

arts news release
scottsdale museum of contemporary art

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SMoCA Presents Exhibition of Works by Acclaimed Women Artists From Aboriginal Australia



Wintjiya Napaltjarri, *Women's Ceremonies at Watanuma*, 2007. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 57 7/8 x 71 7/8 inches.
© Wintjiya Napaltjarri, licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd, Courtesy Papunya Tula Artists, Collection of Debra and Dennis Scholl
(Photo: Sid Hoeltzell)

Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia

Sept. 23, 2017 — Jan. 21, 2018

Opening reception Friday, Oct. 13, 7–9 p.m., free to the public

Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art

Information at www.SMoCA.org

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. – Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMoCA) will present the acclaimed exhibition *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia*, featuring paintings and sculptures of nine contemporary women artists from remote Aboriginal areas across the island continent. The exhibition will open on Sept. 23 and be on view through Jan. 21.

Of the nine artists, seven are still alive: Nonggirnga Marawili, Yukultji Napangati, Angelina Pwerle, Carlene West, Regina Pilawuk Wilson, Lena Yarinkura and Nyapanyapa Yunupingu. Two have died: Gulumbu Yunupingu and Wintjiya Napaltjarri.

Born between the 1920s to the 1970s, these women are revered matriarchs in their communities, and are among the most celebrated artists in Australia; all have works in the Australian National Museum's collection. Nyapanyapa Yunupingu's work has been shown at the Sydney Biennale. The work of her sister, Gulumbu Yunupingu, is in the permanent collection of the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. Regina Pilawuk Wilson's work was shown at the Moscow Biennale.

Their art addresses personal issues and universal contemporary themes, and reflects ancient cultural traditions — Australian Aboriginal art dates back more than 40,000 years and is the oldest ongoing tradition of art in the world.

This exhibition illustrates the seismic shift that occurred in the contemporary Aboriginal art movement in the mid-1990s. Art has always been an important part of Aboriginal life, connecting past and present, the people and the land, and the supernatural and reality. Contemporary Aboriginal artists tend to be organized in collectives, and until the 1980s, the collectives and the art market were dominated by men. Aboriginal societies have faced challenges, including drug and alcohol abuse, as well as a high mortality rate among men. By the end of the 1980s, more than half of the art production from Aboriginal communities was by women.

The exhibition also tells a story about a deep sisterhood that developed among these artists. Their art helps to hold their communities together and became a key component for the women to be able to maintain their social and economic independence.

Included in this internationally touring exhibition are 68 works drawn from the collection of Miami-based philanthropists Debra and Dennis Scholl. Many are being seen publicly for the first time. The Scholls commissioned many of the works specifically for this exhibition, allowing some of the artists to work on a much larger scale than they previously had attempted.

SMoCA will show all of the artworks on tour and the exhibition will occupy half of the Museum's galleries.

"SMoCA is proud to bring this exhibition to Arizona," said Sara Cochran, Ph.D., SMoCA's director and chief curator. "Given the Museum's engagement with a plurality of contemporary artistic voices, we are excited for our audience to discover the unique and powerful work of these Aboriginal women. It is a wonderful opportunity to see a new frontier of contemporary art and understand how another culture contemplates and processes the essential questions of human existence and its place in the world. Their work is a testament to the creativity of older individuals."

The New York Times described *Marking the Infinite* as "a landmark exhibition...critically lauded, innovative works." *Hyperallergic* noted, "This breathtaking display of work falls squarely within the realm of contemporary art."

Marking the Infinite originated at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno under the guidance of William Fox, director of the Center for Art and Environment, and Henry Skerritt, curator of the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Collection at the University of Virginia.

The 30-month exhibition debuted at New Orleans' Newcomb Art Museum at Tulane University in New Orleans in August 2016, and was on view earlier this year at Miami's Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University. In addition to SMoCA, the exhibition will travel to the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno; the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C.; and the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, in Vancouver, B.C.

EXHIBITION PUBLICATION

The publication accompanying the exhibition, *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia*, features essays by some of the world's leading experts in Aboriginal art, including Hetti Perkins, Tina Baum, Cara Pinchbeck, Howard Morphy, John Carty and Henry Skerritt. The 184-page catalog includes compositions on each of the nine artists, with detailed biographical information and full-color reproductions of their works. Through pictures and words, the complex histories of the artworks are revealed, weaving through traditional Aboriginal culture, philosophy, colonial experience and the contemporary art world.

SCOTTSDALE ARTS

Through its partnership with the City of Scottsdale, the nonprofit Scottsdale Arts (formerly known as Scottsdale Cultural Council) creates diverse, inspired arts experiences and educational opportunities that foster active, lifelong community engagement with the arts. Since its founding in 1987, Scottsdale Arts has grown into a regionally and nationally significant, multi-disciplinary arts

organization offering an exceptional variety of programs through three acclaimed divisions – Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMoCA) and Scottsdale Public Art – serving more than 400,000 participants annually.

ABOUT SMoCA

Founded in 1999, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMoCA) explores the best of contemporary art, architecture and design. Global in its focus, the Museum is a unique and vital cultural resource for the Southwest, serving local audiences as well as visitors from the United States and abroad. Designed by award-winning architect Will Bruder, SMoCA's minimalist building (an ingenious renovation of a former movie theater) has four galleries for showcasing changing exhibitions and works from the Museum's collection, along with SMoCA Lounge, a living, functional art installation and space for community engagement. The Museum presents a wide variety of educational programs and special events for adults and families, including lectures, readings, performances, docent-led tours, workshops and classes. SMoCA also features an outdoor sculpture garden housing James Turrell's *Knight Rise*, one of the renowned artist's public skyspaces, and *Scrim Wall*, a monumental curtain of translucent glass panels by James Carpenter Design Associates. The Museum's retail store, Shop@SMoCA, offers classic design objects and furnishings, contemporary jewelry, art and architecture books and imaginative gifts for all occasions.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art
7374 E. Second St., Scottsdale, AZ 85251

www.SMoCA.org

480-874-4666

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HOURS AND ADMISSION

Tuesday – Wednesday, noon – 5 p.m.

Thursday – Saturday, noon – 9 p.m.

Sunday, noon – 5 p.m.

Closed Mondays and major holidays

Admission: \$10 adults, \$7 students, free for members and children under 15

Free on Thursdays and after 5 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays