

# CARBIENE MCDONALD

solo exhibition

PAPUNYA TJUPI ARTS

JULY 2021



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# CARBIENE MCDONALD

solo exhibition

in association with Papunya Tjupi Arts

17 July to 6 August 2021

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8 Parap Place, Parap  
Northern Territory 0820

**P** 08 8981 4822

**M** 0488 564 952

**E** [info@outstation.com.au](mailto:info@outstation.com.au)

**W** [www.outstation.com.au](http://www.outstation.com.au)

Director Matt Ward

**Outstation**  
art from art centres

# CARBIENE MCDONALD TJANGALA:

## Beginning to See the Light

Carbiene McDonald will tell you that he is “a happy man”. And why wouldn’t he be? Within a year of painting his first canvas, he was being feted as the recipient of the \$100,000 Hadley Art Prize, one of the richest landscape prizes in the world. The day I met him happiness did indeed radiate from him like the light from the canvases that flow off his brush. After introducing himself and confidently shaking my hand, he resumed his place cross-legged on the floor and for the next several hours focussed single-mindedly on mapping out his next painting: a vast field of loosely painted contiguous squares, each divided into quadrants signifying the Four Dreamings he invariably paints.

Carbiene McDonald has lived his entire life in Papunya – occasionally Alice Springs. The trip to Tasmania for the prize giving was his first out of Central Australia. He was born in Papunya in 1961, a year after the settlement was officially opened, son of Pitjantjatjara,/Yankuntjatjara/Mantjintjarra man, Snowy McDonald Tjampitjinpa and his first wife Ratitjawalya. He was ten years old, attending Papunya Special School, when he saw the famous murals being painted that helped kick off the Papunya art movement in 1971. His paintings have the same creamy softness of light that characterised those of his father’s close countryman Shorty Lungkarta Tjungurrayi, one of the original Papunya masters. He may have seen some of them being created: Carbiene’s extended family includes Lungkarta’s eldest daughter Martha McDonald Napaltjarri who became Snowy’s second wife. Napaltjarri’s grandson John Scott Rowe, artworker and artist with Papunya

Tjupi for years now, was instrumental in persuading Carbiene to take up painting. Scott Rowe is related on his father’s side to Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula – his uncle.

In a way this is unremarkable - family artistic dynasties and interconnections like these are everywhere you look in Papunya. On the other hand, it underlines a crucial aspect of Carbiene McDonald Tjangala’s story: that it is inseparable from the larger story of the resurgence of painting at Papunya in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Fifty years on from those momentous days when Papunya saw the birth of the contemporary Indigenous art movement, it is again a vital centre of collective creative and cultural expression. New generations of artists are building on the achievements of their forefathers and mothers. With the passing over the last two years of the last surviving greats of that first golden era of Papunya painting, Kumantjayi Long Tjakamarra (1932-2019) and Kumantjayi Nelson Jagamarra (1947-2020), a new cohort of Papunya painting men is emerging from their long shadow.

Long and Nelson were the grey eminences behind the establishment of Papunya Tjupi Arts in 2007, ending a decade of demoralisation following the withdrawal of Papunya Tula Artists from the community where it originated. It was the Papunya painting women – among them some of the first women to join the art movement in their own right back in 1981 - who seized the opportunity presented by having their own art centre in Papunya at long last. These wives and daughters of the founding artists have driven a

renaissance of Papunya painting. And their hard-won success has provided the resources and the platform from which to launch a rejuvenated men’s painting movement into orbit.

The Men’s Culture Camp of October 2018 where Carbiene produced his first painting was organised by Papunya Tjupi to facilitate intergenerational transmission of artistic and cultural traditions from senior experienced artists like Dennis Nelson Tjakamarra and Watson Corby Tjungurrayi to the young men of the community. Back at the art centre after his Hadley win, Carbiene painted his first solo exhibition amid the swirling humanity of Papunya Tjupi’s large painting studio, which for the past decade has been dominated by the women who built up Papunya Tjupi’s reputation. These days he works with the same absorption but in the calm space of the men’s painting studio that Papunya Tjupi has constructed alongside the main art centre building. A dedicated men’s worker tops up his paint supply and the young men who originally encouraged him to paint now keep him company, their own motivation to paint strengthened by his example - and its stellar outcomes.

Before he became a painter, Carbiene’s life had been remarkable for little except the stillness of the man. He kept to himself and was to all appearances untroubled by his lack of engagement with ordinary social life. A personality as enigmatic as his paintings. Papunya Tjupi’s manager still wonders if he is a visionary or just blessed with a remarkable degree of self-belief: in the weeks and months leading up



to the Hadley announcement, he amused the other artists in the Papunya Tjupi studio by pretending to answer a floating phone to be told he had won a big prize. Nothing of the sort was on anyone else's agenda: success for them had come only after years of dedication.

But like them, Carbiene draws inspiration from both the tradition of art making that began here in Papunya half a century ago and its ancient cultural roots. He tells me his ambition, when the painting he is working on is completed, to buy himself a Toyota and drive out to Docker River community to show his family and see his country. Docker River sits at the western end of the Petermann Ranges, the title and subject of Carbiene's second one man show. Here 550 million years ago the Indian subcontinent collided with Western Australia as part of the formation of the Gondwana supercontinent. A geological marvel, where the prospector Lewis Lasseter (1880-1931) searched in vain for a fabulous gold reef. He eventually died in a cave known to the local Aboriginal people who had cared for him as Tjuunti and as 'Lasseter's Cave' to the tourists who drive out here to visit it. As a young man Snowy McDonald met Lasseter on several occasions as he walked along the line of waterholes running from the Petermann Ranges and Kalaya Murrpu (Blood's Range) to Mulyayti near Kata Tjuta that mark out Carbiene's Four Dreamings. Decades later he took his son along the same pathways to show him his inheritance – not gold, but this remote and strangely beautiful country, whose depiction has brought riches to his son.

When he paints, Carbiene tells me, he goes to these places "in my mind":

At last we reached the top of a very high hill from which we obtained an unforgettable view of the western Petermann. To the east Ruined Ramparts burned like red fire, its magnificent red rocks challenging the ravaging hand of time to destroy them. Kekinkura's sheer cliffs – hundreds of feet of sheer crag rising into the cloudy sky – threw out their challenge to all passers by. Behind us the blue ridges of Tjintirintira swept away into the dim distance of Kekinkura; and through this gap could be seen the outlines of a faint blue mountain range, probably Blood's Range. It was a scene of colossal grandeur, an age-old symphony of rock, a vision of wild cliffs towering over a chaos of tumbled-down boulders whose crash had re-echoed like thunder from the sheer faces of the mountains.

Few whitemen knew the Petermann better than T.G.H. Strehlow, son of Hermannsburg missionary Carl Strehlow, whose "excursions into literary heights" as Central Australia's first Patrol Officer (1936-42), though unappreciated by his superiors, here resonate uncannily with Carbiene's representations of the same subject matter.

Carbiene is hardly the first Aboriginal artist to take up painting late in life and find overnight success. It is a familiar art world trope, although more usually accompanied by a storyline about being the last of their people to be born and raised in the desert than how recently they took up painting. But so the storyline read in every one of the dozens of articles on Carbiene's Hadley win. "Indigenous artist wins landscape art prize" – as if that was news in 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia, where Aboriginal representations



of country have long since eclipsed the Western tradition of landscape painting and Indigenous artists have been taking out prestigious prizes for decades. It was news when Kaapa Tjampitjnpa won the Alice Art Prize in 1971 – and it generated a very similar headline in the *Centralian Advocate* of the day. Its contemporary newsworthiness may be connected to a persistent mythology around the original Papunya painters: that they wandered out of the desert and picked up the paintbrushes Geoffrey Bardon handed them and proceeded to create masterpieces. Lots of people have tried to expose this for the myth it (largely) is, especially for Kaapa and the group of painters around him. But the myth lives on, such that a painter from Papunya who casually picks up a paint brush and takes out a major art prize against over 600 contemporary Australian artists generates a lot of interest. Whatever the reasons, Carbiene McDonald Tjangala has found his foothold in the Australian art world and opened a new chapter in the Aboriginal art story.

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# CARBIENE MCDONALD TJANGALA

## Biography

Carbiene McDonald was born in Papunya in 1961, son of Snowy McDonald and as a young man, he travelled back to his father's homelands and inherited his Tjukurrpa (Dreaming). This Dreaming is associated with a series of waterholes running between Docker River and Kata Tjuta. Specifically, it includes four important sites: Petermann Ranges, Docker River, Kalaya Murrpu (Blood's Range) and Mulyayti near Kata Tjuta.

Cabiene's work embodies quality of innovation within tradition, and his practice of filling the canvas with coloured squares of loose acrylic paint creates work of immense depth and sophistication. Having only taken up painting later in life in 2018, his passion for painting coupled with his extreme dedication and enthusiasm has led him to quickly make a name for himself.

Winner of the prestigious Hadley's Art Prize (2019), finalist in the Vincent Lingiari Art Award (2019) his work is held in Art Gallery of NSW Collection, Charles Darwin University Collection and in private collections in Australia. Carbiene's work is currently on show at RAFT artspace, Alice Springs, as part of his second solo show.

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Petermann Ranges : Raft Artspace, Alice Springs, NT
- 2019 Carbiene McDonald : RAFT Artspace, Alice Springs, NT

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Tarnanthi 2020 Art Fair - AGSA : Lot 14, North Terrace, Adelaide
- 2020 Kwarritja Tititja (Now and Then) : Viewing Room, Papunya Tjupi Arts
- 2020 Tarnanthi 2020 Art Fair - AGSA : Lot 14, North Terrace, Adelaide
- 2020 Kwarritja Tititja (Now and Then) : Viewing Room, Papunya Tjupi Arts
- 2020 Desert Mob 2020 Exhibition : Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs
- 2020 Ngurrangka palyanu – making from home : Outstation Gallery, Darwin
- 2020 The Magic of Black & White : Art Kelch, Germany
- 2019 Tjupi Puli : Onsite Gallery, Papunya Tjupi Arts, Papunya, Papunya NT
- 2019 Salon Des Refusés – NATSIAA : Charles Darwin University Art Gallery
- 2019 Kuwarritja – now / newness : Outstation Gallery, Darwin.
- 2019 Back To The Desert — Neue Werke Von Papunya Tjupi Arts : ARTKELCH - Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Germany
- 2019 Nganampa arts, tjungurrinytjaku kutju - Our art, coming together as one - Papunya Mens Art and Cultural Revival Movement : Onsite Gallery, Papunya Tjupi Arts, Papunya, NT

### COLLECTIONS

- Art Gallery Of New South Wales
- Charles Darwin University
- The Hassall Collection

### AWARDS

- 2019 Finalist, Vincent Lingiari Art Award
- 2019 Winner, Hadley's Art Prize



Carbiene McDonald  
Photo courtesy Papunya Tjupi Arts

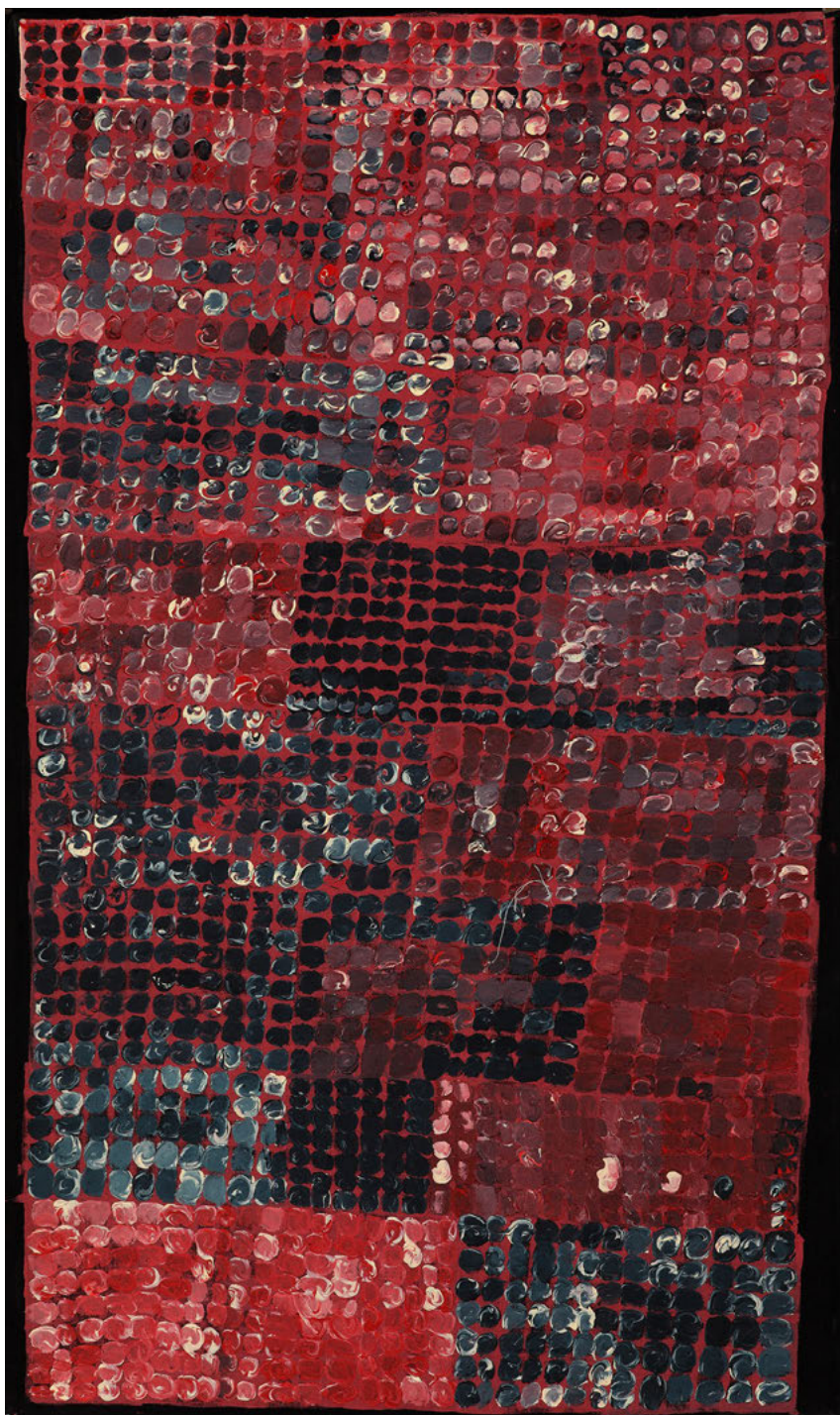




*Four Dreamings*  
2020  
acrylic on linen  
183 x 122 cm  
6-20

**\$7,250**

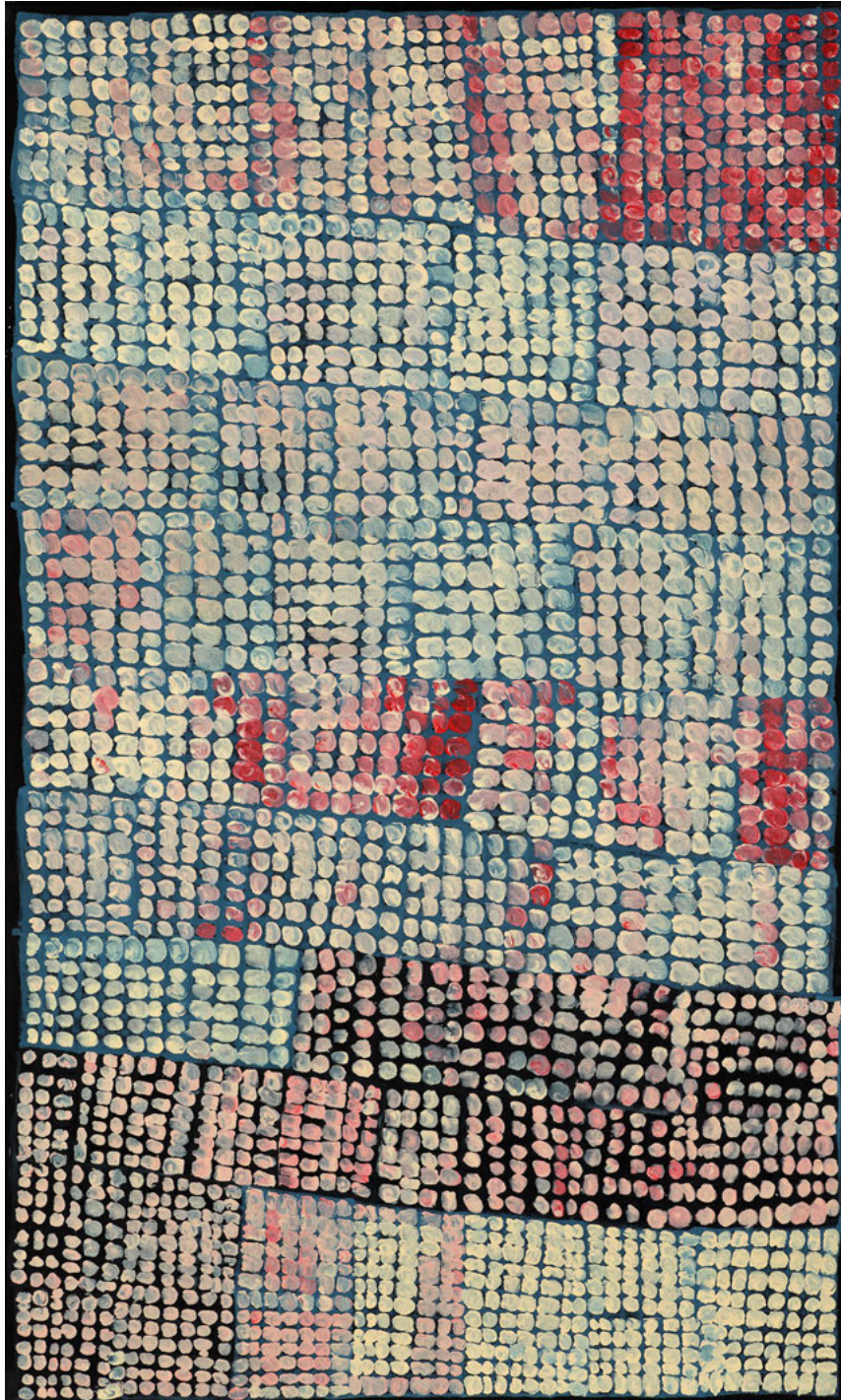




*Four Dreamings*  
2020  
acrylic on linen  
122 x 71 cm  
246-20

**\$2,900**

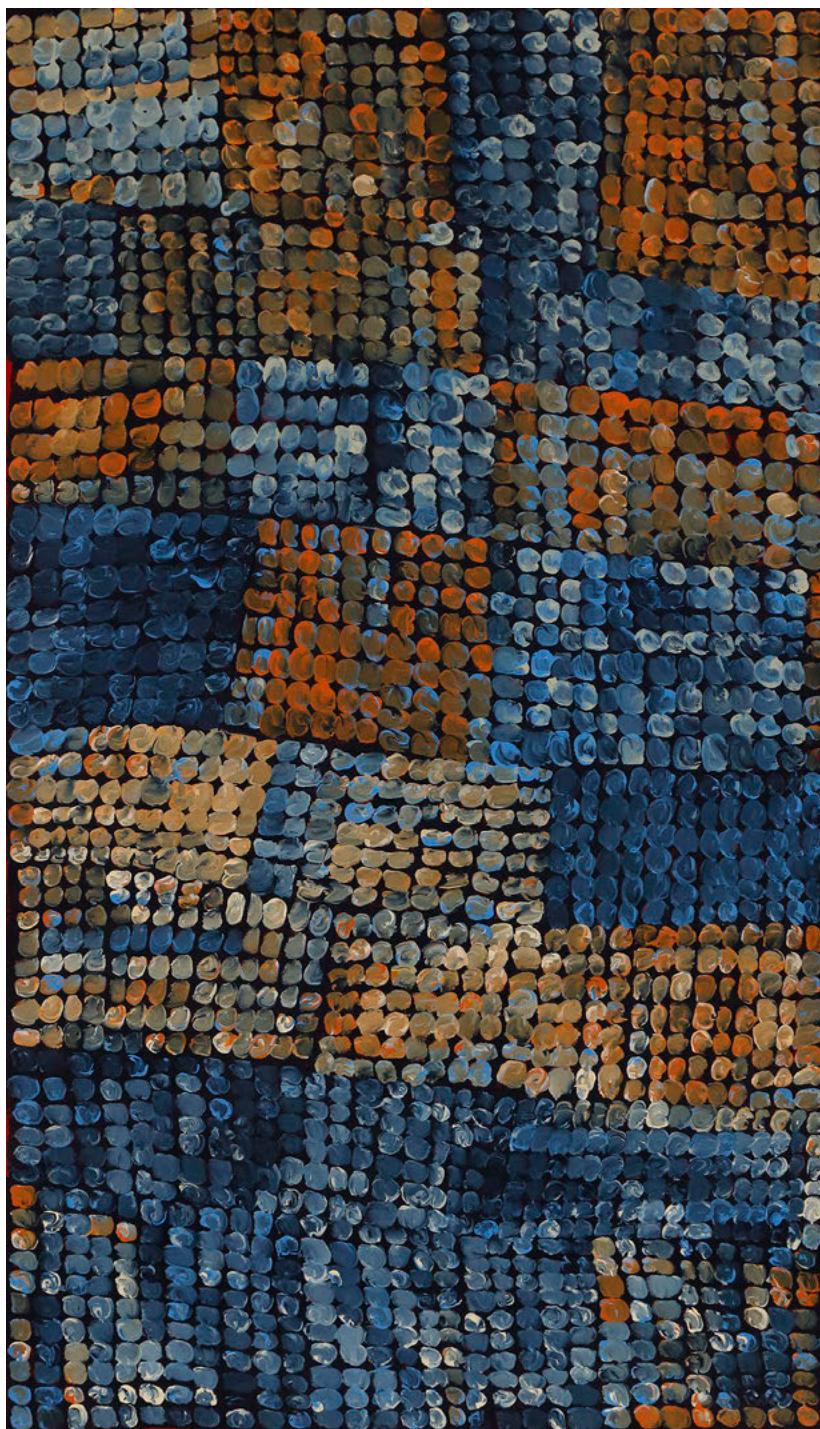




*Four Dreamings*  
2020  
acrylic on linen  
152 x 91 cm  
264-20

**SOLD**

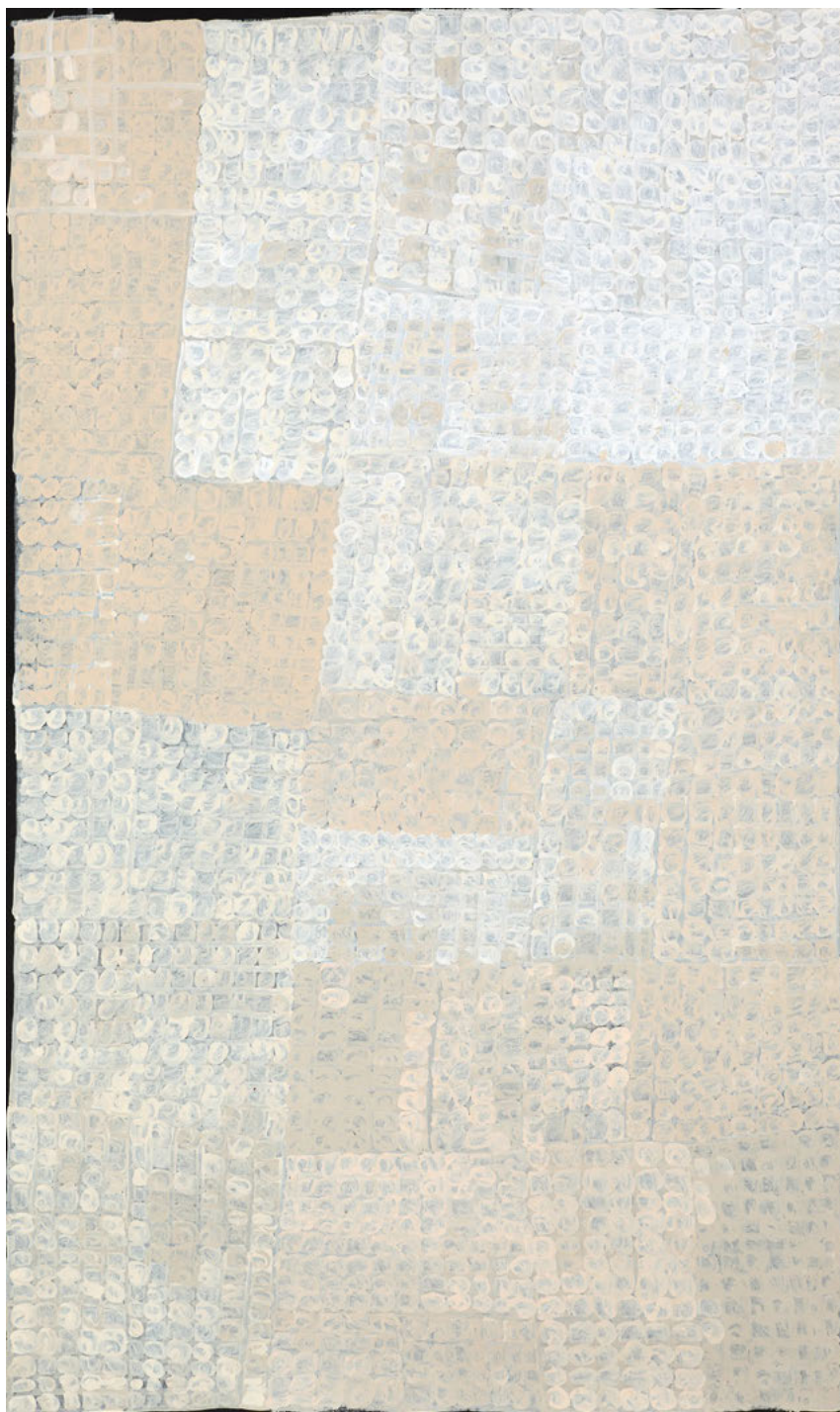




*Four Dreamings*  
2020  
acrylic on linen  
122 x 71 cm  
266-20

**SOLD**

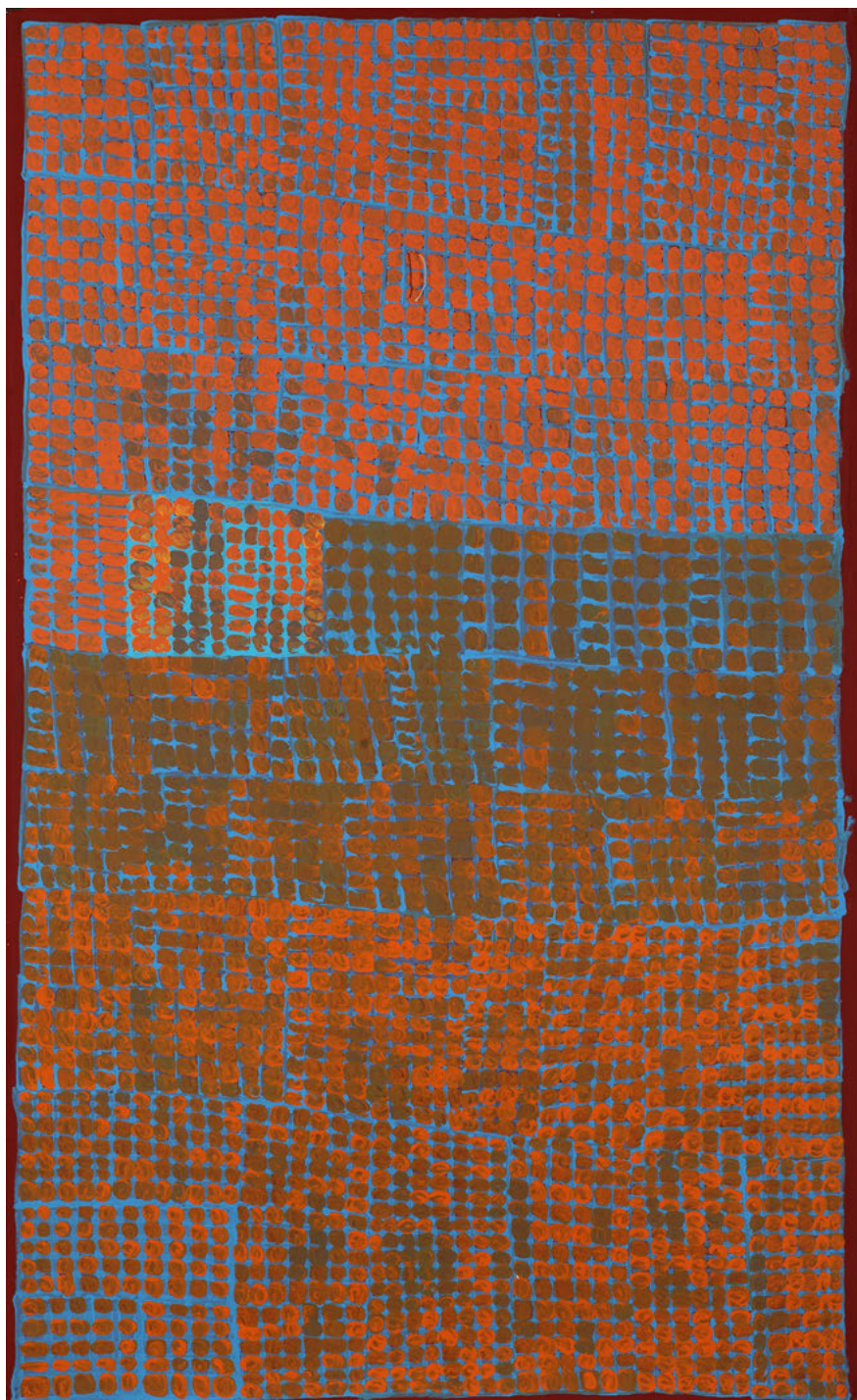




*Four Dreamings*  
2020  
acrylic on linen  
152 x 91 cm  
292-20

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2020  
acrylic on linen  
152 x 91 cm  
313-20

**SOLD**

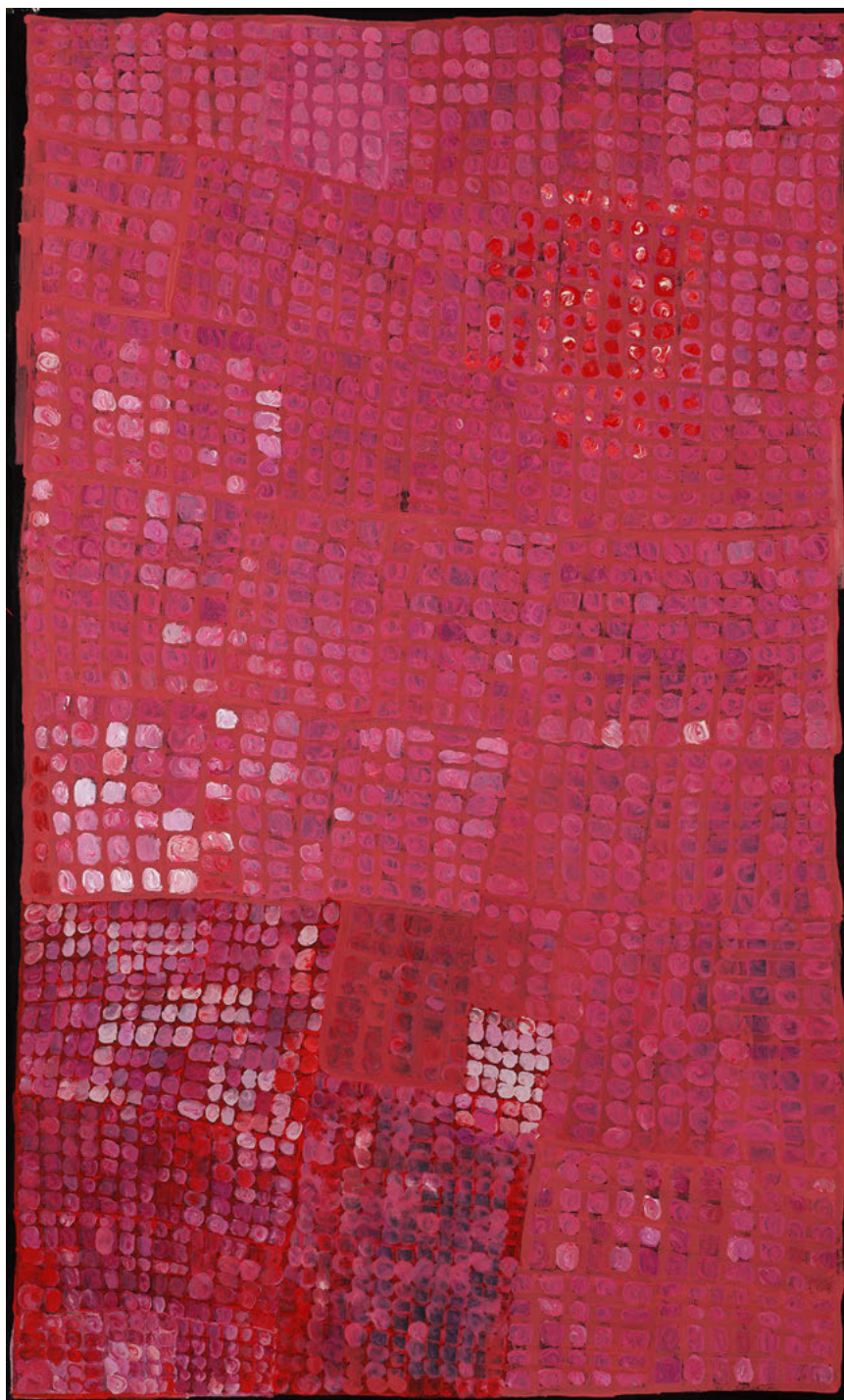




*Four Dreamings*  
2020  
acrylic on linen  
152 x 122 cm  
321-20

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2020  
acrylic on linen  
152 x 91 cm  
396-20

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
198 x 107 cm  
55-21

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
152 x 122 cm  
60-21

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
107 x 182 cm  
94-21

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
274 x 152 cm  
137-21

**SOLD**

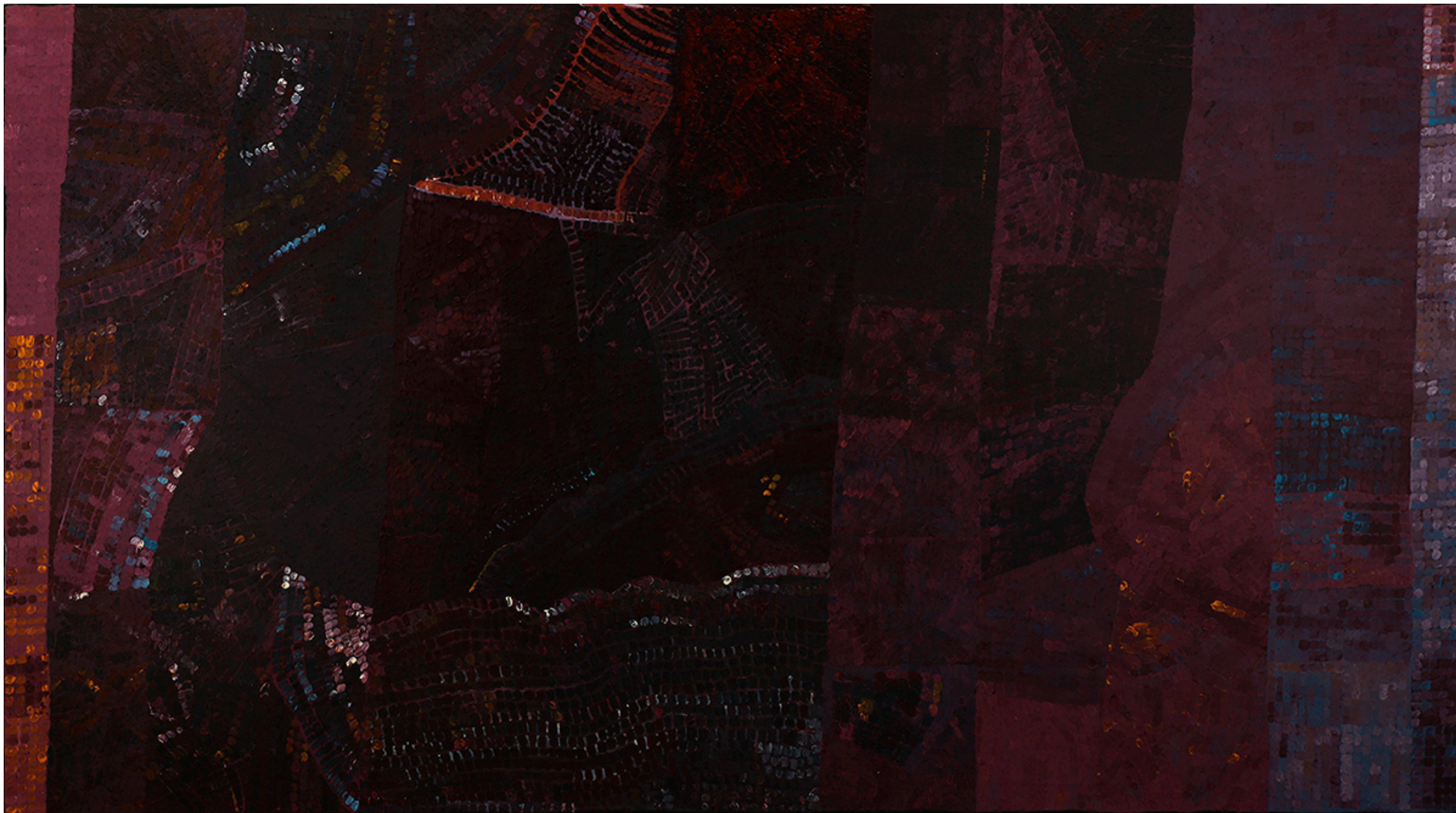




*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
122 x 91 cm  
206-21

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
274 x 152 cm  
202-21

**\$13,500 - on reserve**

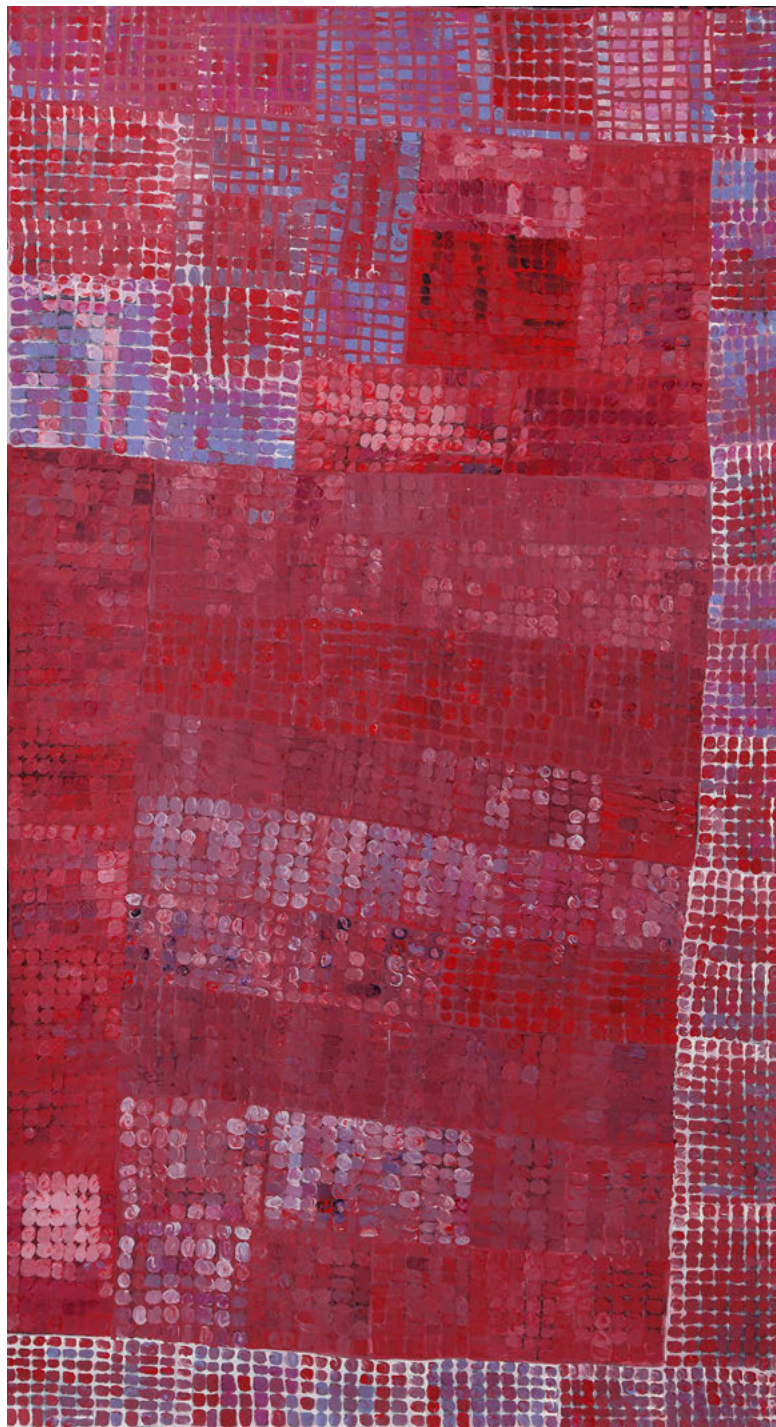




*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
183 x 71 cm  
147-21

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
107 x 198 cm  
148-21

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
183 x 183 cm  
173-21

**\$11,000**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
122 x 198 cm  
174-21

**SOLD**





*Four Dreamings*  
2021  
acrylic on linen  
152 x 122 cm  
179-21

**SOLD**





For further information or to see high resolution images please contact the gallery.

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