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YALINGWA SERIES

A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness Announcing the inaugural Yalingwa exhibition

7 July – 16 September, 2018

The significance of family, community and humour in contemporary Aboriginal life will be celebrated in the inaugural Yalingwa exhibition, *A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness*, which opens on 7 July at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA).

Curated by Hannah Presley, the exhibition will feature 10 new commissions from artists from south-east Australia and beyond, in an exploration of everyday life and experiences of Aboriginal people today. Country music icons, queer identity, pop-culture and community leadership are referenced, as well as the legacy of ancestors and the importance of coming together to strengthen identity and connection in this new major exhibition, the first in the Yalingwa visual arts initiative.

A Victorian Government initiative, Yalingwa is a partnership between Creative Victoria, ACCA and TarraWarra Museum of Art, designed to support the development of outstanding contemporary Indigenous art and curatorial practice. It includes three new curatorial positions and three major exhibitions alternating between ACCA and TarraWarra, focused on new commissions by contemporary Indigenous artists.

Minister for Creative Industries Martin Foley said: “Strengthening and promoting contemporary Aboriginal art and creative expression in Victoria is the number one action of our Creative State strategy, and the Yalingwa initiative is an important part of our commitment.”

“Yalingwa is a Woiwurrung word meaning ‘day’ and ‘light’, and this exhibition signifies a new dawn for First Nations art in Victoria, and beyond. It celebrates the exemplary creative talent and collaborative power of local First Nations artists through ten new projects that together reflect the rich, vibrant and diverse nature of contemporary Aboriginal culture.

“Yalingwa is more than just an exhibition, it’s an investment in the talent, ideas and careers of the participating artists and the future of First Nations art, culture and creativity in Australia.”

Artists and projects included in *A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness* include:

Benita Clements is a Western Arrernte artist from Hermannsburg, based in Alice Springs, NT. Clements is the daughter of artist Gwenda Namatjira and great-granddaughter of Albert Namatjira. Clements will present a new suite of watercolours in the form of autobiographical tableau, narrating her daily life, family, hunting and painting.

Vicki Couzens is a Gunditjmara and Keerray Woorroong artist from the Western districts of Victoria. Couzens is a multi-disciplinary artist focused on strengthening her language and culture. Couzens' new commission will incorporate a soundscape sharing a nostalgia for home, family and a nice cup of tea.

Robert Fielding is a Western Aranda and Yankunytjatjara artist from Mimili community on the Anangu Pitjatjantjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, SA. Fielding's artistic practice revolves around the collision of cultures, interpreting the space in between by drawing on his family and community as inspiration. Fielding has created a new photographic essay for the exhibition which re-contextualises everyday objects.

Jonathan Jones is a member of the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations of South-east Australia, based in Sydney, NSW. Jones creates site-specific installations engaging with the current and historical experiences of place, making connections that honour both contexts. Jones' new commission subtly acknowledges 60,000 years of connection by evoking a sense of nostalgia and celebrating a commonly known, native, seed-eating parrot.

Vincent Namatjira is a Western Arrernte artist from Indulkana on the APY Lands, SA. Namatjira is the great grandson of Albert Namatjira and it was this connection that encouraged him to paint. Namatjira's paintings connect people from now with historical figures such as Vincent Lingiari and Captain Cook, drawing on humour and the unexpected to tell their stories.

Yhonne Scarce belongs to the Kothaka and Nunuku peoples of South Australia. Scarce explores the political nature and aesthetic qualities of glass, referencing the ongoing effects of colonisation on Aboriginal people. Scarce honours her ancestors with her new work, presenting them with intricate hand-crafted gifts.

Peter Waples-Crowe is a Ngarigo visual and performance-based artist living in Melbourne. Waples-Crowe creates bold colourful work that discusses the representation of Aboriginal people in popular culture, often referencing the dingo as an analogy for Indigenous peoples. Waples-Crowes' new commission explores his emerging role as a queer Elder in the Aboriginal community.

Lisa Waup is a Gunditjmara and Torres Strait Islander artist based in Melbourne. Waup melds traditional art forms and methods with a contemporary practice to create distinctively original weavings and works on paper. Waup's new work is a collection of whimsical figures that highlight her affinity with weaving.

Kaylene Whiskey is a Yankunytjatjara artist from Indulkana community on the APY Lands, SA. Whiskey paints colourful, happy portraits of the famous music and film stars she admires, telling stories of her family, friends and Country. Whiskey has created a new series which illustrates the story of the seven sisters.

Tiger Yaltangki is a Yankunytjatjara artist from Indulkana community on the APY Lands, SA. Yaltangki's paintings are a bold and bright blending of the Pitjantjatjara Mamu (supernatural spirits) and rock and roll icons from pop culture. Yaltangki's new commission is a further exploration of his unique visual language.

Alec Baker, Peter Mungkuri and Mr Kunmanara Pompey are three senior artists and respected leaders from Indulkana community on the APY Lands, SA. As young men, they were renowned stockmen and in 2017 they coordinated a men's camp at the local cattle station. Influenced by their ongoing love for cowboy and western films and country music, they created their own spaghetti western. Titled *Never Stop Riding*, this special short film will be screened as part of the exhibition.

Max Delany, ACCA's Artistic Director and CEO, notes: 'Building on ACCA's commitment to supporting the practice of First Nations artists and curators, we are delighted to have welcomed Hannah Presley as the inaugural Yalingwa Curator at ACCA. Drawing on her extensive knowledge of contemporary Indigenous practice nationally, Hannah has brought together a wonderful group of artists, and we are especially excited to see the unfolding of their new work as a result of the Yalingwa Commissions.'

The Yalingwa initiative also includes three generous one-year Artist Fellowships of \$60,000 for senior South East Australian First Nations artists who have made an important contribution to the development of Indigenous cultural expression. The inaugural Fellowship will be announced at the opening of *A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness* on Friday 6 July.

A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness, curated by Hannah Presley
7 July – 16 September, 2018

Artists: Alec Baker, Benita Clements, Vicki Couzens, Robert Fielding, Jonathan Jones, Peter Mungkuri, Vincent Namatjira, Mr Kunmanara Pompey, Yhannie Scarce, Peter Waples-Crowe, Lisa Waup, Kaylene Whiskey, Tiger Yaltangki

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