

Media Release

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The Potter Museum of Art announces artists and new commissions for *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* exhibition



The Potter Museum of Art, the flagship art museum of the University of Melbourne, has today announced the full list of artists and details of the six new commissions for its re-opening exhibition, *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*.

The exhibition will open at the revitalised Museum during Reconciliation Week on **30 May 2025** and run until **23 November 2025**.

65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art celebrates the brilliance and beauty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art while confronting the dark heart of Australia's colonial history.

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 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 450 works, 400 of which are from the first peoples of Australia.

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. The exhibition includes 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**, **Nonggirrnga Marawili**, **Wongu Mununggurr**, **Minimini Numalkiyiya Mamarika**, **Ricky Maynard** and **Julie Gough**.

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.”

Six new commissions by leading contemporary Indigenous artists will be unveiled. They are:

- Kooma new media artist **Brett Leavy’s** *Virtual Narrm 1834*, 2025, will transport audiences into the lands and waterways of the Wurundjeri people as they were in 1834, to foster a deeper appreciation for the environmental stewardship and cultural resilience that are hallmarks of Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung society. The latest in his Virtual Songlines project, this photo-realistic animation is created in collaboration with Wurundjeri elders.
- Trawlwoolway artist **Julie Gough** exposes the prolific Western reproduction and institutional collecting of plaster busts of Nununi leaders Wurati and Trukanini, first modelled by artist Benjamin Law in Nipaluna (Hobart) in 1834-1835. Gough will display the casts in their Medical History Museum storage crates, accompanied by a new video response to the unknowable numbers of these representations of ancestors from Lutruwita distributed across the globe, which by extension refers to all ancestors and their cultural markings taken and dispersed globally by colonists.
- Respected *Anangu ngangkari* (traditional healers) based at Indulkana, South Australia in the APY Lands, **Betty Muffler and Maringka Burton** collaborated to create *Ngangkari Ngura (Healing Country)*, 2022. The 5-metre-long painting celebrates the *ngura* (country) specific to each artist, referencing the artists' healing powers and how they care for *Anangu* and the sentient land. It focuses on healing the country and *Anangu* in the aftermath of British atomic testing at Maralinga and Emu Field during the 1950s.
- **Lorraine Connelly-Northey**, well known for her dramatic sculptural works that make use of discarded post-industrial materials, has created three freestanding monumental *narrbong* (bush bags). Connelly-Northey’s works resonate with cultural and political meaning, and reflect her experience growing up in Swan Hill, Wadi Wadi and Wamba Wamba terrain, south of her mother’s Waradgerie country, disconnected from mainsprings of culture, language and ceremony through colonisation.
- Dhauwurd Wurrung Gunditjmara artist **Sandra Aitken’s** large *Gnaraban* (eel trap) embodies a fish trapping system used by her kin for thousands of years. Aitken learned to weave from the renowned weaver, her aunt, Connie Hart, who revived the important women’s practice of basket weaving that was almost lost due to European colonisation of Victoria from the early 1800s.
- The work of Senior Trawlwoolway artist **Vicki West** from north-east coast Lutruwita is represented by bull kelp water carriers and woven river reed and white iris baskets, honouring forms and processes of her ancestors as well as speaking to the survival of traditions. West was introduced to customary processes of weaving and of working with *kalikina* (bull kelp) at a cultural workshop in the early 1990s and has since become the premier Australian practitioner of kelp, a precious cultural resource.

Professor Emma Johnston AO Vice-Chancellor at the University of Melbourne said: “As this exhibition, *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* will show, since the nineteenth century the University has amassed an extraordinary collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art.

“While many of the artworks shine with the cultural richness of the first peoples, there are also works that engage us in truth-telling and profoundly challenge the legacy of the University’s collections and academic practices.

“Alongside Vol 1 of *Dhoombak Goobgoowana: A History of Indigenous Australia*, this exhibition 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 for the nation as well as the University community.”

Curators Judith Ryan and Shanysa McConville said: “This exhibition bears testament to 65,000 years of knowledge. It encompasses an extraordinary range of artists and works of art that serve as a conceptual map, illustrating our contested shared history and introducing us to some of the Indigenous architects of change. By revealing key moments and turning points in the history of Indigenous art in Australia, we explore diverse art traditions across communities and regions, art forms that emerged post-colonisation, and artistic 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 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**, Leadership Supporters **Peter Jopling AM KC, the Erica Foundation, Creative Australia** and **Creative Victoria**, Foundational Supporters **Andy and Rainie Zhang** and the **Naomi Milgrom Foundation**, and Supporters **Judith and Leon Gorr, Rebecca Hossack, John and Susan Wardle, Her Honour Irene Lawson** and **Brendan Kissane KC**. The **Gordon Darling Foundation** is Publication Partner.

Running alongside the exhibition is a significant new educational initiative that will create 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 Jim Watterston, 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 in winter 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.

Ends

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IMAGES: Available [here](#).

Image captions: William Barak (Wurundjeri, c. 1824–1903), *Ceremony* c. 1885, earth pigments and charcoal on paper, 104.9 × 84.5 cm. Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne; Trevor Nickolls (Ngarrindjeri, 1949–2012), *Tightrope walking* 1979–80, oil on canvas, 198.5 × 91 cm. The University of Melbourne Art Collection, VCA Collection; Mundukul Marawili (Mad-arrpa clan, Yirritja moiety, c. 1890–1950), *Mundukul ga yiwarra (Ancestral snake and fish trap at Baraltja)* 1942, earth pigments on Stringybark, 177 × 100 cm. The Donald Thomson Collection, part of the Indigenous Art and Culture Collection, the University of Melbourne. Gift of Mrs Dorita Thomson, 1973; Emily Kam Ngwarra (Anmatyerr, c. 1914–1996), *Wild Yam 5*, 1995, synthetic polymer paint on linen 200 × 150 cm. Hassall Collection, Gadigal Nura, Sydney.

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Abadjura Ningkumanja Amagula | 29. Charlie Allungoy (Numbulmoore) |
| 2. after Benjamin Law | 30. Charmaine Kerindun |
| 3. after George Frankland | 31. Christopher Pease |
| 4. after William Henry Fernyhough | 32. Claude-Marie Francois Dien (engraver) after Charles Alexandre Lesueur (draughtsman) |
| 5. Albert Namatjira | 33. Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri |
| 6. Alec Mingelmanganu | 34. Cocky Wutjunga |
| 7. Alick Tipoti | 35. Dan Nabiya Mamarika |
| 8. Anna Djamirri Guyula | 36. Danie Mellor |
| 9. Arthur Jose de Souza Loureiro | 37. Daphne Banyawarra |
| 10. Augustus Earle | 38. Destiny Deacon |
| 11. Baluka Maymuru | 39. Dhambit Mununggurr |
| 12. Benjamin Duterrau | 40. Dino Wilson |
| 13. Benjamin Law | 41. Djambawa Marawili |
| 14. Betty Muffler and Maringka Burton | 42. Djäwa |
| 15. Billiamook, Jemmy Miller (Ilon-Tereba) and Paddy (Min-dil-pil-pil) | 43. Dorothy Warrjarrkja Ganambarr |
| 16. Billy Benn Perrurle | 44. E. Phillips Fox |
| 17. Billy Missi | 45. Edith Terrick and Patrick Bellamy |
| 18. Bonnie Buranngarra | 46. Emily Kam Ngwarra |
| 19. Boxer Milner Tjampitjin | 47. Enraeld Djulabinyana Munkara |
| 20. Brett Leavy | 48. Eugene von Guérard |
| 21. Brian Djangirrawuy Gumbula-Garawirtja | 49. Evonne Munuyngu |
| 22. Brian Martin | 50. Freda Wayartja Ali |
| 23. Brian Robinson | 51. Freddie Timms |
| 24. Brook Andrew | 52. Gail Mabo |
| 25. Cardo Kerinauia | 53. Ganbitjun Mudinbuy |
| 26. Caroline Datjumula Guyula | 54. Gätji |
| 27. Charles Rodius | 55. Gawirrin Gumana |
| 28. Charles Walter | 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 Kurtljunytja 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 Jørgensen
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. Larrtjara Ganambarr
101. Larry Jungarrayi Spencer
102. Lena Nyadbi
103. Lesley Winniniyu Guyula
104. Lin Onus
105. Linda Bandawunju Guwatjinurawuy
106. Linda Dalparri
107. Linda Gagati Njuruwuthun
108. Linda Guyula
109. Liwukang Bukulaptji
110. Lola Greeno
111. Lorna Jin-gubarranbunya
112. Lorraine Connelly-Northey
113. Lucille Warwee
114. Mabel Juli
115. Makani Wiliñarr
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 Yunupinu
140. Naomi Hobson
141. Nengbinarra Neyangkumanyirra Mamarika
142. Nicolas-Martin Petit
143. Nongirrnga Marawili
144. Numaldinga Lawurra Wurrawilya
145. Nyapanyapa Yunupinu
146. Nyarapayi Giles
147. Nym Bandak
148. Njarritj-njarritj Nulmarmar
149. Oscar
150. Otto Pareroultja
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 Nganjamirra
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 Burarrwana
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 Balbuja
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 Daymirrinu
195. Vicki West
196. Victor de Pury
197. Vincent Namatjira
198. Vincent Serico
199. Waḍatjaran Guyula
200. Wanjuk Marika
201. Wartuma Charlie Tarawa Tjungurrayi
202. William Barak
203. William Blake (engraver) and Philip Gidley
King (draughtsman)
204. Wilma Nganjamirra
205. Wongu Mununggurr
206. Wongu Mununggurr, Mäma Mununggurr,
Mawunpuy Mununggurr, and
Natjiyalma Mununggurr
207. Wukuṇ Waṇambi
208. Wuluwirr Mununggurr
209. Yhonnie Scarce
210. Yvonne Koolmatrie

ABOUT POTTER MUSEUM OF ART

The Potter Museum of Art (The Potter) reopens in 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 wider 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 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.

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>

ABOUT OPENING WEEKEND PROGRAMS

To mark the opening of the exhibition a special program of conversations will run across the opening weekend featuring artists, custodians and curators. These conversations will be free, and bookings will be required. More information on the program and booking information will be launched in the month before opening.