



## MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

MEDIA CONTACTS: MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, NGV

MARION JOSEPH | 03 8620 2346 | 0427 147 999 | MARION.JOSEPH@NGV.VIC.GOV.AU

BONNIE HORNE | 03 8620 2237 | 0448 369 260 | BONNIE.HORNE@NGV.VIC.GOV.AU

BRIANA TOMASINO | 03 8620 2166 | 0408 333 399 | BRIANA.TOMASINO@NGV.VIC.GOV.AU

## NGV TO PRESENT WORLD'S LARGEST EXHIBITION OF TIWI ART IN 2020

13 November 2020 – 8 March 2021 | The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia | Free



**15 July 2020:** *"TIWI is important because it tells a story from parlingarri (long time) and today. Tiwi culture is unique. The dance, songs and art of the Tiwi people connect us all in what it means to be Tiwi. Melbourne is a long way from the Tiwi Islands, but I like to be able to share our stories with others."* – Pedro Wonaeamirri (Artist)

The National Gallery of Victoria has revealed that *TIWI*, the largest presentation of Tiwi art ever staged, will be exhibited from 13 November 2020 to 8 March 2021 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia.

The Tiwi, the original inhabitants of Melville and Bathurst Islands, are known for their extraordinary art and cultural practices, distinct from those of mainland Aboriginal people. Located 80 km north of Darwin, the Tiwi Islands

are unique, in part due to their geographical position, but also language, customary ceremonies, material culture, and kinship system, all of which have a profound influence on Tiwi art.

"Retaining strong creative traditions, the Tiwi Islands remain a vital place for exclusive artistic practices that are deeply rooted in traditional storytelling and feature the hallmarks of good design known as jilamara," said Tony Ellwood AM, Director, National Gallery of Victoria.

"The NGV is delighted to have the opportunity to exhibit so many works from the NGV Collection alongside those from public and private lenders, including historical and contemporary works by artists from the Tiwi Islands' most significant cultural institutions: Jilamara Arts & Crafts Association, Munupi Arts & Crafts Association, Tiwi Design and Ngaruwanajirri," said Ellwood AM.

*TIWI*, showcasing works from 1911 to the present day, will consist of almost 300 works by over 70 artists. The exhibition features 153 works rigorously selected from the NGV Collection and 130 loans of rare historical objects and contemporary paintings from Australian lenders. *TIWI* marks the first time the majority of the NGV's comprehensive Tiwi collection is displayed, and coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Tiwi Design art centre which began as a partnership between Bede Tungutalum and Giovanni Tipungwuti.

*TIWI* avoids a linear chronology, instead divided into spaces that reveal different aspects of Tiwi art and culture. The two principal cultural events for the Tiwi are the pukumani (mourning) and kulama (coming of age) ceremonies. Each Tiwi person is encouraged to participate in customary visual and performative art as part of these ceremonies – including the creation of tutini (poles), jilamara (body painting), kawakawayi (song) and yoyi (dance). Tiwi creativity is expressed through random combinations of turtiyanjari (colour), patterns of marlipinyini (lines), kurluwukari (circles) and pwanga (dots).

A major highlight of *TIWI* will be a display featuring the NGV's extensive collection of pukumani tutini (poles), which will be installed to suggest a forest setting. Occupying a space devoted to the theme of bereavement, these monumental ironwood sculptures – painted with Tiwi ochres – are customarily created for pukumani (mourning) ceremonies. The selection features tutini created between 1912 and 2019 and will include the works of master carvers Declan Apuatimi, Mani Luki, Tommy Mungatopi, Paddy Freddy Puruntatameri, Pedro Wonaeamirri, Leon Puruntatameri, Pius Tipungwuti and Mario Walarmepui.

*TIWI* will also feature ochre paintings on bark, canvas and paper – now recognised as important forms of Tiwi contemporary art – created by senior artists including Jean Baptiste Apuatimi, Nancy Henry and Kutuwulumi Kitty Kantilla, plus rising talents such as Johnathon World Peace Bush. The exhibition also includes exquisite, layered canvases painted with a pwoja (comb) by young Tiwi leader Pedro Wonaeamirri and elder Cornelia Tipuamantumirri. Their subtle



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abstract paintings will be exhibited alongside the bold canvases of contemporary artist Timothy Cook, who became the first Tiwi artist to win a National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2012.

Additional highlights of *TIWI* will include a striking display of historical and contemporary tunga (bark baskets), which are unique to the Tiwi; a significant loan from the South Australian Museum of twelve bark paintings and five tunga, commissioned by Australian anthropologist Charles P. Mountford in 1954; and the world premiere of *Yoyi (Dance)* 2020, a moving image work involving 25 Tiwi participants from Jilamara Arts & Crafts Association. These works will be displayed alongside exhibition spaces devoted to Tiwi printmaking, batik textiles and ceramics.

A richly illustrated publication, providing a scholarly, in-depth study of Tiwi art and culture, will be produced to accompany the exhibition. Edited by the exhibition's curator Judith Ryan AM, the publication features major essays by artists Pedro Wonaeamirri and Jonathan Jones, plus contributions by leading curators and managers of Tiwi art centres.

***TIWI*, the exhibition, runs from 13 November 2020 to 8 March 2021 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia. Further information is available via the [NGV website](#).**

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#### Media Contacts:

**Marion Joseph, Associate Director, Media and Public Affairs, NGV**

0427 147 999 | [marion.joseph@ngv.vic.gov.au](mailto:marion.joseph@ngv.vic.gov.au)

**Briana Tomasino, Media and Public Affairs Assistant, NGV**

0408 333 399 | [briana.tomasino@ngv.vic.gov.au](mailto:briana.tomasino@ngv.vic.gov.au)

#### Image Caption:

**Timothy Cook**

Tiwi born 1958

*Kulama* 2012

earth pigments on canvas

150.0 x 220.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Robert Martin Bequest, 2019

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