

Yhonnie Scarce: The Light of Day

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Yhonnie Scarce, *Death Zephyr* (detail), 2016. Hand-blown glass, nylon and steel, dimensions variable. Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased with funds provided by the Aboriginal Art Collection Benefactors 2017. Courtesy: the artist and the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth.

Internationally recognised Kokatha and Nukunu artist **Yhonnie Scarce** brings her luminous and powerful works to The Art Gallery of Western Australia in the largest-ever ensemble of her collected glass and mixed-media works seen in Australia, for the Perth Festival in 2024.

One of the country's leading contemporary artists, Scarce is known for her large-scale, unforgettable glass installations that reveal hidden stories of Australia's foray into nuclear testing, and the impacts of colonisation on First Nations people, illuminating the artist's desire to bring the darkest shadows of Australia's past into the direct light of day.

The sheer scale of these works – installations of glass yams hung like oversized chandeliers in the gallery space – highlight the artistry and aesthetic beauty of the glass form. Through these evocative installations, Scarce's work makes visible the story of the dehumanising of First Nations families and

communities told through the lens of archival imagery from her photographic collection, mingled with her handmade glass objects, both at an intimate and phenomenal scale.

The story of the works, and Scarce's broader practice, illuminate the effects of uranium mining and disruption sites, both internationally and locally – particularly drawing attention to the site of Maralinga and the often-unknown impact of nuclear testing impacting Scarce's birthplace of Woomera, South Australia.

The scale and beauty of *The Light of Day* will enthrall visitors, as the stories of the works bring a healing light to Australia's recent history. Scarce's practice and works more broadly contend with the impact of colonisation on First Nations people in Australia and globally, by utilising archival imagery from her personal photographic collection and found objects to illuminate our shared histories of indentured labour and cultural and familial trauma.

The fiercely intellectual and uncompromising narratives of Scarce's practice transcend the local, and as the world again tilts towards potentially lethal global nuclear conflict, *The Light of Day* is a timely reminder of our need to remember the past in order not to repeat those mistakes in the future.

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