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Yankunytjatjara artist Kaylene Whiskey awarded Melbourne Art Foundation 2022 Commission, in partnership with ACMI

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The artist Kaylene Whiskey. Courtesy of Iwanja Arts, Photographer: Meg Hansen

Australia's national museum of screen culture and Melbourne Art Foundation, the non-profit organisation and owner of the biennial Melbourne Art Fair, are proud to announce Kaylene Whiskey as the recipient of the Melbourne Art Foundation 2022 Commission, supported by Artwork Transport and Panasonic.

Set to be unveiled at the Melbourne Art Fair in February 2022 before moving to its permanent home in the ACMI collection, Whiskey's new video work will be the ninth commission of the 15-year program.

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It marks several firsts: the first time the Melbourne Art Foundation Commission program has partnered with ACMI, the first time the commission has awarded a First Nations artist, and the first time it has supported the production of a moving-image work.

Established in 2006, the Melbourne Art Foundation Commission program provides a living artist with a rare opportunity to realise an ambitious work for unveiling at Melbourne Art Fair, which is later gifted to a prominent Australian Institution

Kaylene Whiskey is a Yankunytjatjara artist from Indulkana, a remote Indigenous community in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, South Australia. The artist's strong connection to Indulkana and her Yankunytjatjara heritage will be the foundation of the new single channel video work, responding to the Fair's 2022 artistic program thematic of 'Djeembana/Place' with an intent focus on her hometown.

Kaylene Whiskey said: "I'm very proud to live here on our Country and to hold on to our culture and our language. I grew up watching my family, my aunties and grandfather, making paintings about our Country, and I am continuing this tradition but using new ways too – dot painting and video. I want my work to show a strong, positive message about life in a remote Indigenous community. I am from the generation that grew up with coca cola and TV as well as Tjukurpa (cultural stories) and bush tucker, so I like to have a bit of fun with combining those two different worlds."

Between 'djeembana' and 'place' is a lacuna in language. Direct translation fails. Djeembana, a word of the Boon Wurrung, is a place for community; a meeting point for the exchange of stories, rituals and knowledge. When we speak of place, we look to invoke that which djeembana signifies.

Melbourne Art Foundation CEO and Fair Director, Maree Di Pasquale added: "Kaylene Whiskey is an important Australian contemporary artist on the rise, and one whose work celebrates First Nations heritage, community, and connection to Country. Kaylene's unique visual language portraying native flora and fauna alongside pop idols and consumer products will provide a playful yet critical commentary on place and the impact of globalisation on remote Indigenous communities."

ACMI Director & CEO Katrina Sedgwick OAM said: "We're delighted that Kaylene Whiskey is the recipient of the ACMI supported Melbourne Art Foundation Commission. Kaylene's work is in our permanent exhibition *The Story of the Moving Image* and we're thrilled to be working with her again to support the creation of a brand new moving image work. Kaylene's rich, colourful drawings combine images of her life in the remote community of Indulkana in South Australia and iconic women from popular culture. It's exciting to see these drawings brought to life in moving images."

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This marks the third commission supported by Artwork Transport, the Official Transport Partner of Melbourne Art Fair, and the freight partner of choice for Australia's national collecting institutions.

Artwork Transport Managing Director, Terry Fahey said: "Artwork Transport is thrilled to be sponsoring the Commission once again, an important program that supports living artists and strengthens the collections of Australian institutions. We congratulate Kaylene Whiskey and ACMI for what is certain to be a remarkable moving-image work in Australia's acclaimed museum of screen culture."

Melbourne Art Fair will return in the Victorian summer from 17-20 February 2022, at the DCM designed Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, to present solo shows and works of scale and significance by artists from 50 of the region's leading contemporary galleries. The Commission will be unveiled at the Melbourne Art Fair Vernissage on Thursday 17 February 2022.

About Kaylene Whiskey

Whiskey's paintings incorporate pop culture references alongside traditional Anangu culture, in a playful interpretation of the artist's personal experience of contemporary life in a remote Central Australian Indigenous community. Her practice links the traditional culture of her community's Elders with the experience of the younger generation, who have grown up with contemporary western influences like Coca Cola and Michael Jackson.

Kaylene paints iconic figures such as Dolly Parton and Tina Turner, in a celebration of heroic women and the sisterhood. These pop culture icons are frequently painted into remote desert community landscapes, interacting with native plants and wildlife and engaging in traditional Anangu activities like hunting, collecting bush tucker and cultivating mingkulpa (native tobacco plant). Painted to a soundtrack of classic rock, pop and country music, Whiskey's works are rich in irreverent humour. Whiskey is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Warrang/Sydney