

Education Resource

VCE Art Creative Practice and Art Making and Exhibiting

Nyini Woka

MY PLACE

Featuring artworks from the
Carrillo and Ziyin Gantner Collection
of Australian Indigenous Art

Exhibition Dates
14 February – 3 May 2026

sam
Shepparton Art Museum

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How to use this Education Kit

This Education Kit supports VCE Art Creative Practice and Art Making and Exhibiting students as they engage with the exhibition *Nyini Woka (My Place)*. Students will gain an understanding of the curatorial intentions and how these are expressed through exhibition design. The Education Kit also explores the cultural significance of bark paintings, the artistic practice of Djalu Gurruwiwi, and the preventative conservation measures used to care for his bark painting *Djirrkarrri (Bol'nu)*.

The Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) is on the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta people. The SAM building, and art museum within it, is located close to the Goulburn River, which is known as Kaiela to the Yorta Yorta.

SAM recognises the Yorta Yorta as the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of the lands and water of the country upon which SAM is built, and that sovereignty of this land has never been ceded

Nyini Woka (My Place) – an introduction

**Featuring artworks from the Carrillo and Ziyin Gantner
Collection of Australian Indigenous Art**

**Shepparton Art Museum
14 February – 3 May 2026**

Nyini Woka (My Place) begins with a resonant question: Where do you stand, and what stories stand with you?

Bringing together artworks from the Carrillo and Ziyin Gantner Collection of Australian Indigenous Art and recent works by contemporary Yorta Yorta artists, *Nyini Woka (My Place)* explores the dialogue that emerges between Yorta Yorta stories of *woka* (Country), *nanyak* (ways of being, seeing, doing, knowing) and broader First Nations perspectives.

Spanning an array of creative practices and stories from across the vast continent, *Nyini Woka (My Place)* reveals threads of belonging, resistance, humour, memory and strength, affirming living culture and community voices while extending an invitation to visitors to consider what it means to be here, today, on Yorta Yorta Country and beyond.

Curators

Belinda Briggs, Curator – Indigenous, SAM
Chloe Jones, Curator & Gallery Manager, Kaiela Artsr

Exhibiting Artists

Callistus Babui (Tiwi)	Naomi Hobson (Kaantju/ Umpila)	Trevor Nickolls (Ngarrindjeri)
Amy Briggs (Yorta Yorta)	Gertie Huddleston (Marra)	Lena Nyadbi (Gija)
Don Briggs (Yorta Yorta)	Kathy Inkamala (Western Aranda)	Kathleen Petyarre (Anmatyerre/ Alyawarr)
Nellie Ngampa Coulthard (Yankunytjatjara)	Vanessa Inkamala (Western Aranda)	Evelyn Pilakui (Tiwi)
Julie Dowling (Badimaya)	Wally Mandarrk (Dangbon/ Dalabon)	Laurel Robinson (Yorta Yorta/ Wurundjeri)
Penny Evans (K/Gamilaroi)	Danie Mellor (Ndgadjon/Mamu)	Lily Sandover Kngwarreye (Alyawarr)
Angelina George (Marra/ Wardarang)	George Mung Mung (Gija)	Lyn Thorpe (Yorta Yorta)
Jan Griffiths (Miriwoong/ Ngarinyman)	Albert Namatjira (Arrernte)	Francis Tipakalippa (Tiwi)
Djalu Gurruwiwi (Galpu)	Ewald Namatjira (Arrernte)	Uta Uta Tjangala (Pintupi)
Carlene Thompson (Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara)	Maurice Namatjira (Arrernte)	Judy Watson (Waanyi)
Cynthia Hardie (Yorta Yorta)	Vincent Namatjira (Western Arrernte)	Tommy Watson (Pitjantjatjara)

Nyini Woka (My Place): Exhibition Design Considerations

**Nick Baylart**

Exhibition Manager,
Shepparton Art Museum

Education

Bachelor of Arts – Honours
(Art History)

Master of Cultural Materials
Conservation

Nick designs the museum's exhibitions, creating engaging and visually compelling displays that effectively communicate the curators' intentions while enhancing the visitor experience. He manages the logistics of installing artworks, ensuring their safety and integrity throughout the process.

The following Q&A explores design and display aspects of *Nyini Woka (My Place)* exhibition.

Q: What key design choices were made to reflect the curators' intentions for this exhibition?

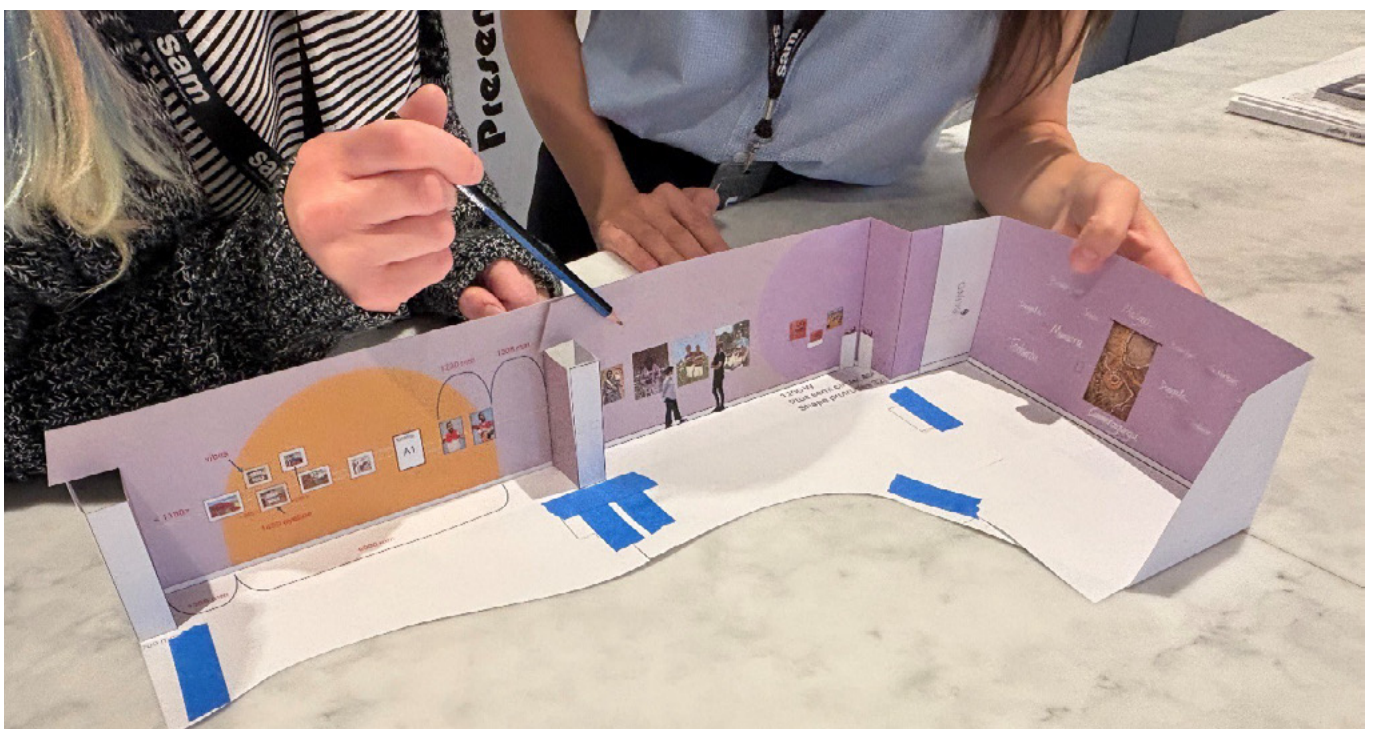
NB: The curatorial approach was to frame the artworks within the context of Yorta Yorta place and language, with a major artwork by Lyn Thorpe functioning as a starting point and anchor for the show. Lyn hand wrote locally significant words and

place names that we had scanned and produced as wall treatments, embedding the importance of the words and their meanings throughout the exhibition. The design of the exhibition was intended to be clean and unified, with simple lines dividing the room using wall colours drawn from key artworks. For example, the curved lines you see on the walls echo the forms in Trevor Nickolls' *Kimberley under the Stars*, undated, suggesting sandhills and the sun at both dusk and dawn.

Q: What approaches and tools did you use to visualise your design ideas prior to installation?

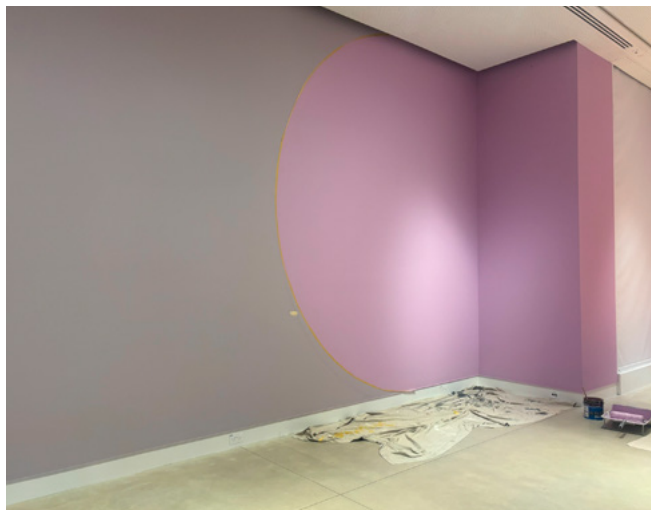
NB: In the initial planning stages, the curatorial team created vision boards with ideas, colour schemes, display solutions, and images from other exhibitions that inspired us. As with most exhibitions, these ideas evolved as final artworks were selected and ideas became more concrete through discussions with the curatorial team.

Images and measurements of the artwork were taken, and a digital mockup was made that let us move the artworks around the exhibition space virtually. This allowed me to experiment with artwork placement, adjusting the layout until the arrangement aligned with the curatorial intention. These plans were printed on paper and folded into 3D models, which helped the team assess spacing, sightlines, and the placement of didactics and labels.



SAM Collection and Exhibition staff looking over a 3D model plan of *Nyini Woka (My Place)* partial layout.

Nyini Woka (My Place): Exhibition Design Considerations



Two shades of purple paint applied to the wall in a curved form.

Can you discuss the reasoning behind one of the aesthetic and structural choices in the design?

NB: In panning the exhibition, it was important to create a cohesive feel to the space, given the works are drawn from all over Australia in many different styles and mediums. The exhibition features four major colours – two shades of purple, a golden orange, and a dark brown – which appear frequently across many of the artworks. The exhibition includes many small works, so curved lines were introduced to divide walls into smaller areas and create intimate viewing spaces, rather than large plain walls where small works might be lost. These divisions help anchor smaller groupings of works and guide visitors to spend more time with each thematic grouping.

We incorporated temporary walls to create additional hanging space for artworks and to shape the visitor's journey through the exhibition. They guide movement along a set pathway, controlling the order in which artworks are encountered and allowing the curator's narrative to unfold.

Were there any design choices that had to be adapted or omitted during the planning process? What influenced these decisions?

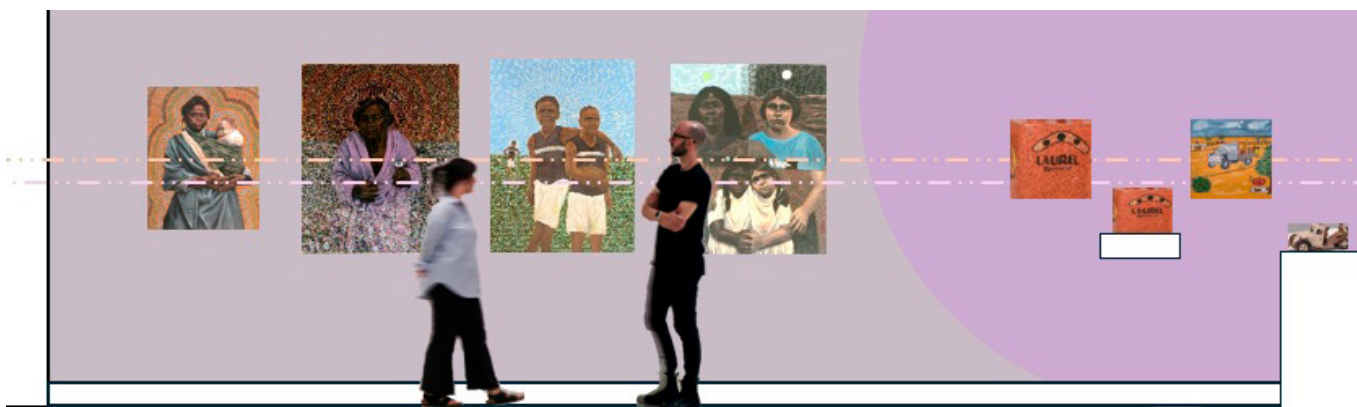
NB: Early in the design process I proposed a literal "thread" – a bold painted line connecting the spaces and unifying the exhibition. However, the design evolved to feature gentle wall colours and the use of local Yorta Yorta language, making the "thread" unnecessary. The exhibition feels stronger without it. The wider curatorial team always refines exhibition concepts and not every idea makes it through to the finish line.

How did you consider the audience's experience when planning the design?

NB: At SAM we always prioritise accessibility and visitor safety. Generous space is provided for wheelchair and mobility aid users, and artwork labels are consistently hung at 1.4 metres, making them predictable and accessible throughout the building. Most artworks are hung along a shared eye line of 1.55 metres, with some variation to create a dynamic visual experience, while avoiding highly detailed artworks being placed too high. These accessibility and safety needs were all considered when designing the layout for *Nyini Woka (My Place)*.

Were there any artworks that posed challenges with regards to the design?

NB: The bark paintings and Tiwi poles needed special consideration because of their fragile surfaces which are easily damaged by touch. We developed a design where they would be protected by a raised trough, allowing visitors to safely appreciate them without the risk of anyone bumping into them. Penny Evans' *Mussel Man 1, 2, and 3*, 2018, needed to be displayed low to the ground per the artist's request, which increased the risk of visitors accidentally stepping on them. Placing them in a nook makes it very difficult for visitors to interfere with the works.



Digital exhibition elevation plan for *Nyini Woka (My Place)*

Introduction to Bark Paintings



Installation view of *Nyini Woka (My Place)* exhibition. Photo: Leon Schoots

Among the oldest and most enduring art forms, bark paintings carry deep cultural significance for First Nations peoples, often depicting ancestral figures and creation stories, and preserving and sharing knowledge about Country for generations.

The process of producing these paintings begins with the preparation of the inner bark of the *Eucalyptus tetrodonta* (stringybark tree), a practice traditionally associated with First Nations artists in Arnhem Land. The bark is stripped during the wet season, and the rough outer layer is removed. The inner bark is placed over fire where it will gradually unfurl, after which it will be laid flat and weighted down, often with stones, creating a smooth surface suitable for painting.

Artists prepare pigments by grinding natural materials such as ochres, clays, and charcoal into powder, then mixing them with water. In recent decades, some artists have also incorporated synthetic pigments and PVA as a binder, expanding the range of colours and finishes available.

The visual language of bark paintings often reflects the Country from which the artist comes or where the artwork is created. Some artists paint intricate geometric patterns in response to clan designs, while others depict figurative imagery inspired by ancestral figures, and some combine both approaches. Fine cross-hatching, known as *rarrk*, is a technique traditionally achieved using a paintbrush made from a few strands of human hair.¹ *Marwat* is the term used and literally translates to 'hair of the head'.²

These techniques and their cultural significance inform how bark paintings are cared for and presented in the exhibition, ensuring visitors can appreciate both their visual impact as well as the stories and meanings they embody.

1. J. Isaacs, *Speaking with colour – Longing for Country: The Collection of Carrillo and Ziyin Gantner*, Shepparton Art Museum, Shepparton, 2013, pp51

2 "Marwat Brush. Eastern Arnhem land, Northern Territory, Australia, 1935," Museums Victoria, accessed 8 January 2026 <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/156011>,

Artwork in Focus



Djal Gurruwiwi, *Djirrkari (Bol'ngu)*, 1997, earth pigments and synthetic polymer binder on bark, 265cm x 107cm, Shepparton Art Museum Collection, donated by Carrillo Gantner AC and Ziyin Gantner.. Photo: Leon Schoots

Djal Gurruwiwi *Galpu*

b. 1940 Wirriku Island, NT
d. 2022 Arnhem Land

Djal Gurruwiwi (b. circa 1935, d. 2022) was a respected leader of the Galpu clan within the Dhuwa moiety of the Yolngu people in north-east Arnhem Land. Foremost recognised as a master of the Yidaki (didgeridoo), Djal Gurruwiwi was also known for his bark paintings, which often depicted his Country, Wirriku Island, and ancestral beings such as Bol'ngu.

REFLECT & RESPOND

What is the significance of Bol'ngu in Yolngu culture, and how is this ancestral being represented by other Aboriginal Artists?

There are great online resources to assist your research. The National Gallery of Victoria is a reliable online resource to start your research:

- [Shark People: Djapu painting and the Miny'tji Buku Larrngay Collection | NGV](#)
- [Nonggirnga Marawili Thunderman raining down | NGV](#)

Research Wirriku Island and the history and traditions of First Nations Peoples on Country.

Does this research change your first interpretation of *Djirrkari (Bol'ngu)*?

Write down a list of adjectives for each of the following art elements:

- Colour
- Line
- Shape

Consider why the artist painted on bark and used earth pigments when canvas and synthetic paints were available.

Do you think Djal Gurruwiwi painted this work using a marwat?

How do the use of materials and techniques contribute to the meaning of the artwork?

Write a didactic for this artwork, incorporating your responses from the previous prompts.

Traditionally, bark paintings are created using natural pigments found on Country, which limits colour choices. Experiment painting with a restricted palette.

Reflect on the outcomes in your visual diary.

Nyini Woka (My Place): Preventative Conservation Practices



Jen Parker

Exhibitions & Collections
Officer

Education

Bachelor of Fine Arts

Masters of Cultural Materials
Conservation

With a background in conservation Jen is responsible for caring for the museum's collection by implementing preservation techniques, ensuring proper display conditions, and safeguarding the artworks for future generations to experience and appreciate.

The following Q&A highlights the conservation methods and preventive care practices applied to *Djirrkarri (Bol'ŋu)* by Djalu Gurruwiwi.

Q: Which materials and unique physical features of *Djirrkarri (Bol'ŋu)*, 1997, made it particularly fragile or sensitive?

JP: Like most bark paintings *Djirrkarri (Bol'ŋu)* presented conservation challenges. As an organic material, bark is highly sensitive to environmental conditions; fluctuations in temperature and humidity can cause it to expand and contract, leading to cracking or splitting, as well as flaking of the pigment. Staining and discolouration resulting from mould growth are also common issues affecting bark paintings.

Additionally, bark paintings are more susceptible to pests. Wood-burrowing beetles are often attracted to bark, while cockroaches may be drawn to the sweetness of tree sap, if it has been used as a binder. In this instance, artist Djalu Gurruwiwi has used a synthetic polymer, reducing the likelihood of a cockroach infestation.

Q: Was there any conservation work that needed to be done to the bark painting before it came into the museum?

JP: When artworks are donated from personal collections, they are often stored or displayed in domestic environments that rarely meet museum standards, increasing the risk of exposure to dust, temperature fluctuations, and pests.

To mitigate the risk of introducing pests into our collection, *Djirrkarri (Bol'ŋu)* was frozen for 28 days at a temperature of -25° C to eliminate any potential infestations. As the bark painting was too large for SAM's freezer, it was sent to Melbourne Museum for treatment.

The original mount was too tight, placing pressure on the bark. A new mount was manufactured to provide adequate support while allowing for natural movement that occurs with wood.

Q: What display considerations were made to ensure the artworks safety?

JP: The artwork's material and structural properties were carefully considered when planning the display, along with visitor engagement and navigation. As an organic material, the artwork was particularly sensitive to light, which was a determining factor in grouping the bark paintings together. Lighting was set at 50 lux, and the artwork was placed in an area of the gallery space without natural light.

Djirrkarri (Bol'ŋu) was displayed on the wall using its custom mounting system. Anticipating visitor curiosity, a raised trough was installed as a physical barrier and a 'Do No Touch' sign was placed as a visual reminder. A stable temperature of 20 degrees Celsius and relative humidity of 40-60% was maintained and monitored by our HVAC system to avoid mould growth and rapid expansion and contraction of the bark.

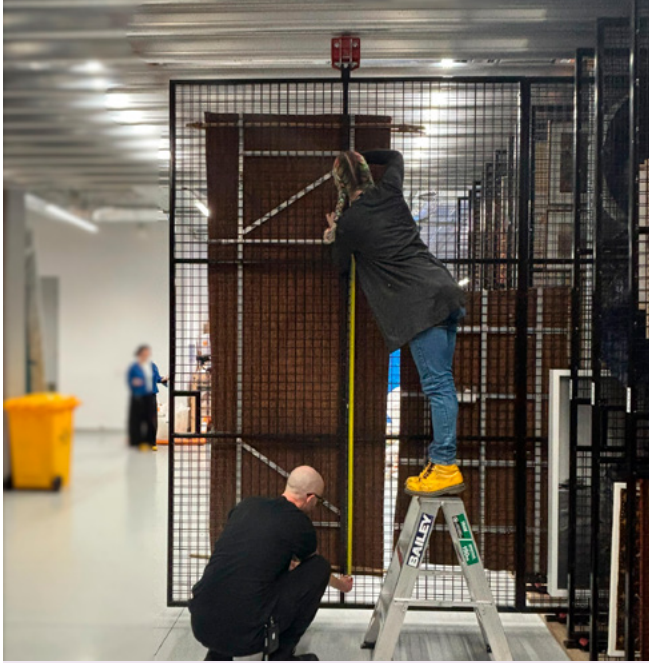
Q: How did you approach installation. What handling techniques or equipment were required to safely install the bark painting?

Once the floorplan had been finalised, the Exhibitions Manager created an installation schedule outlining the sequence artwork will be installed, required personnel, and necessary equipment. A pre-installation briefing ensured all staff understood their roles and the handling requirements for the artwork.

To minimise handling of *Djirrkarri (Bol'ŋu)* and reduce the risk of damage, a wooden stretcher, padded with Dacron and covered in Tyvek to support the artworks curved form, was constructed and used to safely transport it from the collection store to the exhibition space. Nitrile gloves were worn when handling the artwork and when possible, it was handled by its mount reducing contact with the bark itself.

Installation of *Djirrkarri (Bol'nu)*

The following images document the display preparation, movement and installation of *Djirrkarri (Bol'nu)* (1997).



1. Installers in the museum collection store, measuring the bark painting and its hanging mount



2. Measuring and marking the locations for screws on the gallery wall to securely hang the bark painting via its mount



3. Drilling a pilot hole into the wall, with a paper envelope taped beneath the drill point to catch debris and keep the gallery space clean.



4. Padded stretcher placed into position and installers discussing correct handling procedures and coordination of movement.

Installation of *Djirrkarri* (Bol'nu)



5. Four installers supporting and lifting the bark painting off the painting storage rack, while two others stand positioned and ready to take over from the installers on the ladder.



6. The two offside installers taking over the handling as the bark painting is lowered onto the padded stretcher.



7. Bark painting gently being lowered onto the padded stretcher.



8. Two installers carrying the padded stretcher through the collection store. Other installers tasked with clearing access route (opening doors and gaining access to the goods lift).

Installation of *Djirrkarri* (Boḻ'ṇu)



9. Padded stretcher being carried from the Goods Lift through to SAM Level 1 landing.



10. Installers lowering the padded stretcher in the exhibition space in front of display location



11. Installers in position and ready to lift bark painting off padded stretcher.



12. Installers on ladders take over handling of bark painting.

Installation of *Djirrkarri (Bol'nyu)*



- 13.** Installers no longer handling bark painting remain close by and ready to assist if required.



- 14.** Bark painting being secured onto the wall screws via its mount.

How is the artwork stored when not on display?

JP: When not on display, the artwork is stored in our climate-controlled collection store, where it is hung from its mount on one of the retractable painting racks. In this environment, *Djirrkarri (Bol'nyu)* is less exposed to dust and debris due to restricted access, and light exposure is minimised through the use of a motion-activated lighting system.

REFLECT & RESPOND

What are the underlying themes of the exhibition?

Identify any thematic groupings within the exhibition.

What exhibition design choices support the exhibition theme(s) and thematic groupings?

List one aesthetic and one structural design choice.

What aspect of the exhibition design was influenced by preventative conservation practices?

Select an artwork from the SAM Collection to include in *Nyini Woka (My Place)*.

Undertake research on the artwork and artist(s) and write an object label and a didactic label to accompany the artwork.

Glossary

Aesthetic

A branch of thought concerned with the nature of beauty and what is pleasing to the mind or eyes.

Collection

Artworks or objects owned and cared for by a cultural institution.

Conservation

The protection and preservation of objects with cultural heritage relevance.

Curator

A specialist responsible for selecting, researching, caring for, and interpreting artworks or objects within a museum, gallery, or other cultural institution.

Curatorial intention/rationale

The reasoning and conceptual framework guiding the selection and arrangement of an exhibition.

Dacron

A durable polyester fibre used in museums for object supports, mounts, or padding.

Datum line

An exhibition design feature creating the perception of a lower wall and a more intimate space through a painted band along the top of the wall(s).

Didactic

Informative wall labels providing context to help visitors understand the artworks and the themes of an exhibition.

Elevation

A scaled representation of a wall or vertical surface showing the placement of artworks, labels, and display elements.

Exhibition design

The practice of planning and arranging the layout, display, and visitor experience of an exhibition, including the presentation of artworks, objects, text, lighting, and spatial flow.

Object/Artwork label

A text panel placed next to an individual artwork or object in an exhibition, providing key information such as title, creator, date, medium, dimensions, and provenance, and sometimes including biographical information about the artist.

Exhibition theme

The central concept or subject unifying and guiding the selection and presentation of artworks or objects in an exhibition.

Floorplan

A scaled aerial view showing the layout of artworks, display structures and furnishings within an exhibition space.

HVAC

Acronym for heating, ventilation and air conditioning; systems controlling the ambient environment (temperature, humidity, air flow and air filtering) in a space.

Lux

Measurement of luminous flux per unit area; how much light falls within a square meter.

Marwat

A fine paintbrush made from human hair, traditionally used by Aboriginal artists from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory to create delicate lines in bark painting.

Preventative conservation

Measures taken to prevent or minimise damage to artworks or objects.

Rarrk

A traditional Aboriginal painting technique of fine cross-hatching, particularly associated with Arnhem Land artists.

Sightline

The visual line of sight from a visitor's viewpoint, determining which artworks or objects are visible and how they are experienced within the exhibition.

Structural

Relating to the physical supports that hold or display artworks or objects, such as additional walls, platforms and plinths.

Thematic grouping

The arrangement of artworks or objects based on a shared idea, concept, or theme.

Trough

In this context, a trough is a raised platform in front of an artwork that creates distance and discourages audience interference.

Tyvek

A type of high-density polyethylene fibre fabric which is commonly used as a non-abrasive, dust proof barrier to package artworks.

Carrillo and Ziyin Gantner Australian Indigenous Art Collection

Nyini Woka (My Place) features artworks from the Carrillo and Ziyin Gantner collection of Australian Indigenous Art. The collection is an ongoing cultural gift, that continues to enrich SAM's collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art from across the continent.

Bibliography

J. Isaacs, *Speaking with Colour – Longing for Country: The Collection of Carrillo and Ziyin Gantner*, Shepparton Art Museum, 2013.

Museums Victoria, "Marwat Brush. Eastern Arnhem land, Northern Territory, Australia, 1935." Accessed 8, January 2026. <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/156011>.

Open 6 days, closed Tuesdays, 10am – 4pm
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