

## *Christian Thompson: Ritual Intimacy* comes to Griffith University Art Gallery

A major exhibition celebrating the work of Bidjara artist Christian Thompson opens at Griffith University Art Gallery next month.

One of Australia's leading contemporary artists, Thompson made history as one of the first two Aboriginal Australians accepted into the University of Oxford as a Charlie Perkins Scholar, where he completed his Doctorate of Philosophy (Fine Art) in 2016. Coming to Griffith University Art Gallery direct from Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, this first major survey of Thompson's career has been co-curated by MUMA Director Charlotte Day and Hetti Perkins, Thompson's long-time friend and collaborator.

Perkins is the writer and presenter of *art + soul*, the ABC's acclaimed television series about contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. She is a member of the Arrernte and Kalkadoon Aboriginal communities and was for many years the senior curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Perkins says the exhibition is well-earned recognition for Thompson's work, which she featured in the second series of *art + soul*.

*"Christian has spent periods of his adult life, as a practicing artist, away from home, but there is a common thread in his work, and it's this connection to home or Country,"* Perkins says. *"In terms of the rituals or rites of the exhibition title, he is constantly reiterating that connection to home – through words, through performance, through his art, through ideas and writing,"* she says.

Featuring a major new commission created for this exhibition, *Christian Thompson: Ritual Intimacy* showcases highlights from Thompson's diverse fifteen-year practice, and coincides with the publication of the first monograph of the artist's career and work. The specially commissioned installation *Berceuse 2017* develops musical ideas Thompson has previously explored through his work. Incorporating language of the Bidjara people of central west Queensland, it invites viewers into an immersive space of imagery and sound:

*"Bidjara is officially an endangered language but my work is motivated by the simple yet profound idea that if even one word of an endangered language is spoken it continues to be a living language,"* Thompson says.

Thompson works across photography, video, sculpture, performance and sound, interweaving themes of identity, race and history with his lived experience. His work is held in the collections of major state and national art museums in Australia and internationally.

Angela Goddard, Director of Griffith University Art Gallery, says that *Christian Thompson: Ritual Intimacy* explores the unique perspective and breadth of Thompson's practice from the fashioning of identity through to his ongoing interest in Indigenous language as the expression of cultural survival.

*"We are delighted to be partnering with MUMA to bring this important exhibition to Queensland. Christian Thompson is one of this country's most intriguing artists, and to present such an in-depth survey of his work is a real honour,"* Goddard says.

**ABOUT THE ARTIST:**

Christian Thompson

Born 1978, Gawler, South Australia

Lives and works between London and Melbourne

Dr Christian Thompson is a Bidjara contemporary artist whose work explores notions of cultural hybridity, and history; often referring to the relationships between these concepts and the environment. Formally trained as a sculptor and performer, Thompson's multidisciplinary practice engages mediums such as photography, video, sculpture, performance, and sound. His work investigates identity, sexuality, gender, race, and memory. In his live performances and conceptual anti-portraits he inhabits a range of personas achieved through handcrafted sculptures and carefully orchestrated poses and backdrops. In 2010 Thompson made history when he became one of the first two Aboriginal Australian to be admitted into the University of Oxford in its 900-year history. He holds a Doctorate of Philosophy (Fine Art), Trinity College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, a Master of Theatre, Amsterdam School of Arts, Das Arts, The Netherlands, a Master of Fine Art (Sculpture) RMIT University and Honours (Sculpture) RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, and a Bachelor of Fine Art from the University of Southern Queensland, Australia. In 2015 Thompson was mentored by pioneering artist Marina Abramović during her Kaldor Arts Project In Residence in Sydney, and she continues to be a mentor to him.

Thompson has exhibited widely, both nationally and internationally. His solo shows include: Museum of Others, Photo London Fair, London, Michael Reid Gallery, Berlin and Sydney, 2016; Collection+ Christian Thompson, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, 2015; The Imperial Relic, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2015; Polari, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2014; Pagan Sun, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2013; We Bury Our Own, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2012; King Billy, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2011; Christian Thompson Survey Show, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2010; Heat, Chalkhorse Gallery, Sydney, 2010; Lost Together, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2009; Australian Graffiti, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2008; The Sixth Mile, Chalkhorse Gallery, Sydney, 2007; The Sixth Mile, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 2006; The Gates of Tambo, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2004; Emotional Striptease, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2003; Show Me the Way to Go Home, George Adams Gallery, Melbourne, 2002; Blaks Palace, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2002; BIGIYI (Dream to Dream), Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2002; and Gundang Ngaya Burbala, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, 2002.

**ABOUT THE EXHIBITION**

EXHIBITION: 20 July – 9 September. Tuesday to Saturday, 11am – 4pm, or by appointment.

WHERE: Griffith University Art Gallery, 226 Grey Street, South Bank

CONTACT: Visit the [website](#) or call 07 3735 3140.

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ART GALLERY

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