



PAINTING THE FUTURE

Warlpiri paintings represent life at various levels. Some are obvious and straightforward, but there are levels upon levels underneath known only to those who are initiated into the symbolism. All symbols are not simply decorative but for Warlpiri people contain power and some are even deemed dangerous. The paintings are more than works of art but are integral to life and are part of the great Dreaming. All these stories have been passed down through many generations.



Marlu Tjukurrpa
Red Kangaroo Dreaming
Connie Napurrula

Marlu are a highly valued food source by Warlpiri people. In this story an old ancestral kangaroo named *Warlawee* made a camp at *Junti* and moved around from place to place. He hunted during the day and returned to camp each night. The camp was formed by digging depressions in the soft ground. Understanding the ways of the Marlu not only signifies respect for it but brings greater chance of success in hunting. Symbols include circles representing camps and kangaroo footprints.

Mai Tjukurrpa
Bush Tucker Dreamin
Linda Napurrula

Bush tucker, combined with the physical exercise needed to gather and catch it was responsible for the health of the Warlpiri people who thrived for tens of thousands of years in some of the harshest environments on earth. It was the coming of Europeans who destroyed water holes and decimated the local fauna that shattered the link with this healthy lifestyle. Bush tucker is still gathered but is less common than in pre-settlement times.



In this story women go out hunting for bush tucker across large areas of country. The women collect *yukuri* – fresh green growth – and *yulkardi* [desert cucumber] which is used for medicinal purposes. They find them in a low growing herb underneath a mulga tree. Symbols include the bush berries, witchetty grubs, boomerangs, shields and spear throwers.

Christianity is important for many Warlpiri people who syncretise it with traditional beliefs. The story on top of the machine tells of the Lord's Prayer with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit giving healing power to white doctors.



Janganpa Tjukurrpa **Possum Dreaming** **Pamela Walker Napurrula**

Janganpa are nocturnal animals that often nest in the hollows of white gum trees. A common story about possums is about one of their ancestors who travelled all over the Warlpiri land visiting various sites. One site is called *Jangankurlargu* [literally “belonging to the possum”]. The *Janganpa* men carry their hunting weapons as they move around the country. *Janganpa* were frequently found across much Warlpiri land but have become extinct in recent years.

In traditional Warlpiri iconography wavy lines and “E” shapes are used to depict the tracks that the *Janganpa* left as they moved around. Other symbols include men with weapons – spears and boomerangs, hollow trees and the possum tracks.

Wedgetail Eagle **Dreaming** **Calvin Martin Tjungurrayi**

The symbols represent eagle eggs in their nests. At another level this is a story of the *Ngangkari* – the most senior men who are faith healers. At night the men turn into eagles and fly up in huge flocks to look for people who are sick. When the people have been identified then, in time, they will seek out the healers who say they can cure any illness except diseases of the kidney. The kidney, for Warlpiri people, has no physiological function but is the place where the person’s *kurrunpa* - spirit/lifeforce- resides.

