

= Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula =

Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula (sometimes just Turkey Tolson ; c . 1938 ? 10 August 2001) was a Pintupi @-@ speaking Indigenous artist from Australia 's Western Desert region . Born near Haasts Bluff , Northern Territory , Turkey Tolson was a major figure in the Papunya Tula art movement , and the longest @-@ serving chairman of the company formed to represent its artists .

A painter whose creative output spanned nearly three decades , controversy erupted briefly in 1999 , when disputed declarations were made by the artist regarding whether some works under his signature had been painted by some female relatives . Creator of the work Straightening spears at Ilyingaungau (1990) , Tolson 's paintings are held by several major Australian public galleries , including the Art Gallery of South Australia , National Gallery of Victoria and the National Museum of Australia .

= = Life = =

Son of Toba Tjakamarra , one of the first Pintupi people to come into European settlements out of the Western Desert , Turkey Tolson was born near Haasts Bluff , west of Alice Springs , Northern Territory . Sources differ on his birth year : researcher and art historian Vivien Johnson gives an estimate of 1938 , while the National Museum of Australia suggests 1943 . His mother was one of Toba 's three wives : the other two (his stepmothers) were the artists Wintjiya Napaltjarri and Tjunkiya Napaltjarri . He had five half @-@ siblings , the children of Toba and Wintjiya : Bundy (born 1953) , Lindsey (born 1961 and now deceased) , Rubilee (born 1955) , Claire (born 1958) and Eileen (born 1960) .

'Tjupurrula ' (in Pintupi) (also commonly seen as ' Jupurrula ' , this being the Warlpiri spelling) is a skin name , one of sixteen used to denote the subsections or subgroups in the kinship system of central Australian Indigenous people . These names define kinship relationships that influence preferred marriage partners and may be associated with particular totems . Although they may be used as terms of address , they are not surnames in the sense used by Europeans . Thus ' Turkey Tolson ' is the element of the artist 's name that is specifically his .

As a young man , Turkey Tolson worked in construction and as a stockman around Haasts Bluff , and was a skilled spear @-@ thrower . He only came to know his birth country in 1959 , after his initiation . He married and with his family moved to Papunya , Northern Territory at the time of its construction . His first wife died , and after remarrying to Mary Napanangka in 1984 he moved to Kintore , which lies within his family 's traditional country . Later in life he suffered heart trouble , and was in Alice Springs receiving dialysis treatment at the time of his death on 10 August 2001 .

= = Art = =

Contemporary Indigenous Australian art arose in western desert communities when Indigenous men at Papunya began painting in 1971 , assisted by teacher Geoffrey Bardon . Soon afterwards they established Papunya Tula , a company owned and controlled by the artists , which went on to be Australia 's pre @-@ eminent Indigenous art centre . Turkey Tolson was one of the first to paint ? his name appears in the company 's records in 1973 ; he was also one of the youngest . He was influential within the Papunya Tula movement and spent a period as the longest @-@ serving chairman of the company . In addition to painting , Turkey Tolson also made prints , with an example held in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia .

Turkey Tolson 's painting style developed in two broad phases . His early work was classical , tightly controlled and with a strong sense of symmetry characterising the geometrical arrangement of symbols and the patterns of dots surrounding them . Works from the mid @-@ 1970s , painted at Papunya , show this iconography . They include Dreaming at Kamparrarrpa (Kampurarrpa) (1976) , Kampurarrpa (Kampurarrpa) (1976) Two Women Mythology at Putja Rockhole (1977) , and Tjunyinkya (1977) , all held by the National Museum of Australia , and all painted in synthetic polymer paint . Turkey Tolson collaborated with Johnny Scobie Tjapanangka , a fellow Papunya

artist , in creating the last of the works .

After his father 's death , the artist took over ceremonial responsibility for his country . This shift to a senior place in the community was associated with a looser style and a more individualised iconography . It was during this period that he created the work Straightening spears at Ilyingaungau (1990) , held by the Art Gallery of South Australia . This painting was described by both art expert Vivian Johnson and critic Susan McCulloch @-@ Uehlin as his masterpiece , and by obituarist Rebecca Hossack as his most famous work : " a series of shimmering horizontal lines representing spears being heated and straightened over a fire by Tolson 's ancestors " . This and other similar works were described by art critic Susan McCulloch @-@ Uehlin as representing not only the preparation of the spears , but also elements of Dreamings concerning fights between ancestral figures at a rock bluff west of Alice Springs .

In 1999 , controversy erupted when Tolson signed a statutory declaration in which he stated that , in return for payments , he had put his signature on paintings that had been created by some of his female relatives , but then , shortly afterwards , signed a contradictory declaration . The case raised important questions about the nature of Aboriginal art , and about the " corrupting " effects of the art market . Anthropologist Fred Myers analysed the case , and concluded that the issue was not that Turkey Tolson was painting for money , or even being paid money . Rather , " Turkey ? s work is threatened by corruption because the conditions of his presence in Alice Springs ? his need for more regular income and his dealer ? s need for ' product ' ? draw him away from the experiences that inform his painting . "

Major exhibitions in which Turkey Tolson 's work has featured have included Papunya Tula : Out of the Australian desert at the National Museum of Australia in 2010 , and Almanac : The gift of Ann Lewis AO at the Museum of Contemporary Art , Sydney , also in 2010 . The following year , his painting Spear straightening ceremony (1993) was included in a Newcastle Region Art Gallery exhibition , Speaking in Colour .

= = Major collections = =

Art Gallery of New South Wales
Art Gallery of South Australia
National Gallery of Australia
National Gallery of Victoria
National Museum of Australia