



## MEDIA RELEASE

### NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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## From polka dots to pumpkins and more: Australia's largest Yayoi Kusama retrospective exhibition opens exclusively in Melbourne with new, world-premiere work

NGV International, St Kilda Road | 15 December 2024 to 21 April 2025 | Ticketed



**15 April 2024:** In December 2024, the National Gallery of Victoria celebrates the illustrious career of iconic contemporary artist **Yayoi Kusama** with a world-premiere blockbuster exhibition spanning her eight-decade practice, including the global unveiling of the artist's most recent immersive infinity mirror room work. Curated by the NGV, in collaboration with the artist, especially for Australian audiences, the exhibition *Yayoi Kusama* features more than 180 works, including many never-before-seen by local audiences and a diverse display of the artist's showstopping immersive rooms.

Displayed across the entire ground floor of NGV International, *Yayoi Kusama* is one of the most comprehensive retrospective exhibitions of the artist's work ever presented globally and the largest ever mounted in Australia. The exhibition traces her entire career – from her childhood in the 1930s through to the present-day – through a rich selection of works drawn from the artist's personal collection and premier institutions across Japan and Australia. Featuring painting, sculpture, collage, fashion, video and installation, the exhibition reveals the astonishing breadth of Kusama's multidisciplinary practice.

Born in Japan in 1929, Kusama is one of the world's most important and recognised practitioners working today. She is renowned globally for her singular and idiosyncratic use of pattern, colour and symbols to create immersive, thought-provoking and intensely personal works of art that transcend language and borders. She has made indelible contributions to key art movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including minimalism, pop art and feminist art.

A major highlight of the exhibition will be an impressive assembly of Kusama's iconic immersive installations, including her infinity rooms that ingeniously use mirrors to create the visual illusion of infinite space. A new, never-before-seen kaleidoscopic infinity mirror room, currently in development especially for the exhibition, will make its global premiere in Melbourne.

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The exhibition also includes the Australian debut of *Dancing Pumpkin*, a towering 5-metre-tall bronze sculpture newly acquired by the NGV. Conceived by the artist in 2020, *Dancing Pumpkin* takes her iconic motif into new and surprising conceptual terrain and allows audiences to walk under the towering sculpture. The exhibition also features the Australian premiere of *THE HOPE OF THE POLKA DOTS BURIED IN INFINITY WILL ETERNALLY COVER THE UNIVERSE*, 2019, which visually entangles viewers within 6 metre-high tentacular forms covered in yellow-and-black polka dots.

A further highlight will be the presentation of *Narcissus Garden*, a new iteration of the installation Kusama first presented unofficially at the Venice Biennale in 1966. This installation comprises more than 1400 stainless silver balls, each 30cm in diameter and presented en masse as visitors enter the Gallery. As the metallic spheres reflect one another, they create an infinitely recurring landscape that envelops the spectator. Referencing the Greek myth of Narcissus, who was so captivated by his own reflection in a body of water that he drowned in it, the installation offers the viewer a multitude of reflections in which to be visually absorbed. The NGV will have an opportunity to acquire this work for its Collection through the 2024 Annual Appeal, which invites philanthropic donations of any size.

NGV International's public spaces will also be transformed by Kusama's signature polka-dots, extending the sensory experience of Kusama's work beyond the exhibition galleries to include a site-specific artwork for the NGV's iconic Waterwall and an installation of enormous balloons that will float playfully over visitors' heads in NGV International's Great Hall, titled *Dots Obsession*.

Through rarely seen materials drawn from the artist's own archive, including photographs, film, letters, magazines, posters and other ephemera, the exhibition also emphasises Kusama's radical performance art, fashion designs and activism of the late-1960s. In a space evoking Kusama's New York studio, the exhibition will reveal how Kusama's psychedelic parties and events – known as “happenings” – became vehicles for the exploration of radical ideas, such as sexual liberation. Also on display will be more than 20 experimental fashion designs first created by Kusama during this period.

**Steve Dimopoulos, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, said:** ‘We're proud to back the NGV's summer blockbuster exhibition with world-renowned contemporary Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama set to draw big crowds with her vibrant and diverse works that will feel right at home in Melbourne. This must-see exhibition will attract visitors from around Australia and beyond – boosting our businesses and supporting local jobs.’

**The Hon. Colin Brooks, Minister for Creative Industries, said:** ‘Another coup of our creative state, this summer's Yayoi Kusama exhibition at NGV will be an experience not to be missed. Bright, bold and fun for all ages, this will be the largest exhibition of works by the iconic Japanese artist ever to be held in Australia. It's a world premiere, and the only place you'll be able to experience it is in Melbourne at the National Gallery of Victoria.’

**Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said:** ‘There are few artists working today with the global presence of Yayoi Kusama. This world-premiere NGV-exclusive exhibition allows local audiences and visitors alike the chance to experience Kusama's practice in deeper and more profound ways than ever before.’

‘We are indebted to Yayoi Kusama for her passion and collaboration on this special project. Without the artist's personal dedication to this exhibition – and excitement to share her worldview with Australian audiences – none of this would be possible,’ said Ellwood.

Following a thematic chronology, the exhibition will begin by showcasing Kusama's early works, including sketches, drawings and paintings produced during the late 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s in her hometown of Matsumoto and following her move to the United States in 1957. These will be presented alongside early family and personal photographs, offering a candid insight into the artist's early life. A selection of the artist's renowned *Infinity Net* paintings of the late 1950s and 60s, and her *Accumulation* sculptures and fashion of the 1960s and 1970s will be highlights of the first half of the exhibition. Also on display will be archival materials pertaining to her socially engaged and politically charged performance and studio-based activities of the period.

The second half of the exhibition will highlight Kusama's iconic pumpkin-inspired works, large scale paintings and sculptures made over the past four decades, and an extensive presentation of the artist's celebrated room installations, which invite viewers to immerse themselves within a range of environments created by the artist as portals to existential reflection and the infinite.

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The NGV's dedicated free children's galleries will present **Kusama for Kids** which will feature a renowned Kusama artwork to create immersive experiences for kids. Alongside a suite of NGV-curated public programs presented throughout the exhibition, including NGV Friday Nights, NGV will partner with Asia TOPA, Australia's major triennial festival of Asia Pacific performance, to co-present a series of events during the 2025 festival.

Alongside the work presented in collaboration with the NGV and the artist, significant loans will come from Ota Fine Arts, as well as major Japanese and Australian museums including The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art; Chiba City Museum of Art; The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo; Iwami Art Museum, Shimane; The Meguro Museum of Art, Tokyo; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane and private collections, including the Kim and Lito Camacho collection and the Daisuke Miyatsu Collection.

*Yayoi Kusama* will be on display from 15 December 2024 to 21 April 2025 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Entry fees apply. For first access to tickets, sign up to the NGV eNews here: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/newsletters). General sale tickets will be available from Monday 22 April via the NGV website.

The exhibition opening will coincide with the NGV Gala, an annual event, on Saturday 14 December 2024. NGV Gala information is available [here](#).

@ngvmelbourne #NGV #NGVKusama

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#### IMAGES:

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/clfo860vqysp221xbvy5ljxu4/ABO2leJ18ttfcpVe\\_YdVw\\_s?rlkey=4iqehaypnsq06nqt6712rdlpf&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/clfo860vqysp221xbvy5ljxu4/ABO2leJ18ttfcpVe_YdVw_s?rlkey=4iqehaypnsq06nqt6712rdlpf&dl=0)

**IMAGE CAPTION:** Portrait of Yayoi Kusama c. 1939 © YAYOI KUSAMA; Yayoi Kusama © YAYOI KUSAMA Photo by Yusuke Miyazaki. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts; Yayoi Kusama *Pumpkin* 1981. Collection of Daisuke Miyatsu © YAYOI KUSAMA; Installation view of Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity mirror room – Phall's Field* 1965 at the Castellane Gallery, New York/ Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts and Victoria Miro © YAYOI KUSAMA ; Installation view of Yayoi Kusama's *Flower Obsession* 2017 on display in *NGV Triennial* from 15 December 2017 – 15 April 2018 at NGV International Melbourne. Image courtesy of NGV; Yayoi Kusama *The obliteration room* 2002–present. Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art © YAYOI KUSAMA Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts; Installation view of Yayoi Kusama's *Chandelier of grief* 2016/18 at Tate Modern, London. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts and Victoria Miro © YAYOI KUSAMA

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For their support of *Yayoi Kusama* we acknowledge:

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For their support of *Kusama for Kids* we acknowledge:

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