

## **'Western Desert Art' Collection : exhibition interpretive panels**

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### ***Research Background***

This research builds on critical understandings of Indigenous Australian art by providing interpretative information pertaining to the University of the Sunshine Coast's collection of Central and Western Desert artworks on permanent display in a specialised exhibition space and throughout the campus. The collection includes significant paintings by esteemed senior artists as well as emerging practitioners. The collection incorporates work by several generations of artists including some, such as Ronnie Tjampitjinpa, who were involved in the early days of the seminal Papunya Tula painting movement in the early 1970s. It considers ways in which the artists incorporate cultural knowledge and inventive expression to represent culture, law, country and a lived relationship with the land.

### ***Research Contribution***

The essays contribute to understandings of ways in which Indigenous knowledge, law and culture is encoded in visual form. By looking individually and collectively at a grouping of significant works which have not been exhibited elsewhere, by major practitioners including Ronnie Tjampitjinpa, Ningura Napurrula, Long Tom Tjapanangka, Mitjili Napurrula and Gloria Petyarre, the research enriches understandings of the diversity and complexity of practice within the Central and Western Desert art movement. It enhances understandings of ways in which cultural knowledge is both revealed and concealed within the works and how they represent distinctive expressions of connection to 'country'.

### ***Research Significance***

The essays are significant in examining major works of Central and Western Desert art by a range of acclaimed practitioners. They contribute to the existing body of research concerning one of Australia's most seminal art movements – the Papunya Tula movement – which has led to the flourishing of diverse forms of Indigenous Australian art practice. By including analysis of the work of multiple generations of artists, the research provides enhanced understandings of continuity and change within this nationally and internationally significant art movement. The research was funded by a Regional Arts Development Fund grant under the auspices of Arts Queensland.