

# Media Release

Thursday, 29 May, 2025



## The Potter Museum of Art opens with landmark exhibition *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*



The Potter Museum of Art, the flagship art museum of the University of Melbourne, reopens to the public **Friday 30 May**, with the exhibition, *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*, coinciding with Reconciliation Week.

*65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* celebrates the significance and brilliance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art created from time immemorial and throughout Australia's colonial history and beyond into the twenty-first century. The artistic and design traditions that began 65,000 years ago and thrived despite the disasters that befell the first peoples after 1788 remain the distinctive and unique creations of this country.

Curated by **Associate Provost and Distinguished Professor Marcia Langton AO**, **Senior Curator Judith Ryan AM**, and **Associate Curator Shanyssa McConville**—in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and custodians of art traditions—the exhibition explores the very belated recognition of Indigenous art and its rise to prominence globally. The enduring significance of Indigenous cultural and design traditions, knowledge and agency is revealed in the spectacular curation of works of art and cultural objects from across Australia.

**Professor Marcia Langton** said: “The ironic title of this exhibition refers to the belated and reluctant acceptance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art into the fine art canon by Australian curators, collectors, art critics and historians in the last quarter of the 20th century. *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* celebrates Indigenous art as it is increasingly recognised in galleries and collections around the world – as the greatest single revolution in Australian art.”

*65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* includes rarely seen works of art and cultural objects from the University of Melbourne's collections alongside 193 important loans from 77 public and private lenders from across the cultural regions of Australia and decades of history since first contact. More than 400 works of art and 50 documents, photographs and other archival material are exhibited together to create a narrative of these Australian art movements. The exhibition features six new commissions by leading contemporary Indigenous artists including **Sandra Aitken**, **Lorraine Connelly-Northey**, **Julie Gough**, **Brett Leavy**, **Betty Muffler** and **Maringka Burton** and **Vicki West**, and work by groundbreaking artists such as **William Barak**, **Lin Onus**, **Yvonne Koolmatrie**, **Albert Namatjira**, **Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula**, **Emily Kam Ngwarray**, **Trevor Nickolls**, **Destiny Deacon**, **Yhonnie Scarce**, **Rover Thomas**, **Nongirrnga Marawili**, **Wongu Mununggurr**, **Minimini Numalkiyiya Mamarika** and **Ricky Maynard**.

For the [opening weekend program](#) across two inspiring days, **Saturday 31 May** and **Sunday 1 June**, audiences will have the opportunity to hear conversations between curators, artists, Indigenous custodians, art historians, and anthropologists as they delve into the stories, practices, and themes that shape this groundbreaking exhibition. These thought-provoking conversations are free, with bookings required.

**Curator Judith Ryan** said: “This exhibition bears testament to 65,000 years of cultural knowledge. It encompasses an extraordinary range of artists and works of art that together serve as a conceptual map, illustrating our contested shared history and introducing us to some of the Indigenous architects of change.”

**Curator Shanysa McConville** said: “*65,000 Years* reveals key moments and turning points in the history of Indigenous art in Australia, it explores diverse art traditions across language groups and regions and art forms that emerged post-invasion, replete with resistance and innovation.”

**Director of the Potter Museum of Art Charlotte Day** said: “The Potter is uniquely positioned to realise such an exhibition at an important time in Australia’s history. Since 1853, the University has collected works of art, cultural objects and records that form a profoundly important archive, and for the first time these Indigenous collections will be exhibited together and in dialogue with works from other public and private collections, interpreted by authoritative Indigenous scholars and other leading experts.”

The Museum has undergone extensive redevelopment by **Wood Marsh Architects** and features an impressive new entrance on the University’s campus, along with new and improved spaces for the Museum’s leading collection-based learning programs made possible by the generous support of **The Ian Potter Foundation and Lady Primrose Potter AC**.

**Chairman of the Potter Museum of Art Mr Peter Jopling AM KC** said: “The Potter Museum of Art was established in 1972 at the University of Melbourne, and for over 50 years it has played a significant role in the cultural life of Melbourne, exhibiting contemporary art alongside the University’s collections. We are delighted to welcome visitors back into our revitalised museum and to chart a new, bold, and thought-provoking environment for visitors to interact with and enjoy and explore art.”

The exhibition is made possible by the generosity of Principal Supporters **Peter McMullin AM and Ruth McMullin**, Lead Supporters **Peter Jopling AM KC, the Erica Foundation, Creative Australia and Creative Victoria**, Foundation Supporters **Andy and Rainie Zhang** and the **Naomi Milgrom Foundation**, Supporters **Judith and Leon Gorr, Rebecca Hossack, John and Susan Wardle, Her Honour Irene Lawson and Brendan Kissane KC** and Publication Partner the **Gordon Darling Foundation**.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Running alongside the exhibition is a significant new educational initiative that creates resources for both school and tertiary students and teachers to build a deeper understanding of Indigenous art, history and culture. These curriculum-focused resources will continue to be available beyond the life of the exhibition. The initiative is developed in partnership with the University of Melbourne’s signature **Ngarrngga Project** which builds innovative curriculum resources in collaboration with Indigenous Knowledge Experts. Ngarrngga is led by **Professor Melitta Hogarth, Director and Associate Dean (Indigenous) in the Faculty of Education**, in conjunction with Distinguished **Professor Marcia Langton AO, Professor Aaron Corn, Director of the Indigenous Knowledge Institute**, and, **Professor Marek Tesar, Dean of the Faculty of Education**.

**The University of Melbourne with Thames & Hudson** has released a comprehensive publication also titled *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*. Featuring new writing by 25 leading thinkers across generations and disciplines, this publication further examines the history of Indigenous art across time and space. It is edited by **Distinguished Professor Marcia Langton** and **Senior Curator Judith Ryan**.

Located at the Potter, an all-new custom destination restaurant, **Residence**, will open on Friday 6 June 2025. Co-founded by leaders in hospitality **Nathen Doyle** (Sunhands, Heartattack and Vine, Wide Open Road) and **Cameron Earl** (Carlton Wine Room, Embla, ST. Ali), Residence will serve as a daytime to evening restaurant, and centres upon an annual ‘Chef in Residence’ format that uniquely offers chefs the opportunity to realise their restaurant

ambitions from conception to reality. The inaugural head chef is Robbie Noble, with his debut concept Cherrywood, that will bring a refined and expressive approach to seasonal dining at the Potter.

Potter Museum of Art board member, Michaela Webb is also creative director of leading strategic design studio, Round. As a board member, Michaela has helped to guide the strategic vision for the University of Melbourne's cultural precinct over the past ten years that's seen six offerings – including the Potter Museum of Art – unite under one department banner. In turn, Round has been instrumental in this reimagining, overseeing the creation of a new brand identity, a signage and wayfinding system, and marketing communications for inaugural exhibition, *65,000 Years: A short history of Australian Art*.

**Potter Museum of Art Board Member and creative director of Round, Michaela Webb** said: "This marks a significant step forward for the Potter Museum of Art, shaping a wholistic destination – encompassing art, culture, education and hospitality – that considers the diverse needs of many audiences – from students to faculty to the general public. Our strategy for the precinct has leveraged on Round's experience in placemaking and storytelling not to just draw from the cultural zeitgeist but actively contribute to it. With human experience at the heart of our approach, we're very excited for what's to come."

*Ends*

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**IMAGES:** Available [here](#).

Image captions: Installation view of *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*, Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, 2025. Photography by Christian Capurro.

#### **FULL ARTIST LIST FOR *65,000 YEARS: A SHORT HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN ART***

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Abadjura Ningkumanja Amagula  | 21. Brian Djangirrawuy Gumbula-Garawirtja   |
| 2. after Benjamin Law  | 22. Brian Martin  |
| 3. after George Frankland  | 23. Brian Robinson  |
| 4. after William Henry Fernyhough                                      | 24. Brook Andrew  |
| 5. Albert Namatjira  | 25. Cardo Kerinauia   |
| 6. Alec Mingelmanganu  | 26. Caroline Datjumulua Guyula  |
| 7. Alick Tipoti  | 27. Charles Rodius  |
| 8. Anna Djamirri Guyula  | 28. Charles Walter  |
| 9. Arthur Jose de Souza Loureiro                                       | 29. Charlie Allungoy (Numbulmoore)  |
| 10. Augustus Earle   | 30. Charmaine Kerindun  |
| 11. Baluka Maymuru   | 31. Christopher Pease   |
| 12. Benjamin Duterrau  | 32. Claude-Marie Francois Dien (engraver) after Charles Alexandre Lesueur (draughtsman) |
| 13. Benjamin Law   | 33. Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri  |
| 14. Betty Muffler and Maringka Burton                                  | 34. Cocky Wutjunga  |
| 15. Billiamook, Jemmy Miller (Ilon-Tereba) and Paddy (Min-dil-pil-pil) | 35. Dan Nabiya Mamarika   |
| 16. Billy Benn Perrurle  | 36. Danie Mellor  |
| 17. Billy Missi  | 37. Daphne Banyawarra   |
| 18. Bonnie Burarngarra   | 38. Destiny Deacon  |
| 19. Boxer Milner Tjampitjin  | 39. Dhambit Munungurr   |
| 20. Brett Leavy  | 40. Dino Wilson   |

41. Djambawa Marawili
42. Djäwa
43. Dorothy Warrjarrkja Ganambarr
44. E. Phillips Fox
45. Edith Terrick and Patrick Bellamy
46. Emily Kam Ngwarray
47. Enraeld Djulabinyana Munkara
48. Eugene von Guérard
49. Evonne Munuyŋu
50. Freda Wayartja Ali
51. Freddie Timms
52. Gail Mabo
53. Ganbitjun Mudinbuy
54. Gätji
55. Gawirrin Gumana
56. George French Angas
57. Ginger Riley Munduwalawala
58. Glen Mackie (Kei Kalak)
59. Godfrey Charles Mundy (draughtsman) and  
W. L. Walton (lithographer)
60. Gordon Bennett
61. Gordon Hookey
62. Gumirrmirr Jocelyn Garrawurra
63. Harry J. Wedge
64. Helen Djaypila Guyula
65. Indra Prudence
66. Ishmael Marika
67. Jack Numarngkwiya Wurrawilya
68. Jackie Kurtljunyintja Giles
69. Jan Billycan
70. January Nangunyarri
71. Jim Pearson
72. Joanne Guyula Yindiri
73. Joe Rootsey
74. John Cotton
75. John Glover
76. John Skinner Prout
77. John Tjakamarra
78. Johnathon 'World Peace' Bush
79. Johnny Kangatong
80. Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula
81. Joseph Lycett
82. Josephine Wurrkidj
83. Joyce Milpuna Bidingal
84. Judith Pungkarta Inkamala
85. Judy Watson
86. Julie Bukandjarri Guyula
87. Julie Djulibing Malibirr
88. Julie Dowling
89. Julie Gough
90. Julieanne Gitjulu Malibirr
91. Justus Jörgensen
92. Kalanga Numarndangiya Bara
93. Kaylene Whiskey
94. Keith Lapulung Dhamarrandji
95. Kunmanara Pennington
96. Kunmanara Pennington
97. Kunmanara West
98. Kunmanara Yaltangki
99. Kutuwulumi Purawarrumpatu Kitty Kantilla
100. Larrtja Ganambarr
101. Larry Jungarrayi Spencer
102. Lena Nyadbi
103. Lesley Winniniŋu Guyula
104. Lin Onus
105. Linda Bandawuŋu Guwatjinurawuy
106. Linda Dalparri
107. Linda Gagati Nurruwuthun
108. Linda Guyula
109. Liwukang Bukulaptji
110. Lola Greeno
111. Lorna Jin-gubarranbunja
112. Lorraine Connelly-Northey
113. Lucille Warwee
114. Mabel Juli
115. Makani Wiliŋarr
116. Makinti Napanangka
117. Mäma Munungurr
118. Mamulinauwi
119. Mandy Nicholson
120. Maree Clarke
121. Margaret Djarrbalabal Malibirr
122. Margaret Marrarrawuy Wanambi
123. Marilynne Nicholls
124. Marlene Gilson
125. Marlene Rubuntja
126. Mary Banbalmiya Bidingal
127. Mavis Djuliping Marrkula
128. Mawunpuy Munungurr
129. Michelle Pulatuwayu Woody Minnapinni
130. Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri
131. Mickey Bungkuni
132. Mickey of Ulladulla
133. Micky Geranium Warlapinni
134. Miliering Bagalkandji
135. Minimini Numalkiyiya Mamarika
136. Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori
137. Mowarra Ganambarr
138. Mundukul Marawili
139. Mungurrawuy Yunupinŋu
140. Naomi Hobson
141. Nengbinarra Neyangkumanyirra Mamarika

142. Nicolas-Martin Petit
143. Nongirrŋa Marawili
144. Numaldinga Lawurra Wurrawilya
145. Nyapanyapa Yunupiju
146. Nyarapayi Giles
147. Nym Bandak
148. Ŋarritj-ŋarritj Ŋulmarmar
149. Oscar
150. Otto Pareroutja
151. Paddy Bedford
152. Patrick Thaiday
153. Patsy Manganala
154. Pedro Wonaeamirri
155. Peggy Patrick
156. Pepai Jangala Carroll
157. Peter Nangwurrama Wurrawilya
158. Priscilla Badari,  
Lynne Nadjowh, Sylvia Badari and Katra Ŋa  
njmirra
159. Quartpot Nangenkibiyanga Warramarrba
160. r e a
161. Richard Browne
162. Ricky Maynard
163. Robert Campbell Jnr
164. Robert Dowling
165. Robert Neill
166. Robyn Nabegeyo
167. Ronnie Tjampitjinpa
168. Rover Thomas
169. Rrikin Burarrwaŋa
170. Rusty Peters
171. Sally Rubuntja
172. Sandra Aitken
173. Sedrick Waia
174. Segar Passi
175. Shorty Lungkata Tjungurrayi
176. Sonia Kurarra
177. Stanley Douglas
178. Susan Balbuŋa
179. Sydney Parkinson (draughtsman) and  
Thomas Chambers (engraver)
180. Takkalara
181. Thomas Bock
182. Thomas Clark after Thomas Napier
183. Thomas Nanjiwarra Amagula
184. Thomas Napier
185. Tiger Palpatja
186. Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri
187. Tjam Yilkari Katani
188. Tjanpi Desert Weavers – Dorcas Tinnimai  
Bennett, Cynthia Nyungalya Burke, Roma  
Yanyakarri Butler, Judith Yinyika Chambers,  
Chriselda Farmer, Dianne Ungukalpi Golding,  
Nancy Nyanyana Jackson, Polly Jackson,  
Eunice Yunurupa Porter, Winifred Puntjina  
Reid, Rosalie Richards, Delilah Shepherd,  
Erica Ikungka Shorty, Dallas Smythe, Martha  
Yunurupa Ward, and Nancy Nangawarra  
Ward
189. Tommy Lowry Tjapaltjarri
190. Tommy McRae
191. Tommy Pau
192. Trevor Nickolls
193. Uta Uta Tjangala
194. Vanessa Daymirriŋu
195. Vicki West
196. Victor de Pury
197. Vincent Namatjira
198. Vincent Serico
199. Waɖatjaŋan Guyula
200. Wanjuk Marika
201. Wartuma Charlie Tarawa Tjungurrayi
202. William Barak
203. William Blake (engraver) and Philip Gidley  
King (draughtsman)
204. Wilma Nganjmirra
205. Wongu Mununggurr
206. Wongu Mununggurr, Mäma Mununggurr,  
Mawunpuy Mununggurr, and  
Natjiyalma Mununggurr
207. Wukuŋ Waŋambi
208. Wuluwirr Mununggurr
209. Yhonnie Scarce
210. Yvonne Koolmatrie

## ABOUT POTTER MUSEUM OF ART

The Potter Museum of Art (The Potter) opens on 30 May 2025 with the landmark exhibition *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*. The Potter is a dynamic site for education and exhibitions that connect to the key issues and cultural debates of our time. The Potter is an industry leader in collections and exhibitions-based learning, working with the University of Melbourne’s Art Collection and the Potter’s exhibition program to engage students from a wide range of faculties and disciplines, as well as broader audiences. The University’s Art Collection, of 18,000+ objects, is a rich teaching resource featuring works from Western antiquity to contemporary art, including works by prominent Indigenous and Australian artists. The Collection is presented in dialogue with

loaned works and new commissions to explore issues and build knowledge of historical and contemporary perspectives.

Website: <https://potter-museum.unimelb.edu.au/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/pottermuseum/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/potter.museum.of.art/>

X: <https://x.com/pottermuseum>