

Betty Muffler

Kalaya Tjina Tjuta – Emu Tracks

Melbourne Art Fair Booth H2, 19 – 22 February 2026
& Jan Murphy Gallery 4 – 21 March 2026

Jan Murphy Gallery is excited to present new paintings by acclaimed senior Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara artist Betty Muffler at Melbourne Art Fair 2026.

Betty Muffler (born 1944) is a highly respected senior Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands artist and renowned Ngangkari (traditional healer) having learnt this practise from her aunties, handed down through her father's side.

Born in the remote bush area near Watarru near the border of South and Western Australia, Muffler grew up at the Ernabella Mission following the displacement and deaths of family members in the aftermath of the British nuclear testing at Maralinga and Emu Field. Witnessing the devastation of country and surviving this experience motivates Betty Muffler's recurring depiction of healing sites and the intensity of her connection to these places in her paintings titled 'Ngangkari Ngura' (Healing Country).

"My name is Betty Muffler. My birthplace is Yalungu. Yalungu is my real place. There are emus there. A group of emus. Those emus are alive in the site. It's rocky. It's in rockhill country. I am a ngangkari healer. And it is as a Ngangkari that I paint. The eagle is my father's spirit. The eagle itself is not a ngangkari but has a special vision which I can use. And also, I am a painter of emus. They are a significant part of my birthplace, the walking emus. I paint their tracks, belonging to the site, Yalungu. There is water there, and the emus are standing drinking the water, and then walking along. Yes, I have made many works detailing this on canvas. And, yes, I also paint hands - the hands of a healer, and I the eagle that I have inside. If a person's spirit is absent, then I will send the eagle out to see, as I wait. Then it can be returned! And the person is awakened, healed!

My artworks are about ngangkari, what it feels like and what it means to be ngangkari – so they're really important to me. They're all about my feelings and thoughts about my ngangkari work. Ngangkari like me can see spirits and feel a lot of different energy. When I'm painting or drawing I'm feeling the good energy – it's connecting with my spirit and all of these feelings become part of the artwork."

– Betty Muffler, 2024

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Betty Muffler is a regular finalist in several major awards including the Wynne Prize and the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Award, having won the Emerging Artist Award (2017) and the General Painting Award (2022). Her work has been included in numerous major institutional exhibitions including the 14th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea, The National: New Australian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (2021), Tarnanthi at the Art Gallery of South Australia (2017, 2020, 2022), Kulata Tjuta at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes (2020) and Before Time Began at Fondation Opale, Switzerland. In 2020, her work was featured on the cover of Vogue Australia's September issue.

Her work is represented in numerous collections in Australia and overseas including Artbank, the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, the Australian War Memorial and Fondation Opale in Switzerland.