



## MEDIA RELEASE

### NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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## Big Weather

12 March – 21 October 2021 | The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia | Free



**Thursday 11 March:** The NGV will present *Big Weather*, an exclusive exhibition exploring the sophisticated understanding of weather systems that exist within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, opening 12 March 2021 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia.

The exhibition highlights the vital role Indigenous artists and designers play in sharing stories that ensure cultural knowledge is shared, celebrating an intimate understanding of the land, which has been handed down over generations and has

been recorded through song, dance and art.

An exhibition highlight will be the recently acquired work by Wiradjuri artist Karla Dickens who responds to the destructive bushfire event in the summer of 2019-20 by drawing on humour to emphasise the devastation in a work titled *We are on fire (not in a sexy way)* 2020 and woven shield designs by emerging Yorta Yorta/Taungurung artist Donna Blackall referencing different aspects of the natural environment across the five language groups of the Kulin Nations, the Country where the NGV stands.

*Big Weather* will feature over 50 important artists from the NGV Collection across media, encompassing painting, photography, weaving and sculpture. The exhibition will showcase works by artists from diverse Indigenous communities including paintings on bark and sculptures presenting unique interpretations of Ancestral spirit beings who summon the rain, hail, and seasonal storms, that feed into our rivers, revive the landscape and nourish wildlife.

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, National Gallery of Victoria said, “*Big Weather* will present works that speak to specific historical and contemporary environmental events that shape Australia’s diverse landscape including recent acquisitions that will be presented at the NGV for the first time and respond directly to current events including the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires and the global climate emergency.

Presented alongside these recent works will be pieces from the NGV Collection that reveal cultural stories and experiences interpreting the origins and effects of weather through works by artists including Albert Namatjira, Emily Kam Kngwararray, Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri and Rover Thomas,” said Ellwood.

Upon entering the exhibition, visitors will be greeted by a sculpture of the powerful ancestral spirit *Bolngu, the Thunderman*, 2010 by Johnny Yirryirngu of Elcho Island, North East Arnhem Land, placed alongside John Mawurndjul’s 1992 painting *Namarrkon ngal-daluk, the female lightning spirit*, portraying a formidable spirit who strikes lightning down to earth announcing the arrival of the wet season to Kuninjku people of Western Arnhem Land.

Climate change is addressed in works exploring extreme weather including flooding, bushfires, cyclones, and storms and how these events are changing our landscape. Multi-disciplinary artist Clinton Naina links the effects of climate change to the ongoing impacts of colonisation in a recently acquired work titled *Stolen Climate*, which won the prestigious Premier’s Award at the 2020 Cairns Indigenous Art Fair.

Knowledge of weather systems and ancestral stories about Country is shared through oral traditions and customary ceremonies passed down across generations. The significance of transferring cultural knowledge over generations is illustrated by paintings by Western Arrernte watercolourists including legendary artist Albert Namatjira presented alongside contemporary artists who continue the watercolour tradition including Noreen Hudson and Seth Namatjira, grandson of Albert Namatjira. This display illustrates changes across the Central Australian landscape reflecting the artists' connection to the land now and over time and highlighting the importance of intergenerational transfer of knowledge.

The integral role of animals in the overall balance and wellbeing of the environment is portrayed in representational works in diverse media, including woven fish traps from across Australia which reflect how animals are universally respected not only as practical sources of food but for their spiritual existence and as indicators of changing weather patterns.

Michael Riley's *Untitled* from the iconic photographic series *cloud*, 2000 depicting a levitating cow, speaks directly to Australia's history of settlement and the sadness and confusion that introduced animal species caused Indigenous communities, interrupting their ancient relationship with their Country.

*Big Weather* will be on display from 12 March – 21 October 2021 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Federation Square, Flinders St & Russell St, Melbourne, Australia. Information is available from the NGV website [NGV.MELBOURNE](http://NGV.MELBOURNE).

Michael Riley's *untitled (cow)* 2000 is supported by Linda Herd and donors to the 2020 Annual Appeal.

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**IMAGES:** <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tpzy6iq10txd0b2/AAD-YfDiyLbA4YFTPqLakQtwa?dl=0>

## **IMAGE CAPTION**

**Karla Dickens**

*We are on fire (not in a sexy way)* 2020

mixed media

25 x 16 x 160 cm

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