

TOMMY WATSON

CV

Yannima Tommy Watson known as Tommy Watson is an Indigenous Australian artist, of the Pitjantjatjara people from Australia's central western desert. He has been described by one critic as "the greatest living painter of the Western Desert".

Born: Yannima Pikarli, c. 1935

Region: Anamarapiti, Western Australia

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

- 2017 *Sharing Country*, Olsen Gruin Gallery, New York
- 2016 *From West of Here*, Piermarq, Sydney
- 2016 Art Palm Beach
- 2010 *Christmas Show*, Aranda Art, Armadale
- 2010 *Irrunytju Artists*, Agathon Galleries, Sydney
- 2009-2010 *Emerging Elders – honoring senior Indigenous artists*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- 2009 *Kutu Wara (The Last One)*, Solo Exhibition, Agathon Galleries Sydney
- 2009 *Nganmapa Ngura (My Country) Irrunytju Artists*, Linton and Kay Fine Art, Perth
- 2009 *New Works: South Western Desert Art of Australia*, Agathon Galleries 2009
- 2009 Agathon Galleries Sydney, Melbourne
- 2008 Agathon Galleries Sydney, Melbourne
- 2008 Lismore Gallery
- 2008 Selected Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award
- 2007 Musee du Quai Branly, Paris (permanent exhibition)
- 2007 *One Sun, One Moon*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, NSW
- 2007 *Tommy Watson*, Solo Exhibition, Agathon Galleries, NSW
- 2007 *Senior Irrunytju Artists*, Agathon Galleries, VIC
- 2007 Irrunytju Fundraiser Exhibition, Agathon Galleries, NSW
- 2006 *Tommy Watson*, Solo Exhibition, Agathon Galleries, VIC
- 2006 Landmarks, National Gallery of Victoria, VIC
- 2006 Musée du Quai Branly Paris, France
- 2005 Mixed Show, Aranda Art
- 2005 *Tommy Watson*, Agathon Solo Exhibition, Sydney NSW
- 2005 Cairns Regional Art Gallery, QLD
- 2005 Wollongong City Art Gallery, NSW
- 2005 Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) Gallery, VIC
- 2005 *Ngayuku Ngura (My Country)*, Vivien Anderson Gallery, VIC
- 2005 *Senior Irrunytju Men*, Aboriginal and Pacific Gallery, NSW
- 2004 *Colour Power: Aboriginal Art post 1984*, National Gallery of Victoria, VIC
- 2004 *NATSIAA – Celebrating 20 Years*, National Archives of Australia, ACT
- 2004 Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, SA
- 2003 RAKA AWARD: Places that name us, The Potter Museum of Art.
- 2002 Finalist Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards
- 2002 Aboriginal and Pacific Art, Sydney

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AWARDS:

2008 25th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award Darwin
2003 20th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award Darwin
2002 19th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award Darwin
2002 Wati Tjilpiku Tjukurpa. Aboriginal and Pacific Gallery. Sydney.
2002 Desert Mob. Araluen. Alice Springs. National Gallery of Victoria. Australian National Gallery. Canberra

RELATED BOOKS/READING:

Yannima Tommy Watson: MacMillan mini art series number 11
New Beginnings: Classic Paintings from the Corrigan Collection of 21st Century
Aboriginal Art
Claire Armstrong, ed. (2006). Australian Indigenous Art Commission: Musee du quai
Branly. Eleonora Triguboff, Art & Australia, and Australia Council for the Arts
McCulloch, Alan; Susan McCulloch, Emily McCulloch Childs (2006). The new
McCulloch's Encyclopedia of Australian Art. Fitzroy, VIC: Aus Art Editions in association
with The Miegunyah Press. p. 179
John McDonald (2005-11-24). "The Australian Way - December - Art" (pdf). Qantas.
<http://www.unc.edu/home/owen/downloads/QANTAS%201205.pdf>. Retrieved 2007-11-
21. "BORN C1930-32. WARAKURNA, WA. Since 2002 Watson has emerged as
arguably the outstanding painter of the Western Desert" page 56
Yannima Pikarli Tommy Watson, Marie Geissler, Ken McGregor, 2010 MacMillan

Time magazine, art critic - Robert Hughes, "Australian Aboriginal Art is the last great art movement of the 20th century."

Source: New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/06/arts/06iht-aborigine.html?_r=1&

COLLECTIONS:

Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Western Australian Art Gallery, Perth
South Australian Art Gallery, Adelaide
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris
Adam Knight Collection
Aranda Collection
Auscorp Collection
Elizabeth and Colin Laverty, Sydney
Harold Mitchell Collection
Patrick Corrigan, Collection
Kerry Stokes Collection
Kerry Stokes Collection
Luciano Benetton & family, Italy
Richard Branson Collection

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TOMMY WATSON

Born at Anamarapiti, a homeland 44 kilometres west of the present-day community of Irrunytju, which is situated on the tri-state border of Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory. Tommy lived a nomadic lifestyle in the semi-arid country at the edge of the Gibson Desert. He travelled in the bush with his parents and learnt about hunting and gained respect for his country from his father.

In 2001 Tommy Watson and other senior Ngaatjatjarra and Pitjantjatjara men followed the example of the women at Irrunytju and began to paint on canvas. Watson said: "I want to paint these stories so that others can learn and understand about our culture and country". His country is marked by ancient ranges, dry creek beds, kapi (rockholes), maluri (claypans), tali (sand dunes) and flat sandy plains sparsely vegetated with spinifex, mulga scrub and desert oaks.

From his father he learnt how to craft spears, spear throwers, shields and boomerangs; make stone tools; hunt malu (kangaroo), putji (feral cat), kalaya (emu) and kipara (bush turkey). With these skills he set out on his own, living like his father taught him. Walking long distances through a land where water is scarce and traditional knowledge vital to survival, Tommy gained considerable understanding of the physical environment and the tjukurpa (Dreaming) connected with it.

Tommy's artwork brings together contemporary painting techniques and media with traditional visual language and tjukurpa. Tommy uses layers of vibrant colours to symbolically represent the country of his parents and grandparents. Oranges, burgundy, reds, ivory, blue and pinks (and more recently, highlights of green) are used to create sumptuous, complex compositions. His shimmering dots surge across the canvas, suggesting the ripples and contours of the landscape. According to Judith Ryan, senior curator of Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Watson produces work that is inward and liturgical which, in common with the early boards of the Pintupi men, exhibits 'incandescence'. Watson began painting in 2002 following the establishment of the community arts centre at Irrunytju in 2001 by the senior women of the community. Tommy burst into prominence at the 2002 Desert Mob show in Alice Springs with a magnificent painting, 'Walpa.'

With the assistance of the Harold Mitchell Foundation his work is now exhibited in the much anticipated Musee de Quai Branly, Paris, as one of six Indigenous Australian artists to be incorporated into the architectural structure of the museum. Watson's painting Wipu Rockhole will be on permanent display as a focal point of the Museum's design, embedded in its ceiling. In Australia, the confirmation of his extraordinary talent was achieved when his Waltitjata set an all time record for the work of a living aboriginal artist when it was sold for \$240,000 at Lawson~Menzies auction in 2007.

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