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**INSPIRED BY EXPANSION:  
NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART ANNOUNCES MAJOR GIFT FROM *THE ROBERT KAPLAN AND MARGARET LEVI COLLECTION***

*Work from the Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi Collection includes works by over 50 artists working from over 20 different geographic areas that collectively celebrate contemporary Australian Aboriginal art and makes the Nevada Museum of Art one of few institutions in North America to have a concentration of contemporary Aboriginal art.*

**Reno, NV (January 23, 2024)** – For several decades, Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan have long been fascinated with Australian Aboriginal art—yet, unlike many fascinations, this one has grown into a prestigious, museum-quality collection that offers a glimpse into rural, Aboriginal artists who are producing contemporary works. Today, the Nevada Museum of Art announces a major gift of 72 works of art from this esteemed collection—celebrated for its diverse holdings of contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art from a range of media—to become a part of the Museum’s *Robert S. and Dorothy J. Keyser Art of the Greater West Collection*.

“The Kaplan and Levi Collection of Cotemporary Aboriginal Art is well-known and for good reason—the Seattle Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art have both displayed paintings from this collection, which can only be described as monumental—both in scale and ambition. As a world-class Museum interested in works from the geographical super-region we refer to as ‘the Greater West,’ the Nevada Museum of Art provides a meaningful context for these extraordinary works,” said David B. Walker, CEO of the Nevada Museum of Art. “The addition of these works will deepen the exploration and study of the Greater West. This is a gift of substantial importance that adds significantly to the breadth and depth of the Museum’s permanent collection.”

Works from their collection will be featured in two upcoming exhibitions at the museum, one of which will be entirely devoted to this transformational gift. “We are thrilled to be able to learn from these exceptional objects and to incorporate them into exhibitions that explore larger dialogues of contemporary art, abstraction, global Indigenous movements, and the environment, among other subjects. We are honored to be stewards of this collection,” said Apsara DiQuinzio, senior curator of contemporary art.

The gift coincides with the major expansion project currently underway at the Nevada Museum of Art. In addition to an expanded library increasing access to archives, a dedicated art and architecture bookshop and a rooftop sculpture garden, the expansion project will increase exhibition space from 15,000 to nearly 30,000 square feet for the ongoing display of the permanent art, archive and library collections.

### **About Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi**

Kaplan and Levi have been long-time trustees of the Seattle Art Museum and have made substantial gifts of their collection to that museum, as well as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Their collection was put on display in 1996 and the Seattle Art Museum continues to maintain a gallery devoted to their gifts. Their commitment to the field of contemporary, rural Aboriginal art is demonstrated by their generosity in gifting the Nevada Museum of Art with works from their groundbreaking collection, placing the Museum in the distinguished company of few other museums in the United States with substantial collections of Australian Aboriginal artwork.

“Our romance with Australian Aboriginal art began more than thirty years ago. Both of us grew up with art in our lives, thanks to mothers who believed in owning it and in supporting the institutions that displayed it. Both of us had collected contemporary art prior to our marriage in 1990, and Margaret had already acquired a small collection of Australian art during her regular visits to universities there. Our common commitment emerged during our first joint visit to Sydney in 1991, when we bought two pieces.... [That year] we committed ourselves to developing a museum-quality collection,” said Robert Kaplan.

Since 1990, the two Seattle collectors have been focused on collecting Aboriginal art from across the continent of Australia, visiting with artists, curators, scholars and dealers who have all made contributions to contemporary Aboriginal art. Their many visits to the continent include meaningful explorations of the arts and culture; the couple experience the desert and the tropics, observing the landscape, fauna and flora depicted in the artworks they collect.

It is important to Kaplan and Levi to know the works in their collection as intimately as possible, and that the works explore aspects of nature, the elements, and its relationship to time in the ancestral landscape. “Each year we return to Australia to explore its art and train our eyes and open our minds,” said Margaret Levi. “We have been privileged to meet many of the artists whose works are represented [in the collection.] Some meetings have been in the cities... but we have also arranged expeditions to their traditional lands, which is the source of their inspiration. We’ve enjoyed the kangaroos, honey ants, witchetty grubs, mud crabs and love mussels our hosts have hunted, gathered and shared with us. They have also shared their ritual songs, stories and dances, and their personal experiences of atomic testing and of initial contact. Such experiences enrich our understanding of the work and its production.”

### **Kaplan and Levi Gift Highlights**

This consequential gift to the Nevada Museum of Art includes over 50 artists working from over 20 different geographic areas. Artists represented in this significant gift include legends such as Gloria Petyarre, Eubena Nampitjin, Elizabeth Nyumi, Paddy Fordham, Queenie McKenzie, Ginger Riley Munduwalawala, Polly Napangardi, and George Ward (among others.) The gift also includes artists of a younger generation who have already been recognized on an international stage, including Christine Yukenbarri, Gunybi Ganambarr, Djambawa Marawlli, and Lloyd Kwilla.

Notably, the gift includes twenty-one paintings by artists from the Balgo Hills, making the Nevada Museum of Art one of few institutions (if not the only) in North America to have a concentration from that regional area. Other geographic strengths in this group include artists from Utopia, Yuendumu, Kintore, and Papunya.

### **Robert S. And Dorothy J. Keyser Art of the Greater West Collection**

In 2012, the Museum defined the Greater West as a “super region” which broadens conventional definitions of the West by expanding the scope of the collection’s geographic emphasis to encompass a region generally bounded from Alaska to Patagonia and from Australia to the United States intermountain West. This is a geography of frontiers characterized by large expanses of open land, enormous natural resources, diverse Indigenous peoples, colonization, and the conflicts that inevitably arise when all four of those factors exist in the same place at the same time. The Kaplan and Levi gift joins the

collection, which contains nearly 90 works of contemporary Aboriginal Australian works previously donated by Debra and Dennis Scholl.

## **\$60 Million Museum Expansion Project: Expanding Horizons**

Despite a population of three million people, Nevada has only one accredited art museum to serve its citizens. As such, the Museum has both urgent and an ongoing need that must be addressed to accommodate the education and research programs that benefit the state's rapidly growing population.

To meet these needs, we have implemented a strategic plan with three goals:

- **Establish** an Education and Research Center to serve students, educators, scholars and the community.
- **Build** upon the established endowment to ensure financial stability and operating support.
- **Increase** the number of galleries dedicated to the permanent collections.

The expansion project not only increases gallery space for the Museum's permanent collections but also provides enhanced access to the vast art, archive, and library collections through a renovated and expanded Center for Art + Environment. This new space will allow visitors to delve deeper into the Museum's rich collection and discover new connections between art and the environment. The Center supports the practice, study and awareness of creative interactions between people and their natural, built and virtual environments, with many of its archives and collections from more than 1,000 artists and organizations working on all seven continents.

*Image captions: Gloria Petyarre. Aknangkere Growth, 1998. Acrylic on canvas, 64 15/16 x 93 3/4 in. (165 x 238 cm), Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi. © Copyright Agency. Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, 2023. Photo: Zocalo Studios. Eubena Nampitjin. Nr. Jupiter Well, 1995. Acrylic on linen, 70 15/16 x 47 1/4 in. (180 x 120 cm), Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi. © Eubena Nampitjin / Copyright Agency. Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, 2023. Photo: Zocalo Studios.*

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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 statewide 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, Great Basin Native Artists Archive, Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen's *Orbital Reflector*. Learn more at [nevadaart.org](https://nevadaart.org).

### **Land Acknowledgement**

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the *Wa She Shu* (Washoe), *Numu* (Northern Paiute), *Newe* (Western Shoshone), and *Nuwu* (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 28 tribal nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.