

NGV Triennial 2026: Jenny Holzer, Wolfgang Tillmans, Zanele Muholi, Ocean Vuong and more feature in the 4th edition of the NGV's blockbuster exhibition

NGV International | 13 December 2026 – 11 April 2027 | FREE



WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL 2026: The 2026 NGV Triennial, opening 13 December, offers a dynamic and diverse snapshot of contemporary culture today through the work of nearly 100 artists and collectives from 35 countries. Traversing all levels of NGV International, this blockbuster exhibition features more than 80 projects, including 25 world-premiere commissions and 70+ entering the NGV Collection. These include a newly commissioned sculpture by **Zanele Muholi** (South Africa), a never-before-seen installation of photographs by **Wolfgang Tillmans** (Germany), and a larger-than-life participatory chess set by Melbourne's own **Louise Paramor**.

The exhibition features important work by international artists and designers including **Jenny Holzer** (USA), **Sarah Sze** (USA), **Shilpa Gupta** (India), **Mika Rottenberg** (Argentina), **Martine Syms** (USA), **Pamela Rosenkranz** (Switzerland), **Wu Tsang** (USA), **Rachel Kneebone** (UK), **Christine Sun Kim** (USA), **Frida Escobedo** (Mexico), **Wendy Red Star** (USA), **Kent Monkman** (Canada) and **Ocean Vuong** (Vietnam), alongside leading Australian practitioners including **Christian Thompson**, **Angelina Karadada Boona** and **Juan Ford**. Across the exhibition, artists and designers explore transformation in its many forms – material, cultural, technological, personal, political and societal – offering new ways of seeing and understanding the world around us.

The exhibition opens with two major site-specific works that transform NGV International's Forecourt and Waterwall. Wunambal Gaambera/Worrora artist **Angelina Karadada Boona** will realise her most ambitious work to date: her signature Wandjina figure reimagined in glowing light for NGV International's iconic Waterwall. Wandjina are powerful ancestral beings that live in the clouds and are responsible for bringing the wunju (monsoon) rain. Represented with owl-like eyes and a halo intended to reflect lightning and storm clouds, Karadada Boona's world-premiere Wandjina installation will rise up across the Waterwall and convey a reminder of one's impact on Country.

Commissioned by the City of Melbourne in partnership with NGV, Lebanese-French artist **Najla El Zein**'s world-premiere new work will take the form of a major outdoor sculpture designed for public gatherings. The carved and contoured limestone forms encourage audiences to sit, touch, rest, recline, gather and play. Made from stone quarried from a mountain outside Beirut, the work was carved in Beirut by master artisans from Lebanon and the region. Presented on the NGV Forecourt, the sculpture is an invitation to connect within a shared space.

Major exhibition highlights include a series of large-scale sculptures and installations that bring together ambitious scale, material innovation and extraordinary craftsmanship. For NGV International's Federation Court, **Pamela Rosenkranz** will create a new iteration of her 7.5 metre sculpture *Old Tree*, 2023, originally commissioned for

New York's public art park, the High Line. Embodying the ancient 'tree of life' motif, the vivid pink hues of the sculpture emphasises humanity's relationship with nature.

The exhibition also features several major works which explore how we read, interpret and understand the world, including **Jenny Holzer's** kinetic sculpture *WTF*, 2022. Comprising a suspended and swinging LED sign, the work displays online posts by a conspiracy theorist and tweets from United States President Donald Trump during his first term. The work slides along a track in an unpredictable rhythm that echoes the chaotic patterns of digital conversation.

For the 2026 NGV Triennial, German photographer **Wolfgang Tillmans** will create a never-before-seen installation of images titled *Love Life Installation* (1989-2022). Comprising twenty-five photographs at varying scales, this whole-room installation brings together large abstractions, intimate portraits, club scenes and still life images in a single composition. Here the themes that have shaped Tillmans' practice over time – community, desire, fragility, protest and the material conditions of being – are distilled into a unique spatial experience.

Though internationally recognised and decorated for photography, **Zanele Muholi** has recently expanded their practice into large-scale sculptures. Muholi's monumental 3.3 metre sculpture *Umkhuseli (The Protector)*, 2025, on display in the Triennial, depicts the artist as the Virgin Mary, offering a powerful commentary on gender-based injustice while also calling for greater empathy for all.

For the NGV Triennial, **Chinar Farooqui** (India) will create a contemporary interpretation of a traditional Mughal tent, traditionally used as temporary royal encampments. The work will celebrate *chikankari*, the delicate white-on-white 'shadow' embroidery that emerged in Lucknow during the Mughal period. Embroidered across diaphanous muslin, *chikankari* carries within it the intimacy of domestic practice – an art form historically sustained by women, stitched into the rhythms of everyday life in Uttar Pradesh.

In **Shilpa Gupta's** *Words come from ears*, a flap board, typically used to display train departure information, presents fragmented words and phrases. The poetic messages are programmed to include mistakes, typos and missing letters, prompting the viewer to create another layer of meaning to the work by mentally filling in the omissions. The rhythmic flipping of the panels generates a compelling soundscape, adding a distinctive tonal quality to the work's poetic 'voice'.

States of Mind, 2026, is a world-premiere wall mural by **Christine Sun Kim** that continues the artist's practice of translating American Sign Language into visual graphic form. Sun Kim's mural gives physical presence to ASL phrases relating to the mind – such as 'mind gone', expressing the idea of being jetlagged or otherwise absent-minded. The black masses of her mural act as an expansive 'mind-map' that stretches along Coles Court.

Offering a poignant reflection on our media-saturated world, **Sarah Sze's** *Slow dance*, 2024, is a sculptural and video installation comprising a 14-minute cycle of videos – footage of animals, nature, and human-made objects – projected onto hundreds of pieces of torn paper. The suspended paper 'screens' are tethered to the ground by everyday objects collected from the artist's studio and surrounds. Breaking with established conventions of both video and sculpture, *Slow dance* offers a poignant and meditative reflection on the complex relationship between two-dimensional images and three-dimensional objects in today's image-saturated world.

Martine Syms presents her recent trilogy of videos, *Sicks or Act I*, *Steven or Act II*, and *Ate or Act III* (2023). Presented on bespoke sculptural screens within a striking colour saturated environment, these filmic collages draw from television, the internet, social media and footage produced by phones and CCTV to address how representations of gender and Black identity are formed within image and language systems.

In a moment when AI is radically altering our media landscape, New Zealand photographer **Yvonne Todd's** most ambitious photographic work to date, *Personators* will echo the way that AI collects data to inform its outputs. Hundreds of images from a range of non-digital sources – such as 1970s fashion magazine spreads, Victorian Pictorialist photographs, fashion editorials and wedding photography – will immerse the entire gallery space in a world of uncanny imagery.

The exhibition also features several participatory works that invite visitors to learn, interact and play. In the Great Hall, Melbourne-based artist **Louise Paramor** will create thirty-two human height chess pieces, each realised in the artist's signature sculptural language of primary-coloured anthropomorphic forms. Visitors are invited to participate in chess games and competitions throughout the exhibition period.

Wendy Red Star's new commission draws on the histories, archives and lived knowledge of the Apsáalooke Nation. The artist will take over the NGV's Gallery Kitchen with a multi-media installation, developed with Deakin Motion Lab, that transforms colonial-era landscape paintings from the NGV Collection into an animated, interactive world. Audience members are invited to 'enter' the artwork where they are transformed into an invasive animal, revealing the ongoing ecological impact of colonisation on Victoria's unique ecosystems.

Mika Rottenberg's three channel video *Spaghetti Blockchain*, 2019 takes its name from a sculptural element within the video itself – a blockchain-like structure made of raw spaghetti, held together by nodes of marshmallows. Drawing on sources as varied as from Tuvan throat singing to the large Hadron Collider at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, the video explores how energies and objects circulate and transform across states of matter, reflecting on the incessant creation, distribution and consumption of materials that defines contemporary life.

For younger audiences, **Mika Rottenberg** will also take over the NGV's children's gallery with the exhibition *Squish, Twist, Fizz*. The exhibition features *Cosmic Generator*, 2017, a video work that travels through brightly lit underground tunnels, marketplaces and communities along the border between Mexico and the United States. Extending beyond the screen, the exhibition invites children into a hands-on environment inspired by the film's textures, colours and movement, where they can draw, play and make sculptures from plastic waste collected from the streets of New York City.

Also on display is the interactive work *The birds*, 2026, by **Benedikte Bjerre** (Denmark), in which a large gallery space is populated by foil inflatable penguins filled with helium. Visitors are invited to navigate the crowd of penguins and interact with the work, picking up the penguins before watching them slowly float back to the ground. Taking its title from Alfred Hitchcock's classic horror film, the work is a commentary on the destruction of the penguins' natural habitat as the climate crisis continues.

Chief Executive Officer, Mercedes-Benz Australia/Pacific, Homero Becerra said: 'We are proud to once again support NGV Triennial 2026 as Principal Partner. At Mercedes-Benz Australia, we are driven by innovation, design excellence and a commitment to shaping the future. Guided by our philosophy, 'the best or nothing', we champion creativity that challenges convention, embraces progress and reflects the world we live in today. NGV Triennial powerfully captures this spirit, bringing together contemporary art, design and architecture from around the globe to explore both our present moment and the possibilities ahead.'

Director of the NGV, Tony Ellwood AM, said: 'Every three years, the NGV Triennial gives audiences the chance to reflect on our rapidly changing lives and culture through the work of some of the globe's leading practitioners. Through art and design, the Triennial presents an opportunity to learn, understand and contemplate a world in flux, as well as our place within it.'

'With 25 world-premiere commissions and over 70 projects entering the NGV Collection, the NGV Triennial stands as a testament to our incredibly generous network of philanthropic donors. Without their passion for sharing contemporary art and design with all Victorians, we wouldn't be able to stage an exhibition of this calibre, nor would we be able to build and preserve a collection for the enjoyment of future generations,' said Ellwood.

Launched in 2017 and held every three years since, the NGV Triennial is a FREE gallery-wide exhibition of contemporary art, design, architecture and fashion. The inaugural exhibition in 2017 is the NGV's most attended exhibition in history and was visited by more than 1.23 million people, with a daily average attendance in excess of 10,000 people. In 2023, the third edition of the NGV Triennial welcomed more than 1 million visitors.

Further exhibition highlights include:

- **Avery Singer** (United States): Singer's 2023 painting *Deepfake stan* is part of a recent series of works influenced by the artist's personal experience of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. The work depicts Stan Honda, a photojournalist whose images were widely circulated during media coverage of 9/11. Built from digitally altered composite images, Singer's painting unsettles distinctions between what is real and what is mediated, prompting reflection on how images circulate and the media's role in shaping perceptions of collective trauma. For the 2026 NGV Triennial, Singer will present *Deepfake stan* within a site-specific architectural intervention that draws on the artist's recollections of the World Trade Center's office interiors.
- **April Bey** (Bahamas): In her textile portraits, Bey frequently adopts the character of an alien to illustrate the othering of Black peoples in the United States and the Bahamas. Bey incorporates queer-coded materials such as fur, glitter, vinyl and woven textiles into these portraits to reissue them in handcrafted contrast to the digital or virtual world.
- **Ayoung Kim** (Korea): The moving image installation, *Delivery Dancer's Arc: Inverse*, 2024, follows two female couriers in a futuristic version of Seoul. Described by Kim as 'pandemic fiction', the work was built using AI, CGI, and game-engine technologies and interrogates how data systems have reshaped labour, bodies and environments.
- **Christian Thompson** (Australia): Christian Thompson presents *Dhanana Gaminga (Stand Beside Her)*, 2026, a new self-composed three-channel operatic film extending his investigations into language, voice and the cultural weight of classical form. Filmed within Melbourne's iconic Capitol Theatre and featuring soprano Nina Korbe, a proud Koa, Kuku Yalanji and Wakka Wakka woman, the work tests what classical vocal traditions can hold when they carry Indigenous presence, contemporary authorship and the insistence that language is alive and ever-evolving.
- **David Claerbout** (Belgium): Continuing his preoccupation with perception, cognition and temporality, Claerbout's film *Birdcage*, 2023, sees a picturesque garden suddenly transformed by an explosion, disturbing the stillness and turning calm into chaos. Two birds, a glossy starling and a singing thrush, become central figures in the work, unsettling the notion of human primacy.
- **Farah Khan** (Malaysia): In a striking dialogue with the NGV's collection of historical European paintings, Malaysian fashion label Farah Khan reimagines eight iconic works as wearable canvases. With mannequins draped in these meticulously created designs, each piece evokes the grandeur and narrative richness of the paintings while offering a modern interpretation. This project not only highlights the label's signature intricate beadwork but also bridges centuries of artistic tradition, inviting the viewer to experience the intersection of fashion, history and the visual arts in a dynamic, immersive setting.
- **Frida Escobedo** (Mexico): In *Screen 01*, 2024, Escobedo reinterprets the bi-fold room divider as a device for questioning the boundaries of privacy. By incorporating windows and blinds, viewers may feel as though they are looking through someone's window, the curtain wall of a skyscraper, or through the room divider. In 2018, Escobedo became the youngest architect to create London's Serpentine Pavilion, was appointed to renovate a wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2022, and will collaborate on the renovation of the Centre Pompidou in Paris.
- **Jose Dávila** (Mexico): Developed specifically for the 2026 NGV Triennial, Jose Dávila's new body of work toys with natural and industrial materials, seeking out naturally weathered volcanic boulders from Guadalajara riverbeds and a single, used basketball from a local basketball court. Trained as an architect, Dávila arranges objects as if they are the basic elements of a drawing, creating systems that exemplify notions of equilibrium, stability and permanence.
- **Juan Ford** (Australia): Juan Ford's new commission for the 2026 NGV Triennial is a 15-metre-long painting developed over a year – and his most ambitious work to date. Structured as an epic triptych, the three parts explore the 'divine' nature of the muse as a force that can both generate and undo images. Installed alongside the NGV's British Royal Academy and Pre-Raphaelite paintings, the work creates a contemporary dialogue with the traditions of history painting.
- **Kent Monkman** (Canada): Cree artist Kent Monkman foregrounds Indigenous experiences through his large-scale history paintings that subvert Western European and American art traditions. In the painting *I come from pâkwân kîsik, the hole in the sky*, Monkman explores the cosmic portal from which the Cree legendary being Wîsahkêcâhk emerged. The work depicts Wîsahkêcâhk and Monkman's alter-ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, floating upwards towards other Cree legendary beings, such as the piyêsiwak (thunderbirds), which appear as pink-robed pterodactyls.

- **Kresiah Mukwazhi** (Zimbabwe): *Nyenyedzi Nomwe (The Seven Sisters Pleiades)*, 2024, is a monumental 8-metre-long textile work that communicates the artist's engagement with the community of sex workers in the suburbs of the Zimbabwean capital, Harare. Constructed from thousands of used bra straps from this community, Mukwazhi's collage of worn, torn, ripped and cut lingerie fragments conjures up associations with intimacy, power and control.
- **Louise Giovanelli** (UK): Louise Giovanelli's theatrical works explore materiality and the significance of painting being both a medium and a form of representation. *Threadsoul*, 2024, depicts a large curtain, a recurring motif in the artist's work selected for its materiality, colour and the way it reflects light. Giovanelli is interested in their presence in both 'low' and 'high' cultural spaces, from theatres and ballrooms to strip clubs and function rooms. Curtains mark a threshold: something is always both in front and behind, revealing and concealing yet always holding the promise of something beyond.
- **Maria Madeira** (East Timor): In response to the occupation of East Timor, Madeira created *Kiss and don't tell*, a mixed-media installation exploring the violence inflicted on women during the occupation. To long strips of canvas, Madeira applied *tais* (a traditional Timorese textile) in the shape of lips and lipstick marks, along with betel nut and paint which drip down the canvas to resemble wounds and blood. For the 2026 NGV Triennial, Madeira will recreate her live performance from the 2024 Venice Biennale in which she kisses the canvas, re-staging her tender homage acknowledging and honouring the many Timorese women subjected to the abuse and humiliation.
- **Meriem Bennani** (Morocco): Towering over audiences at 4.8 metres, the animatronic sculpture *Umbrella twist* features a video depicting a female character engaging in the Moroccan internet trend known as 'my daily routine,' in which Moroccan women film themselves completing household chores, with an erotic undertone that might not be seen at first. With humour and magical realism, the frenetic video sees the women's domestic objects fall under a curse and come to life.
- **Megha Joshi** (India): For the 2026 NGV Triennial, Joshi expands her use of *agarbatti*, or incense sticks, commonly found in many Indian homes and often produced by women. This work uses incense sticks without their coating and therefore smell, provoking questions about whether an incense stick without its smell is still embedded with meaning. The reclassified incense sticks are bound together in extended lengths to create sweeping lines across the gallery space, operating almost like a 3D drawing.
- **Noémie Goudal** (France): Influenced by geology, deep time and a curiosity about nature's creation and destruction, Goudal's photography and films reflect on humanity's relationship with Earth's history. Her film *Supra Strata*, 2024, made for the Prix Marcel Duchamp 2024 exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, shows a verdant forest gently disintegrating; the accompanying photograph is likewise layered and theatrical. Her work shows how precarious and constructed nature is, and that its seeming permanence is an illusion.
- **Ocean Vuong** (Vietnam): In 2009, the bestselling author of *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* spent a day photographing his mother Rose's nail salon – its colours, people and rhythms. Vuong's presentation for the 2026 NGV Triennial interlaces those images with photographs taken with his brother fifteen years later following their mother's death. The work honours the Vuong family's experience as Vietnamese immigrants to America, linking their resilience and intimate life moments with broader themes of labour, loss and remembrance.
- **Rachel Kneebone** (UK): Challenging the limits of porcelain as a material, Kneebone's new commission for the 2026 NGV Triennial, *Core*, will feature a sculptural form suspend in space, with intricate floral, spherical, ribboned and fibrous details emerging from the porcelain. Filled with otherworldly and sensuous references to the sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Core* is Kneebone's largest commission to date.
- **Rineke Dijkstra** (The Netherlands): *Night watching*, 2019, is a three-channel video installation that captures fourteen different groups responding to Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* (1642), in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Bringing together a cross-section of viewers, the work foregrounds not only the painting itself but the different social dynamics, interpretive habits and mutual relationships that emerge around it.
- **Rooshad Shroff** (India): Responding to the NGV Decorative Arts Collection, including recently acquired works by Frank Lloyd Wright and Marion Mahony, Shroff's 2026 NGV Triennial commission comprises three related works. The first is two of Shroff's iconic embroidered *C-chairs*, remade in a new colourway with thread colours drawn from Indian vernacular palettes. The second work is an embroidered bench that introduces a different register of tactility, its woven composition enriched by intricately beaded

embroidery. Finally, a suite of twelve hand-carved marble suspension lamps reinterprets the familiar form of the light bulb in stone.

- **Thabisa Mjo** and **Beauty Bathembile Ngxongo** (South Africa): Designed by Thabisa Mjo, the *Hlabisa bench* and *Umthungo light* unifies two distinct cultures, combining the work of master Zulu basket weaver Beauty Bathembile Ngxongo and the carpentry skills of Afrikaans duo Houtlander. Sitting alongside these two monumental collaborative works, Ngxongo will weave her largest basket to date. Specifically designed to accompany the bench and the light, this new work takes the form of an *isichumo*, a vessel traditionally used for transporting water and beer, often carried on women's heads.
- **Wu Tsang** (USA): Wu Tsang's recent work *La gran mentira de la muerte* (*The big lie of death*), 2024, is a large-scale film installation presented within an immersive sound environment. The work reinterprets Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen*, linking the title character to the performative worlds of flamenco and bullfighting, where death becomes spectacle. Like Bizet's opera, these traditions put mortality on a stage, implicating the viewer in the ritual.
- **Xu Tiantian** (China): China's most prominent female architect, Xu Tiantian, presents *Bamboo theatre* as the MECCA X NGV Women in Design Commission 2026, an installation that draws on the landscape of Songyang County, a mountainous region of Zhejiang province, where dense bamboo forest surrounds local villages and terraced tea plantations. Handcrafted from locally sourced bamboo, this new immersive work bridges architecture with animation to offer a poetic natural space for gathering and contemplation.

The 2026 NGV Triennial will be on display from 13 December 2026 – 11 April 2027 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Entry is FREE. Further information is available via the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.com.au)

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Images: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/72s8px9m5tupkxp14na64/AH9tKDYQwHYLW-R-Ovmuvk4?rlkey=jpv3q171e3aw7dzyfs0pfe37e&st=teaf4tv8&dl=0>

Image Caption (L to R): **Pamela Rosenkranz** *Old Tree* 2023. Photo: Timothy Schenck; **Zanele Muholi** *Umkhuseli (The Protector)* 2025. Photo: Hayden Phipps; **Ayoung Kim** *Delivery Dancer's Arc: Inverse* 2024 Photo © Courtesy of the artist

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