



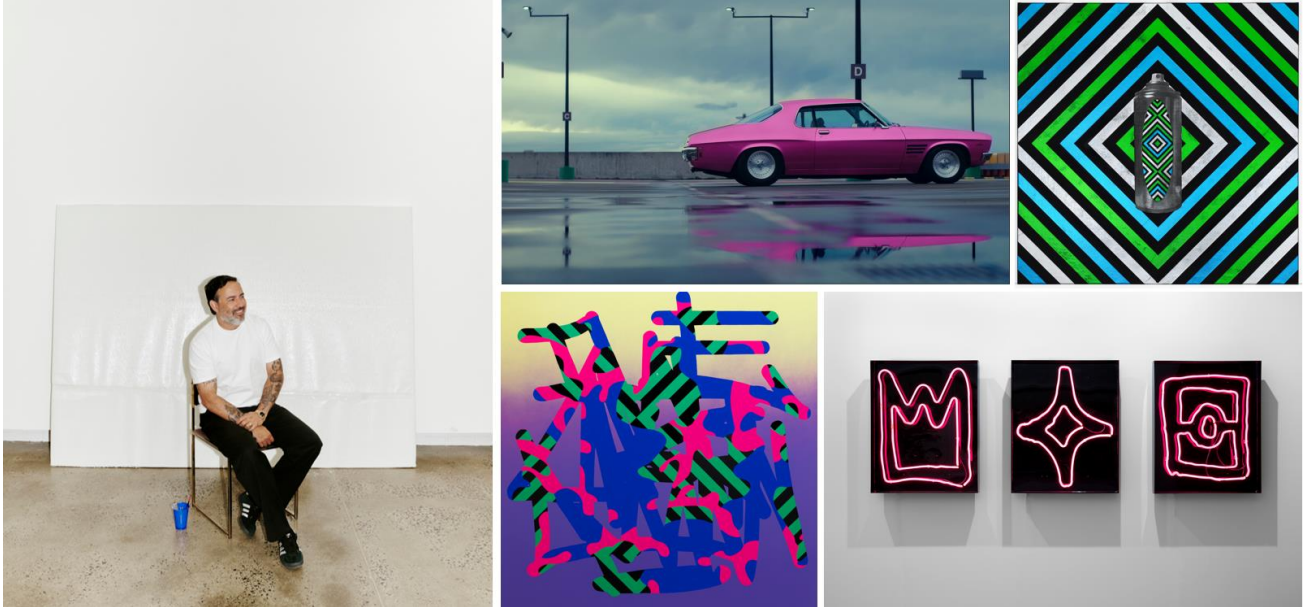
## MEDIA RELEASE

### NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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## **REKOSPECTIVE: The Art of Reko Rennie**

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia | 11 October 2024 to 27 January 2025 | FREE



**5 August 2024:** Featuring a 15-metre-wide light sculpture and a Rolls Royce covered in bold pink and black camouflage, **REKOSPECTIVE: The Art of Reko Rennie** is the artist's largest presentation of work to date and his first-ever retrospective exhibition.

With more than 100 works on display - including recent acquisitions and new, never-before-seen bodies of work - the exhibition charts the entirety of Rennie's more than two-decade long career, inviting audiences to explore his powerful responses to specific histories, cultures and materials.

Introduced to graffiti culture at a young age, Rennie is globally renowned for his distinctive style and visual language that integrates street art principles with contemporary art forms and traditional Kamilaroi designs in his practice. By merging traditional Kamilaroi diamond-shaped designs, hand-drawn symbols and repetitive patterning with contemporary mediums, such as print making, sculpture, video, painting and neon, the artist seeks to subvert romantic ideologies of Aboriginal identity.

Rennie has exhibited widely across Australia, Asia, the United States and Europe, including in *Personal Structures: Crossing Borders* at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015 and with the 2016 XIII Bienale de Cuenca in Ecuador. The artist committed to his art practice full time in 2008, and in the same year received the prestigious Victorian Indigenous Art Award, going on to be held in major State collections and receive significant public art commissions across Australia.

Key exhibition highlights include the NGV debut of *REMEMBER ME*, 2020, a monumental text-based light work spanning more than 15 metres. Commissioned by Carriageworks and acquired by the NGV, *REMEMBER ME* responds to the 250th anniversary of Lieutenant James Cook's first landfall at Botany Bay, and is considered a present-day memorial in recognition of the frontier wars, during which many Aboriginal communities experienced massacre, displacement and dispossession.

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Also on display is the three-channel film, *Initiation OA\_RR*, 2021, in which a pink 1973 Holden Monaro cruises the urban landscapes of Rennie's youth in Melbourne's west. At an open tarmac, he puts the customised Monaro through a series of burnouts, referencing 'Westie' drag-racing culture, First Peoples initiation practices and the traditional sand engraving motifs of the Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi people. The film is accompanied by an original operatic score composed and performed by Yorta Yorta woman, composer and soprano, Deborah Cheetham AO.

*Initiation OA\_RR* 2021 builds upon the visuals and themes of *OA\_RR*, 2016, which features the artist driving a Rolls Royce customised in one of his renowned camouflage designs. The usual function of camouflage is rendered obsolete through a bold palette of pink, black and beige, asserting Rennie's visibility and presence as he carves through the red desert landscape of Kamilaroi Country – a site of displacement and invisibility, powerfully reclaimed. Both the video and Rolls Royce car will be on display, allowing visitors to further appreciate the artist's interest in materiality from hard-edge finishes to repurposed materials, and the influence of subcultures, such as Australian car culture.

*REKOSPECTIVE* represents the full scope of Rennie's artistic career, from a selection of his earliest paintings that translate the language of street art onto canvas, to works charting the development of his distinctive Original Aboriginal camouflage designs. The exhibition includes early bronze sculptures, prolific steel totems and new works employing marble and light, which together demonstrate Rennie's capacity to apply his distinctive style to new and surprising materials and subject matter.

Largely autobiographical, Rennie's practice explores his own lived experiences navigating contemporary society, art spaces, politics and culture as a First Nations person. His practice contributes to, and advocates for the relationship between First Peoples identity and contemporary art, provoking broad yet nuanced discussions surrounding the legacy of Australia's colonial history.

**Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV said:** 'Starting out as a street artist, Reko Rennie is today one of Australia's most respected contemporary artists. Over the last two decades, Rennie has developed an instantly-recognisable signature style that amalgamates his Aboriginal heritage with a bold contemporary point of view. We are delighted to be sharing the work of this renowned Melbourne-born artist in his first-ever retrospective at an Australian public institution.'

*REKOSPECTIVE: The Art of Reko Rennie* is on display from 11 October 2024 to 27 January 2025 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia at Fed Square. Entry is FREE. For further information, please visit the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au)

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#### IMAGES:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/t7r39gybjmrrh9saryzm4/AJqdNW3gnkiUvYXasv3fUNc?rlkey=jd8aeakbeadibd11s7e0a58w&dl=0>

**Image credit:** Clockwise from left: Reko Rennie. Photo: Jo Duck; **Reko Rennie** *Initiation\_OA\_RR* 2021 © Reko Rennie; **Reko Rennie** *Message Stick (Green)* 2011 National Gallery of Australia, Kamberrri / Canberra. © Reko Rennie; **Reko Rennie** *Regalia* 2013 © Reko Rennie, courtesy blackartprojects, Melbourne; **Reko Rennie** *I WEAR MY OWN CROWN* 2022 © Reko Rennie. Image courtesy STATION Naarm / Melbourne

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**Rekospective: The Art of Reko Rennie** is made possible with the generous support of our partners:

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