

Morris Gibson

TJAPALTJARRI



Dates: c. 1957
Language: Pintupi
Community: Papunya
Art: Aboriginal
Region: Central Desert
State: Northern Territory



Originally from the central Australian desert, Morris Gibson belongs to the Pintupi group whose artists depict sites related to the stories of the Tingari Men. These Great Ancestors appeared at the first time of the creation of the Aboriginal world and are reputed to have travelled the Australian continent in the company of their wives and young apprentices whom they were responsible for initiating.

At each of their stops in the desert, they created a sacred site around water points symbolized by concentric circles, around which the Tingari established their camps. These waterholes are connected by lines that represent the path followed by the Tingari ancestors. The black serpentine lines evoke both the river and stream beds and the footprints left on the ground by ancestral snakes, sometimes identified with the totemic figure of the rainbow python, which created the world in the Dreamtime.

The technique recalls the paintings on the ground made by the aborigines to stage their great religious myths. From this point of view, the paths drawn also have a magical value; they describe, in fact, a spiritual as well as a material initiatory journey. The colors evoking the natural pigments used by the aborigines for their sacred paintings confirm the desire to anchor this work in a multi-century religious tradition. The same analysis could be made of the stippling technique used here: it is the same as the one that the Aborigines still use to cover the ground of vast ritual frescoes with a stick dipped in color.

These sites, which still structure the real and mystical topography of the aboriginal world, have become places of worship where the memory of the Tingari Men is honored.

Collections :

- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- National Gallery of Australia, Canberra