



Artback NT

OUR CHOIR HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRAVELLING

ABOUT ARTBACK NT

WHO WE ARE

Artback NT is the Northern Territory's leading arts development and touring organisation. For 30 years, we have connected people and place through the arts, supporting artists and communities across the Territory and beyond. We work across multiple art forms from visual arts, performing arts, music, to dance, to bring high-quality, culturally rich experiences to audiences in remote, regional, and urban locations.

WHAT WE DO

- **Touring:** We develop and deliver national and Territory-wide tours of exhibitions, performances, and workshops.
- **Artist support:** We collaborate with artists to create new work, offering professional development and production support.

- **Community engagement:** We prioritise meaningful engagement with communities, especially First Nations communities, ensuring cultural integrity and local relevance.
- **Partnerships:** We work with galleries, venues, and organisations across Australia to ensure successful delivery and audience reach.

OUR ROLE IN THIS EXHIBITION

Artback NT is proud to lead the national tour of this exhibition. Our team is responsible for:

- Coordinating logistics and scheduling with participating galleries
- Providing curatorial and technical support
- Managing freight, insurance, and installation
- Supporting marketing and audience development
- Ensuring artist and community engagement throughout the tour

This exhibition reflects our commitment to showcasing diverse voices and stories of the Northern Territory, and we are excited to bring it to audiences across the country.

NATIONAL TOURING NETWORK

Artback NT is the Northern Territory representative on the National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Australia group. This national network comprises representatives from six other states and territories, working collaboratively to deliver best-practice touring exhibitions of contemporary visual culture to remote and metropolitan communities throughout Australia. As part of NETS Australia, Artback NT contributes to a shared vision of cultural exchange, accessibility, and excellence in visual arts touring.

Michelle Bell, CEO

Roni Judge, Visual Arts Manager

www.artbacknt.com.au

EXHIBITION OUTLINE

Our Choir Has Always Been Travelling is a touring exhibition currently in development. It celebrates the Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir through the stories and artworks of six choristers who are also leading visual artists from Hermannsburg Potters and Tangentyere Artists.

Presented through ceramics, paintings, film, and ephemera, the exhibition offers a rich, multi-sensory experience that speaks to cultural resilience, artistic innovation, and the deep interconnection between music, language, and visual storytelling.

This project is led by the Artback NT, in partnership with the participating artists and their communities, and independent curator and arts worker Eloise Lindeback. It is being developed for national audiences, supporting the creation and touring of high-quality exhibitions that reflect Australia's cultural diversity and regional excellence.



Above: Nyinta Donald.
Image courtesy of
Tangentyere Artists

Cover image: *Our Choir Has Always Been Travelling*, 2025 film still.
Image courtesy the artists, Tangentyere Artists,
Hermannsburg Potters, and studio peeki

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Ntaria Choir and the broader Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir are widely recognised for their unique blend of Western choral traditions and Aboriginal languages. Emerging from the Lutheran missions of Hermannsburg (Ntaria) and surrounding communities, their story is one of cultural resilience, spiritual strength, and innovation.

The exhibition draws on the artistic talents of six choristers who are also established visual artists. Their dual roles as musicians and creators inform the exhibition's unique voice, blending visual storytelling with song, memory, and place.

This project is artist-led and community-driven, prioritising First Nations leadership, cultural integrity, and the protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). It celebrates the creative agency of women as cultural custodians and intergenerational knowledge holders.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Co-curated by Judith Pungarta Inkamala, Marjorie 'Nunga' Williams, and Eloise Lindeback, this exhibition celebrates the remarkable international story of the world-renowned Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir. Mapping the choir's many journeys and transformative iterations, the project highlights its lasting impact on both members and audiences across generations.

"It's important for us choir mob to share this story. Long time this choir story. From mission day to now, some ladies like Marjorie even still singing. I been travel a lot with choir, South Australia, New South Wales, Western Australia, Northern Territory. I went with Morris around Australia; I travel for singing. We feel proud, sharing Western Aranda songs and this special thing from Ntaria. In exhibition we can share a lot of story with our pots and painting and our animation".

Judith – Curator

"I was in the choir for a long time singing. I was in Tangentyere Artists for a long-time painting. This will be my first time curating".

Marjorie – Curator



Rona Rubuntja.
Image courtesy of
Hermannsburg Potters



Choir in front of the Pioneer Tours bus.
Image courtesy of Mrs Olga Radke
and David Roennfeldt

HISTORY & FUTURE

A central theme of the exhibition is *History & Future*. The story begins in the Mission Days, when choir members first translated and performed 400-year-old German hymns in Western Arrarnta during the early-mid 20th century. From these beginnings, the exhibition traces key milestones: early visits to neighbouring remote communities for choir festivals, the 1961 tour across the South Australia and Victoria, and the 1993 album recording in Tamworth, Australia's country music capital. It also celebrates the choir's current stature as a world-class ensemble, performing to international acclaim in the USA and Europe. Looking forward, the exhibition reflects on the interests of the next generation and considers how these evolving perspectives will shape the choir's enduring legacy.

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Another key theme is *Language & Culture*. The exhibition foregrounds the breadth of musical and visual arts talent among the featured artists, while also exploring the profound intersections of language and spirituality at the heart of the choir's practice. It examines the merging of traditional Aboriginal cultural expression with Christianity, revealing a unique dialogue between worlds. As artist and curator Judith Pungurta Inkamala explains: "*Aboriginal way, ceremony and singing, it is different to the choir, but that is our culture too.*"

VOICES AT THE CENTRE

As a chorist- and artist-led project, the curatorial approach is centred on honouring the voices of past and present choir members and championing the perspectives of the exhibiting artists. Drawing on extensive historical archives alongside lived experiences, the exhibition weaves together personal reflections and collective memory to tell a story that is both intimate and expansive.

Snippets of the choir's story have been told through creative projects such as the 2017 documentary *The Songkeepers*, and Olga Radke's 2021 publication *Choir Tour Diary*, resources which will support the project development. However, this project will be the first in the exhibition format, the first to map the story of the choir from beginning to now, and more importantly, will be the first project led by members of the choir.



Our Choir Has Always Been Travelling, 2025 film still. Image courtesy the artists, Tangentyere Artists, Hermannsburg Potters, and studio peeki

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

HERMANNSBURG POTTERS

Established in the 1990s, the Hermannsburg Potters are a dedicated group of Western Aranda artists, renowned for their spherical pots embellished with landscape painting and figurative sculptures. From their studio in Ntaria (Hermannsburg), NT, the artists create work which expresses their collective and individually lived experiences in their distinct Country. The Hermannsburg Potters' enduring success comes from their continuing inventiveness, sharing knowledge of Country in new ways.

GWEN INKAMALA

Gwen Inkamala is a leader of the Ntaria (Hermannsburg) community and long-time member of the famous Ntaria Ladies Choir and Central Australian Women's Choir. Inkamala is an accomplished painter and ceramicist with the Hermannsburg Potters.



JUDITH PUNGARTA INKAMALA



Judith Pungarta Inkamala is the Chair and a senior member of Hermannsburg Potters, having joined the founding group of artists in the 1990s. In her renowned ceramics works, Judith depicts her lived histories and distinct Western Aranda Country. Her work is held in major collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, National Gallery of Victoria, National Gallery of Australia, and notably her large-scale pot 'Desert Choir' is held by Araluen Arts Centre. She has been selected as a finalist in major awards including the NATSIAAs and Wynne Prize and invited to present work internationally in Indonesia and China.

ANITA MBITJANA RATARA



Anita Mbitjana Ratara is a prolific artist, having worked with Hermannsburg Potters for close to 30 years. As a Traditional Owner for Palm Valley, Anita often depicts her Country in her work, home of the Wily Wagtail Dreaming, who turned into a stone in the desert. Her works are held in private and public collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, National Portrait Gallery, National Gallery of Victoria, among others.

Left: Judith Pungarta Inkamala
Above: Anita Mbitjana Ratara with her daughter Hayley Panangka Coulthard
Images courtesy of Hermannsburg Potters

TANGENTYERE ARTISTS

Established in 2005, Tangentyere Artists is an Aboriginal owned, not-for-profit enterprise for Town Camp Artists in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), NT. Tangentyere is an Arrernte word meaning coming together, working together, and the member artists are from several different Countries and language groups. Through their practice, Tangentyere Artists communicate stories about their history, identity, families and lives. They aim to highlight the everyday experience of Aboriginal people in Central Australia through painting their diverse and shared memories.

MARJORIE NUNGARRAYI WILLIAMS



Marjorie Nungarrayi Williams, known by close relations as 'Nunga', is a senior Western Aranda Woman heavily respected in her community. Since joining Tangentyere Artists in 2017, Nunga has developed a sought-after style of figurative landscape painting, depicting memories of her early years on Country. She has recently authored and illustrated a children's book with Magabala Books, was a finalist in the National Emerging Art Prize, and was invited to present for the 3rd and 4th National Indigenous Art Triennials at the National Gallery of Australia.

BETTY CONWAY



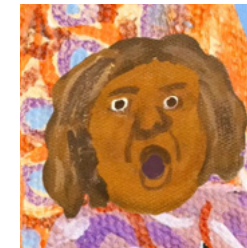
Betty Conway joined Tangentyere Artists in 2006 and has since forged a distinctive style of figurative landscape painting, using rich colours to create illustrative works telling her stories of Country. Conway's work is held by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, Artbank and Araluen Arts Centre as well as in many private collections.

LIZZIE TOPSY TOPORA JAKO



Lizzie Topsy Topora Jako is a senior Western Aranda woman strong in her commitment to Western Desert Women's Law. She is renowned for figurative landscape paintings of Iwupataka (Jay Creek), Urrampinyi (Tempe Downs) and the neighbouring Ukaka Community. She has exhibited work at major public institutions including the National Gallery of Australia, and Araluen Arts Centre.

N. DONALD PEIPEI



N. Donald Peipei (1946-2024) is a celebrated artist who worked with Tangentyere Artists for many years. Through her work she depicted the transition of the 'old days', in-between days' and 'new days' of her Country, Kaltukatjara/Docker River, NT. Her work is held by the Art Gallery of South Australia, Artbank and in the Slattery Collection. Notably, her 2023 paintings, both titled 'Our Aboriginal Women's Choir', were selected for the Sulman and NATSIAA prizes.



Anita Mbitjana Ratara.
Image courtesy of
Hermannsburg Potters

ARTWORKS

Final object list TBC

Artworks including Judith Inkamala's Desert Choir (previously exhibited at Araluen Arts Centre) and N. Donald's Our Aboriginal Women's Choir (2023 Sulman Finalist).

- **Ceramics:** including choir-themed vessels and sculptural representations (e.g., choir bus).
- **Paintings:** featuring representations of choir performances on country and around the world.
- **Film:** Animated short Our Choir Has Always Been Travelling (10 minutes) plus archival choir footage.
- **Objects:** Handmade choir uniforms and archival items such as songbooks and tour programs, requiring secure display cases - subject to availability.

PRODUCER / PROJECT INFORMATION

HISTORY AND CREDENTIALS

Judith Pungarta Inkamala and Marjorie 'Nunga' Williams are senior artists and choristers with decades of cultural knowledge, their leadership and curatorial experience bring rich cultural connection, humour and creativity.

Eloise Lindeback has extensive experience in community-based visual arts, curation, arts writing, and project coordination, particularly within Central Australian Indigenous art centres and public galleries.



Top: 1967 album cover front and back. Image courtesy of David Roennfeldt

Bottom: Judith Inkamala Image courtesy of Hermannsburg Potters



SIGNIFICANCE

CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

- **Celebrates Indigenous Language and Music:** The Ntaria Choir and Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir have translated and sung 400-year-old German hymns in their own languages, preserving and revitalising Indigenous languages through music.
- **Community Storytelling:** The exhibition is told through the voices and artworks of six Aboriginal women artists, who are also choristers. This dual role enriches the narrative with lived experience and cultural authenticity.
- **Cross-Cultural Exchange:** The choir's international tours (USA, Europe, Australia) highlight the global resonance of Indigenous Australian culture and its ability to connect across borders. This exhibition could be an opportunity to showcase the strength of First Nations cultural development to countries across the globe.



Dawn Wheeler/
Rona Rubuntja.
Image courtesy of
Hermannsburg Potters



Judith Inkamala.
Image courtesy of
Hermannsburg Potters

ARTISTIC IMPORTANCE

- **Multidisciplinary Approach:**
The exhibition includes paintings, ceramics, film, and archival footage. The animated short film, co-written and illustrated by the artists, is a central piece that blends visual art with storytelling.
- **Renowned Artists:** Featuring works by Judith Pungarta Inkamala, Anita Mbitjana Ratara, Marjorie Nungarrayi Williams, Betty Conway, Lizzie Topsy Topora Jako, and N. Donald artists from Hermannsburg Potters and Tangentyere Artists whose practices are widely respected in contemporary Indigenous art.



Top left: 1993 Ntaria Choir at Hadley Studios in Tamworth NSW. Image courtesy of David Roennfeldt

Top right: Judith Inkamala. Image courtesy of Hermannsburg Potters

Bottom: Betty Conway. Image courtesy of Tangentyere Artists

AUDIENCE RELEVANCE

- **Representation and Pride:** The exhibition celebrates Aboriginal women's voices, language, and creativity, fostering a sense of pride and recognition.
- **Cultural Connection:** It offers a platform for intergenerational storytelling and cultural continuity.
- **Innovative Format:** The blend of ceramics, animation, and archival footage appeals to those interested in contemporary and experimental art forms.
- **Artist-Led Narratives:** The exhibition foregrounds the artists' own voices, offering authenticity and depth.
- **Mission History:** It provides insight into the legacy of Lutheran missions and their impact on Aboriginal communities.
- **Unique Musical Fusion:** The choir's reinterpretation of German hymns in Aboriginal languages showcases a rare and moving musical tradition.
- **Global Reach:** The choir's international tours highlight the universal appeal of their music.
- **Emotional Storytelling:** The personal and communal stories are accessible and moving, even for those unfamiliar with the cultural context.
- **Visual Appeal:** The vibrant ceramics, paintings, and engaging animation make the exhibition visually captivating.



Left: Marjorie Williams.
Image courtesy of
Tangentyere Artists

Right: Lizzie Jako.
Image courtesy of
Tangentyere Artists

EXHIBITION DETAILS

Proposed national tour from July 2028

AUDIENCE & ENGAGEMENT

This exhibition is designed to engage a wide cross-section of Australian audiences, from regional communities to major metropolitan centres. It offers rich opportunities for:

- First Nations engagement and community-led storytelling
- Education and curriculum alignment (history, music, art)
- Public programming including performances, artist talks, and workshops pending funding
- Intergenerational learning and cultural exchange

COST

\$5 - 6k

CONTACT INFORMATION

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