

Artist Note**Natalie Puantulura**
Front Cover Untitled*Ochre on linen*
1830mm x 2440mm

Natalie Puantulura is an artist from the Tiwi Islands, located 80 kilometres north of Darwin. Her paintings tell the 'Jilamara Body Paint Story'. During ceremony on the Tiwi Islands a series of 'yoi' (dances) are performed; some are totemic (inherited from the person's Mother) and some serve to act out the narrative of newly composed songs. Participants in these ceremonies are painted with 'turtiyanginari' (the different natural ochre colours), using a wooden Pwoja comb (also called Kayimwagakini, meaning 'bone'). The designs are called Jilamara body paint designs and they are used to transform the dancers and, in some cases, provide protection against recognition by 'mapurtiti' (spirits). Natalie is of the Japajapunga (March Fly) skin group and her dance is the Yirrikipayi (Crocodile).

Traditionally, the Pwoja combs are made from bloodwood or ironbark and are about 15 centimetres in height (ensuring they can be held firmly for application) with a single row of teeth at the base. The comb is dipped in ochre and applied to the body creating dotted lines. A completed collection of dots is called 'yirrinkiripwoja'.

Natalie was born in 1975 in Darwin. She was taught to paint by her grandfather, Declan Aputimi (Senior) the late husband of renowned Tiwi artist Jean Baptiste. As Jean's granddaughter, Natalie was also taught about Tiwi culture and painting by her grandmother. Natalie painted with Tiwi Design Art Centre up until

2004, after which she and her partner, Edward Malati Yunupingu, moved to Pirlangimpi, her mother's country, and began working with Munupi Arts and Crafts. Her late father, Januarius Puantulura, was a mechanic by trade. Her late mother, Carmellina, was a school teacher at Nguui on Bathurst Island, which was her father's country.

Natalie has exhibited in group shows in many leading galleries throughout Australia between 2002 and 2011 (including Tali Gallery's International Grammar School Scholarship Exhibition in 2011) and held her first solo exhibition in Tasmania earlier in 2012. She also participated in the Darwin Festival 'Lighthouse' Wall Mural with five other Tiwi Artists. She was a finalist in the prestigious 20th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in the Works on Paper Category.

Thanks go to Di Stevens for the enthusiastic contribution of her words and knowledge on art and culture in the Tiwi Islands. Di is a curator at the Tali Gallery, Sydney.

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