

National Gallery of Victoria

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Celebrating emerging First Nations artists with the National Gallery of Victoria



“The Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions creates a major new platform for First Nations art and design in Australia. The unique mentorship format—the only one of its kind in Australia—offers a career-defining opportunity to emerging practitioners to create a new work under the guidance of a respected mentor.” *Tony Ellwood AM, Director, National Gallery of Victoria*

Together with the National Gallery of Victoria, we’ve proudly partnered on a national, biennial mentorship and exhibition program designed to celebrate emerging First Nations artists.

The first and only initiative of its kind in Australia, the Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions pairs First Nations artists and designers with esteemed industry mentors, who support and guide the artists to create their most ambitious works to date.

Mentors from each of the Australian states and territories are invited by the NGV to join the series, before nominating an emerging artist to guide through the conception, development and creation of a major work. The nominated artists represent a diverse range of artistic and creative disciplines, ranging from weaving and textiles, to installation, painting and more.

The aim of the Commission series is to acknowledge and nurture the creative relationships between artists and their mentors around the country. The mentorship is structured to reflect and champion the storytelling and knowledge-sharing systems that exist within First Nations communities.

Responding to the theme of 'My Country', the inaugural series will be unveiled in 2024 in a major exhibition at The Ian Potter Centre, NGV Australia. Following the exhibition, commissioned works will permanently enter the NGV Collection, establishing an important legacy for future generations.

The inaugural recipients of the Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions:

Tony Albert (Mentor) and Warraba Weatherall (Artist)

Tony Albert has achieved extraordinary visibility and critical acclaim for his visual art practice, which combines text, video, drawing, painting and three-dimensional objects. Examining the legacy of racial and cultural misrepresentation, particularly of Australia's Aboriginal people, Albert has developed a universal language that seeks to rewrite historical mistruths and injustice.

Warraba Weatherall is a Kamilaroi artist, researcher, curator and cultural scholar. By drawing from Indigenous knowledges and experience, Warraba presents alternate ways of seeing and understanding to contribute to a cross-cultural dialogue. He currently works across the mediums of painting and sculpture, and his studio-based research aims to regenerate Indigenous knowledge systems within a contemporary arts practice.

Maree Clarke (Mentor) and Mitch Mahoney (Artist)

Maree Clarke is a Yorta Yorta/Wamba Wamba/Mutti Mutti/Boonwurrung woman, and pivotal figure in the reclamation of south-east Australian Aboriginal art practices. Known for her open and collaborative approach to cultural practice, Maree embraces art as a medium to inspire others to reconnect with their cultural heritage.

Mitch Mahoney is a Boonwurrung and Barkinji artist. He was born in north-west Victoria in Mildura along the banks of the Murray River where he lived for the first part of his life. Currently living on Country in Melbourne, Victoria, Mitch works on a large range of artworks specialising in the revitalisation of south-eastern Aboriginal practices.

Western Australia

Peggy Griffiths (Mentor) and Jan Griffiths (Artist)

Peggy Griffiths is a highly respected senior artist at Waringarri Arts, located in the heart of Miriwoong Country at Kununurra, East Kimberley. Her paintings are delicate in colour and style, using natural ochre pigments with fine brushwork to depict her Country.

Jan Gunjaka Griffiths is a prolific artist currently working across painting, ceramics and poetry. Her work explores personal family narratives which have also included multimedia installations, fashion and photography.

New South Wales

Jonathan Jones (Mentor) and Sophie Honess (Artist)

Jonathan Jones is a Sydney-based artist of the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations of south-east Australia. He works closely with communities to create a range of projects that talk to both the historical and contemporary. His projects are grounded in research and work with Elders and community to tell local stories.

Sophie Honess is a Gomeroi Yinarr based in Tamworth, New South Wales. She has been creating textile art professionally for the past five years. Her works respond to her immediate environment, finding and exploring hidden beauty on Gomeroi Country through colour and texture.

South Australia

Vincent Namatjira OAM (Mentor) and Alec Baker and Eric Barney (Artists)

Western Aranda artist **Vincent Namatjira** is recognised internationally for his paintings that reference Australia's colonial history, First Nations histories and contemporary aspects of Indigenous life. In 2020, Namatjira was the recipient of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in honour of his contribution to Indigenous visual arts and was the first Indigenous artist to win the Archibald Prize.

Alec Baker and **Eric Barney** are a collaborative painting duo, who have worked together since 2017. Baker is recognised as a respected Elder and cultural authority, known for his extensive knowledge of Country. Eric Barney grew up in Indulkana Community, where he continues to live and work. Barney has been guided and mentored on painting technique and cultural protocol by the senior men at Iwantja Arts.

Tasmania

Denise Robinson (Mentor) and Cheryl Rose (Artist)

Denise Robinson is a palawa (Trawlwoolway) woman with Scottish/English matrilineage. The greater part of Denise's work within the creative sector is towards building capacity for Tasmanian Aboriginal practitioners. An artist, administrator, advisor, broker and mentor, she has held a diverse range of roles across government, business, community, and industry sectors as well as managing her own arts practice.

Cheryl Rose is a Pataway/Burnie-based artist located on the north-west of lutruwita/Tasmania. She is currently working in a range of mediums, from paints to printing and etchings, and expanding to digital and video. Cheryl is inspired by coastal lands, sea and all that's within, place, community and culture.

Australian Capital Territory

James Tylor (Mentor) and Aidan Hartshorn (Artist)

James Tylor is a multidisciplinary visual artist whose practice explores Australian environment, culture and social history through photography, video, painting, drawing, sculpture, installation, sound, scent and food. James explores Australian cultural representations through the perspectives of his multicultural heritage that comprises Nunga (Kaurua), Māori (Te Arawa) and European (English, Scottish, Irish, Dutch and Norwegian) ancestry.

Aidan Hartshorn is a Walgalu man of the Ngurmal Nation, situated in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains region in New South Wales. Through his practice, Aidan explores the destructiveness of colonial processes and the connections to Country he and his people have with the ever-changing landscape.

Northern Territory

Pedro Dennis Wonaeamirri (Mentor) and Johnathon World Peace Bush (Artist)

Pedro Dennis Wonaeamirri grew up in Pirlangimpi (Pularumpi) on Melville Island. He was educated in Darwin and returned to the Tiwi Islands in 1989. He has been exhibiting since this time and his artworks are in many national, state and private collections Australia-wide and overseas. Pedro is a senior cultural leader on the Tiwi Islands with a significant and strong knowledge of the old Tiwi language and all of the songs and dance important in Tiwi culture.

Johnathon World Peace Bush expresses his views on equality, culture, art, and language through painting, writing, and song. Bush's ochre paintings present a unique combination of Tiwi culture and his personal views on global politics, family, and cultural heritage.

