

# Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum  
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## Press Release

### The Harvard Art Museums Present *Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia*



Tommy Watson, *Wipu Rockhole*, 2004. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Purchased with funds provided by the Aboriginal Collection Benefactors' Group 2004, 256.2004.  
© Tommy Watson. Courtesy of Yanda Aboriginal Art.

Cambridge, MA  
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The Harvard Art Museums present *Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia*, on display in the museums' Special Exhibitions Gallery from February 5 through September 18, 2016.

The exhibition has been guest curated for the Harvard Art Museums by Indigenous Australian Stephen Gilchrist, of the Yamatji people of the Inggarda language group of Western Australia. Gilchrist has shaped the exhibition to ensure that it centers around the authentic perspectives and experiences of Indigenous people from Australia. The exhibition takes its title from the concept of “the Everywhen,” a term coined by Australian anthropologist William Stanner in the 1960s to describe his comprehension of Indigenous people’s understanding of time, which is conceptualized as part of a cyclical and circular

order where past, present, and future are intertwined. As explained by Pitjantjatjara artist Tommy Watson, whose work *Wipu Rockhole* (2004) is included in the exhibition, “Our paintings are our memories for the future relatives.”

“The central idea of the exhibition is time,” said Gilchrist, the Australian Studies Visiting Curator at the Harvard Art Museums and associate lecturer in art history at the University of Sydney, Australia. “Everyone can relate to time; artists across the globe and across centuries have responded to the task of thinking about time and its promise, presentness, and passing. But this exhibition asks people to think about time from an Indigenous perspective, to consider how it is marked, observed, and sensed.”

While Indigenous art has at times been viewed by the international community as a relic of the past, the exhibition argues that Indigenous art and culture is equally invested in the past, present, and future. The exhibition asks visitors to consider Indigenous art as sophisticated, contemporary, and “of our time.” The exhibition also asks visitors to explore the underlying issues and experiences of the artists. While art has served as a customary medium for Indigenous people to pass on cultural practices, it has also provided a crucial public platform for Indigenous people. Through their works, Indigenous artists visualize ancient narratives, and also their experiences with colonial oppression, philosophies of ecological sustainability, interventions within museum collections, and the necessity of engaged political activism.

The exhibition features more than 70 works of varying scale and media, with the majority produced over the past 40 years. Drawn from public and private collections in Australia and the United States, many of the works have never been seen outside Australia. The exhibition is organized around four interrelated themes—Seasonality, Transformation, Performance, and Remembrance—all of which are central to Indigenous art and culture.

Works by some of the most significant contemporary Indigenous artists will be on view, including Rover Thomas (c. 1926–1998) and Emily Kam Kngwararray (c. 1910–1996), who both exhibited at the Venice Biennale; Judy Watson (b. 1959), recipient of the 2006 Clemenger Contemporary Art Award; Doreen Reid Nakamarra (c. 1955–2009), who participated in dOCUMENTA (13); Vernon Ah Kee (b. 1967), who has also exhibited at the Venice Biennale, and most recently, the Istanbul Biennial; and the visual and performance artist Christian Thompson (b. 1978), who was recently mentored by Marina Abramović in Australia.

*“Everywhen* asks important and nuanced questions about the agency of contemporary Indigenous artists and how their works are situated within today’s global society,” said Deborah Martin Kao, the Landon and Lavinia Clay Chief Curator and interim co-director of the Harvard Art Museums.

In addition to the extraordinary works of contemporary art, which are realized in a wide array of media, from paintings on bark to video, the exhibition also makes a place for historical objects from Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The inclusion of these customary objects, such as *coolamons* (multipurpose carrying vessels, sometimes used to cradle babies), baskets for food gathering, and *larrakitj* (hollow log coffins), is to demonstrate how a life is lived, measured and made meaningful through cultural objects. While the names of the makers of these objects were rarely recorded by collectors, they nonetheless possess the tangible, human residue of their makers. The exhibition invites audiences to consider the histories of erasure in past museum displays and collecting practices that have marginalized, silenced, and dehumanized Indigenous people. The exhibition also speaks to the new politics of display that are symbolically reuniting objects to their source communities where possible.

“By including these objects, we are also trying to break down the divisions between art history and anthropology,” said Gilchrist. “For Indigenous people, art and culture are both software and hardware; they need to be seen and understood together.”

## **Works on Display**

Approximately 10 to 15 works of art will be showcased in each of the four thematic sections that make up the exhibition.

*Seasonality*: Forty thousand years of living culture on the continent of Australia has provided Indigenous people from Australia with a sensitive understanding of ecological patterns and celestial movements. In many parts of Australia, the solar year is regularly divided into six to eight discrete seasons, with these punctuating changes often understood as manifestations of ancestral presence. Works of art in this section explore what it means to be responsive to the natural world. They invite the viewer to observe environmental transitions and consider larger issues that shape the current cultural landscape: how we have denaturalized our relationship to the natural world, the impact of global climate change, and the ways we can re-energize our interconnectedness with the world around us. Works on display include two examples of *Wanjina* (c. 1980) by Alec Mingelmanganu (1905–1981); *Yari country* (1989), a painting by Rover Thomas (c. 1926–1998); Emily Kam Ngwarray’s (c. 1910–1996) four-panel painting *Anwerlarr angerr (Big Yam)* from 1996; Judy Watson’s (b. 1959) painting *bunya*, from

2011; as well as three contemporary wood *larrakitj*, or hollow log coffins, by Yolngu artists Djambawa Marawili (b. 1953), Yumutjin Wunungmurra (b. 1953), and Djirrirra Wunungmurra (b. 1968), on loan from the Hood Museum of Art.

*Transformation:* The narratives told and retold by Indigenous people explain the origins of the natural world and often feature the travels of shape-shifting ancestors who metamorphosed into features of the landscape, vesting them with their sacred power. Indigenous artists create and re-create these narratives, and the sacred and significant sites associated with them, to canonize their spiritual ancestors and to re-energize their personal and cultural connection to them. The theme of transformation also applies more broadly to Indigenous art and culture, which is reimagined and reconstituted by those who create and live it. While many people erroneously associate Indigenous art and culture as being about the past, the works in this section emphasize that Indigenous people have always and continue to embrace adaptive and innovative practices. Works on display include Tommy Watson's (born c. 1932) painting *Wipu Rockhole* (2004); Ronnie Tjampitjinpa's (born c. 1932) *Two Women Dreaming* (1990); and Manydjarri Ganambarr's (born c. 1952) poetic bark painting *Djambarrpuyngu mārna* (1996).

*Performance:* The ceremonies that Indigenous people attend and participate in are used by some Indigenous artists as the source iconography in their art. While Indigenous people continue to face ongoing challenges relating to the maintenance of cultural practice, ceremonial practices are often invoked in part by artists in the creation of their art. In a sense, art making has become a new medium of performance and the rhythm of ceremony resonates in sculptures, painted objects, and photographs. Works on display in this section include Doreen Reid Nakamarra's (c. 1955–2009) large painting *Untitled* (2007), composed of thousands of small dots evoking the innumerable grains of sand that make up her desert country, as well as the rhythm and mindfulness of ceremonial performance; *The Burala Rite* (1972), a bark painting by Tom Djawa (1905–1980); and two woven baskets on loan from Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

*Remembrance:* Creating works of art that resonate with cultural memory, the artists in this section critically reflect on history and how it configures the present. The works invite visitors to consider what we choose to remember and what, and who, we are forced to forget. Serving the exhibition's interest in the multilayered concept of the Everywhen, these works of art highlight how we carry the past within. Through artistic excursions into the past, personal memories, national histories, and practices captured in the collections of museums can be confronted, interrogated, and sometimes laid to rest. Works on display include Vernon Ah Kee's (b. 1967) *many lies* (2004), a text-based vinyl work applied directly to

the gallery wall; Julie Gough's (b. 1965) *Dark Valley, Van Diemen's Land* (2008), a "necklace" that hangs in the shape of Tasmania and is composed of Tasmanian coal; and three photographs from Christian Thompson's (b. 1978) *We Bury Our Own* series from 2012, his response to the Australian photographic collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

The artists in this exhibition demonstrate how Indigenous people can be both couriers and keepers of what has been, what is, and what will be. Their compelling visual statements condense a wealth of cultural, ritual, ecological, and historical information that undermines the discourse that relegates Indigenous people to history. The themes of the exhibition—Seasonality, Transformation, Performance, and Remembrance—reflect an experience of time that is active, abiding, and expansive. The Everywhen can show us that Indigenous art and culture do not merely represent the time before time, but in fact awaken us to the fullness of it.

### **Conservation Research**

As part of the research and preparation for the exhibition, conservation scientists in the Harvard Art Museums' Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies launched the first ever large-scale technical examination of Indigenous Australian bark paintings, including historic objects that served as short-term shelters in wet weather. It was commonly thought that Indigenous artists would not have used binders, but after three years, two hundred samples, and analysis of fifty paintings, there is scientific evidence to challenge that view. The team found the first conclusive evidence that orchid juice was used as a binder in two of the oldest known bark paintings, dating to the late 19th century.

"For the first time, we are able to provide physical evidence to support or challenge theories from the past about the type and presence of binders in bark paintings," said Australian Narayan Khandekar, senior conservation scientist and director of the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies.

Khandekar and his team also uncovered more information about where Indigenous artists sourced their pigments. Traditional bark painting from Arnhem Land in the far north of Australia uses only four colors—yellow, white, red, and black—derived primarily from minerals. The team analyzed and mapped the elemental composition of pigments from historic bark paintings and then compared those pigments to ochres (earthen pigments) that the team had collected while visiting Indigenous art centers in Australia and conducting artist interviews. These findings will be added to an informal "atlas" of all Australian pigment sources, contributing to a greater understanding of the extensive ochre trade among Indigenous Australians. On Groote Eylandt, an area with abundant manganese deposits, they found

that the artists used naturally occurring black as well as black from dry cell batteries and from charcoal, indicating a nuanced choice of material.

### **About the Curator**

Stephen Gilchrist, from the Yamatji people of the Inggarda language group from Western Australia, has curated exhibitions in Australia and the United States and has written extensively on Indigenous art from Australia. He is a leading voice in Indigenous modes of curation as a form of social practice and cultural activism. Gilchrist is currently the Australian Studies Visiting Curator at the Harvard Art Museums and associate lecturer in art history at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Over the past decade, Gilchrist has made significant contributions to the field through his work with the Indigenous Australian collections of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; the British Museum, London; the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; and the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. He has written and contributed to important publications about Aboriginal art, including *Ancestral Modern: Australian Aboriginal Art* (2012) and *Crossing Cultures: The Owen and Wagner Collection of Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Art at the Hood Museum of Art* (2011). In addition, Gilchrist is on the international advisory board acting as an attaché for the 2016 Sydney Biennale.

### **Programming**

*Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia* will open with a free public celebration on Thursday, February 4, 2016. This event features a discussion at 6pm about the exhibition's central themes between curator Stephen Gilchrist and Vernon Ah Kee, one of the artists featured in the exhibition, and includes open hours in the exhibition and in all other museum galleries beginning at 5pm. A celebratory reception in the Calderwood Courtyard follows the discussion.

During the course of the exhibition, there will be lectures, including one on March 23, 2016, by Michael D. Jackson, Distinguished Visiting Professor of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School. Jackson will discuss the work of Paddy Nelson Jupurrula, one of the preeminent Warlpiri artists of the Western Desert painting movement. Christian Thompson, a Bidjara artist from Queensland featured in the exhibition, will also give a lecture in the spring (details forthcoming). Events also include dance and music performances, weekly film screenings, biweekly gallery talks, and Materials Lab workshops on earth-based pigments and clay. There will also be public conversations on curatorial practice and indigeneity, as well as programmatic collaborations with Harvard University campus organizations,

academic departments, and research centers. Detailed information about programs can be found at [harvardartmuseums.org/visit/calendar](http://harvardartmuseums.org/visit/calendar).

## **Catalogue**

The exhibition catalogue, published by the Harvard Art Museums and distributed by Yale University Press, will be available in February 2016. Including images of the works on display and six essays by distinguished scholars, the publication delves more deeply into the concepts proposed in the exhibition, offering a lasting look at Indigenous Australian art and paying homage to the particular traditions of specific regions of Australia. Edited by Stephen Gilchrist, the catalogue features essays by Gilchrist; Hetti Perkins, one of Australia's most respected curators of Aboriginal art and daughter of Indigenous activist Charles Perkins; Henry F. Skerritt, a doctoral candidate in the history of art and architecture at the University of Pittsburgh; and Fred Myers, professor of anthropology at New York University, among others. The catalogue will be available for purchase in the Harvard Art Museums shop, located adjacent to the Calderwood Courtyard on Level 1. To inquire about ordering, visit [shop.harvardartmuseums.org](http://shop.harvardartmuseums.org), call 617-495-1440, or email [am\\_shop@harvard.edu](mailto:am_shop@harvard.edu). To request a copy for review, contact Jennifer Aubin in the museums' Communications Division at [jennifer\\_aubin@harvard.edu](mailto:jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu) or 617-496-5331.

## **Acknowledgments and Credits**

In Australia, special events are often opened with a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country statement to show respect to the traditional custodians of the land. To reflect that tradition here in the United States, the Harvard Art Museums, in opening this exhibition, recognize the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), along with the Nipmuc Nation and the Massachusetts people, on whose land the museums stand today.

Lead support for *Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia* and related research has been provided by the Harvard Committee on Australian Studies. The exhibition is supported by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Consulate-General, New York. Additional support for the exhibition, catalogue, and related research has been provided by the Robert Lehman Foundation, John and Barbara Wilkerson, the American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia, Debra and Dennis Scholl, the William E. Teel African and Oceanic Arts Endowment, the Dimitri Hadzi Memorial Fund for Modern Art, and the Harvard Art Museums Mellon Publication Funds, including the Henry P. McIlhenny Fund. Modern and contemporary art programs at the Harvard Art Museums are made possible in part by generous support from the Emily Rauh Pulitzer and Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., Fund for Modern and Contemporary Art.

Lenders include: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Lyn and Rob Backwell, Melbourne; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville; Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Milani Gallery, Brisbane; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; National Museum of Australia, Canberra; Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; John and Barbara Wilkerson; and two anonymous lenders.

### **Press Preview**

A preview of *Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia* will be held for members of the press on Monday, February 1, 2016, 8:30–10:00am. Kindly RSVP by Thursday, January 28 to [jennifer\\_aubin@harvard.edu](mailto:jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu) or 617-496-5331. Parking is available, by permit, at the nearby Broadway Garage, 7 Felton Street. To reserve a permit, please indicate the need for parking in your email.

### **About the Harvard Art Museums**

The Harvard Art Museums, among the world's leading art institutions, comprise three museums (the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums) and four research centers (the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Fogg Museum includes Western art from the Middle Ages to the present; the Busch-Reisinger Museum, unique among North American museums, is dedicated to the study of all modes and periods of art from central and northern Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking countries; and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum is focused on Asian, ancient, and Islamic and later Indian art. Together, the collections include approximately 250,000 objects in all media. The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and the public. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in the United States.

The Harvard Art Museums' recent renovation and expansion builds on the legacies of the three museums and unites their remarkable collections under one roof for the first time. Renzo Piano Building Workshop's responsive design preserved the Fogg Museum's landmark 1927 facility, while transforming the space to accommodate 21st-century needs. Following a six-year building project, the museums now feature 40 percent more gallery space, an expanded Art Study Center, conservation



labs, and classrooms, and a striking new glass roof that bridges the facility's historic and contemporary architecture. The new Harvard Art Museums' building is more functional, accessible, spacious, and above all, more transparent. The three constituent museums retain their distinct identities in this new facility, yet their close proximity provides exciting opportunities to experience works of art in a broader context. [harvardartmuseums.org](http://harvardartmuseums.org)

### **Hours and Admission**

Daily, 10am–5pm. Closed major holidays. Admission: \$15 adults, \$13 seniors (65+), \$10 non-Harvard students (18+). Free for members; youth under 18; Cambridge residents; and Harvard students, faculty, and staff (plus one guest). On Saturdays, from 10am–noon, Massachusetts residents receive free admission. Visit our website for information about other discounts and policies.

[harvardartmuseums.org/plan-your-visit](http://harvardartmuseums.org/plan-your-visit)

### **Exhibitions, Events, and News**

Our Special Exhibitions Gallery presents important new research on artists and artistic practice, and our University Galleries are programmed in consultation with Harvard faculty to support coursework.

[harvardartmuseums.org/visit/exhibitions](http://harvardartmuseums.org/visit/exhibitions)

Lectures, workshops, films, performances, special events, and other programs are held throughout the year at the museums. [harvardartmuseums.org/visit/calendar](http://harvardartmuseums.org/visit/calendar)

Check out *Index*, our multimedia magazine, to keep up with what's happening at the Harvard Art Museums. [magazine.harvardartmuseums.org](http://magazine.harvardartmuseums.org)

### **Members and Fellows**

With access to exclusive perks and programs, Harvard Art Museums members enjoy special moments to celebrate and explore the museums' world-class collections and special exhibitions.

[harvardartmuseums.org/support/members](http://harvardartmuseums.org/support/members)

The Fellows are a dynamic group of art enthusiasts and supporters who enjoy the most exclusive opportunities that the museums have to offer. [harvardartmuseums.org/support/fellows](http://harvardartmuseums.org/support/fellows).

The Harvard Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

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