

5 Malakoff Street, North Caulfield, Vic, 3161
Telephone: (61 3) 9509 9855 Facsimile: (61 3) 9509 4549
Email: ausart@diggins.com.au Website: www.diggins.com.au
ABN.19006 457 101

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JOHNNY WARANGKULA TJUPURRULA c.1932 - 2001

Region: Central Desert

Residence: Papunya

Language: Loritja

Woman Camped at Kampurrula 1973

synthetic polymer on board

58 x 34 cm

JW730807

Provenance:

Papunya Tula Artists, N.T.

Arunta Gallery, NT

private collection Europe

private collection, QLD

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Kampurarra is the name of both a bush raisin (*Solanum centrale*) and a site, Mount Russell (in the Henty Hills, 180 kilometers west of Papunya). Both the raisin and Mount Russell are celebrated in this painting.

As a boy, Warangula and his family were camped at Ilpili, near Kampurarra, when the legendary bushman, Bob Buck and his team of camels, materialised on the eastern horizon. Warangula's first contact with non-Aboriginal people would soon result in his family's exodus from their desert homelands.

Forty year later, Warangula was conspicuous among those who initiated contemporary Indigenous art at Papunya in 1971. Significantly, it was Warangula who pioneered the dot as an expressive mark, over and above its customary application for the embellishment of iconographic signs and motifs.ⁱ

The current work, painted in May 1973, demonstrates Warangula's mastery of the dot to evoke desert vegetation. Perfected earlier, when interpreting the Storm Dreaming site at Kalipinya,ⁱⁱ here, Warangula creates a dense mosaic of dotted patches to establish the environment within which a group of ancestral women made their camp, having found respite from the relentless pursuit of ardent men.

Integrated by his characteristic gestural fluidity, Warangula weaves three distinct tiers of representation to create *Women camped at Kampurarra*. The strong sinuous lines represent *ngalyipi*, a fibre made from green birdflower (*Crotalaria cunninghamii*). The lines of fibre spun by the women coalesce to form a customary ∞ icon at the heart of the composition, while other lines twist and stretch to define the paths of the women. The cleared earth of the women's campsites is suggested by white patches, upon which their activities are inscribed with traditional signs to show the women at their hearths (U-shapes and concentric circles), digging sticks (straight lines), containers (ovals), a carpet snake and small game that they have collected (adjacent sinuous lines). The footprints of the women are also disclosed, padding around their campsite. The artist then unifies these apparently disparate tiers within an animated field of dots and patches. The yellow patches represent the ripe *kampurarra* that gives the site its name. Warangula encourages our eyes to move freely, shifting through space and levels of resolution with weightless ease.

Kampurarra was one of Warangula's favoured themes, recurring frequently throughout his career. The reverence with which the artist regarded the site is evident by its choice for his first large canvas, *Kampurarra* (1974, National Gallery of Victoria).

John Kean, 2016

ⁱ John Kean, 'Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula: painting in a changing landscape,' *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, 2001, 41, pp. 47-54.

ⁱⁱ Judith Ryan, 'Aesthetic splendour, cultural power and wisdom: early Papunya painting', in *Tjukurr tjaju: Origins of Western Desert Art*, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, 2011, pp. 24-26.