

POTTER
MUSEUM
OF ART

65000 YEARS

A
Short
History
of
Australian
Art

EDUCATION PROGRAM REPORT



Ngarrngga
to know, to hear, to understand

University
of Melbourne
Museums and
Collections



Support for the education program for 65,000 Years – A Short History of Australian Art was generously provided by Peter and Ruth McMullin.

Acknowledgement of Country

Ngarrngga acknowledges and pay respects to the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which we work, learn and live. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.



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Research Team

Professor Melitta Hogarth is the Director of Ngarrngga and Professor of Indigenous Education at the Faculty of Education. Her research focuses on the translation of policy to practice, particularly in the area of Indigenous education. Integral to this research is investigating how to best support educators to engage with Indigenous Knowledges and peoples to ensure the nation-building aspirations of curriculum and policy is possible.



Associate Professor Abbey MacDonald is a leading Australian scholar in conceptualising professional practices of education resource creation, working to articulate the methodological, philosophical, positional, and motivational factors that underpin this work. Her research, practice and praxis for conceptualising education resource creation is informed by extensive and longstanding collaborations with creative, cultural and education practitioners in Gallery, Library, Archive and Museum settings. She is nationally sought after and internationally recognised as a leader in her approaches to this work.



Introduction

From the 30th May through to the 23rd November 2025, the hallmark exhibition, *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* examined the rise to prominence of First Peoples' art across Australia. In the face of a brutal history of colonisation, the exhibition demonstrated the importance of Indigenous knowledge and agency.

Housed at the Potter Museum of Art in Narrm (Melbourne), Australia, the exhibition featured more than 400 artworks, including important public and private loans and new commissions. The works of art and cultural objects displayed in *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* did not sit in isolation. The curatorial team made up of Distinguished Laureate Professor Marcia Langton AO, Senior Curator Judith Ryan AM and Associate Curator Shanyssa McConville, in consultation with Indigenous custodians, carefully considered the placement of these works of art and cultural objects in situ, curating the relationships and conversations created between them.



Signage, Image credit: Ngarrngga

The works of art and cultural objects were curated into distinctive sections through themes such as First Encounters and Frontier Wars, to Resistance and Innovation, to showcasing the Art of Arnhem Land, Groote Eylandt and the Kimberley.

The education program for *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* was developed in collaboration between Ngarrngga, the University of Melbourne's Museums and Collections team, and the exhibition curators. As a Signature Program at the University of Melbourne, Ngarrngga comprises a broad program of works supporting educators' engagement with and embedding of Indigenous Knowledge in curriculum, schools and teacher education.

Background

In 2024, Ngarrngga was approached by the curatorial team to produce the education resources for *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* to further the impact and longevity of the work beyond the exhibition timelines.

Through the generosity of Peter and Ruth McMullin, funding was provided to second an expert to work with Ngarrngga to produce a series of educational resources to support educators to showcase Indigenous Art and Knowledges in conjunction with the exhibition.

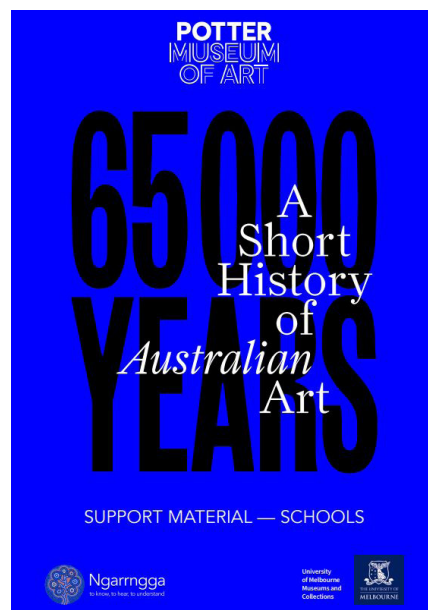
The Program Director, Professor Melitta Hogarth, approached Associate Professor Abbey MacDonald, an Arts teacher educator at the University of Tasmania, to assist in the development of these critical educational resources. Abbey's work with Ngarrngga builds on longstanding collaborations with creative, cultural and education practitioners, with a particular focus on the methodological, philosophical, positional, and motivational dimensions of education resource creation and use.

The education resources for *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* were designed to engage Years 3-12 students across Australia and University of Melbourne Higher Education cohorts with key Indigenous knowledge, concepts and perspectives expressed through creative and cultural practices presented in the exhibition. Featuring a flexible, dual-purpose design, the resources were developed for use in onsite school tours at The Potter while also being made accessible online for classrooms across Australia via the Ngarrngga website.

Delivered through three booklets comprising support materials, case studies and support materials, the resource suite incorporates discussion-based activities to encourage dialogue, reflection and meaning-making in museum and classroom inquiry settings. Practice-based activities provide means for educators to guide students in exploring

personal connections, values and interpretations relating to the case studies and to extend learning beyond the exhibition.

Aligned with content, capabilities and priorities across Australian, Victorian and New South Wales curriculum frameworks, the education resources were collaboratively developed through Ngarrngga's approach for working with Indigenous Knowledge experts, museum educators, classroom teachers, teacher educators and artists. This team of collaborators worked together to highlight key knowledge, concept and lines of inquiry presented within the exhibition, with curriculum-aligned activities designed to foster culturally responsive, safe, and respectful engagement with *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*.



Booklet cover, Image credit: Ngarrngga



Ngarrngga team at the exhibition, Image credit: Ngarrngga

Program Findings and Discussion

Education Resources

A total of 391 discrete educational resources were produced to support educators to engage with this nationally significant landmark exhibition. These works included (but are not limited to) the development of freely accessible, quality curricula resources for educators and students as well as contributing to related research and evaluation.

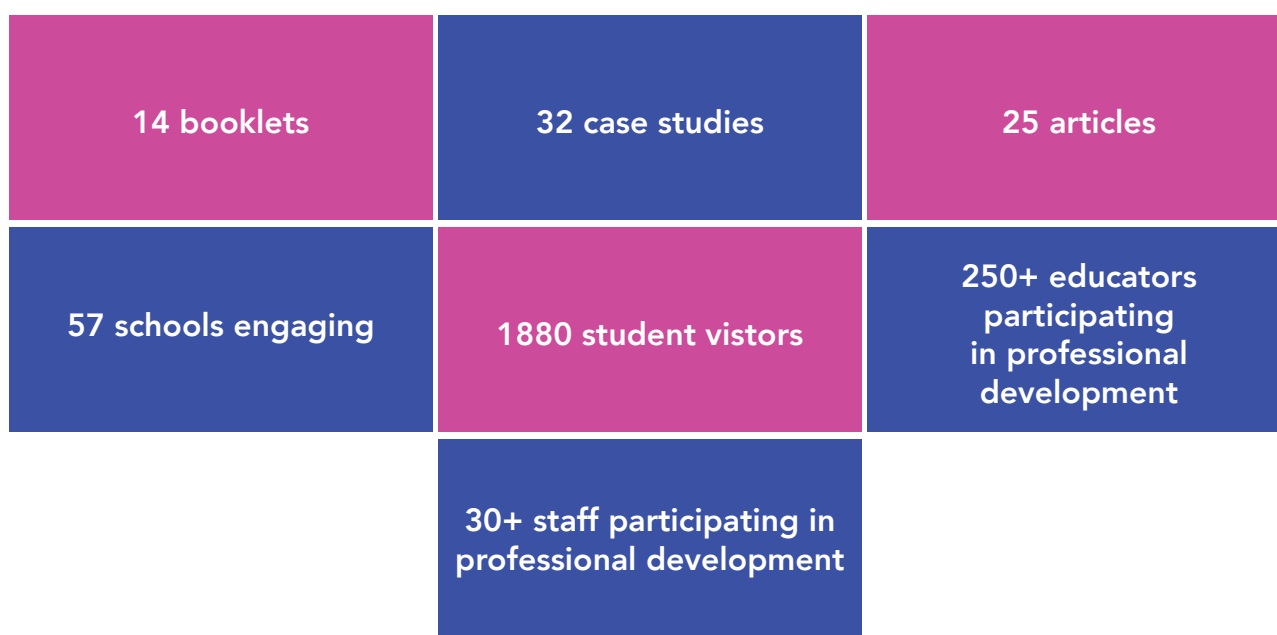


Figure 1: Overview of engagement with education program.

Five bespoke education resource packs were prepared for school Grades 3/4 through to Grades 11/12. Each education resource includes case studies for works of art and cultural objects featuring in *65,000 Years: A Short History in Australian Art*. The selected works were carefully chosen by the curatorial team for age-appropriate storytelling in accordance with correlating curriculum content for their respective Grades. Table 1 presents an overview capturing the breadth and diversity of discrete educational resource outputs.

Schooling Educational resource outputs	Booklet
<i>65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art</i> - Preparatory Material Schools	1
Connection to Country: Grade 3/4 Case Studies	2
Continuity of culture: Grade 5/6 Case Studies	2
Land, belonging and time: Grade 7/8 Case Studies	2
Rights and Freedoms: Grade 9/10 Case Studies	2
Truth telling through curating: Grade 11/12 Case Studies	2
Support Material – Schools	3

Higher Education Educational resource outputs	Booklet
Preparatory Material – Truth-telling	1
Connection to Country – Case Studies	2
Continuity of culture – Case Studies	2
Land, belonging and time – Case Studies	2
Institutional racism – Case Studies	2
Rights and Freedoms – Case Studies	2
Truth telling through curating – Case Studies	2

Table 1: Education resource outputs to support Schooling and Higher Education educators

32 case studies were produced storying the work of 25 artists and one historical object. Both historical and contemporary works spanning themes of Country, culture, kinship, cultural astronomy and political activism were extrapolated and explored; bringing students and educators into conversation with these artists' works, knowledge and perspectives. Table 2 provides a summary of the artists, the artworks and the case study storylines.

Artist	Name of artwork	Year	Case study storyline
Brett Leavy	Virtual Narm 1834	2025	Imagining Country
			Continuum of culture
			Continuity of culture and Country
			Contemplating colonisation
			Reimagine
Mandy Nicholson	Possum skin cloak	2012	Communicating Country
			Communicating culture
			Possum skin stories
Albert Namatjira	Quarta-Tooma (Ormiston Gorge)	1939	Colours of Country
Minimini Numulkiyaya Mamarika	Map of Groote Eylandt and surrounding islands with Mamarika (the south-east wind)	1941-45	Mapping and making with Country
Betty Muffler and Maringka Burton	Ngangkari Ngura (Healing Country)	2022	Caring for Country
			Country, care and kinship
			Reviving Country
			Restore
William Barak	Ceremony	c. 1890	Championing culture

Mundukul Marawili	Mundukul ga Yirwarra (Ancestral snake and fish trap at Baraltja)	1942	Culture across Generations: Father and daughter
Nongirrna Marawili	Baratjala	2022	
Brian Robinson	Land Sea Sky: Charting our place in the universe	2016	Charting our place in the universe
Ginger Riley Munduwalawala	The Linmen Bight River – My Mother Country	1993	Brilliance and belonging
Naomi Hobson	Life on the River	2024	River rhythms
Lin Onus	Taking the children away	1992	Stolen Generations
Trevor Nickolls	Tightrope walking	1979-80	Political activism
Robert Campbell Jnr	Roped-off at the pictures II	1986	Segregation at the cinema
Ishmael Marika	Wana Watanumirri Dharak	2013	Land Rights and Self Determination
Julie Gough	Observance	2012	Reveal
Godfrey Charles Mundy (draftsman) and W.K. Walton (lithographer)	Mounted police and blacks, a rencounter	1852	Rencounter
Gordon Bennett	Death of the ahistorical subject (up rode the troopers a, b, c)	1993	Reinstate
John Tjakamarra	Untitled (Man's Dreaming)	1971	Revolutionise
Marlene Gibson	Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner	2015	Death and defiance
	Finance Committee Minute Book 1911-1917	1911-1917	Dark dealings
Brook Andrew	Vox: Beyond Tasmania	2013	Collection and complicity
Yhonnie Scarce	In the Dead House	2020	Mortuary and mourning
Julie Dowling	Death of the Anthropologist	1996	Unmasking injustice

Table 2: Summary of the artists, artworks and storylines explored in the Case Studies

All resources, except for the Higher Education educational resources that were produced specifically for the University of Melbourne, were uploaded to the [Ngarrngga website](#) to enable educators across the nation to access and utilise these materials both during and beyond the life of the exhibition.

School Engagement

On the 4th of April 2025, Associate Professor Abbey MacDonald, Shanysa McConville and Eloise Breskvar delivered a preparatory workshop for 30+ Learning Experience Facilitators and Teaching Fellows. This session sought to strengthen Potter Museum staff understanding of the education resources design and intended use to best support school and higher education cohort engagement with the exhibition.

During the six-month exhibition period of *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*, 57 schools (both Primary and Secondary) visited the exhibition resulting in 1880 students in attendance.

144 teachers attended with school groups and Teacher Professional Learning sessions provided in collaboration with the Learning Experiences Program Team. Two preparatory online professional learning workshops were provided for teachers; one with a focus on the curatorial approach to the exhibition, and the second with a focus on the design and utilisation of education resources and additional material.



School visit, Image credit: Potter Museum of Art



Teacher workshop, Image credit: Ngarrngga

In addition, Ngarrngga was invited by the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership to present to their cohort of skilled educators participating in the Teaching Excellence Program in late May, 2025. Presented by Associate Professor Abbey MacDonald, a further 100+ educators had opportunity to hear about teaching and learning with *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*.

Digital Engagement

Five blog posts relating to the design, development and release of the education resources for *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* were prepared and published via Ngarrngga's Stories and News platform. These publications introduce, articulate and scaffold the underlying approach to resource development, alongside complementary support materials and pedagogical guidance to assist educators in effectively engaging with and utilising the resources. These blog posts build on Ngarrngga's [model and methodology](#) for resource development, extending this work to the arts space. The blogs had a total of 2,250 page views and 1,074 total users visiting.

The five posts are:

- [Bridging care and connection - Engage with 65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art](#)
- [Bridging content and contexts - Culturally responsive pedagogies for museum education](#)

- [Bridging now to next - Coming to know, hear and understand 65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art](#)
- [Bridging confidence and competence – Going further with 65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art](#)
- [Bridging pedagogies and possibilities – Bringing a culturally responsive lens to our pedagogical preferences](#)

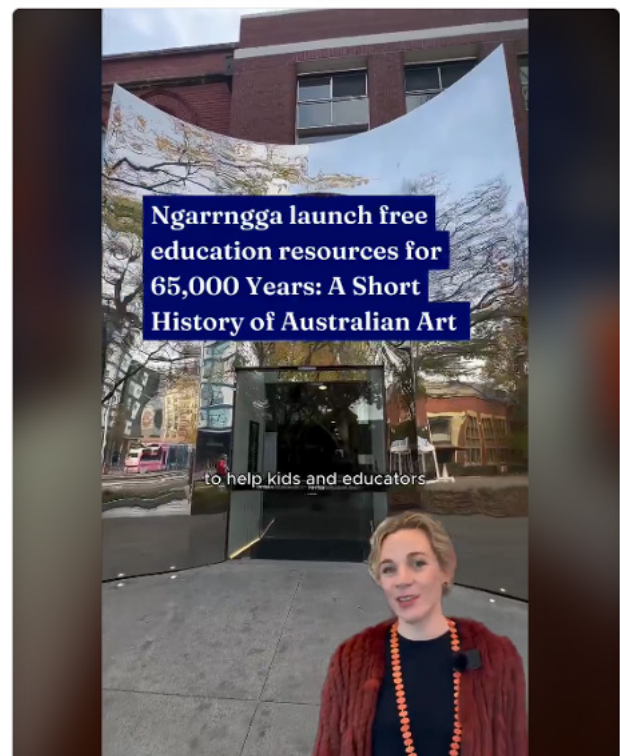
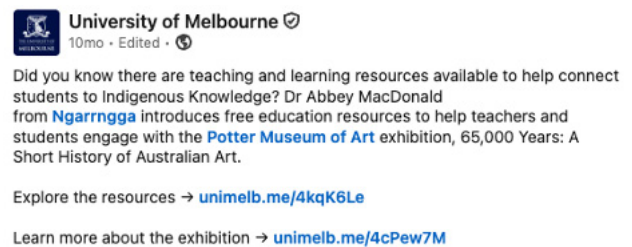
The Ngarrngga education resources were uploaded to the *Curriculum Resources* directory, freely available for all educators in Australia. These materials contain booklets providing contextual information, year level specific content, and further reading and recommended materials so that educators can engage with the learning materials beyond the life of the physical exhibition. These booklets were downloaded by a total of 711 users, and the curriculum pages had 834 total users visiting.

Social Media

Ngarrngga shared about the *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* exhibition and resources seven times on our social media channels, LinkedIn, Instagram and Threads, X, Facebook, and BlueSky. Our posts received over 8,883 impressions, 427 likes, and 30 reshares.



Ngarrngga reshared the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Professor Marek Tesar's post about the opening night of *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*:
<https://go.unimelb.edu.au/w9b2>



Abbey MacDonald introduces free education resources to help teachers and students engage with the Potter Museum of Art's new exhibition, *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*, UniMelb Faculty of Education, 31st May, 2025:
<https://go.unimelb.edu.au/79b2>

Dissemination

Presentations

[To know, to hear, to understand: A Short History of Australian Art with Ngarrngga, University of Tasmania Teaching Matters Conference 2024](#)

On Wednesday 27th November 2024, Professor Melitta Hogarth and Associate Professor Abbey MacDonald introduced the multi-faceted nation-building work of Ngarrngga, and the importance of foregrounding Indigenous Knowledge within education resources and teacher education. Given the Tasmanian context of the presentation, examples of Palawa artists and scholars featured in *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* and its associated education resources were discussed to demonstrate how art and education can create powerful contexts for cultural engagement, critical interrogation, and creative transformation and change. They highlighted the central roles that recognition of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), reparative justice and relationality play in the development of Ngarrngga's education resources, as well as the aspirations for their use in classroom contexts.

[Teaching and learning with city-based artists, Culture, Creativity and Changing Landscapes Professional Learning Day with Hadley's Art Prize, 2025](#)

On Saturday 13th September 2025, Associate Professor Abbey MacDonald and Caine Chennatt explored examples of exhibitions showcasing the work of Aboriginal artists shaping the city-based artists movement, highlighting the significant activist contributions city-based Aboriginal artists make to culture and society at large. In examining recent and current local and national exhibitions, they explored tensions and shifts away from reductive Eurocentric definitions, and how Indigenous voices and presence is leading the restorying and repositioning of city-based artists over time. Examples from the Years 9/10 Rights and Freedoms education resource for *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* were discussed with participating teachers as a basis to explore these important contributions and developments with students in their classrooms.

[Learning about and from First Nations perspectives, Australian Teachers of Media \(Victoria\) State Conference, 2025](#)

On Friday 31st October 2025, Eloise Breskvar and Ramona Tilley delivered a media arts-aligned presentation designed to empower educators to embed First Nations perspectives within their curricula. The session drew on selected education resources from *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* to highlight rich opportunities for engaging with Indigenous Knowledge through media arts education. It also aimed to build educator confidence in addressing new requirements for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the Victorian Curriculum 2.0, as well as in broader educational contexts.

Publications

A number of research and scholarly publications arising from the development of the education resources for *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* are currently in press or under development. Notable examples include:

Hogarth, M., MacDonald, A., Hayres, G. (In press). A methodology for education resource creation: Working in and with creative and cultural complexities, in D. Henriksen, D. Harris, & T. Chemi (Eds), *Handbook of Creativity in Higher Education*, Bloomsbury.

Recognition

In 2025, Professor Melitta Hogarth was awarded the **Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA) Distinguished Australian First Nations Creative Leadership Award** in recognition of her leadership in developing Ngarrngga education resources, created to support the landmark exhibition *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*. Professor Naomi Sunderland, Griffith University and DDCA Judge said:

“Professor Hogarth’s submission demonstrates outstanding leadership in truth-telling and curriculum transformation, with a strong emphasis on embedding Indigenous perspectives across education sectors...”

The DDCA Awards acknowledge and celebrate contributions to creative arts, elevate and share best practice, and encourage and promote the next generation of creative arts leaders in research and education.

In 2026, *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* was awarded **Large Project of the Year** by the **Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA)**, the with judges commending:

“This exhibition unites an extraordinary range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks, highlighting the enduring depth, creativity, and resilience of First Peoples’ cultural expression. By weaving together historical pieces, contemporary practice, and Indigenous-led insights, the exhibition offers a contemplative and immersive experience, inviting audiences to connect with Australia’s past and present in a meaningful and resonant way.”

The AMaGA Awards are delivered in partnership by Australian Museums and Galleries Association Victoria (AMaGA Victoria) and Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV), recognising outstanding achievement across the museum, gallery and community collecting sector.

Partner with us

Thank you for your interest in elevating Ngarrngga — together we can enrich the next generation of young learners with a deep understanding of, and respect for, the world's oldest continuous living cultures.

With your support, we can further expand the impact of the education material outlined in this report. Additional projects available include the following.

Indigenous Arts in the Spotlight

Building on the resources developed in *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*, we are creating a future of transformative education through the power of Indigenous arts including music, visual arts, dance, drama and media studies. The resulting modules will showcase Indigenous excellence in the arts and leverage Ngarrngga's relationship in the sector and with community for nationwide impact.

Cultural Medicine: The Art of Indigenous Healing

This project will produce teacher and student resources in partnership with [the exhibition](#) and Ngarrngga to ensure impact in education settings beyond the life of the exhibition.

For Educators

Educators are encouraged to support our work by engaging with Ngarrngga's materials on our [website](#) and using them in your classrooms and with your students and learners. Educators can also get in touch with us to share stories of practice with the opportunity to be spotlighted by Ngarrngga.

Thank you for your support — please get in touch at ngarrngga-team@unimelb.edu.au.

