

# Media Release

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## Potter Museum of Art announces May 2025 opening date for revitalised Museum with landmark exhibition *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*



Image: Architectural render of the Potter Museum of Art (The Potter), redeveloped by Wood Marsh Architects.

The University of Melbourne has today announced its revitalised flagship art museum, the **Potter Museum of Art (The Potter)**, will reopen to the public during Reconciliation Week on **30 May 2025**.

An exhibition celebrating the longevity and brilliance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art will open the Museum in May and run until **23 November 2025**. Titled *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*, the exhibition features more than 400 artworks, including important public and private loans, and new commissions.

The Museum has undergone extensive redevelopment by **Wood Marsh Architects** and will feature 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**.

Under the ambitious artistic vision of **Director of Art Museums Ms Charlotte Day**, the revitalised Museum will present exhibitions, programs and learning initiatives which explore key issues and cultural debates, inspired by the University of Melbourne's Art Collection.

*65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* stares into the dark heart of Australia's art history and is curated by **Associate Provost Professor Marcia Langton AO**, **Ms Judith Ryan AM** and **Ms Shanysa McConville** in consultation with Indigenous custodians.

The exhibition examines the rise to prominence of Indigenous art in Australia and the importance of Indigenous cultural and design traditions, knowledge and agency. Seven major new artistic commissions by leading contemporary First Nations artists will also be unveiled as part of the exhibition.

**Professor Marcia Langton AO** 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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."

The exhibition is made possible through a significant donation from principal supporters **Peter Mc Mullin AM and Ruth McMullin**, and the generosity and leadership of **Mr Peter Jopling AM KC, Chairman of the Potter Museum of Art**.

**Professor Duncan Maskell, Vice-Chancellor at the University of Melbourne** said: "Alongside the recently released *Dhoombak Goobgoowana: A History of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne*, this program is an important exercise in truth-telling for the University, including histories of scientific racism, and the collecting of ancestral remains.

"It will provide a vital platform for Indigenous storytelling and encourage dialogue about the importance of Indigenous culture, history and art."

**Ms 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 interpreted by authoritative Indigenous scholars and other leading experts."

Running alongside the exhibition is a significant new educational initiative that will create resources for school and tertiary students and teachers to build a deeper understanding of Indigenous art, history and culture. These 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 **Professor Melitta Hogarth, Associate Dean (Indigenous) in the Faculty of Education**, in conjunction with **Professor Marcia Langton AO, Professor Aaron Corn, Director of the Indigenous Knowledge Institute**, and **Professor Jim Watterston, Dean of the Faculty of Education**.

This month, **Thames & Hudson** also release a comprehensive publication 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 extraordinary body of artwork in the exhibition across media, time periods, regions and language groups. It is edited by **Ms Ryan** and **Professor Langton**.

Other partners whose generosity is enabling this significant program of work include foundational supporters **Andy Zhang and Rainie Zhang** and **Naomi Milgrom AC**, publication partner the **Gordon Darling Foundation** and supporters **John Wardle and Judith and Leon Gorr**. The exhibition is also supported by **Creative Australia** and **Creative Victoria**.

Further details about the program will be announced in early 2025.

*Ends*

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

#### **ABOUT THE POTTER MUSEUM OF ART**

The Potter Museum of Art (The Potter) will reopen in 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. 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 major 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.