

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, 20 February 2026

Acclaimed artist returns to the NT to exhibit deeply personal works

Acclaimed artist William Mackinnon returns to the Northern Territory with a compelling new exhibition reflecting on his experiences working in remote Aboriginal communities.

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) proudly presents Phoenix, an exhibition featuring a series of paintings inspired by Mackinnon's time as an artist in residence at Mangkaja Arts and as a field officer for Papunya Tula artists.

As recipient of the prestigious Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship, he spent two transformative years living and working with the Kintore (NT) and Kiwirrkurra (WA) communities in 2008.

Now acclaimed nationally and internationally, he has returned to showcase these years through his artworks.

"Returning to the NT brings back very strong memories, emotions and experiences," William said.

"It was a powerful experience for me to live and work with Aboriginal people, to witness their strength and connection to Country."

William said that living and learning in the communities had a profound impact on his work.

"I chose the Kimberley because of its wild beauty and the amount of rock art that can be found there and worked with artists including Naata Nungurayi, Johnny Yungut Tjupurrula and Yukultji Napangati.

"This exhibition is a warts and all celebration of resilience, humour and adaptability in adversity filled with beauty, sport, art and life."

While in Darwin William will visit several schools to talk to students and teachers about his practise.

"My time in the Kimberley was a formative time for me and my work," he said. "I feel it is important for me to talk with the next generation to answer questions about the life of the artist and how I have got to where I am without a manual."

Presented with permission from Papunya Tula Artists, these paintings represent the artist's reckoning with his experiences of that time.

Exhibited internationally across Europe and the USA, these works now return to where the journey began.

MAGNT Director Adam Worrall said that these works offer a deeply considered reflection on a transformative period of William's life.

"It is a privilege to share these powerful works reflecting a personal meditation on the country's landscape and its people from such an acclaimed artist with our visitors," he said.

"I would like to thank our exhibition lenders and supporters; Nick Mitzevich, Director of the National Gallery of Australia, Hamish Mackinnon, Arthur and Suzie Roe and Philip Bacon."

Phoenix opens at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory on Saturday 21 February and runs until 24 May 2026.

Join us for special artist floor talks on Saturday, 21 February at 11am and 2pm.
For more information, visit: <https://www.magnt.net.au/william-mackinnons-phoenix>

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