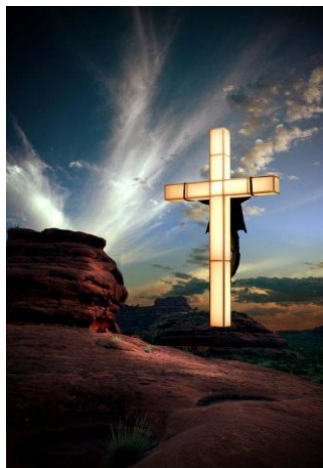


Media Release: 14 January 2013

**New exhibition presents indigenous views from across Australia –
Over 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to show in Auckland**



Warwick Thornton, *Stranded 2011*, 3D digital video - full image credit below

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is bringing the largest and most significant exhibition of contemporary Indigenous Australian art yet seen in New Zealand to Auckland with *My Country: Contemporary Art from Black Australia* from Friday 28 March.

My Country showcases the breadth of recent work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, and the connections the artists have with their land and nation, or 'country'. Highlighting the many relationships to place and sparking debate as to the politics of land, *My Country* celebrates the powerful art of Indigenous Australians today. The exhibition comes to New Zealand thanks to support from the Australia Council for the Arts.

The exhibition has been selected from the collections of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane for Auckland Art Gallery, the only venue outside Australia to present these works. *My Country* offers alternative views of Australian history seen through the eyes of artists, and creative perspectives on contemporary life. Nearly 100 works by over 40 artists, such as Vernon Ah Kee, Richard Bell, Bindi Cole, Fiona Foley, Mirdidingkingathi Juwarrnda Sally Gabori, Tony Albert and filmmaker Warwick Thornton present personal, ancestral and indigenous perspectives on their past and present relations with the vast expanse of the Australian continent. In sensitive and provocative works, the artists convey the stories and experiences of Black Australia through drawings, photographs, film, carvings, paintings and installations.

Included with *My Country* is *Kangaroo Crew*, a Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Children's Art Centre exhibition developed in collaboration with Indigenous Australian artist Gordon Hookey, from the Waanyi people. The free and family-friendly *Kangaroo Crew* explores the artist's story of four kangaroos whose home on a sacred hill is threatened by the arrival of myna birds. *Kangaroo Crew* offers young visitors the opportunity to engage with the story through an animated film, hands-on and multimedia activities, and paintings by the artist.

Auckland Art Gallery Director, Rhana Devenport, says, 'Auckland Art Gallery has a strong commitment to supporting indigenous art and artists, as seen through our collection of Māori and Pacific art and through our exhibitions programme.'

'*My Country*, however, is the first exhibition of Indigenous Australian contemporary art of this depth and scale in New Zealand. This exhibition not only strengthens our leadership in fostering and promoting indigenous art, but also deepens our relationships with other leading galleries throughout the Asia Pacific region. The expansion of the exhibition through film, discussion and the interactive artist project for children and families will offer rich experiences for visitors.'

Auckland Art Gallery Principal Curator, Zara Stanhope, says, '*My Country* offers fresh insights into Indigenous Australia and the creativity of its artists. Visitors to the exhibition will be moved and stimulated by the art, and surprised at the wide range of content in the exhibition.'

'While New Zealanders are familiar with Māori culture, many of us don't know Indigenous Australia. This exhibition reveals the individual and collective experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in ways that are personal and political. The art in this exhibition will be new, but has resonances with history and life in New Zealand. It's important we recognise these artists and the relevancy of their message in Australia and within an international context.'

In addition to the Indigenous Australian art shown in *My Country*, indigenous New Zealand works feature permanently at Auckland Art Gallery as part of its collection show, *Toi Aotearoa*. Māori art also takes centre stage in 2014 in *Five Māori Painters*, an upcoming exhibition scheduled to coincide with *My Country*. This important exhibition of contemporary art traces the development of Māori painting from the 1970s to the present day, surveying the work of Kura Te Waru Rewiri, Saffronn Te Ratana, Robyn Kahukiwa, Emily Karaka and Star Gossage. *Five Māori Painters* is open from 23 February – 20 June 2014 and entry is free.

My Country: Contemporary Art from Black Australia is a Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Touring Exhibition. The presentation of *My Country* in Auckland and the visit of exhibiting artists has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its funding and advisory body.

Adult admission to *My Country* is \$15 on weekends and \$10 on weekdays. Children 12 years and under are given free entry. Entry to the *Kangaroo Crew* Children's Art Centre exhibition is free. *My Country* opens Friday 28 March and closes on Sunday 20 July 2014. Auckland Art Gallery is open daily from 10am – 5pm, except for Christmas Day.

- ENDS -

Exhibition partners:



Australian Government



Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is part of:



Image credit:

Warwick Thornton

Kaytej people

Australia NT b.1970

Stranded 2011

3D digital video: 11:06 minutes, colour, sound, 16:9 widescreen, ed. 1/5

Commissioned by the 2011 Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund

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