural bloc) from this area to the Hermannsburg mission outpost of Haasts Bluff (Ikuntji). These people called themselves the Pintupi. Nungurrayi made the journey relatively late, in 1964, ending up at the new government settlement of Papunya, not far from Haasts Bluff. She moved back to Walungurru (Kintore) when it was established as an outstation in the early 1980s.

While the wives of Papunya Tula painters had often assisted their artist husbands, and several women began painting in the early 1980s at Papunya, women remained peripheral to the company until the 1990s. With the exception of Narpula Scobie Napurrula, who began painting in 1982, no women painted for the company at Kintore or Kiwirrkurra until the mid-1990s. Prior to that time, lack of resources obliged Papunya Tula Artists to limit their numbers.

For several reasons this began to change, following consultation with and guidance from the company, a number of women joined Papunya Tula Artists early in 1996. Instrumental in the process of change was a women's painting camp in 1994 run by Mariana Stocchi, which involved senior women from Walungurru and a recently formed group of painters from the Ikuntji Women's Centre (Haasts Bluff).

While she did not participate in this painting camp, Nungurrayi has since emerged as one of Papunya Tula's most distinctive painters. Along with other Pintupi women such as Walangkura Napanangka, she has forged a new direction away from the austere minimalism of classic Pintupi painting established by the men. Nungurrayi is a senior elder, and her paintings refer to traditional women's law and ceremony.

(Author: Ian McLean)