

## Desert Lines

**An exhibition of batiks that celebrates the genesis of Indigenous women's art practice opens at Bendigo Art Gallery on 17 August.**

*Desert Lines: Batik from Central Australia* brings together around 60 selected works from the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, each illustrating the unique and distinct batik styles of five central desert communities: Ernabella, Fregon, Utopia, Yuendumu and Kintore.

Batik – a method of wax resist fabric printing – was first introduced to Indigenous women in 1971 and each of the five desert communities has approached the medium in artistically distinct ways.

This exhibition will highlight the significance of batik work for women of the desert and enable links to be made between batiks and paintings of Pitjantjatjara, Anmatyerr, Alyawarr, Walpiri and Pintupi artists. It will also reveal differences in iconography, subject matter, palette and approaches to the hot wax and painting mediums across time and space.

As senior curator of Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria **Judith Ryan** states, 'batik was instrumental in the awakening of central desert women – the hitherto sleeping giants of the Aboriginal art world – as creators and inventors in new materials'.

Batik served as a prelude to painting on canvas at Indigenous art centres across the desert. Many of the women who worked in the medium went on to become renowned painters, including Emily Kam Ngwarray, Peggy Napurrula Poulson, Tjunkaya Tapaya, Unurupa Kulyuru and Tjunkiya Napaltjarri.

'During the 1970s and 1980s batik failed to reach the Australian art market or excite public imagination because of its recognition as 'craft' work. As a result, the artists were liberated to take risks producing batiks of unexpected colours and designs,' said **Shonae Hobson**, First Nations Curator of Bendigo Art Gallery.

Desert women are interconnected through ceremony, constant travel and closeness to their traditional country. Their art in any medium is empowered

by an understanding of sacred sites and the ancestral world. Batik making has been joyously embraced because it affords women an opportunity to meet, exchange stories, sing and make art. It parallels their painting up big for *inma*, *awely* and *yawulyu* ceremonies, telling sand stories, going hunting and sharing bush foods.

**Desert Lines: Batik from Central Australia**

**An NGV (National Gallery of Victoria) Touring Exhibition in association with Bendigo Art**

**17 August – 17 November, 2019**

**Bendigo Art Gallery**

**A free exhibition**

**[www.bendigoartgallery.com.au/desertlines](http://www.bendigoartgallery.com.au/desertlines)**

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