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**'THE INSIDE WORLD: CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN MEMORIAL POLES' STANDS AS A POWERFUL METAPHOR FOR THE CROSSING OF CULTURES**

This third and final major touring exhibition of contemporary Aboriginal Australian works from the Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection is the culmination of a dozen years resulting in sixteen museum exhibitions.



**Reno, Nev. (January 19, 2019)** – Over the past three years, contemporary Aboriginal Australian works from the Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection have been touring museums across the United States, leaving an indelible mark upon thousands of people and helping to drive the international market for Aboriginal painting within the context of contemporary art. This January, another extraordinary grouping of works from the collection will start their journey through North America. ***The Inside World: Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Memorial Poles from the Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection*** presents 94 memorial poles by 49 artists from remote Aboriginal communities in the tropical northern region of Australia known as Arnhem Land. Traditionally, these poles—named *lorrkkon* in the west and *Jarrakitj* in the east—marked the final point in Aboriginal mortuary rites. Today, these poles are made as works of art. *The Inside World* begins its four-venue tour at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, where it will be on view January 19 through June 23, 2019.

The artists included in the exhibition are some of the most respected contemporary artists working in Australia today. These include John Mawurndjul, who was recently honored with a retrospective at the Museum Tinguely in Basel, and Djambawa Marawili, whose work has been included in the Moscow, Istanbul and Sydney Biennales. Yet, it is not art world acclaim that these artists seek. The power of their work comes from its desire to communicate the persistence and beauty of Aboriginal culture to the world, to scratch beneath the surface and show what hides there.

These artists, and the many others featured in the exhibition, were commissioned by Debra and Dennis Scholl to make almost one hundred memorial poles. Over a decade of collecting Aboriginal art, the Scholls moved into working directly with local Aboriginal art centers to commission new works that were often of a far-larger scale than the artists had tackled before.

"Twelve years ago we set out with the immodest goal of changing the western world's view of where these Aboriginal Australian artists belong in the canon," Dennis Scholl said. "I am not sure we have succeeded yet, but I know my life has been changed forever."

***The Inside World: Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Memorial Poles from the Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection*** is accompanied by a publication of the same name, edited by Henry F. Skeritt, Curator of Indigenous Arts of Australia at the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, who has assisted Debra and Dennis Scholl in developing all three exhibitions from their Aboriginal Australian art collections: *The Inside World*; *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia*, and *No Boundaries: Aboriginal Australian Contemporary Abstract Painting*. With contributions by Murray Garde, Louise Hamby, Howard Morphy, Kimberley Moulton, Diana Nawi, Wukun Wanambi, and David Wickens, the catalogue explores the complex histories of memorial poles in Australia.

In former times, poles similar to the ones included in this exhibition—known as *lorrkkon*, *dupun*, or *larrakitj*—were used to house the bones of the deceased. Traditionally, interment in a memorial pole marked the final point in a long and complex mortuary process designed to guide the spirit of the deceased on its final journey. It signified the moment when spirits were considered to have finally returned to their ancestral homes—when they had left all vestiges of the mundane "outside" world and become one with the "inside" realm of the ancestral world.

As works of art, these poles become a powerful metaphor for the ability of Aboriginal art to cross cultures, to speak of the secret "inside" world within the mundane outside of the artworld. They are not ritual objects in themselves, but metaphors for the crossing of cultures: spirit vessels designed to hint at the existence of the elusive world of ancestral energy that permeates through all things.

***The Inside World: Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Memorial Poles from the Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection*** opens at the Nevada Museum of Art in January, and will tour a total of four venues in the United States:

- Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV: January 19, 2019 – June 23, 2019
- Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI: July 18, 2019 – December 29, 2019
- Fralin Museum of Art, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA: January 24, 2020 – June 28, 2020
- Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum, Florida International University, Miami, FL: July 2020 – December 2020

Drawn from the collections of Miami-based collectors and philanthropists Debra and Dennis Scholl, *The Inside World* is the third touring exhibition of their Aboriginal art collections, following the successful exhibitions *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artist from Aboriginal Australia*, and *No Boundaries: Aboriginal Australian Contemporary Abstract Painting*, which toured to 12 museums in North America. All three exhibitions are organized by the Nevada Museum of Art.

Access high-resolution images and captions, as well as a PDF of the publication: <http://bit.ly/SchollMemorialPoles>

### **Nevada Museum of Art Feature Program**

The Nevada Museum of Art will honor *The Inside World* by facilitating a dialogue between two of the artists in the exhibition and leading experts in the field. ***The Inside World: Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Memorial Poles – A Panel Discussion*** takes place Friday, February 15, and features artists Gunybi Ganambarr and Barayuwa Mununggurr from Buku-Larrnggay; Henry Skeritt, Curator of Indigenous Arts of Australia at the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia; and Will Stubbs, Director of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre. This important discussion will be moderated by William L. Fox, Director of the Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art.

To recognize the Scholls in perpetuity, the Nevada Museum of Art has established The Debra and Dennis Scholl Distinguished Speaker Series to present prominent visiting speakers on contemporary art and visual culture. This ongoing series is a fitting association as the Scholls continue to encourage Museums to push the boundaries in the art world.

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**The Nevada Museum of Art** is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the Reno-based institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally-recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Ugo Rondinone, and Trevor Paglen. Learn more at [nevadaart.org](http://nevadaart.org).