

# Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken

## *Kungkarangkalpa: Seven Sisters*

18 July – 5 August 2023

Jan Murphy Gallery is pleased to present *Kungkarangkalpa: Seven Sisters* by Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken.

*Kungkarangkalpa: Seven Sisters* marks a major milestone for Ken, the first time she has exhibited solo at Jan Murphy Gallery and her first solo exhibition since 2016.

Ken has been creating her vibrant and distinctive paintings since 1999. Her large scale paintings depict the Seven Sister's creation story, a well-known ancestral narrative of the Pleiades constellations (the sisters) and a sinister man who followed them across the night sky.

The punctuation of dots painted across the vast surfaces, creates a rhythm and an immersive topography that invites you to travel through the remote desert landscape, following the journey of the Seven Sisters as they evade the traps of their menacing pursuer, known here as Wati Nyiru. Ken paints with a punu stick (not a brush) in a signature palette of warm reds, purple, orange, yellow and white, the layering of dots trace the rock holes, waterholes, and significant places that the story traverses.

"I paint my family's side of the country where the Sisters travelled through Cave Hill and Alkunyunta, all the way through to Kuli. My right to paint this part of the Dreaming is established. Tjukurpa mulapa means a really important and true story." – Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken

The paintings in *Kungkarangkalpa: Seven Sisters* are defined by their subtle variations in colour, a gradient that weaves and morphs throughout the composition tracking not only a landscape but a time-scape journey across the cosmos. Ken explains, "I'm always thinking about colour. Pink, orange, dark red, light red, purple, creams and white. Sometimes I put little colours for wildflowers around the rockholes. I change the colour the same way as Wati Nyiru changes form to trick the sisters; it's the same way the colours change across the painting."

Based in the Amata community in the remote Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands of South Australia and painting at Tjala Arts, Ken's evocative paintings are a celebration of Anangu culture and connection to country alongside her individual expression of 'Tjukurpa' (ancestral knowledge and law).

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sylvia Kanytjupai Ken was born in Amata (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands of South Australia) and has been painting since 1999. In 2019, Ken was awarded the Wynne Prize for her landscape *Seven Sisters* from the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She has been a finalist in the Telstra National Indigenous Art Award (2013, 2014, 2018), The Hadleys Art Prize (2019) and the Wynne Prize (2018, 2019, 2021).

In 2022, work by Ken was included in CHAOS: CALM, Bangkok Art Biennale, Thailand and her work is currently held in significant national and international collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, National Gallery of Victoria and Artbank.