The genesis of Emily Kame Kngwarreye’s painting lies in a range of experiences and a cultural upbringing with other women in caring for Country and participating in the birthing of life—one ‘grows up the land as one ‘grows up’ children.’ Her genius, inherent from birth, is better understood in New Guinea visual explorations of her Country—Alalkerre, the island Adjacent to the Solomon Islands, north of East Timor—Sindai and Walevai, her ancestors’ traditional home. Kngwarreye’s oeuvre is a collective expression of her cultural heritage, encompassing the metaphysical associations of Country, as well as the metaphysical associations of life and death. In Kngwarreye’s visual language, paintings are glorious manifestations of her Country, created with her ‘whole lot’—a concept that was ever present in her work, across all style and periods. Anne Marie Brody has claimed, in a translator’s note: ‘...the whole lot is present in a single person, rock or tree.’

The name Utopia originates from literature: a mythical oceanic place and metaphysical realms in Anmatyerre Country. The gesture of naming: ‘organic uninhibitedness’, as well as ‘fluidity as structure.’

Neale makes the connection between Kngwarreye’s Utopian transcendence, dancing and mark making and the rhythm of life and Country: ‘...the hand is the method of body-painting where one blemish is then swept there, then another, one upon another, then the other...’

Body markings act as a metaphorical thread and painted ‘for looking. All Emily Kame Kngwarreye’s works, across all styles and periods, Continuing to represent purpose, presence and place of spirit, wind and earth. Desert Water’s synthetic and chromatic strategies reveal the microcosm of physical and metaphysical planes, and is testament to what has been described as the ‘Aboriginal view’.

The present greatly expanded work, Desert Water, represents the ‘whole lot’ in a remarkable way: the artist’s physical and metaphysical passage through Country—‘the artist in a dream’, clearly visible in her technique. Painted in a drought year ‘the whole lot’ in a remarkable way: the artist’s physical and metaphysical association of life and death. Desert Water is a testament to the artist’s ‘Aboriginal view’...

More recently, Tony Ellwood has stated that Kngwarreye’s art is ‘visually complex and ambiguous, as well as ‘fluidity as structure.’ Kngwarreye’s focus exploring the fertile energy of her country’s life cycle, and in particular, the pencil yam plant and wild anaroolya (also referenced as a yam) has resulted in an extraordinary body of bush and cultivated work, within which Desert Water is a powerful manifestation of the ‘Aboriginal view’, as well as ‘fluidity as structure.’

Roger Benjamin highlights approach in his key, Kngwarreye’s genius towards her technical and philosophical approach through a development thatคว�ntained ‘...the tension between...’. Aesthetic and formal, dynamic and formal...’

Kngwarreye’s oeuvre has ‘...the tension between...’ and is testament to what has been described as the ‘Aboriginal view’...

Kngwarreye’s focus exploring the fertile energy of her country’s life cycle, and in particular, the pencil yam plant and wild anaroolya has resulted in an extraordinary body of bush and cultivated work, within which Desert Water is a powerful manifestation of the ‘Aboriginal view’, as well as ‘fluidity as structure.’

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Kngwarreye’s genius was acknowledged and celebrated with her prestigious Australian Artists Creative Fellowship award, which was one of the first to be devoted to an Indigenous artist: ‘...in recognition of the exceptional talent and career-long contribution of Emily Kame Kngwarreye’.

Her position is in Australia’s pantheon of great painters is assured. She was the first Indigenous artist to be awarded the prestigious Australian Artists Creative Fellowship. She is the first Indigenous artist to have her art represented in every State and Territory gallery in Australia, and in major institutions worldwide.

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