

Susie Hunter PETYARRE



Dates: 1966
Language: Alyawarre
Community: Utopia
Art: Aboriginal
Region: Central Desert
State: Northern Territory



Susie Hunter Petyarre was born in 1966 in Utopia. She is the daughter of Molly Pwerle, sister of the famous artist Minnie Pwerle. She spent a lot of time with Emily Kame Kngwarreye, who was adopted by Jacob, the father of Lilly Sandover Kngwarreye, the highest spiritual leader of the Alyawarre clan who taught Susie Petyarre and her sisters sacred body painting. She began painting in 1989 with her younger sisters, Annie and Jessie Petyarre before developing their own style. Susie Petyarre spent many years working alongside some of the greatest Aboriginal women artists of their time, including Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Gloria Petyarre and Kathleen Petyarre. These exceptional artists helped build the Utopia School of painters. Their style is unique in that they draw on the body paint motifs they cover themselves with to celebrate their fertility rites, and they combine these with drawings inspired by the rich flora of their native region to celebrate the myths - or « *dreams* » - of which they are the guardians.

In this painting, the artist evokes the site of Enteebra where the sacred cave of Arowilya is located, where the women of the Kngwarreye and Petyarre family groups gather each summer to celebrate the legend, or Awelye, of the two sisters. These mythical sisters were pursued by Alert, a man who wanted to seduce them even though he belonged to the same clan, the Kngwarreye. He was breaking a law established to avoid inbreeding problems among the people of the Australian Central Desert. The two women escaped him by taking refuge in the cave of Arowilya where Pareeja, the Night Snake Woman, protected them.

The artist has composed her painting in a very subtle way using a very rich iconographic vocabulary with very fine lines of white paint subtly applied to the canvas with a needle coming out of a tube of paint. Her canvas wonderfully embodies the energy of the blossoming flowers that grow in the site of Enteebra, a symbol of fertility par excellence. The intertwining lines represent the body paint that women use to adorn their bodies during these ceremonies and are a tribute to fertility. Susie Hunter Petyarre's work is very organic.

Collections:

- National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- National Gallery of Victoria The Holmes a Court Collection, Perth
- The Art Gallery of New South Wales, New South Wales