



# Emily Kam Kngwararray

**Media Kit**

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**The National Gallery of Australia respectfully acknowledges that we are on the Country of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples of the Kamberri/Canberra region. We recognise their continuing connections to Country and culture, and we pay our respect to their Elders, past and present.**

**We respectfully acknowledge all Traditional Custodians of Alhalkher Country and throughout Australia whose art we care for and to whose lands National Gallery exhibitions and staff travel.**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this content contains images and voices of, and references to, deceased people. Where possible, permission has been sought to include their names and images.**



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**“Alhalkerarl anwernekakerrenh. Anwerlarr. Atyenh arrernek mern, mern ayengarl inewelhek—mern annga yanh-lkwer ayengarl inewelhekek. Kam arreyrn ap ra. Kam. An mern anwerlarr-warl inewelhek. Me Kam now.”**

**“Alhalker Country is ours—so is the anwerlarr yam. I paint my plant, the one I am named after—those seeds I am named after. Kam is its name. Kam. I am named after the anwerlarr plant. I am Kam!”**

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY



**“By exploring the full cultural context of her practice, this exhibition fosters understanding and appreciation of one of our most significant Australian artists”**

NICK MITZEVICH, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL GALLERY

The National Gallery of Australia is proud to present *Emily Kam Kngwarray* as our major exhibition for 2023–24. This timely exhibition honours one of Australia’s greatest painters, whose indelible attachment to Alhalker Country, her place of birth, served as the driving force behind her practice.

Encompassing more than 80 paintings, batiks, and works on paper, the exhibition includes key loans from public and private collections. Reconnecting these exceptional works, many of which have been drawn from prominent national and international collections, is essential in the continuing celebration of Kngwarray’s work.

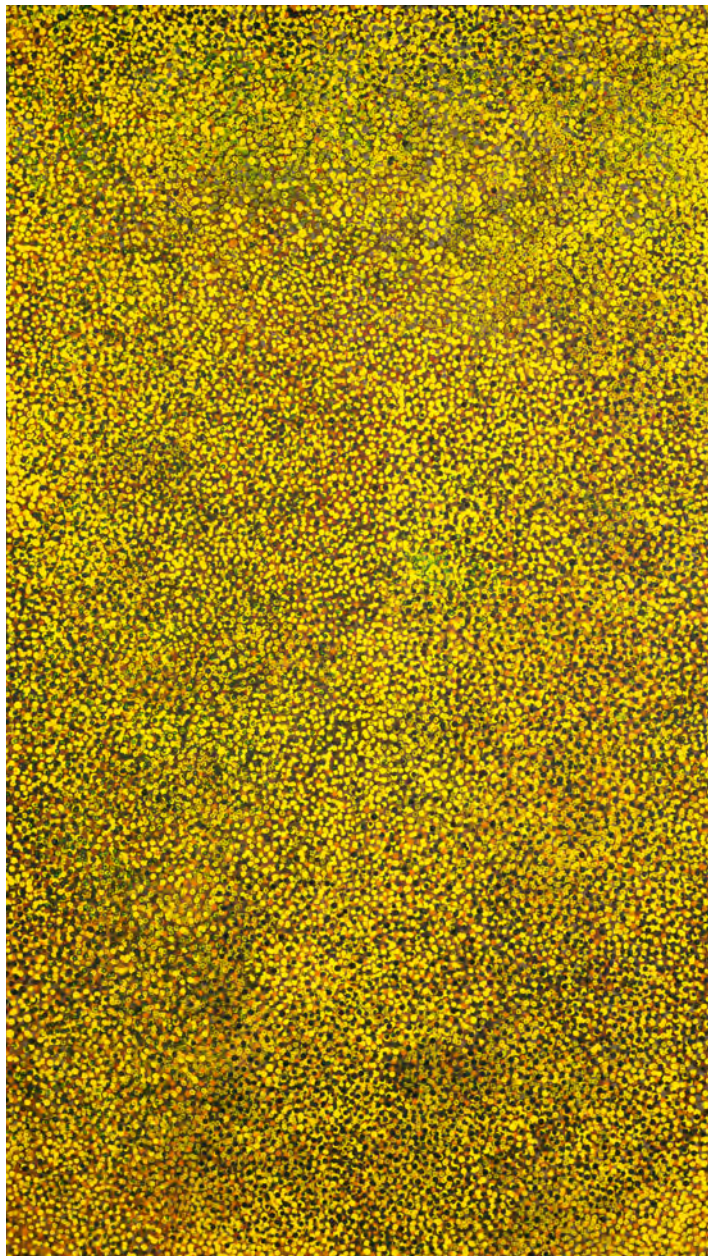
*Emily Kam Kngwarray* highlights the National Gallery of Australia’s sustained commitment to women artists and First Nations cultures. Both are central to our vision as a national institution that inspires creativity, inclusivity, engagement and learning. The exhibition forms part of the Gallery’s Know My Name initiative, which celebrates the work of women artists and is a cornerstone of our Gender Equity Action Plan.

The art of Emily Kam Kngwarray is remarkable for its fusion of colour and gestural brushwork, and its stylistic breadth and diversity. By exploring the full cultural context of her practice, this exhibition fosters understanding and appreciation of one of our most significant Australian artists.

We hope to see you at the Gallery.

Nick Mitzevich  
Director

Nick Mitzevich, Director, in *Emily Kam Kngwarray*, National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, 2023. Photo by: Sam Cooper



**“Mer Alhalkerl, ikwerel inngart. Kel akely anem apetyarr-alpek Utopia station-warl. Mern arlkwerremel akeng-akeng mwantyel itnyerremel, lyarnayt tyerrerretyart, tyap lyarnayt. Mern angwenh, ker kaperl arlkwerrek, ilpangkwer atwerrerl-anemel netyepeyel arlkwerrerl...”**

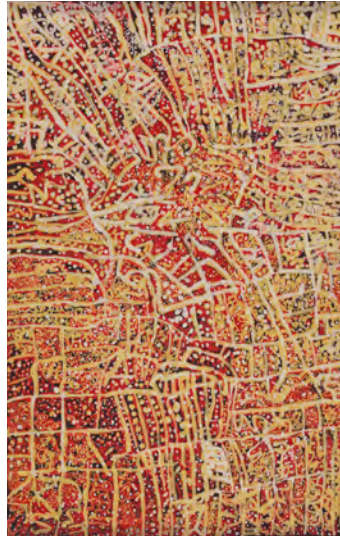
**“I was born at the place called Alhalker, right there. When I was young we all came back to Utopia station. We used to eat bits and pieces of food, carefully digging out the grubs from Acacia bushes. We killed all sorts of lizards, such as geckos and blue-tongues, and ate them in our cubby houses...”**

**EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY**

*Emily Kam Kngwarray* celebrates the timeless art of a pre-eminent Australian artist, one of the world’s most significant contemporary painters to emerge in the 20th century. A senior Anmatyerr woman, Kngwarray devoted her final years to painting, creating works that encapsulate the experience and authority she gained throughout an extraordinary life.

The exhibition will be an extensive survey of Emily Kam Kngwarray’s work, bringing together the most important works of her oeuvre, from early vibrant batiks to her later monumental paintings on canvas. An audio-visual project created in collaboration with artist’s community will feature as part of the exhibition, weaving through the songs of the awely ceremony that informed Kngwarray’s works in soundscapes and audio tours.

*Emily Kam Kngwarray* includes paintings, textiles (batiks) and works on paper drawn from international and national collections. Many never-before-seen works from tightly held private collections are included in this exhibition, along with new acquisitions of the artist’s seminal works in the national collection.



## Untitled

In the National Gallery's untitled work on cotton created in 1981, the distinctive features of Kngwarray's later practice emerges, with intersecting strokes, grids and roundels of varying sizes. While the broader lines are the result of brushwork, the finely detailed dots encircled by lines were made using a canting to apply the wax. This work maps the cultural meridians of Alhalker and neighbouring older 'sibling' country Anangker, employing the metaphor of the pencil yam – and its seeds and seedpods. These are called Kam, Kngwarray's namesake.

Emily Kam Kngwarray, Anmatyerr people, *not titled*, 1981, National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, purchased 1983 © Emily Kam Kngwarray/Copyright Agency, 2023



## Emu woman

Emu Woman is characterised by graphic branch-like forms occasionally ending in a circle that recur around a central rendering of this design. Central to the composition, shallow curves may be discerned which were identified as representing the correct butchering and cooking of the bird according to specific protocols. Emus have their own 'law' and, similarly, the preparation of emu for consumption is governed by a cultural code. Secreted in the array of the utyim (ribs) and arwentey (neck) icons are the wetyeny (feet and tracks) also camouflaged by the skein of dotting that articulates the skeletal motifs within a field of red, black, yellow, and white dots. The fat of the emu is signified by yellow and arntwatherrk (half-cooked meat) is red. Contrariwise to the sequential colouration related to anwerlarr and kam, the emu life cycle begins with darker shades to represent youth and concludes with lighter colours for old age.

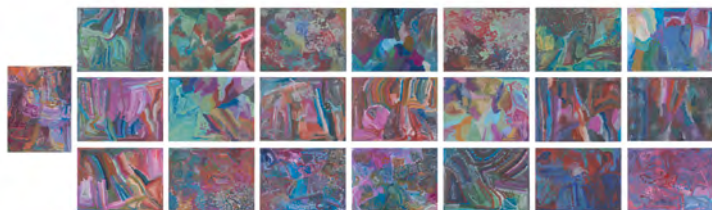
Emily Kam Kngwarray, Anmatyerr people, *Emu woman*, 1988–89, Janet Holmes à Court Collection, Boorloo/Perth © Emily Kam Kngwarray/Copyright Agency, 2023. Image courtesy of Janet Holmes à Court Collection, Boorloo/Perth



## Anwerlarr (pencil yam)

*Anwerlarr (pencil yam)* – (previously titled Anoranngait, – healing plant), 1990 was acquired by the National Gallery of Australia from the first solo exhibition of Kngwarray's works. The painting sees the unerreng (emu bush) image as immersed in swirling pools of dots. The unerreng (emu bush) plant has been described as 'the most sacred, mystical or magical of all Central Australian plants'. It's myriad sacred and secular uses; including for ceremony, medicine, and cooking, reflect the multi-layered meanings of artistic references Kngwarray employed in her batiks and paintings. The plant has personal, cultural, and practical associations specific to the artist and Alhalker and inform the bulk of her creative ideas.

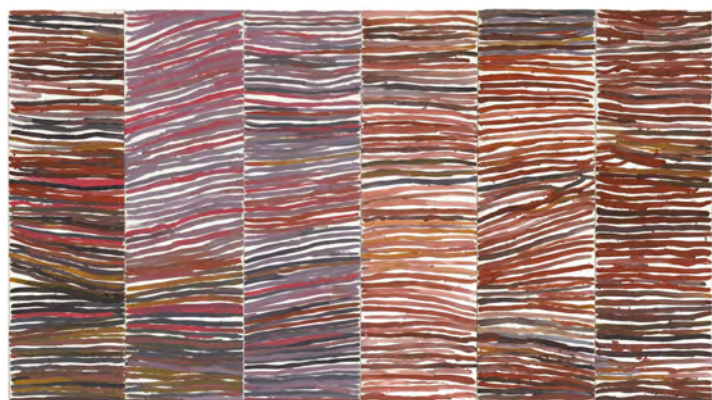
Emily Kam Kngwarray, Anmatyerr people, *Anwerlarr (pencil yam)*, 1990, National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, purchased 1990 © Emily Kam Kngwarray/Copyright Agency, 2023



## The Alhalker suite

In the middle years of the period she primarily devoted to painting, Kngwarray decisively broadened the colour spectrum and techniques in her works of art. The most ambitious of the works from this era is the 22-panel opus entitled *The Alhalker Suite*, 1992. The scale and title of this monumental work clearly implies that it is a kaleidoscopic view of Alhalker. However, from the intimate perspective of its creator, it is perhaps more accurately considered as a multi-faceted portrait of a land – alive and conscious. The family of the artist immediately recognised the suite of paintings as Alhalker and its coalescing and dispersing roundels as representing the different environments of Kngwarray's country: rockfaces and rockholes, grasslands and riparian zones. Through the eyes of Kngwarray's countrywomen, the high-keyed colour palette captures seasonal change and the shifting light over a timeless land.

Emily Kam Kngwarray, Anmatyerr people, *The Alhalker suite*, 1993, National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, purchased 1993 © Emily Kam Kngwarray/Copyright Agency, 2023



## Untitled (Awely)

Kngwarray's linear works on paper and on canvas evoke the rhythms of ceremonial song and dance that are carefully choreographed representations of the Altyerr [UL-CHAIR-RA] or Dreaming. In earlier paintings that feature ceremonial body paint designs, particular colours relate to specific subjects. In these later line paintings Kngwarray exercised a significant degree of creative license. The National Gallery's 6-panel work *Untitled (awely)*, 1994 and the monochromatic work of the same name and year from the Chartwell Collection represent the range of her colour palette. These works were shown posthumously in fluent at the Venice Biennale in 1997, along with other works by Kngwarray – as well as those of Judy Watson and Yvonne Koolmatric.

Emily Kam Kngwarray, Anmatyerr people, *Untitled (awely)*, 1994, National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, purchased 2022 with the assistance of the Foundation Gala Funds 2021 and 2022, in celebration of the National Gallery of Australia's 40th anniversary, 2022 © Emily Kam Kngwarray/Copyright Agency, 2023



## **Emily Kam Ngwarray**

Curator Kelli Cole reflects on Ngwarray's life and shares highlights from the collection.

[Read more](#)

## **Emily Kam Ngwarray: An artistic revolution**

Curators Kelli Cole and Hetti Perkins with Jennifer Green outline the ideas and perspectives that underpin the National Gallery's major exhibition Emily Kam Ngwarray.

[Read more](#)

## **The Seed and the Flower**

Curators Kelli Cole and Hetti Perkins reflect on the National Gallery's acquisition of a major painting by Emily Kam Ngwarray.

[Read more](#)

## **Yan Bani/Always Here**

Curator Tina Baum discusses the richness, diversity and depth of the works of art on display in Ever Present: First Peoples Art of Australia.

[Read more](#)

## **Emily Kam Ngwarray, The Exhibitionists**

An excerpt from the ABC documentary The Exhibitionists, inspired by the National Gallery's Know My Name initiative and produced by Northern Pictures for ABC TV.

[Read more](#)





**KELLI COLE**  
**Curator, Special projects**  
**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art**  
**Warumungu/Luritja peoples**

Kelli Cole is a Warumunga and Luritja woman from central Australia and curator of Special Projects for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Department at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. She has worked on major projects at the Gallery since 2007, including the National Indigenous Art Triennial in 2007 and 2012, 2018, 2021 and assisted in the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander galleries in 2010.



**HETTI PERKINS**  
**Senior Curator at Large**  
**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art**  
**Arrernte/Kalkadoon peoples**

Hetti Perkins is an Arrernte and Kalkadoon curator, cultural adviser and writer. She began her career at the Sydney Gallery of Aboriginal Arts Australia before spending thirteen years as a senior curator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She has curated major survey exhibitions of Indigenous art, including Australia's representation at the Venice Biennale of 1997 and Art + Soul, which became an exhibition, book and television documentary. She has worked with countless federal agencies, arts organisations and local government.



**Join curators Kelli Cole and Hetti Perkins as they discuss the rich and diverse world of Aboriginal Australian artist Emily Kam Ngwarray.**

Over the course of 12 immersive audio stops, the audio experience will explore themes from the intricate beauty of batik and paintings, the cultural importance of Emu Dreaming to the spiritual significance of Alhalker Country.

The focus goes beyond the artworks as they journey into the heart of Utopia, Emily Kam Ngwarray's homeland, and reveal the insightful impact of the art movement that emerged from this extraordinary Country. Listen as they uncover the incredible artistic quality, legacy and cultural impact that Emily Kam Ngwarray's works brings to life.



## Key dates

**2 December 2023–  
28 April 2024**

## Ticket information

<b>Adult</b>	<b>\$26</b>
<b>Concession/Student*</b>	<b>\$23</b>
<b>Members</b>	<b>\$21</b>
<b>Children (5–16 years)</b>	<b>\$11</b>
<b>Children (4 years and under)</b>	<b>Free</b>
<b>Companion**</b>	<b>Free</b>
<b>Families (2 adults and up to 3 children)</b>	<b>\$63</b>
<b>Members season ticket</b>	<b>\$51</b>
<b>Mob Tix***</b>	<b>\$16</b>

Book tickets [here](#)

Publication available for purchase at the Art Store

\* Valid concession types: Government issued concession cards and full time students. List of valid concession types.

\*\* We support the Companion Card program and agree to provide a ticket for the cardholder's companion at no charge when the cardholder's ticket is purchased at the same time. Orders containing Companion tickets without an additional attendee will be cancelled. You may be required to show your Companion Card when visiting the Gallery.

\*\*\* Mob Tix are available for people who identify as being of First Nations descent. Mob Tix support our commitment to equity and access. Two tickets per transaction.



**Escape the everyday and enjoy a light lunch, pre-booked by you, packed fresh by us.**

Choose from a Lunch Box, Savoury Box, Sweet Box or Children's Box. Enjoy your lunch boxes in the Sculpture Garden, surrounded by light and art.

Available alongside your *Emily Kam Kngwarray* exhibition ticket purchase every Friday, Saturday and Sunday throughout the exhibition, until Sunday 28 April 2024.

Servings are for one person. All dietaries and allergens can be catered for with pre-order only. Changes are not available on the day of collection.



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## OPENING WEEKEND

Sat 2 Dec, 10:30am–3:00pm

Join curators Hetti Perkins and Kelli Cole to celebrate the opening of *Emily Kam Kngwarray*.

### 10:30–11.30am:

Welcome to Country and performance by Utopia artists.

### 11:30am–12.30pm (onsite):

Tour the exhibition with the curators, in conversation with visiting artists from Utopia Arts Centre.

### 2pm–3pm (onsite and online):

Hear from the curators about their collaboration with the artist's community to delve into the relationships between Emily Kam Kngwarray's artworks and her extraordinary life as a senior Anmatyerr woman.

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## GUIDED TOURS

Daily, 11.30am and 1pm, 4 Dec 2023–28 Apr 2024

Make the most of your visit with a free, one-hour guided tour of the exhibition with the Gallery's friendly volunteer guides. Bookings are recommended, with limited walk-up spots available on the day. Please note, tours are for a maximum of 15 people and are subject to availability on the day.

For those who can't make a tour, guides will also deliver free daily Art Chats inside the exhibition at 10.30am and 2pm.

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## ART CART FOR EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

Sat and Sun 6 Jan–28 Apr, 10:00am–2:00pm

Free, drop-in, limited capacity

Join National Gallery staff in the exhibition foyer to learn about *Emily Kam Kngwarray's* art and country through games, creative activities, storytelling and play. Children must be accompanied by a parent/carer. This program is designed for children aged 0–8 years.

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## EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY KIDS & FAMILIES ART TRAIL

Collect a free Kids & Families Art Trail when you visit the *Emily Kam Kngwarray* exhibition. Inspired by Emily Kam Kngwarray's life on Alhalker Country, the art trail invites children and their families to look together at Emily Kam Kngwarray's art.

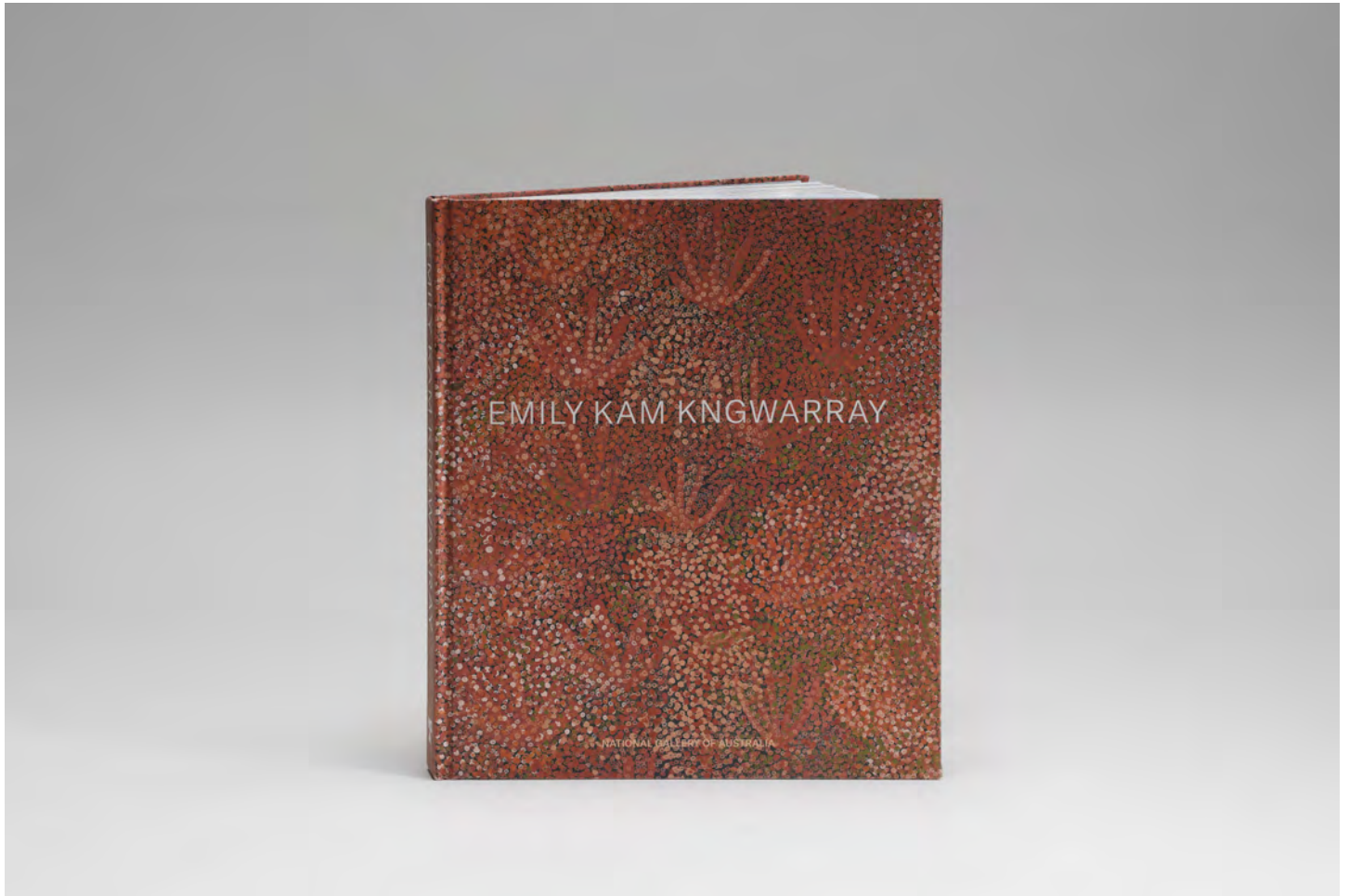
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## NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION CONFERENCE

22–24 Jan, 2024

Book to attend onsite or online.

The National Visual Art Education Conference (NVAEC) brings together teachers, artists, cultural practitioners and thought-leaders to inspire and energise best-practice teaching and learning in the visual arts. Emily Kam Kngwarray co-curator Kelli Cole will deliver the opening keynote at NVAEC, followed by an exclusive walk through of the exhibitions alongside National Gallery Educators for onsite participants.



***Emily Kam Kngwarray***  
**RRP \$89.95**  
**Hardcover (280 x 245mm)/256pp**

To request a review copy, please contact  
[media@nga.gov.au](mailto:media@nga.gov.au)

Emily Kam Kngwarray is a comprehensive and richly illustrated book, published to accompany a major retrospective of the celebrated Australian artist. This publication offers new insights into Emily Kam Kngwarray's life and work, featuring original research and reflections from the artist's community, curators and academics.

Generously illustrated, the publication brings together Kngwarray's most significant works, from early vibrant batiks to her later monumental paintings on canvas. It includes archival images, many of which have never been published, and a visual record of community consultations and visits to Kngwarray's Country.

Emily Kam Ngwarray has been made possible through the continued generosity of individual and corporate supporters.

## STRATEGIC PARTNER



## INDIGENOUS ART PARTNER



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AND HELLEN GANNON

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The National Gallery of Australia acknowledges Christopher Hodges and Helen Eager in advancing Emily Kam Ngwarray's artistic legacy over the past three decades, and for their support of this project.



Read the [Media Release](#)  
Download images and video from the [Media Centre](#)  
Visit the exhibition [web page](#)

To request a review copy of the publication,  
please contact [media@nga.gov.au](mailto:media@nga.gov.au)

#### **Editor's Note**

Spelling of Emily Kam Ngwarray: In 2010, the Central & Eastern Anmatyerr to English dictionary was published following extensive consultation and research with the community. The National Gallery of Australia has adopted this orthography for its collection and programs.

#### **Contacts**

Fiona McQueenie  
Head of Communications  
+61 6240 6786  
[fiona.mcqueenie@nga.gov.au](mailto:fiona.mcqueenie@nga.gov.au)

Kirsty Noffke  
Communications Manager  
+61 401 090 089  
[kirsty.noffke@nga.gov.au](mailto:kirsty.noffke@nga.gov.au)

Madison Du  
Communications Officer  
+61 476 781 662  
[madison.du@nga.gov.au](mailto:madison.du@nga.gov.au)