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## JACKIE KURLTJUNIYTJINTA GILES TJAPALTJARRI

*Texts by Hetti Kemarre Perkins, Georges Petitjean, Michael Stitfold*

For a large part of his life, Jackie Kurtjuniytja Giles Tjapaltjarri (c. 1935–2010) led a nomadic existence, travelling across large tracts of and later spending time in small communities in Australia's vast Western Desert region.

Jackie Giles was renowned as a man of great erudition and a powerful healer, Maparnjarra in his native Ngaanyatjarra language. The powers of these traditional healers include the gift of seeing into the bodies and even the spirits of others. In the 1990s, Jackie Giles started painting with acrylic on canvas. Mr Giles, as he was often called, combined an intimate knowledge of his land with his own oneiric visions to build what became a significant personal oeuvre. These paintings celebrate the Tjukurpa (Dreaming), which pervades the land and is a cornerstone of its identity.

Built around labyrinthine patterns and monumental shapes, these dynamic, rhythmical compositions allude to the esoteric, sacred subject matter of the Dreaming. The intense, striking works that make up this awe-inspiring oeuvre manage to link two dimensions: Ngaanyatjarra cosmology and the rapidly changing modern world.

**Hetti Kemarre Perkins**, an Arremte and Kalkadoon writer, curator, and the daughter of the renowned Aboriginal rights activist Charles Perkins, worked as a senior curator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales from 1989 to 2011. She co-directed the Australian pavilion at the 1997 Venice Biennale, which featured the work of Emily Kam Kngwaray, Yvonne Koolmatie, and Judy Watson. In 2010, she created Art + Soul, a multidisciplinary project focusing on Aboriginal art. She also co-curated the "Emily Kam Kngwaray" retrospective (2023–2024) and organised numerous significant exhibitions.

Since 2017, **Georges Petitjean** has been the curator of Collection Bérengère Primat and of contemporary Aboriginal art exhibitions at the Fondation Opale. An art historian with a PhD in Western Desert art from La Trobe University in Melbourne, his research focuses on the transition of Australian Aboriginal art from its origins to the international art world.

**Michael Stitfold** managed Aboriginal art centres from 2002 to 2020. He served as administrator for Papunya Tula Artists from 2002 to 2004 and was appointed director of Kayili Artists in Patjarr, a remote Aboriginal community in the Gibson Desert in Western Australia, in 2005. During this time, he collaborated with Jackie Kurtjuniytja Giles Tjapaltjarri and accompanied him to Sydney in 2009. He later worked with Munupi Arts (2012–2020) and also directed Injalak Arts. These experiences enabled him to connect isolated artists with the wider art world.