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NGV and Country Road unveil transformative First Nations Commissions



Installation view of FUTURE COUNTRY: Country Road x NGV First Nations Commissions from 20 March – 13 September at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Melbourne. Photo: Sean Fennessy.



MELBOURNE. - Future Country is the second iteration of the Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions, a transformative national, biennial mentorship and exhibition program. The Commission pairs an outstanding emerging Australian First Nations artist or designer with an esteemed industry leader from each state and territory across Australia. The initiative provides a career defining platform for artists to make their most ambitious work to date, exploring new mediums, scales and ideas that push the boundaries of their practices.

Established First Nations mentors are invited by the NGV to participate, and each in turn nominate a remarkable early career practitioner for the opportunity. Artists are supported by their mentor in the conception, development and creation of their work which will respond to the theme of 'Future Country'.

The mentorship will culminate in a major exhibition at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, opening on 20 March 2026, with all works on display entering the NGV Collection and expanding its representation of work by contemporary First Nations artists.

The recipients of 2026 Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions are:

- Megan Cope, Quandamooka (Mentor) and Boneta-Marie Mabo, Nywaigi/Meriam/Manbarra (QLD)

• Michelle Suter, Nyoongar/Wardandi (Mentor) and Cary Latham, Doo, Nyoongar/Wardandi (ACT)

• Karla Dickens, Wiradjuri (Mentor) and Charlotte Allingham (Coffinbirth), Wiradjuri/Ngiyampaa (NSW)

• Brook Andrew, Wiradjuri (Mentor) and Jahkarli Felicitas Romanis, Pitta Pitta (VIC)

• Clothilde Bullen, Wardandi (Nyoongar)/Badimaya (Yamatji) (Mentor) and Katie West, Yindjibarndi (WA)

• Lola Greeno, Trawlwoolway (Mentor) and Nunami Sculthorpe-Green, Palawa/Warpiri (TAS)

• Brenda L Croft, Gurindji/Malgin/Mudburra (Australian First Nations), Anglo-Australian, Chinese, German, Irish, Scottish (Mentor) and Paul Girrawah House, Ngambri-Kamberri/Ngurnal (Walgalu)/Pajong (Gundungurra)/Wallaballooa/Eramble/Brungle (Wiradjuri) (ACT)

• Doreen Jinggarrabarra, Burarra (Mentor) and Stephanie Ali, Burarra (NT)

The nominated artists represent a diverse range of disciplines, ranging from photography to video, sculpture, weaving and textiles, installation and more.

The mentorship calls on the expertise of some of Australia's most respected First Nations artists and administrators who bring with them a diversity of experience and leadership in the sector, both locally and internationally. The cohort of mentors will offer valuable guidance drawing on their own careers and practices exploring subject matter from reclamation of cultural practice to sharing of Indigenous knowledge and colonial histories.

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV said: 'The Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions offers a vital platform for emerging artists to expand their practices and create ambitious new work under the guidance of an experienced and respected industry mentor. We're grateful to Country Road for their support in realising this mentorship and national exhibition program, the first and only of its kind in Australia.'

Dr Jessica Clark, Senior Curator, First Nations Art, NGV said: 'FUTURE COUNTRY – the second iteration of the Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions – invites artists to look to the future while simultaneously acknowledging the past. Bringing together eight emerging creatives with leading industry mentors, the exhibition acknowledges and celebrates the important relationships and creative exchanges that already exist amongst emerging and established First Nations artists.'

Helen Wright, Managing Director, Country Road said: 'We're proud to continue our partnership with the NGV through the Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions, supporting First Nations artists with a national platform for storytelling, knowledge and cultural expression.'

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