

2.

Carlene West

Carlene West's inaugural sell-out solo show at Alice Springs' Raft Artspace in September 2014 represented a critical breakthrough for the artist and her community. It was the first solo show for any artist from The Spinifex Art Project, which was established as part of the Native Title documentation process in 1997 and which has been exhibiting artists locally and internationally for most of its 17 years.

West was one of the first Spinifex artists to embrace the paintbrush and the solo exhibition was a timely testament to her artistic maturity, ambition, adaptability and individual talent.

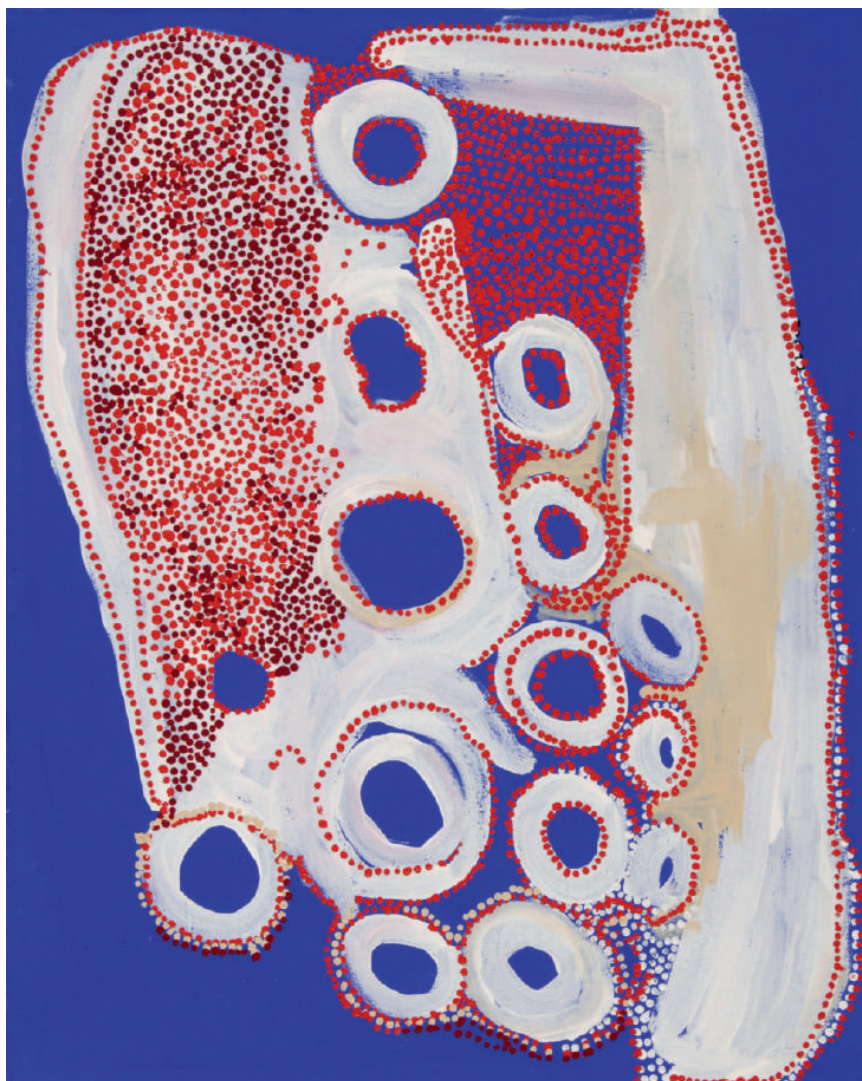
West paints the salt lake country of Tjitjiti, a sacred place for which she has custodial responsibility. Her canvases are dominated by bold voids painted on high key background palettes of black and red, which serve as powerful compositional anchors for her Tjukurrpa narratives that feature sinuous lines and sparkling, shimmering embellishments.

The intensity of Spinifex art and iconography has been characterised by journalist **Nicolas Rothwell** as suggesting "not just topography but motion, light's flow, the drift of sand, the way time leaps and runs inside our blood".

The declaration of West's artistic vision is best evinced in her magnificent large canvases, where she morphs Spinifex iconography into a unique expression of the power of place. The drama in West's work – and that which distinguishes her art amongst the Spinifex – derives from her open canvases and gestural application of paint. West explodes the crowded rhythmic commotion of Spinifex artists' interlocking curvilinear and circular compositions into expansive planes of mellifluous paint.

West's traditional country was once described by anthropologist **Scott Cane** as a "sheltered world... secluded and sequestered in the spinifex and sand". Perhaps so, but West herself is deservedly attracting the spotlight now and seems ready for stardom. Her sell-out exhibition proves the secret is out.

Jane Raffan



2. Carlene West

Opposite page:

Carlene West, *14091 Tjitjiti*, 2014.
Acrylic on linen, 75 x 60cm.

This page:

Carlene West, *14106 Tjitjiti*, 2014.
Acrylic on linen, 137 x 200cm.

COURTESY: THE ARIST AND RAFT ARTSPACE,
ALICE SPRINGS

