



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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Kusama paints the town pink: More than 60 trees along St Kilda Road, Melbourne to be wrapped in custom artwork by Yayoi Kusama in celebration of NGV-exclusive exhibition

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



27 November 2024: In celebration of the National Gallery of Victoria's (NGV) world-premiere blockbuster exhibition *Yayoi Kusama*, more than 60 plane trees along St Kilda Road in front of NGV International will be wrapped in a pink-and-white polka-dot design developed especially for Melbourne by the artist. The artwork, *Ascension of Polka Dots on the Trees*, is one of several FREE artworks that visitors can experience beyond the walls of the exhibition, alongside a site-specific artwork created for NGV International's waterwall, polka-dotted inflatables in the Great Hall, and a children's exhibition.

Extending Kusama's kaleidoscopic worldview beyond the walls of the NGV, *Ascension of Polka Dots on the Trees* will envelop the trees along Melbourne's iconic grand boulevard. Kusama initially presented *Ascension of Polka Dots on the Trees* at the Kirishima Open Air Museum in Japan in 2002 where she displayed red-and-white trees, but for Melbourne she has created a special iteration in a bold pink-and-white polka-dotted fabric.

Nearby, NGV International's glass waterwall will be covered with a pink-and-black polka dot design, enticing visitors into Kusama's creative world through this iconic Melbourne entryway. Inside NGV International, visitors will also encounter *Narcissus Garden*, 1966/2024, a new iteration of the installation Kusama first presented unofficially at the Venice Biennale in 1966. This installation comprises 1400 silver balls, each 30cm in diameter and presented en masse as visitors enter the building. This sea of mirrored spheres will be presented in front of the waterwall and parts of Federation Court, creating a reflective landscape that envelops the spectator. 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.

Also in Federation Court, visitors will discover a towering 5-metre-tall bronze pumpkin sculpture newly acquired by the NGV. Twisting under the skylit atrium, *Dancing Pumpkin*, 2020, is one of Kusama's largest and most ambitious imaginings of her beloved pumpkin motif to date. Whereas her earlier pumpkin sculptures have typically static, solid bases, *Dancing Pumpkin* has eleven leg-like sections – all but three hover above the ground, suggesting joyous movement.

In the Great Hall, there will also be a presentation of *Dots Obsession*, originally conceived by the artist in 1996. Hanging overhead and beneath Leonard French's iconic cut-glass in Great Hall, this spectacular work features large yellow-and-black inflatable vinyl spheres covered in the artist's signature polka-dot pattern. For Kusama, dots symbolise both the individual and, when presented in great numbers, the cosmos.

Also on display in the NGV's FREE children's gallery is *The Obliteration Room*, 2002–present, a large-scale, interactive installation that invites audiences of all ages to transform a stark white domestic interior into a kaleidoscope of coloured dots. Throughout her career, Kusama has used dots and other repetitive forms to cover many different surfaces and fill entire rooms. She calls this process 'obliteration', a concept that underpins much of the artist's practice, and involves fragmenting something in order to return it to the universe. In this work, Kusama invites kids and their families take part in this process of obliteration by adding bright, colourful dots to the white furniture, objects and surfaces of the work's interior.

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Steve Dimopoulos, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, said: 'Yayoi Kusama is set to draw big crowds with her vibrant and diverse works – visually spectacular and creatively executed within the gallery walls, but also drawing people in with the addition of these free public activations. We're proud to back the NGV's summer blockbuster exhibition – one that feels right at home in Victoria – a state that is 'Every bit different.'

Colin Brooks, Minister for Creative industries, said: 'The NGV is taking audiences of all ages on a whirlwind Kusama adventure this summer – from the delightful polka-dot transformation of trees outside the gallery to a 5-metre tall *Dancing Pumpkin* sculpture and more – there are plenty of free and fun experiences for people of all ages to enjoy, and that's before they step into the exhibition.'

Nina Taylor, Member for Albert Park, said: 'We're proud to back the NGV's summer blockbuster - *Yayoi Kusama* – one of the largest ever showcases of the iconic artist's work, and an enticing addition to Melbourne's jam-packed calendar of events.'

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV said: 'We're delighted to be able to extend our exhibition experience beyond the walls of the gallery and share Kusama's creativity with as many visitors as possible through these free, accessible and all-ages artworks. We're grateful to Kusama for helping us to make her Melbourne retrospective exhibition a cultural event like no other.'

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.

Yayoi Kusama will be on display from 15 December 2024 to 21 April 2025 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Entry fees apply. Tickets and information are available via the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.com.au)

@ngvmelbourne #NGV #NGVKusama

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IMAGES:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/860vqysp221xbvy5ljxu4/ABO2leJ18ttfcpVe_YdVw_s?rlkey=xmia0vtnjloa9g8t83tbw6aly&st=y4wfkdf&dl=0

IMAGE CAPTION: Yayoi Kusama's *Ascension of Polka Dots on the Trees*, 2002/2024, on display along St Kilda Road, Melbourne for the National Gallery of Victoria's *Yayoi Kusama* exhibition until 21 April 2025. © YAYOI KUSAMA. Photo: Tobias Titz

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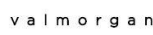
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