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Art  
Gallery  
NSW

## Media release

### New era begins as Art Gallery of New South Wales expansion opens this Saturday



Aerial view of the Art Gallery of New South Wales' new SANAA-designed building, 2022, photo © Iwan Baan

An exciting new era in the cultural life of Australia begins this Saturday 3 December, as the Art Gallery of New South Wales' new building opens with over 15,000 people already registered to visit over the opening weekend.

The new standalone building – designed by Pritzker Prize–winning architects **Kazuyo Sejima** and **Ryue Nishizawa** of **SANAA** – is the centrepiece of the expansion, the most significant cultural development to open in Sydney in nearly half a century. The completion of the project creates a new art museum campus comprising two buildings connected by a public art garden on Gadigal Country overlooking Sydney Harbour.

NSW Premier **Dominic Perrottet** said: 'The Art Gallery will shortly open the doors of an extraordinarily beautiful, expanded and enhanced public institution to people from across New South Wales, Australia and the world.'

'Central to every decision made in the development and design of this project and at the heart of the NSW Government's investment has been an unwavering focus on supporting access to art of a world-leading standard, education opportunity without limit and community enrichment with tangible benefit.'

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Arts, Regional Youth and Tourism **Ben Franklin** added: 'The NSW Government is proud to be leading the way in arts and culture investment to deliver this once-in-a-generation project, which will yield incredible benefit for people across NSW. The Art Gallery is an institution with a truly ambitious vision, supporting partnerships, educational programming, sector connections and leadership. This is "Art for all" to inspire joy, connection and enrichment.'

Together with the NSW Government's \$244 million in funding, the Art Gallery has raised more than \$100 million from private donors to support the expansion, a once-in-a-generation cultural investment. It is the largest government and philanthropic arts partnership of its kind to be successfully achieved in Australia.

Art Gallery of New South Wales director **Michael Brand**, who has overseen the Art Gallery's transformation for the past decade, said: 'Our vision has been to transform the Art Gallery into an art museum campus with seamless connections between art, architecture and landscape. I am incredibly proud to now be welcoming visitors to our expansion, which has such a strong sense of place and such an innovative display of art. With the support of the NSW Government, our donors, staff, artists and a wide community of supporters, our vision is now a reality. This is especially significant given the challenges we faced during the past three years of construction with the impact of bushfires, the global pandemic and record-breaking rainfall.

'From our dazzling new stage, we now offer even more art experiences worthy of our location, our history, the many who have contributed to our development over the past 151 years and the many who will look to us for joy, inspiration and insight in the coming decades,' Brand said.

Located in one of the world's most beautiful cultural precincts, the SANAA-designed building, with **Architectus** as executive architects, has multiple sightlines to its parkland and harbour surroundings. It is the first public art museum in Australia to achieve a 6-star Green Star design rating.

Architectural features include three limestone-clad art pavilions that gently step down towards the harbour; 250 metres of rammed earth wall over two levels made with material sourced from across NSW; and 3400 square metres of accessible roof 'art terraces' and courtyards. New art spaces include a column-free gallery, a gallery for time-based art, and adaptive re-use of a decommissioned Second World War naval fuel bunker, now known as the Tank, a 2200-square-metre space that is one of Australia's most unique art destinations.

SANAA principals Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, who this year were awarded the Praemium Imperiale award for architecture, said: 'It has been a wonderful honour to design such an important public building in Sydney. Working closely with the Art Gallery of New South Wales team, we aimed to design an art museum building that is harmonious with its surroundings, one that breathes with the city, the park and the harbour. We hope it will be a special place where visitors feel connected to art wherever they are in this beautiful setting.'

The expansion almost doubles exhibition space for the display and enjoyment of art. It also creates a prominent new destination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, with a larger dedicated space to showcase the Art Gallery's internationally renowned collection. Yiribana, meaning 'this way' in the Sydney language, is the first gallery visitors encounter when they enter the new building.

**Maud Page**, the Art Gallery's deputy director and director of collections, said: 'An Indigenous lens is held up across our displays as they powerfully herald new art histories to be written from here. Our curatorial narratives are amplified through networks connecting the urgent social issues that motivate artists in the 21st century, including gender, race, the value of labour, and a strong concern for the precariousness of the natural world.'

From Saturday, a free opening program of exhibitions, collection displays and new commissions, featuring works by over 900 artists from around the world, will be open across the Art Gallery's two buildings and outdoor spaces, to celebrate this historic moment for a much-loved public institution.

The celebrations will continue for nine days, from 3 to 11 December, with a curated program of talks, workshops, special performances and music, including a nightly drone show designed by Kamilaroi artist **Reko Rennie**, and a free concert in the Domain on 10 December featuring **Ellie Goulding**, **Meg Mac** and **Electric Fields**.

As part of the celebrations, the Art Gallery will extend its opening hours at both buildings until 10pm each night. For more information and to book tickets, [visit the Art Gallery website](#).

The new building has been delivered by **Infrastructure NSW** on behalf of the government and the Art Gallery and built by **Richard Crookes Constructions**.

## HIGHLIGHTS:

### ART

- From 3 December, a free program of exhibitions, collection displays and new commissions, featuring works by over 900 artists from around the world, will open across the new art museum campus.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is front and centre, with the Yiribana Gallery elevated from the lowest level of the original building to a larger dedicated space on the ground level of the new building. Indigenous Australian art is also displayed throughout the new and original buildings.
- New exhibitions include [\*Dreamhome: Stories of Art and Shelter\*](#), [\*Making Worlds\*](#), [\*Outlaw and Adrián Villar Rojas: The End of Imagination\*](#).
- There are more works by women artists than men displayed in the new building, and greater gender parity has been achieved in displays in the original building.
- The expansion includes the largest commissioning program in the Art Gallery's 151-year history, featuring nine major new site-specific works by Australian and international artists: **Lorraine Connelly-Northey, Karla Dickens, Simryn Gill, Jonathan Jones (scheduled for completion in mid 2023), Yayoi Kusama, Lee Mingwei, Richard Lewer, Lisa Reihana and Francis Upritchard.**
- From 3 to 11 December the Art Gallery will be open until 10pm and host free opening celebrations including a concert in the Domain headlined by Grammy-nominated international pop star Ellie Goulding, supported by Australian artists Meg Mac and Electric Fields; a nightly drone show over Woolloomooloo Bay created by Kamilaroi artist Reko Rennie; a series of conversations with artists, creatives and thought leaders; and a series of special performances.

### ARCHITECTURE

- The centrepiece of the Art Gallery's transformation is a spectacular new building designed by Pritzker Prize-winning Japanese architects SANAA, with Australian practice Architectus as executive architect.
- The new building almost doubles the space for exhibitions and features different types of spaces for new ways of thinking and new forms of art. These include the Tank, an adaptive re-use of a 2200-square-metre former Second World War fuel bunker; a 1100-square-metre column-free gallery for contemporary art; and a gallery for time-based art.
- Architectural features include three limestone-clad art pavilions that gently step down towards the harbour; 250 metres of rammed earth wall over two levels made with material sourced from across NSW; and a double-height atrium in the centre of the building reaching over 11 metres at its highest point.
- Indoor and outdoor areas of the new building are seamlessly integrated with more than 3400 square metres of accessible roof 'art terraces' and courtyards.
- The Art Gallery's original building has been revitalised by Australian architectural firm **Tonkin Zulaikha Greer (TZG)** with a full reinstallation of collection displays, an upgraded Members Lounge, and the addition of Australia's first children's art library situated alongside the new Edmund and Joanna Capon Research Library and the National Art Archive.

### LANDSCAPE

- Australian landscape architects **McGregor Coxall** and landscape architect **Kathryn Gustafson** with Seattle firm **Gustafson Guthrie Nicol (GGN)** led the design of landscape and civic spaces for the campus.
- Linking the two buildings, the new public Art Garden includes a major art commission by Wiradyuri and Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones, *bíal gwiýúño (the fire is not yet lighted)*, scheduled to open mid-2023.
- Other landscape features include **Joseph Beuys'** newly re-instated environmental artwork *7000 oaks – city forestation instead of city administration 1982–87* on Art Gallery Road, between the two buildings, and an enhanced landscape with over 50,000 plants and 70% more trees than existed on the site before construction.
- Kathryn Gustafson redesigned the forecourt of the original building with two black granite reflecting pools, new landscaping, seating and shade to create an expanded civic area.

### SUSTAINABILITY

- The new building is the first public art museum in Australia to achieve a 6-star Green Star design rating.
- 100% of the new building's energy needs are powered by renewable energy, with more than 10% of energy needs generated by solar panels on the Entrance Pavilion roof.
- Rainwater capture and harvesting for re-use in irrigation and cooling towers.
- More than 8000 square metres of green roof and landscaped areas are planted with Australian native species.

## Assets for media

### Media contacts

Sophie Tedmanson  
Communications manager  
61 434 996 833  
[sophie.tedmanson@ag.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sophie.tedmanson@ag.nsw.gov.au)

Stephanie Pirrie  
Communications specialist  
61 430 517 722  
[Stephanie.pirrie@ag.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Stephanie.pirrie@ag.nsw.gov.au)

James Ricupito  
Communications advisor  
61 466 894 044  
[James.ricupito@ag.nsw.gov.au](mailto:James.ricupito@ag.nsw.gov.au)



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### Strategic partner



### About the Art Gallery of New South Wales On Gadigal Country

The Art Gallery of New South Wales acknowledges the traditional custodians of the Country on which it is located, the Gadigal of the Eora nation, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. From its magnificent site in Sydney, the Art Gallery is one of Australia's flagship art museums and the state's leading visual arts institution. Its mission is to serve the widest possible audience as a centre of excellence for the collection, preservation, documentation, interpretation and display of Australian and international art, and a forum for scholarship, art education and the exchange of ideas. As the Art Gallery prepares to open its significant expansion on 3 December, it remains committed to making art a vital part of everyday life.

The transformation of the Art Gallery – the Sydney Modern Project – is creating a new art museum experience across two buildings connected by a public art garden in one of the world's most beautiful cultural precincts. The Art Gallery's new building, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects SANAA with Architectus as executive architect, brings together art, architecture and landscape in spectacular new ways with dynamic galleries and seamless connections between indoor and outdoor spaces. It will be a new prominent destination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture. Together with the NSW Government's \$244 million in funding, the Art Gallery has raised more than \$100 million from donors to support the project, which has been delivered by Infrastructure NSW and built by Richard Crookes Constructions. [artgallery.nsw.gov.au](http://artgallery.nsw.gov.au)