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Wednesday 1 September 2021



Tarnanthi to feature 1400 artists in festival of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art

In the Kaurna language of the Adelaide Plains, tarnanthi means ‘to rise, come forth, spring up or appear’. It heralds the animation of new ideas and new beginnings such as the rising sun, a universal metaphor across cultures for the agency of imagination.

Adelaide, Australia: Tarnanthi, the Art Gallery of South Australia’s festival of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, will feature the work of more than 1400 artists in exhibitions and events at AGSA and venues across South Australia from 15 October 2021 – 30 January 2022, and be launched with a powerful livestreamed performance by electronic duo Electric Fields with Antara singers and Tjarutja Dance Theatre Collective.

Tarnanthi Artistic Director Nici Cumpston OAM says, ‘Storytelling lies at the heart of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists’ work, and Tarnanthi provides us with an occasion to listen. If we give them our fullest attention, they can transport us across time and country, into different ways of seeing and understanding. They represent a generous gift and it is an honour to work with these artists to present their stories at this year’s Tarnanthi.’

Participating artists, aged from 13 to 89-years, from the length and breadth of Australia, have created new works of art for Tarnanthi. Artists reinvigorate culture through a range of mediums – from photography, weaving and sculpture to painting, fashion, film and immersive installations.

At AGSA, Tarnanthi will feature works by artists employing maverick materialities, such as John Prince Siddon’s ‘psychedelic’ paintings on canvas, bullock skulls and kangaroo pelts that deliver critical commentaries on environmental, social and political issues. Desert artists from Irrunytju, at the intersection of the WA, SA and NT borders, share their stories on salvaged and painted car parts in an exhibition titled *Mutaka* (motor car). Yankunytjatjara artist Kaylene Whiskey merges pop culture and traditional knowledge in her witty painting on a found road sign and moving image works, while, from the northern Kimberley region, Angelina Karadada Boona’s contemporary art practice brings ancient ideas to a new generation through her *Wandjina Emerging* works.

This year sees a re-emergence of painting as a site for inventive storytelling. 2021 NATSIAA winner Timo Hogan will present a colossal triptych of his homeland, Lake Baker, in the Great Victoria Desert

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of WA. Katjarra Butler's gestural paintings depict a sweeping journey into the spiritual terrain of the Western Desert, while Yankunytjatjara artist Alec Baker's suite of paintings express the essence of his 90 years living on Country. Journeying north to Arnhem Land, Djerrkṅu Yunupijū's paintings tell the story of her spiritual conception as a mermaid, while the tropical deluge of colours that flood Gwenneth Blitner's canvases joyfully bring to life her country in Ngukurr, the Gulf Country of the NT.

Also at AGSA, Gail Mabo recalibrates traditional navigational charts used by Torres Strait Islander people in her bamboo installation *Tagai* and pays homage to her famous late father Eddie Koiki Mabo while, from Tasmania, Julie Gough's unsettling installation converses with colonial works from AGSA's collection.

Artists from Iltja Ntjarra and the community of Ntaria (Hermannsburg), west of Alice Springs, respond to an important historical moment – the life-saving construction of a water pipeline in the 1930s. Celebrating the continued significance of water to life and culture, the project takes its visual cues from a boomerang painted by Albert Namatjira depicting the laying of the Kupriya Springs pipeline.

Rhana Devenport ONZM, AGSA Director says, 'Tarnanthi once again demonstrates itself to be a charged and porous space for contemporary expressions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Visitors can experience the potency and vitality of culture in Tarnanthi through close to 60 projects at AGSA and across the state in a wealth of exhibitions.'

From the heart of Tarnanthi at AGSA, the festival stretches across South Australia with partner venues presenting more than 30 exhibitions, from Port Augusta to McLaren Vale. Presented by Country Arts, *Wild Dog* reveals the storyline of our most misunderstood cultural symbol, the dingo, in an immersive theatrical presentation by Jacob Boehme and artistic associates. APY Gallery presents *Ngura Pulka – Epic Country*, which will transport visitors to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in an augmented-reality experience featuring artist Matjangka Norris.

Tarnanthi 2021 will launch on Thursday 14 October with a livestreamed performance by award-winning Electric Fields presenting their contemporised versions of two traditional *inmas* (cultural song and dance), and featuring Antara and SA's Tjarutja Dance Theatre Collective.

In addition, the popular Tarnanthi Art Fair is going digital in 2021, giving audiences across Australia and the globe, the opportunity to buy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art online. Since 2015, more than \$4 million of art has been sold at the Tarnanthi Art Fair, with all proceeds going directly to the artists and their community-run art centres.

'An opening weekend highlight is always the panpapanpalya ideas forum, where visitors can hear important conversations from artists - this too will be available online so that audiences can experience the power of Tarnanthi wherever they are,' Devenport says.

Senior Kaurna man Mickey Kumatpi O'Brien says, 'The Tarnanthi festival is our opportunity to experience the wonders of culture in many spaces and places. And it is through our observing eyes, our listening and inquiring ears, and our doing bodies, we will emerge as a part of the Tarnanthi festival as one, and to rise together.'

Dr Jennifer Purdie, BHP Asset President Olympic Dam, says 'BHP has supported Tarnanthi from the very beginning – launching the partnership together in 2015. Even after just six years, the benefits from Tarnanthi promise to span generations. Tarnanthi's vision aligns with our priorities at BHP and through these important partnerships we can successfully contribute to the community around us in

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a sustainable way. We are proud of what this important cultural celebration has achieved – and will continue to deliver – in gallery spaces, in classrooms and on Country.’

Hon. Steven Marshall, MP, Premier of South Australia says, ‘At a time when travel opportunities have been limited, Tarnanthi carries us far away – at home. It takes us into the cultural richness of the many nations of our nation. I am pleased that South Australia is home to this inspiring festival that has generated close to \$100 million in economic investment for our state.’

Tarnanthi: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art is presented by AGSA in partnership with BHP and with support from the Government of South Australia. For full program details, visit agsa.sa.gov.au.

Tarnanthi in 2021 will be presented at part of the state’s Bloom Spring Campaign, a new initiative by the State Government and South Australian Tourism Commission.

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KEY DATES Tarnanthi 2021 Festival Season | 15 October 2021 – 30 January 2022
Tarnanthi Art Fair | Online | 15 – 18 October
Media Preview | AGSA | 14 October, 11am
Official Launch | Livestream | 14 October, 6pm
Panpapanpalya | AGSA and online | 15 October
Artist Talks | AGSA and online | 16 – 17 October

IMAGES https://files.artgallery.sa.gov.au/ftp/marketing/MEDIA/2021/Tarnanthi_2021_Images.zip

VIDEO youtube.com/playlist?list=PLanKs12eypov-REBapE5MAJhS-rr3Dylc

MEDIA PORTAL agsa.sa.gov.au/about/media/tarnanthi-2021-media-portal/

SOCIAL MEDIA @agsa.adelaide @tarnanthi #tarnanthi

TARNANTHI 2015 - 2020 AT A GLANCE

- 1.4 million people have attended Tarnanthi exhibitions and events
- 4,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists have been included in exhibitions, art fairs and events
- More than \$4 million of art has been sold at the Tarnanthi Art Fair, with all money going directly to artists and communities
- \$96.8 million in economic expenditure has been generated in South Australia since 2015 because of Tarnanthi

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- International recognition for APY artists has soared through Tarnanthi, exemplified by the acquisition of the 1500-spear installation work *Kuḷaṭa Tjuṭa: Kupa Kupa* by Swiss gallery Fondation Opale and by the 2020-21 exhibition *Kuḷaṭa Tjuṭa* shown in Rennes, Brittany, and Le Havre, Normandy
- Over 27,000 students and teachers have attended Tarnanthi exhibitions, and tens of thousands more have benefited from AGSA's pioneering education program and book, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art in the Classroom*, which equips teachers to integrate First Nations art, culture and histories into daily classroom learning.

About Nici Cumpston OAM

Tarnanthi is led by Artistic Director Nici Cumpston OAM, the Art Gallery of South Australia's Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art. Nici is a proud Barkandji person from the Barka, the Darling River in far west New South Wales, who is also of Afghan, English and Irish heritage. Her career has been characterised by working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to bring new work and new ways of seeing to wider audiences.

Header image caption: Kaylene Whiskey, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory 1976, *Seven Sistas Sign*, 2021, Indulkana, South Australia, water-based enamel paint on SA Tourist Attraction road sign, 75.0 x 270.0 x 3.0 cm, © Kaylene Whiskey/Iwantja Arts, photo: Saul Steed.