

Reno Museum to Steward One of the Country’s Largest Aboriginal Art Collections

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Gloria Petyarre, *Aknangkere Growth*, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 64.9375 x 93.75 in. 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.

The Nevada Museum of Art in Reno has received two major donations of Aboriginal and Native American artworks as part of its ongoing \$60 million expansion project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2025 and will nearly double the size of the museum's building and galleries.

The museum acquired seventy-two artworks by more than fifty Aboriginal artists from the collection of the philanthropists Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan, including works by George Ward, Gloria Petyarre, Eubena Nampitjin, and other contemporary artists from regions that are still lesser-known to foreign audiences, like the Balgo Hills in Western Australia.

The Kaplan-Levi collection of Aboriginal art spans more than 500 works that the couple has amassed since the 1990s, some of which are also held by the Seattle Art Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which presented the acclaimed exhibition *On Country: Australian Aboriginal Art from the Kaplan-Levi Gift* in 2017.

Some of the works from the Kaplan-Levi collection will be featured in two forthcoming exhibitions at the Reno museum, one of which will be entirely devoted to the gift.

"The museum has been involved with Aboriginal art and artist communities for many years, and have in our collections and archives materials related to two multi-year projects," says Ann M. Wolfe, Nevada Museum of Art chief curator and associate director. "All told, after the Kaplan-Levi gift, the Nevada Museum of Art will have the fourth largest public collection of Aboriginal Australian art in North America."



Paddy Japaljarri Stewart, *Ngarlu Jukurpa (Ngarlu Dreaming)*, 2002, acrylic on linen, 72 x 35.875 in.
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi. Photo: Zocalo Studios.

These aforementioned multi-year projects include *The Paruku Project: Art and Science in Aboriginal Australia* and *Arnhembrand: Living on Healthy Country*—two projects spearheaded by the artist Mandy Martin and the conservationist Guy Fitzhardinge to elevate contemporary stories from remote regions of Australia, which collectively comprise around 100 artworks and archival materials.

The Nevada Museum of Art also received a collection of contemporary Aboriginal paintings and sculptures—spanning around ninety pieces—from the collectors Debra and Dennis Scholl in 2023.

The Kaplan-Levi donation will join the Nevada Museum of Art's Robert S. and Dorothy J. Keyser Art of the Greater West Collection, which includes works by artists Judy Chicago and Harry Fonseca (Maidu/Nisenan, Portuguese, Hawaiian). The collection has “a strong foundation in contemporary Indigenous art from a super-region that stretches from Alaska to Patagonia and from the American West to Australia,” Wolfe says.

She adds, “It addresses themes such as unsettled geographies, rich natural resources, mining and extraction of these resources, land use, nuclear and military presence, settlement and ongoing waves of colonization, and the conflict that arises from all of these things.”

The museum has also received 120 contemporary Native American paintings, photographs, and other works from the collection of the artist Judith Lowry (Hammawi Band Pit River/Mountain Maidu/Washoe) and her husband Brad Croul. The donation focuses on artworks centered around the West Coast and the Great Basin.



Judith Lowry (Hammawi Band Pit River/Mountain Maidu/Washoe), *Edna at Honey Lake*, 1999/2012, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 54 in. Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Judith Lowry. Copyright Judith Lowry.

The gift strengthens the museum's unmatched focus on the region and its support of Native American artists, which includes its Indigenous Art Future Endowment, a \$5 million fundraising campaign launched last year to support related acquisitions and programming.

The Lowry-Croul collection will be exhibited in 2025 and includes works by Frank LaPena (Nomtipom-Wintu), Dalbert Castro (Nisenan), George Longfish (Seneca and Tuscarora), and others, as well as more than twenty paintings by Lowry.

Lowry has previously collaborated with the museum's Center for Art + Environment to create an archive of ephemera that she has collected during her lifetime exploring controversial depictions of Native Americans in history and pop culture, from American Spirit ephemera to sheet music for songs like "Indian Love Call" from the 1920s Broadway musical *Rose-Marie*.

In a statement, Lowry says the museum has shown a "true commitment to contemporary Native American artists" over the last two decades, and that she is honored to donate her collection to a museum that is "located close to my ancestral homelands." She adds, "Considering the relative youth of the organization, it has been impressive to witness what they have done to honor living artists and their communities."

The expansion project will increase the museum's exhibition space from 15,000 to nearly 30,000 square feet, allowing the museum to exhibit 50 percent of its permanent collection. It will also feature an art and architecture bookshop, a rooftop sculpture garden, and more research facilities and educational programming spaces.



Christine Yukenbarri *Winpurpula*, 2005, acrylic on linen, 47.25 x 31.5 in. 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.

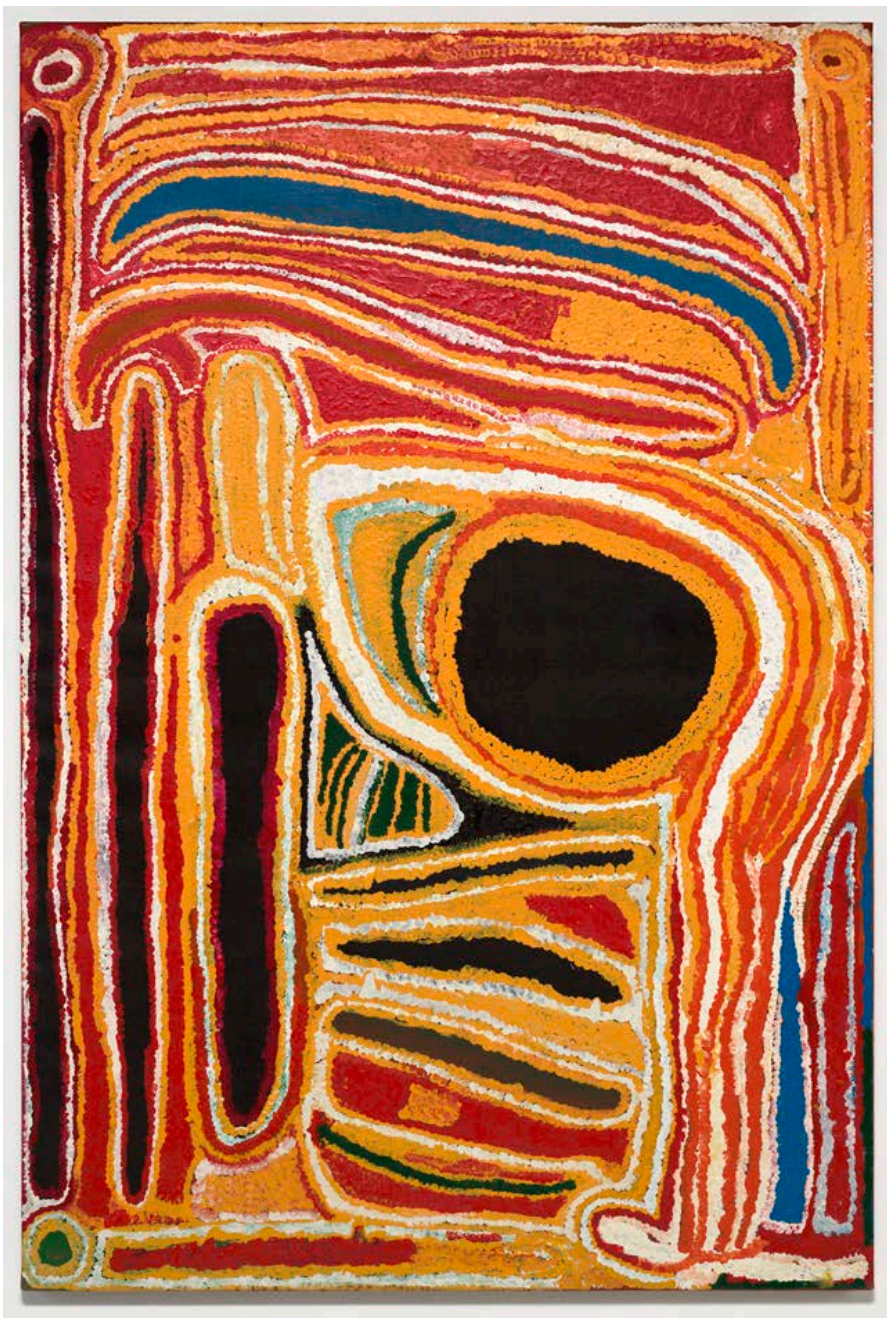




Darby Jampijinpa Ross, *Yankirri Jukurrpa (Emu Dreaming)*, 1993, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 18.125 in. Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi.
Photo: Zocalo Studios.



Eubena Nampitjin, *Minidki Karu*, 2002, acrylic on linen, 59 x 39.375 in. Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi. Copyright Eubena Nampitjin / Copyright Agency. Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, 2023. Photo: Zocalo Studios.



Eubena Nampitjin, *Nr. Jupiter Well*, 1995, acrylic on linen, 70.9375 x 47.25. 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.



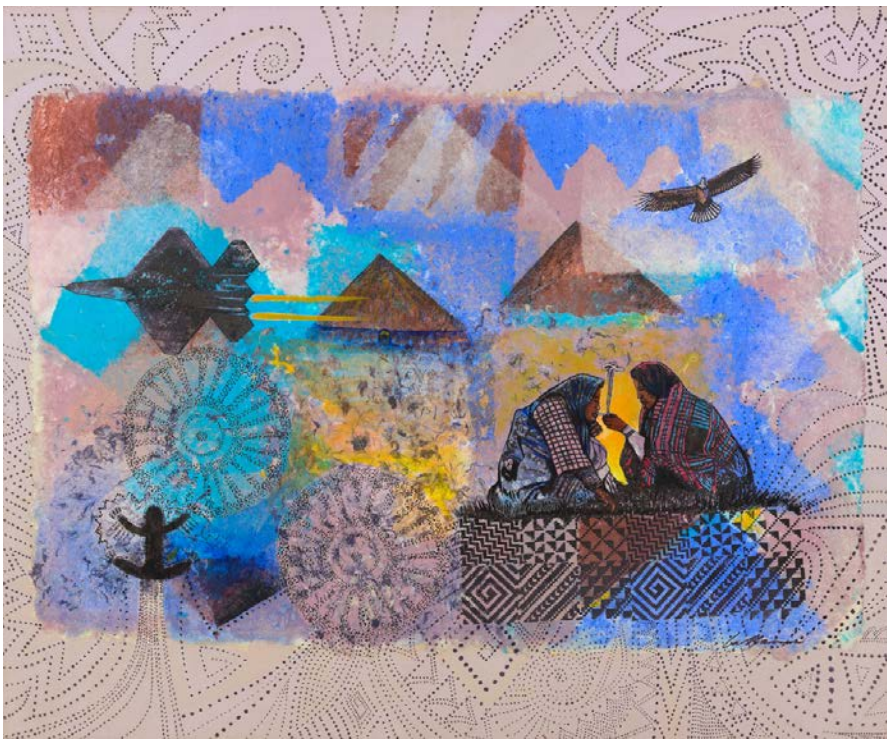
Gunybi Ganambarr, *Wurran Ga Baypinga*, 2011, ochres on wood, 62.9375 x 8.875 in. Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi. Photo: Zocalo Studios.



Polly Napangardi Watson, *Wataki (Bush Orange) Dreaming*, 1996, acrylic on linen, 38.125 x 48 in.
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi. Photo: Zocalo Studios.



Harry Fonseca, (Maidu/Nisenan, Portuguese, Hawaiian), *[St. Francis of the Bluebirds] Saint Francis of Assisi*, n.d., mixed media on canvas 47.5 x 31 in. Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Judith Lowry. Copyright 2016 Harry Fonseca Collection, Autry Museum of the American West.



Jean LaMarr (Northern Paiute/Pit River), *Lighting Up*, n.d., mixed media, 36 x 44 in. Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Judith Lowry. Copyright Jean LaMarr.



Frank LaPena (Nontipom-Wintu), *Untitled*, n.d., acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 in. Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Judith Lowry. Copyright Frank LaPena.



George Longfish (Seneca/Tuscarora), *Modern Times*, 1994, triptych, color lithograph on Arches 88 paper, 41.5 x 30 in.(each panel). Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art. Gift of Judith Lowry. Copyright George Longfish.

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Gabriella Angeleti is a writer based in New York. She was born in Rio de Janeiro, grew up in Las Vegas, and spends much of her time in Southern Utah.

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