

Yalti NAPANGATI



Dates: c. 1970
Language: Pintupi
Community: Papunya Region
Art: Aboriginal
Region: Central Desert
State: Northern Territory



Yalti Napangati was born in 1970 in the artistic community of Papunya. She lives mostly in Kiwirrkura and belongs to the Pintupi group, who were driven out of their ancestral lands during colonization. The Pintupi were grouped together in the central desert settlement centers, which is why they lived for a long time in the Papunya region where contemporary Aboriginal painting was born in the 1970s. The artist borrows this iconographic vocabulary from the ritual ground paintings that she and other initiates create to commemorate the passage of her Ancestors to this sacred site and to celebrate Mother Earth. Like most Western Desert painters, Yalti Napangati uses « *dot painting* ».

This artwork testifies to the attachment of Aboriginal painters to their territory by referring to a sacred site created, in the Dreamtime, by ancestral women who travelled the desert. At each of their stops, they established various rites that the Aborigines have not stopped celebrating since.

This specific site is located in the south-west of the community of Kiwwikura (Western Australia). It was here that during the Dreamtime a group of women stopped along the way to camp and pick edible berries known as *kampurarrpa* or desert grapes from the central Solanum, a small shrub. These berries can be eaten directly from the shrub, but are sometimes ground into a paste and cooked in charcoal to form a kind of stew. The women would then have continued their journey east through the nearby site of Wirrunga, before heading northeast to Wilkinkarra (Lake Makkay).

Following the pictorial tradition of the desert, Yalti Napangati gives the appearance of a satellite vision of her territory, offering a very abstract cartography mixing different levels of reading.

The different motifs represent the geographical feature of the landscape, as well as the fruit-laden bushes and bush fodder that the women would have collected during their travels. The « U » shapes symbolize the ancestors accompanied by their coolamons (oval shapes) and digging sticks (vertical bars). The coolamon is a container used for multiple purposes: the harvesting of seeds and berries in the desert or the transport of water. Generally they were linked to traditionally feminine activities: watching over children and searching for means of subsistence; in the same way as the digging stick, which was used for planting as well as for harvesting roots. The dotted lines that link them together symbolize the path taken, while the serpentine lines represent the traces left by the snake as seen from the sky.

The artist refers to the iconographic vocabulary of the ritual floor paintings that she and other initiates create to commemorate the passage of her ancestors to this sacred site and to celebrate Mother Earth.