



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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Kimberley couture: Peggy Griffiths and Cathy Ward create two breathtaking gowns as part of NGV's biennial Indigenous Fashion Commission



18 December 2024: Two couture gowns by Miriwoong artists Peggy Griffiths and Cathy Ward were unveiled on the red carpet of the NGV Gala on Saturday 14 December 2024. Drawing inspiration from the sacred native plants that are central to life and culture in the Kimberley, Western Australia, the garments were created as part of the NGV's biennial Indigenous Fashion Commission, supported by philanthropist Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family and Vogue Australia, and will enter the NGV's permanent collection.

Griffiths' design, *Jilinybeng Jardang (Bush Cucumber and Spinifex)*, 2024, draws upon the interrelationship of bush tuckers, such as the bush cucumber, a recurring motif in her art-making practice. The bush cucumber and spinifex are both indicative of the wet season in the Kimberley. Griffiths' sculptural construction of the bush cucumber envelopes the garment, showcasing the multisensory prowess of Country. This gown embodies both her family's deep cultural knowledge and unbreakable connection to the land in the Kimberley, where Griffiths lives and works.

Cathy Ward, Griffiths' granddaughter, has designed a garment that pays tribute to the boab tree, a powerful symbol of the Kimberley. In the region's arid, dry climate, boab trees serve as natural reservoirs, storing water within their thick trunks. For Indigenous communities, these trees carry deep cultural meaning, representing both physical and spiritual nourishment.

Peggy Griffiths is a founding member of Waringarri Aboriginal Arts and has worked at the centre since 1985. Her practice spans carving, painting, printmaking, textile and fashion design. As part of the Indigenous Fashion

Commission, Griffiths has mentored her granddaughter, Cathy Ward, who is a multidisciplinary artist and board member for Waringarri Aboriginal Arts.

Both garments were realised with the support of seamstresses Sally Jackson and Lynelle Flinders, facilitated by First Nations Fashion + Design, led by Grace Lillian Lee.

The garments were worn on the NGV Gala red carpet by emerging First Nations models Lisa Fatnowna and Charvarnie Walsh.

The NGV's Indigenous Fashion Commission invites First Nations artists and designers to create couture garments for the NGV's permanent collection, showcasing Indigenous designers on the national and international stage. The project first launched in 2022 with a gown designed by Julie Shaw, a Yuwaalaraay designer, in collaboration with Bula'Bula weavers Evonne Munuyngu, Lisa Lalaywarra Gurrulpa, Serena Gubuyani, Mary Dhapalany, and Margaret Djarbalarbal Malibirr from Ramingining, Western Arnhem Land.

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: 'Pairing grandmother with granddaughter, the 2024 Indigenous Fashion Commission is a resplendent celebration of First Nations couture that shares important stories and motifs from the designers' Country in the Kimberley. We are indebted to Krystyna Campbell Pretty and Family, whose passionate support of the NGV's Fashion and Textiles collection has been truly transformative in recent years.'

The garments will go on display at NGV International in February 2025.

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IMAGES:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/w1apik1bza90dsy6iqim5/AlyjSDSnyD_6OCV0mwwbw4c?rlkey=a1vhh0a5mlxz7vo0mzar1m3jk&st=btcgkebm&dl=0

IMAGE CAPTION: Charvarnie Walsh, Cathy Ward, Peggy Griffiths, Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Lisa Fatnowna attend the NGV Gala 2024. Charvarnie Walsh wears Cathy Ward's Indigenous Fashion Commission garment and Lisa Fatnowna wears Peggy Griffiths' design, *Jilinybeng Jardang (Bush Cucumber and Spinifex)*, 2024 for the Indigenous Fashion Commission. Photo: Getty

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