

JGM Gallery London

Waltja: One Family

11 February to 20 March 2026

An exhibition of works by five First Nations Australian artists.



Lucy Napanangka Yukenbarri, *Marpa 01*, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 179.5cm x 119.5cm. Image courtesy of Sergey Novikov.

LONDON, 11 February, 2026 – JGM Gallery presents *Waltja: One Family*, an exhibition of paintings by five Kutjungka artists working from Wirrimanu (Balgo), in the north-east of Western Australia. Featured are works by the late Lucy Napanangka Yukenbarri (d. 2003) and her husband, Helicopter Tjungurrayi, one of Australia's most seminal artistic partnerships, and those of their three children, Christine Yukenbarri, Carmel Yukenbarri and Imelda Gugaman Yukenbarri. With paintings dating from 2002 to 2025, this exhibition surveys change and continuity within the Tjungurrayi-Yukenbarri family's collected artistic practices.

In Kutjungka culture, the exhibition's title, *Waltja*, means 'family', 'kin' or 'distinctive'. Indigenous concepts of kinship involve not only human and blood relations but a much wider relational and custodial system, connecting landscape topography, vegetal and animal life, elements, weather, the cosmos, and the stories of their creation. By using the concepts evoked by *waltja* as a lens to view the exhibiting artists' practices, what emerges is an emphasis on the transmission of style and subject through the family's work and the aesthetics that are particular to them. From this focus on the similarities between a family's artistic practices, differences and departures also become apparent between the work of individuals, across generations and gender. We might also think of cultural property, for example, what stories each artist is permitted to share and what visual language they are able to convey them through. *Waltja* therefore expresses the closeness and importance of family in Kutjungka culture, in which an individual often has responsibility for, and lives in relation to, a

collective framework. The exhibition's concept may also remind us of the European tradition of painting workshops, where apprentices would develop their individual style and skill under the tutelage of a 'master', with an overarching aesthetic as their foundation.

Two recurring subjects for Helicopter Tjungurrayi are *tali* (sandhills) and *tjurnu* (soakwater), which he depicts topographically in a distinct linear style. In *Wangkartu*, a representation of Tjungurrayi's traditional Country, south-west of Wirrimanu in the Great Sandy Desert, sandhills painted in red, orange and pink sit within a light blue outline, representing the flow of water which, though sparse in this region, still nourishes the land, as well as Tjungurrayi's kin and community. The effect of the concentric linework is twofold, both mimicking the undulating sandhills of Wangkartu and evoking a sense of pulsating life. The painting seems to embody the concept of *Waltja*, expressing the interrelation of water, life and landscape and creating a potent metaphor for sustaining and enriching connections between places and people.

Water, particularly as a generative life force, is the central motif in almost all of the exhibiting artists' work. In *Winpurpurla I*, Imelda Gugaman Yukenbarri depicts seven *tjurnu* as irregularly shaped circles. Through the use of pattern and its absence, she establishes these sources of water as points of origin for the surrounding abundance of bush foods, rendering them as unmodulated fields of colour, while articulating the land through a peppering of dots. It is an aesthetic approach informed by the artistic practices of her parents, specifically an even more dense dotting style pioneered by her mother, Lucy Napanangka Yukenbarri, coined *kinti-kinti* (close-close). Beyond its centrality in the life and work of the exhibiting artists, water is also a useful and resonant metaphor for understanding the conceptual focus of *Waltja: One Family*. In the work of the exhibiting artists, it conveys ancestral stories and the flow of an aesthetic language between family members: a cultural and artistic inheritance, and its evolution.

Exhibiting artists: Lucy Napanangka Yukenbarri, Helicopter Tjungurrayi, Christine Yukenbarri, Imelda Gugaman Yukenbarri and Carmel Yukenbarri.

About JGM Gallery

JGM Gallery was founded in 2017 by Australian-born Jennifer Guerrini Maraldi, one of the United Kingdom's leading specialists in Indigenous contemporary art. Guerrini Maraldi has more than 20 years experience in collecting, dealing and promoting First Nations artists from across Australia.

Through its exhibition programme, JGM Gallery provides a platform for the histories and contemporary art forms of First Nations artists, with a focus on the uses of traditional materials and techniques, innovation and social commentary. The gallery seeks to counter the pervasive and misplaced perception that Indigenous contemporary art is homogenous. Instead, it emphasises the genre's plurality of styles, materials, techniques, themes and content. In the words of Guerrini Maraldi, "The styles of this movement's leading figures are as varied, complex and sophisticated as any in the Western canon."

In addition to championing First Nations contemporary artists, the gallery has a roster of British and global contemporary artists. These artists further reflect contemporary art's multifaceted and fluid nature. Since its inception, JGM Gallery has promoted and placed the work of these artists in significant private and institutional collections.

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For further information and press enquiries, please contact the gallery at info@jmgmgallery.com or + 44 (0) 20 7228 6027.

Opening Reception:

Wednesday, 11 February, 6:30pm - 8:30pm
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JGM GALLERY

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