

WHERE HAVE ALL THE PAINTERS GONE?

(S. Butcher /N. Murray)

Where have all the painters gone?
From the 1970's
The ones who started a movement
For all the world to see

They have left their Dreamings behind,
Do the families hold them still?
Is the Tjukurrpa painted today
The way the old ones did?

In the nation's capital
on the steps of parliament house
Is a grand and beautiful mosaic
That gleams so clear and proud
And it makes us happy to see it there
For everyone can know now
It speaks "Nganampa Ngurra"
This is our country

Tjilpi tjutaya nyinapayi
Irritiya warumpila
Nyinarra palyalpayi
Tjukurrpa piintngka

*All the old men sat down in Papunya a long time ago.
Having stayed there, they began to make with paint the Dreamings,
then they were always painting the Dreaming.*

Where have all the painters gone?
Only one old man remains
Singing with a blank canvas
That he can barely see

But his wife lends him her hands
And loads a brush with paint
With a single stroke of ochre
Tjukurrpa takes its shape
And it makes us happy to see it done
A sacred gift to the world
It speaks – "ngaatja nganampa tjukurrpa" (*this is our dreaming*)
This is our country