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ETERNAL SIGNS AT THE NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART CELEBRATES CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN ART AND INAUGURATES NEW GALLERIES

RENO, NEV. (May 21, 2025) – The Nevada Museum of Art is proud to announce *Eternal Signs: Indigenous Australian Art from the Kaplan and Levi Collection*, a major new exhibition that welcomes viewers into the diverse and vibrant visual languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from Australia. As the inaugural exhibition in the Museum’s new E. L. Wiegand Feature Gallery, it highlights nearly fifty works from across seventeen different communities in the Central and Western Desert regions of Australia.

With ancestral lineages extending back more than 60,000 years, Indigenous Australian peoples are widely considered to represent one of the world’s oldest, continuous, living cultures. Their knowledge systems—often described as Dreamings, songlines, or creation time—are vividly expressed through their art forms.

“For artists from remote areas of the Australian continent, their lives continue to be linked to ancient knowledge and diverse customs, which permeate their art forms and become eternal sign systems that evolve in the present,” stated Apsara DiQuinzio, senior curator of contemporary art. “These works are not just beautiful works of art—they are vital expressions of ancestral knowledge that allow us to explore larger dialogues relating to contemporary art, abstraction, global Indigenous movements, and the environment.”

Featured artists in *Eternal Signs* include multi-generational and internationally celebrated voices, such as Ginger Riley Munduwalawala, Polly Napangardi, Gloria Petyarre, George Ward Tjungurrayi, Djambawa Marawlli, and Gunybi Ganambarr.

The large-scale, group exhibition showcases the majority of the significant gift to the Nevada Museum of Art from Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan’s esteemed private collection of contemporary

Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, which includes sculpture, paintings, and other works from diverse geographic areas across Australia, including Arnhem Land in the north, the Central Desert sites of Utopia and Papunya, and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the south.

“The Kaplan and Levi collection is well-known and for good reason—the Seattle Art Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art both exhibited paintings from this collection, which can only be described as monumental in both scale and ambition,” said David B. Walker, CEO of the Nevada Museum of Art. “This important gift added significantly to the breadth and depth of the Museum’s Robert S. and Dorothy J. Keyser Art of the Greater West Collection.”

For several decades, collectors Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan, who live in Seattle, Washington, have been deeply engaged with the art by First Nations Australian practitioners. What began as a fascination evolved into one of the most prestigious private collections in the United States.

“We have been deeply moved by the power and beauty of Aboriginal art, which speaks to both ancient traditions and contemporary experiences,” said Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan. “It has been our privilege to collect these works, and we are glad to partner with the Nevada Museum of Art to steward them, share them with a broader audience, to foster greater appreciation and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures.”

Their transformative gift to the Nevada Museum of Art in 2023 is now a cornerstone of the Museum’s *Robert S. and Dorothy J. Keyser Art of the Greater West Collection*. Since 2012, the Nevada Museum of Art considers the Greater West to be a global super-region—from Alaska to Patagonia and from the Australian Outback to the American Intermountain West. It is defined by land, natural resources, diverse Indigenous cultures, and the complex histories of colonization. *Eternal Signs* offers a profound opportunity to engage with contemporary Aboriginal artists whose work ties ancient systems of knowledge and belief to the present and which are not often displayed in North America.

For exhibition details, public programs, and more, visit nevadaart.org.

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ABOUT ROBERT KAPLAN AND MARGARET LEVI

Kaplan and Levi have been associated with the Seattle Art Museum for many years 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.

ABOUT THE NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART

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 was designed by architect Will Bruder. The four-level, 120,000 square foot building is inspired by geological formations in Northern Nevada and is a visual metaphor for the institution’s scholarly focus on art

and environment. The Museum's permanent collections are divided into thematic focus areas including the Art of the Greater West, the Altered Landscape, contemporary art, and work ethic in American art.

The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally recognized research center that supports the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their natural, built, and virtual environments. The Center houses significant archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents.

Learn more at nevadaart.org.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the Wašičiw (Washoe), Numu (Northern Paiute), Neue (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.

Photo Captions

1. Gloria Petyarre, *Aknangkere Growth*, 1998. Acrylic on canvas, 65 x 94 in. (165.1 x 238.76 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
2. Ginger Riley Munduwalawala, *Limen Bight River during the Wet*, 1995-96. Acrylic on canvas, 53 x 95 in. (134.62 x 241.3 cm). Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi. © Estate of Ginger Riley. Courtesy of Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne. Photo: Zocalo Studios
3. Gunybi Ganambarr, *Wurran Ga Baypinga*, 2011. Ochres on wood, 63 x 9 in. (160.2 x 22.85 cm). Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Kaplan and Margaret Levi. Photo: Zocalo Studios