

The National 2021 **New Australian Art**



**Art Gallery of
New South Wales**

26 March – 5 September 2021

Carriageworks

26 March – 20 June 2021

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

26 March – 22 August 2021

2017/2019/2021

The National 2021 New Australian Art

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The National 2021: New Australian Art opens at three of Sydney's leading cultural institutions



[Sydney, 26 March 2021] A major survey of contemporary Australian art, ***The National 2021: New Australian Art***, opens today across three of Sydney's leading cultural institutions, the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), Carriageworks and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), presenting 39 new commissioned projects by established, mid-career, emerging artists and artist collectives from across the nation.

Isadora Vaughan, *Organs of Cognition*, 2021. Installation view
The National 2021: New Australian Art, Carriageworks. Photo credit
Zan Wimberley. Image courtesy the
artist and STATION © the artist

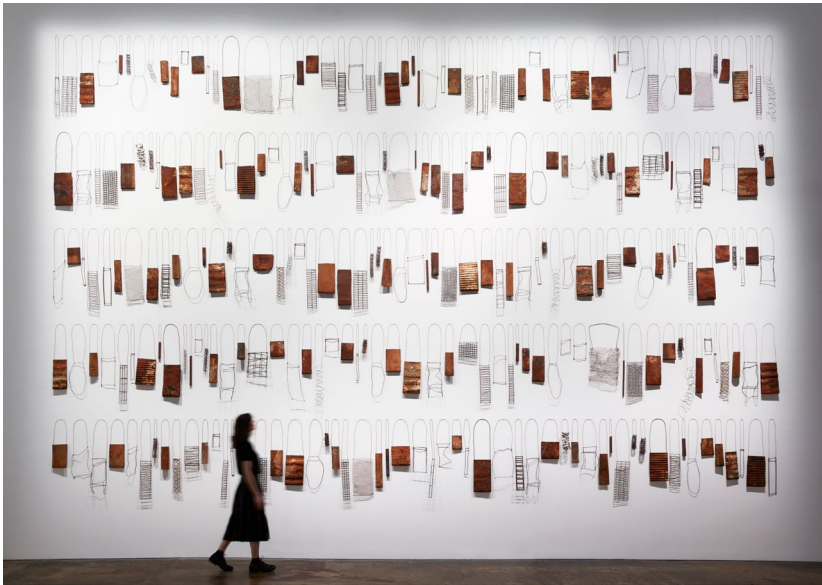
The third iteration in a series of biennial surveys, originally launched in 2017, *The National 2021* showcases the varied and vital work being made by Australian artists, in urban and regional centres, as well as remote communities, by artists of different generations and cultural backgrounds.

Three distinct exhibitions have been developed by four curators, Matt Cox and Erin Vink (AGNSW), Abigail Moncrieff (Carriageworks) and Rachel Kent (MCA Australia). Each exhibition invites collective dialogue about the ideas and concerns mobilising some of Australia's most significant contemporary artists.

The National 2021 at AGNSW presents a diverse selection of works from 17 artists and cultural practitioners, including five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from the Zendath Kes (Torres Strait Islands), Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia, Brisbane, and Canberra.

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“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in this exhibition present works that exist between moments of categorisation and form, relying on and claiming Indigenous and non-Eurocentric forms of knowledge. Significant commissions include two large-scale nocturnal, healing landscapes by **Betty Muffler** and **Maringka Burton**, a daguerreotype installation reclaiming Kaurua place names by **James Tylor**, and large fibreglass sculptural forms of sea creatures by **Alick Tipoti**,” said AGNSW Co-curator **Erin Vink**.

AGNSW Co-curator, **Matt Cox** said: “Reflecting on the six years since the inception of *The National* and its intention to present new Australian art that observes moments in our collective histories, the third iteration offers a renewed sense of what it means to be living in Australia and despite post-truth cynicism, an optimism in the transformative value of art.”

“The exhibition harbours a tension between sorrow and hope. The sites of grieving in the work of **Fiona Hall** and **Gabriella Hirst**, which respond to the devastation of the bushfires and the Barka Darling River system, are buoyed by an undeniable joy and promise of alternative futures in the performative installation of **Justin Shoulder**,” added Cox.

A deep sense of questioning and responsiveness lies within the works presented at Carriageworks. Interrogating ‘who is speaking’ and ‘what is being said when we speak’ the works contain both messages and warnings. The cry of Guwayi bird warns of a turning tide in **Vernon Ah Kee** and **Dalisa Pigram**’s work, while the **Karrabing Film Collective** use filmmaking to interrogate the conditions of inequality for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and to retain connections to land and their Ancestors. **Alana Hunt** turns her lens on colonial aspirations of leisure, tourism and development that underpin contemporary life. The material complexity of **Isadora Vaughan** and **Lorraine Connolly-Northey**’s sculptures speak to a sense of place and history while **Sarah Rodigari**’s performance installation draws from conversations with casual staff at Carriageworks, providing a new reading of the site and its relationship to labour.

Carriageworks Curator, **Abigail Moncrieff** said: “Collaboration, kinship and sociality threads throughout the work of the 13 artists and artist collectives at Carriageworks, with each work navigating the measure and texture of our actions and engagement with the world around us. These urgent voices from around Australia speak to our complicated and fractured present, and within this, offer hope for a renewed future.”

The National at the MCA presents the work of 13 artists who consider diverse approaches to the environment, storytelling, and intergenerational learning. Their works incorporate natural materials and processes, as well as found objects and detritus, to explore notions of planetary caretaking and our relationship to place in an era of dramatic change.

From left to right:

Lorraine Connolly-Northey, *Narabong Galang*, 2021. Installation view *The National 2021: New Australian Art*, Carriageworks. Photo credit Zan Wimberley. Image courtesy the artist and The Commercial © the artist

Mulku Wirrpanda, *Pardalotes*, 2020, Sydney; *Ŋāḍi ga Guḍḍirr*, 2019, collection of Bidy and Chris van Aanholt; installation view, *The National 2021: New Australian Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, earth pigment on board, image courtesy and © the artist, photograph: Anna Kučera

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Unseen physical forces – wind, gases, emissions – power works by sculptor **Cameron Robbins**, as seen in his 5-metre-tall kinetic wind powered sculpture, commissioned for the MCA Sculpture Terrace. Yorta Yorta/Wamba Wamba/Mutti Mutti/Boonwurrung artist **Maree Clarke** looks to the natural world using objects such as river reeds, kangaroo teeth and echidna quills in her work, whilst **Lauren Berkowitz** transforms plastic waste into powerful statements on the fragility of our environment. Women's practice is central to *The National* at the MCA, explored through diasporic and familial histories by artists such as **Sancintya Mohini Simpson**, **Mehwish Iqbal**, and **Betty Kuntiwa Pumani**, whose large-scale painting reflects her mother's Country, Antara – a portrait of four generations of women in her family.

MCA Chief Curator, **Rachel Kent** said: "For me, symbiosis in nature is an enduring and meaningful exhibition motif. It is expressed in the art of **Mulkun Wirrpanda**, whose bark paintings demonstrate the ways that diverse animal communities cohabit harmoniously, in the termite mounds of north-east Arnhem Land. Her works reveal intricate patterns of connection and the balance of all things in the natural world."

Several public programs have been newly commissioned to celebrate the opening weekend of *The National 2021* including, live performances, interactive workshops and artist talks held across the three institutions.

The opening weekend at AGNSW features a range of free events including, the launch of **Justin Shoulder's** immersive performance series, *AEON†: TITAN ARUM* on Saturday 27 March; two special performances of *Baydham a Dhangal Sagul*, a shark and dugong cultural performance by **Alick Tipoti** and family on Saturday 27 March and Sunday 28 March. Plus, artist talks with collaborative duo **Wona Bae** and **Charlie Lawler**; **Gabriella Hirst** and Gallery conservator **Paula Dredge**; and Fiona Hall on Saturday 27 March.

Three free artist performances will be presented at Carriageworks on Saturday 27 March including, the premiere of **Sarah Rodigari's** poetic monologue *On Time* exploring the precarity of casual labour in the art world; a live-streamed performance of a monologue describing her six-year engagement with *The National* by artist **Agatha Gothe-Snape** with **Andrew Burrell**; and a series of impromptu performances by artists and audience members in the installation of international collective **A Constructed World**. A highlight of the opening program will be a series of artist talks featuring **Vernon Ah Kee**, **Janet Burchill**, **Isadora Vaughan**, **Lorraine Connelly-Northey**, **Alana Hunt**, **Michelle Nikou**, **Mitch Cairns**, **Sarah Rodigari**, **Darren Sylvester** and **Brendan Van Hek**.

From left to right:

James Tylor, *We Call This Place... Kaurna Yarta*, 2020, engraved daguerreotype photographs, vinyl, installation dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Narrm (Melbourne) © the artist
Photo: AGNSW, Felicity Jenkins

Lauren Berkowitz, *Plastic Topographies* (detail), 2020–21, installation view, *The National 2021: New Australian Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, plastic bottle tops, lids, containers, plants, image courtesy and © the artist, photograph: Anna Kučera

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A special in-conversation event will take place on Sunday 28th March at the MCA with artist **John Wolseley** and **Gurrundul Marawili**, daughter of the late senior Yolŋu artist **Mulkun Wirrpanda**, as they reflect on the artists' important relationship and honour Ms Wirrpanda's life. Plus, hear MCA artists **Maree Clarke**, **Sancintya Mohini Simpson**, and **Sally Smart**, in conversation with MCA Chief Curator, Rachel Kent.

The National 2021 is supported by a dedicated website offering a comprehensive record of the participating artists across all three 2017, 2019 and 2021 iterations. Available resources include artist biographies and texts, curatorial essays, and photographic documentation of all works. For exhibition details and program updates, visit <https://www.the-national.com.au/>.

A selection of high-res images of artworks can be downloaded [here](#).

From left to right:

Alick Tipoti, *Dhungal Madhubal*, 2021 & *Baydham* 2021, fiberglass resin, rope, beads, acrylic, installation dimensions variable Courtesy the artist, *Girelal* 2012, single-block vinyl cut printed in black ink on paper, 120 x 825 cm, Cairns Art Gallery, Queensland, donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Editions Tremblay, 2012 Courtesy the artist and Cairns Art Gallery © the artist Photo: AGNSW, Felicity Jenkins

Darren Sylvester, *Burning candle*, 2021. Installation view *The National 2021: New Australian Art*, Carriageworks. Photo credit Zan Wimberley. Image courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf and Neon Parc © the artist

Art Gallery of NSW
26 March – 5 September 2021

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26 March – 20 June 2021

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26 March – 22 August 2021

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