



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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Australian First Nations artist Dhambit Mununggurr presents first European solo exhibition at the Australian Embassy in Paris curated by NGV

The Earth is Blue: The Art of Dhambit Mununggurr | Australian Embassy in Paris | 25 Oct 2024 – 31 March 2025 | Free



7 November 2024: Celebrated for her innovative compositions that incorporate vibrant shades of acrylic blue paint, Dhambit Mununggurr is one of Australia's most daring and inventive contemporary painters. *The Earth is Blue: The Art of Dhambit Mununggurr* (*La Terre est bleue: L'art de Dhambit Mununggurr*), curated by the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in partnership with Buku Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre and opening 25 October 2024 at the Australian Embassy in Paris, presents a new series of works on paper that reflect the cultural memories and experiences of the artist's life in her home Community at Yirrkala, in northeast Arnhem Land.

Before Dhambit Mununggurr, no Yolŋu artist had painted with the colour blue. It is customary for Yolŋu artists who paint Country, and the stories that it holds, to only use materials collected from Country, such as ochre, bark and earth pigments. However, following an accident in 2005 that left Mununggurr with an acquired brain injury and physical disabilities, she was given special permission within her Community to work with acrylic paint, which she found easier to manipulate as they do not require hand-grinding. This sparked her unprecedented – and now iconic – exploration of the colour blue, in all its shades.

The exhibition includes 20 world-premiere works on paper – all commissioned especially for this presentation by the NGV. The works are painted with spontaneous energy that reimagine the spiritual and physical properties of sacred totems, places and symbols. In Mununggurr's works, these stories are powerfully transformed through her groundbreaking use of acrylic paint and colour. This exhibition marks Mununggurr's first time working with paper as a medium, expanding her practice beyond her previous works on bark and board.

Highlight works include *Turtle Hunters*, 2024, which depicts five Yolŋu people floating on the ocean in a canoe alongside turtles, sharks and dolphins. The dolphins in Mununggurr's work likely reference a true event where her grandfather, Mungurrawuy, became adrift at sea when the tide swept his canoe away. On the verge of death, he was supported by dolphins who helped him return to his canoe, making dolphins especially significant to Dhambit and her family.

Gurtha (Fire), 2024, represents the Gumatj miny'tji (sacred design) that embodies gurtha (fire). The Gumatj language, Dhuwalandja, is itself known as the 'tongue of flame' and is believed to incinerate dishonesty. As with much of Mununggurr's work, this depiction of flame is characterised by the artist's spontaneity and gesture. Horizontal and vertical lines are abstracted into bold geometric shapes, representing the different intensities of flame, smoke and ash.

This is the fifth exhibition presented by the NGV at the Australian Embassy in Paris and builds on the success of previous exhibitions, including *Blak Rainbow: L'Art de Dylan Mooney* (2023), *Maree Clarke – Rituel et Cérémonie: Extrait de Mémoires Ancestrales* (2022), *DESTIN: L'Art de Destiny Deacon* (2022) and *Gothique Blanc: Petrina Hicks* (2021).

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Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: ‘Dhambit Mununggurr is globally renowned for her striking and colourful works of contemporary art. Through her work, Dhambit propels the timeless cultural traditions, stories and motifs of the Yolŋu people into the twenty-first century, revealing a cyclical history of Indigenous Australian art that is at once ancient and modern.’

The Earth is Blue: The Art of Dhambit Mununggurr is on display from 25 Oct 2024 – 31 March 2025 at the Australian Embassy in Paris, 4 Rue Jean Rey, Paris, France. For more information, please visit the NGV [website](#) and Australian Embassy [website](#).

The exhibition is presented by the Australian Embassy in Paris in partnership with the National Gallery of Victoria and Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre, Northern Territory, and has been curated by Myles Russell-Cook, Senior Curator of Australian and First Nations Art, NGV.

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IMAGES: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/8ofz0j3hhm63n89jhofl/AMtqZ6C-uy4W4PYPRAsiHuA?rlkey=r2hg1n3dfawax1ipzf6ak5x3e&st=sn0q7q92&dl=0>

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Image credit: Installation view of *The Earth is Blue: The Art of Dhambit Mununggurr* at the Australian Embassy in Paris. Photo: Andrew McLeish; Installation view of *Dulk II 2024* on display in *The Earth is Blue: The Art of Dhambit Mununggurr* at the Australian Embassy in Paris, Photo: Andrew McLeish; **Dhambit Ruypu Mununggurr, Turtle Hunters, 2024**, acrylic paint on paper, 81.5 x 121 cm, Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, © Dhambit Ruypu Mununggurr, courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre; Installation view of *The Earth is Blue: The Art of Dhambit Mununggurr* at the Australian Embassy in Paris. Photo: Andrew McLeish