

# Iluwanti Ken & Betty Muffler

## Sydney Contemporary

### 7 – 10 September 2023

Jan Murphy Gallery is excited to present new paintings by acclaimed senior Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara artists, Iluwanti Ken and Betty Muffler at Sydney Contemporary.

Showcasing the distinct styles and visions of both Ken and Muffler, the gallery presentation will feature individual artworks alongside an expansive collaborative painting by the award-winning indigenous artists. Painted in the monochromatic palette for which both artists are known for, these recent works continue the artists practice of documenting their deep connection to Country and their Tjukurpa (Anangu cultural heritage, encompassing past, present, and future).

Both artists are renowned Ngangkari (traditional healers), a practice that has been handed down through generations. Each artist paints in different but related ways, the powerful spirit of the mother eagle, and the journeys of the Ngangkari, who travel in their sleep to meet and treat patients in need of healing.

Born near Watarru, Betty Muffler grew up at the Ernabella Mission following the displacement and deaths of family members in the aftermath of the British nuclear testing at Maralinga and Emu Field. Witnessing the devastation of country and surviving this experience motivates Betty Muffler's recurring depiction of healing sites and the intensity of her connection to these places in her paintings titled 'Ngangkari Ngura' (Healing Country).

*"Ngayuku mamaku ukari. Iluwanti-ku ngunytju, ngayuku mamaku malanypa ka ngayuku kuntili pulka. Ka Iluwantinya, ngayuku malanypa. Ngayuku malanytju mamaku walkatjunkupai walawuru. Ngayuku mamaku, Iluwantilu drawamilaningi katunguru tjarukutu munu tjarunguru katu. Walawuruku tjukurpa, tjukurpa wiru mulapa. Ngayulu yanga kanyini tjukurpa unngu. Ngayuku walytja tjutangku nintinu-na nguraku ngayunya nintinilta ngayuku mama tjungu, ngayuku ngunytju kuntili kulu-kulu, Iluwantiku ngunytju, uwankara.*

*Iluwanti is my father's niece. Iluwanti's mother was my father's younger sister, my eldest aunty. But in our way, Iluwanti is my younger sister. My younger sister paints my father's eagle tjukurpa. These are the eagles, the tjukurpa at my father's place, that Iluwanti draws. She has been drawing these eagles swooping down from above and flying up from below with good food to give to their young. It's a wonderful story. I have this tjukurpa, the eagle spirit of my father, within me now. My extended family taught me all about our home country as we moved around it together. My father, my mother, and my aunts, including Iluwanti's mother - all of them taught me so much in my early years."*

- Betty Muffler, 2022 (Translation by Patrick Hookey)

Iluwanti Ken is well known for her large scale ink drawings which feature graphic depictions of mother eagles hunting. These highly detailed drawings are created using punu sticks and express her Tjukurpa. She says that birds like the Walawuru (eagles) and Patupiri (swallows) have lessons for Anangu women about how to care for one's children. These birds build strong wiltjas (shelters) for their family, they hunt for food and protect their young from dangers.

*"Ngayulu kulini, I'm thinking about the Walawuru tjukurpa – the eagle story. Tjukurpa pulka –this is a big story, from my father's Country at Alkara, near Watarru. This is my tjukurpa and all of my children's tjukurpa too."* - Iluwanti Ken, 2023



*Betty Muffler & Iluwanti Ken 2023, Photography by Rohan Tomson*

#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Betty Muffler (born 1944) has been included in numerous major institutional exhibitions including the 14th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea, The National: New Australian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (2021), Tarnanthi at the Art Gallery of South Australia (2017, 2020, 2022), Kulata Tjuta at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes (2020) and Before Time Began at Fondation Opale, Switzerland. In 2022 she won the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Award (General Painting), having previously won the Emerging Artist Award (2017). Her work is represented in numerous collections in Australia and overseas including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, the Australian War Memorial and Fondation Opale in Switzerland.

Iluwanti Ken (born 1944) is a Pitjantjatjara artist, originally from Watarru and now living in Amata, in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in South Australia. In 2020, Iluwanti won the 37th Telstra NATSIAA Works on Paper Award and has also been a finalist in the Sulman Prize (2023), Dobell Drawing Prize (2021, 2022) and the National Works on Paper Prize (2020). Several of her works were featured in Tarnanthi 2020: Open Hands, at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Her work is held in numerous public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, QAGOMA and the Singapore Art Museum.

Later this year Betty Muffler and Iluwanti Ken will both feature in the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) Triennial 2023 with large scale paintings spanning three and five metres respectively. The NGV Triennial is an exciting and powerful exhibition featuring the work of 100 artists at the forefront of global contemporary practice.