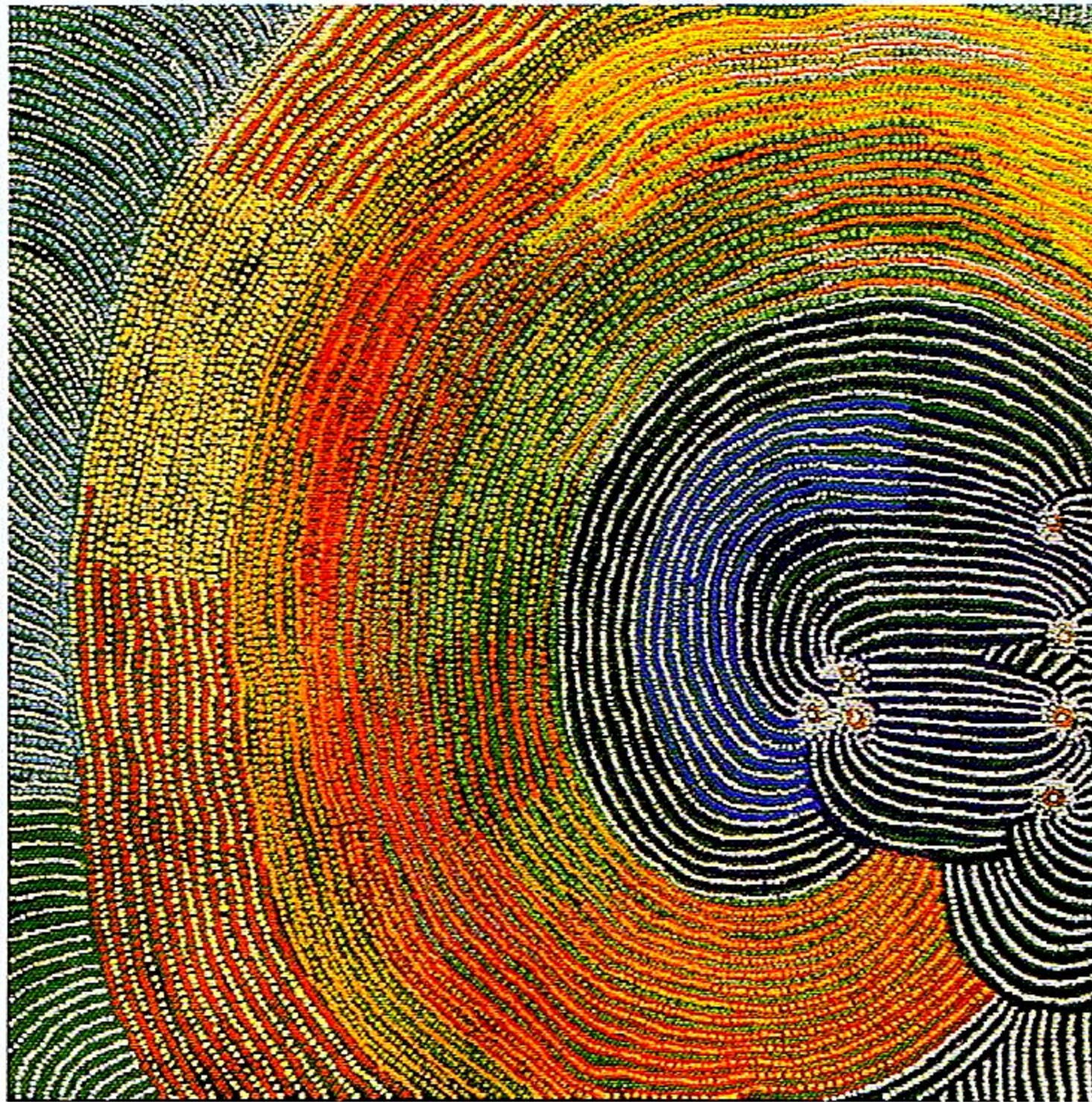


WARAKURNA ARTISTS

WARAKURNA ARTISTS IS PART OF A RECENT FLOURISHING OF CENTRAL DESERT ART CENTRES, NOT LEAST BECAUSE OF ITS FOCUS ON GOOD GOVERNANCE, NURTURING TALENT AND EMPOWERING ARTISTS REPORTS **JANE RAFFAN**.



On 29 June 2005, the Federal Court recognised that Ngaanyatjarra native title claimants held exclusive possession rights over most of their country, covering almost 188,000 square kilometres in the central desert region of Western Australia. Since this statement of empowerment, an intense and dynamic flourishing has occurred at many art centres across these lands. Commencing operations in 2005, Warakurna Artists is among the newest of these centres.

Located in the township of Warakurna near the Rawlinson Ranges in Western Australia, approximately 330 km from Uluru, Warakurna Artists represents artists from the nearby community of Wanam as well as its resident painters from the township. The centre is fully owned and governed by Aboriginal people and is a self-professed energetic, happy and creative place. Warakurna's premier artists include Tommy Mitchell, Myra Cook, Tjapartji Bates, Carol Maayatja Golding, Peter Tjarluri Lewis, Tjunka Lewis and Rachel Yukultja Jennings. Most began painting in 2005 although there are a few exceptions. Tjunka Lewis previously painted for Papulankutja/Blackstone, and senior artist Tjapartji Bates first painted for the Warburton Arts Project in the 1990s.

Warakurna artists are represented in the collections of Artbank, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, and the

Art Gallery of New South Wales. Recent showings of Warakurna artists include the 2007 exhibition *Kutju – One: Western Desert Mob Ngaanyatjarra Lands Regional Exhibition* at the Lawrence Wilson Gallery in Perth and the 2008 Melbourne Museum exhibition *Yamatji Pirmi: Many Friendships, Sharing Life and Art from the Western Desert*.

This year two Warakurna works were selected in the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award. One was a vibrant, energetic canvas by Tommy Mitchell, and the other a richly detailed depiction of the Lasseter's gold exploration story by the Warakurna Artist's Women's Collaborative, an example of a first contact story becoming modern Tjukurpa or dreaming. ■

Ethically sourced Indigenous art can be purchased from many outlets across Australia. One way to be certain a work for your collection has been ethically sourced is if it is purchased from artist-owned, community-based art centres, where one exists for the region, or from galleries that source the work from these centres, where they exist.

From left: Tommy Mitchell, *Walu*, 2009. Acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4cm; Tjapartji Bates, *Kungkarangkalpa*, 2009. Acrylic on canvas, 76.2 x 76.2cm. PHOTOS: EDWINA CIRCUITT. COURTESY: THE ARTISTS AND WARAKURNA ARTISTS