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## Acclaimed Australian Aboriginal Artist Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri Makes his U.S. Solo Debut by Kat Herriman

Hanging on the walls of Salon 94's whitewashed Bowery gallery, Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri's canvases appear to pulsate. These paintings have come a long way from their home—the western deserts of Australia—where the artist grew up as a member of a nomadic Aboriginal family known as the Pintupi Nine. An optical feast, Warlimpirrnga's swirling geometric abstractions suggest an earthy Op Art informed by the colors and patterns of the desert. They are, in part, a product of his nomadic upbringing, but also his reaction to modernized Australia.

Warlimpirrnga was first introduced to painting at Papunya Tula Artists, a community arts center dedicated to fostering and preserving Aboriginal culture through contemporary art. It is here that the artist learned to paint and subsequently created his first body of work. In 1988, his first show at Melbourne's Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi earned him national acclaim—catapulting him into the global art-world spotlight. He's been there ever since.

"Maparntjarra," which means ritual healer, is Warlimpirrnga's first solo gallery show in the U.S. and coincides with his inclusion in "No Boundaries: Aboriginal Australian Contemporary Abstract Painting" at Perez Art Museum Miami. Rhythmic and twisting, his dizzying compositions, primarily composed of dotted lines, appear to be in constant motion. The effect is at once challenging and mesmerizing—like detecting a wave of heat rising from hot pavement. Different from all angles, his abstractions have an abyss-like sense of depth that makes one feel small, especially when standing up close.

The work of aboriginal artists like George Tjungurrayi and Tjampu Tjapaltjarri have emboldened Warlimpirrnga to develop his own visual language, using paint to evoke the sandy landscapes that dominated his childhood experience. Rooted in the traditions of the Pintupi, Warlimpirrnga's patterns are encoded with the stories and rituals of the Tingari, a mysterious ancestral group that travelled through around Wilkinkarra, a huge salt lake in the area where the artist was raised. His patterns are also informed by the Tingari tradition of inscribing pearl shells and ceremonial shields with designs that referenced their journeys. Almost impenetrable to outsiders, these references get lost in the mesmerizing imagery. Imposing yet delicate, Warlimpirrnga's works leaves one pleasantly lost in the waves of pattern and meaning.

"Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri: Maparntjarra" is on view at Salon 94, New York, Sep. 9–Oct. 24, 2015.