Louise Adam de Villiers
Eloquence Art Prize Winner — 2025

A look back on my journey to Australia

February 2026

Culture Plus

Australian Embassy
France

Ecole du Louvre
Palais du Louvre

Foreword

In May 2025, I took part in the Eloquence Art Prize contest organized by Culture Plus, the Australian Embassy in France, and the École du Louvre. I had the opportunity to present to Her Excellency Lynette Wood, Australian Ambassador to France; Claire Barbillon, Director of the École du Louvre; and Magali Mélandri, Head of the Oceania - Insulinde Heritage Unit at the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac; two artists, Jimmy John Thaiday and Nicolas Floc'h. As a result of the contest, I won a three-week trip to Australia.

From the 7th to the 28th of February 2026, I set off for Australia to discover the country's major cultural institutions and meet professionals in the cultural sector. In addition to the must-see visits to the most important museums, the program designed by Culture Plus has been specially adapted to my background - as a student at the École du Louvre majoring in Australian Arts, I aim to work in cultural project management in the Pacific region. The trip thus became a tremendous professional opportunity meant to introduce me into the Australian cultural market. It allowed me to meet a diverse range of professionals working in cultural diplomacy, museums, and the art market.

I spent 9 days in Sydney, 6 days in Melbourne, and 4 days in Canberra, allowing me to explore Australia's three major cultural hubs. The itinerary for my trip is detailed below:

Sydney

9/02 — 16/02

My trip to Australia began with an exploration of Sydney and its cultural institutions. The meetings with professionals involved in Indigenous arts led to very valuable exchanges about practices and the differing approaches that France and Australia may take toward Indigenous collections. My introduction to Sydney's art collections was also notably marked by a tour of the *Dangerously Modern* exhibition at the AGNSW— an exhibition celebrating 20th-century Australian women artists—which allowed me to discover amazing artists I was unaware of. Finally, I was fascinated by the juxtaposition of different architectural styles from one neighborhood to another across the city. I was thus able to plan my visit to Sydney around the history of architecture, as recommended by Culture +.

Visits and cultural events :

- Museums and galleries : Chau Chak Wing Museum, Anzac Memorial, The Cassandra Bird Gallery, 4A art Centre, Art Gallery of NSW, White Rabbit Gallery, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Australian Museum.

- Openings and exhibitions : *Undying* (12/02, CCWM), *Unkept: Kirtika Kain* (12/02, CCWM), *Infinite Scroll* (12/02, CCWM), *Dangerously Modern* (AGNSW), *An offering A burning A prayer* (13/02, 4A Art Centre), *Our father's story our mother's story* (14/02, Cassandra Bird Gallery).

- Landmarks : Sydney Opera House, Botanical gardens, St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney University, The Rocks Neighborhood…

Meetings :

- 9/02 : Helene Carmona, Culture & Communication manager, Alliance Française Sydney.

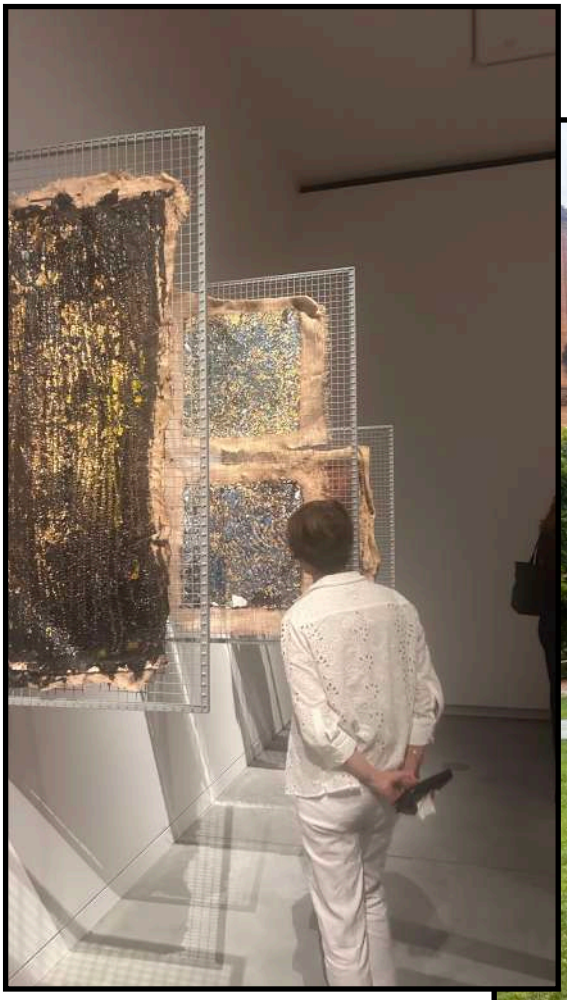
- 10/02 : Cassandra Bird, Director Sydney/Paris, The Cassandra Bird Gallery.

- 11/02 : Max Moon, Collection manager, Australian Museum & Poppy Thomson, Gallery manager, Deutscher & Hackett auction house.

- 12/02 : Jude Philp, Senior Curator Macleay Collections, Chau Chak Wing Museum.

- 13/02 : Julie Erwington, Chair, A4 Centre & Simon Chan, Founder and Director, Art Atrium Gallery.

- 26/02 : Raphaël Coulhon, Cultural attaché, French Embassy.



Unkept: Kirtika Kain opening

Visit of the Sydney University

*Visions of the Country e*xhibition

Indigenous collections at the AGNSW

Melbourne

16/02 — 21/02

I was particularly captivated by the energy and dynamism of Melbourne's cultural scene. This dynamism is tangible on many levels, whether in the city itself, with the presence of street art everywhere, or among galleries focused on emerging artists, such as the Agency Project. I was also delighted to discover the same spirit of modernity through the museum collections. For example, I found the temporary exhibitions (*Westwood | Kawakubo* at the NGV, and *Rebel Hearts* at the State Library) to be very modern, both in their themes and scenography, as well as in their marketing strategies. This sense of cultural dynamism was finally confirmed during my visit to the Melbourne Art Fair, where many young artists and galleries were featured. There, I also had the chance to meet artists I'd discovered in Sydney, such as the painter George Cooley, an artist from Coober Pedy represented by the Cassandra Bird Gallery. As for the meetings organized in Melbourne, they were more focused on cultural project management, featuring professionals involved in projects of international scope.

Visits and cultural events :

- Museums and galleries : Ian Potter Center, National Gallery of Victoria, State Library, Potter Museum of Art.
- Openings and exhibitions : *Treaty* (State Library), *Rebel Hearts* (State Library), *Westwood | Kawakubo* (NGV), The Agency Project opening (18/02), Melbourne Art Fair (20/02)
- Landmarks : Hosier Lane (street-art), Botanical Gardens, Queen Victoria Market…

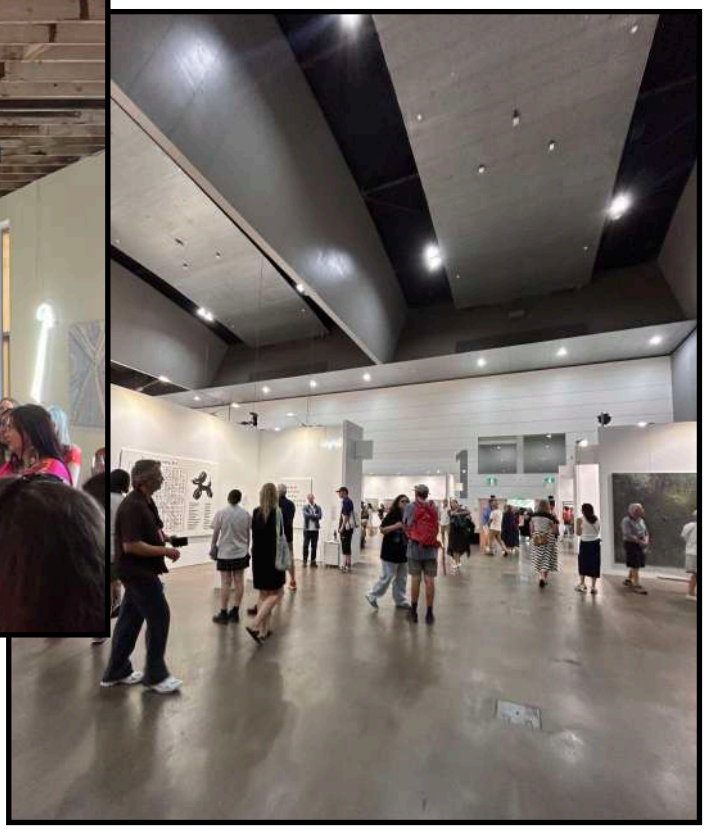
Meetings :

- 17/02 : Jessica Clark, Senior curator, National Gallery of Victoria.
- 17/02 : Kerry Gardner, Philantrope.
- 17/02 : Chloe Brugale, FACEF (French Australian Cultural Exchange Foundation), Project Manager.
- 18/02 : Deborah Hart, Chair, Climarte.

The *Westwood* | *Kawakubo* exhibition

Visit of the NGV

The Agency Project opening



Visit at the Melbourne art fair

Canberra / Goulburn

21/02 — 26/02

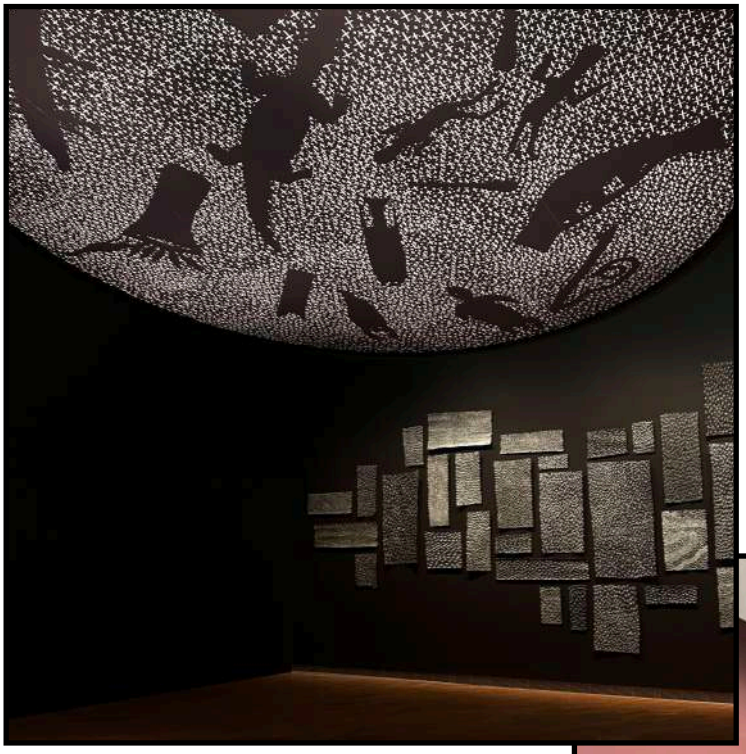
My trip came to an end with a stay in Canberra, followed by a brief stop in Goulburn to see Brenda Croft's latest exhibition on her family heritage. I was particularly surprised by the collections in Canberra—to see so many masterpieces gathered in a relatively small area. In addition to the excitement of finally seeing the NGA's Indigenous collections in person, I had the chance to visit the 5th National Indigenous Art Triennial. This triennial was very interesting in terms of curation, as it was exclusively curated by (and featured works by) Indigenous artists, including Jimmy John Thaiday. The meetings organized in Canberra were also very enlightening. I particularly appreciated my conversation with Dr. Jilda Andrews, Deputy Director of the NMA, for sharing her vision of the future of museography and how museums holding Indigenous collections should rethink their exhibition methods.

Visits :

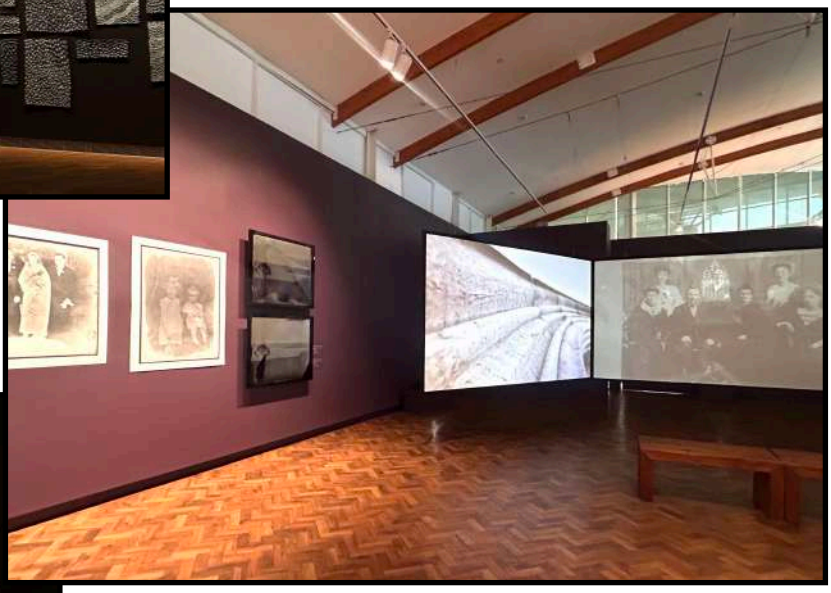
- Museums : National War memorial, National Museum of Australia, National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia, Canberra Museum and Gallery, National Portrait Gallery of Australia.
- Exhibitions : *After the Rain*, 5th National Indigenous Art Triennal (NGA), *1975: Living in the seventies* (NSL), *In Bloom* (NPGA), *SUPER KAYLENE WHISKEY* (NPGA), T*he Nolan Collection* (CMG).

Meetings :

- 24/02 : Dr Jilda Andrews, Deputy Director, First Nations, National Museum of Australia.
- 25/02 : Brenda L. Croft, Indigenous Art History artist, curator, writer.
- 25/02 : Virgina Rigney, Senior Curator, Canberra Museum and Gallery.

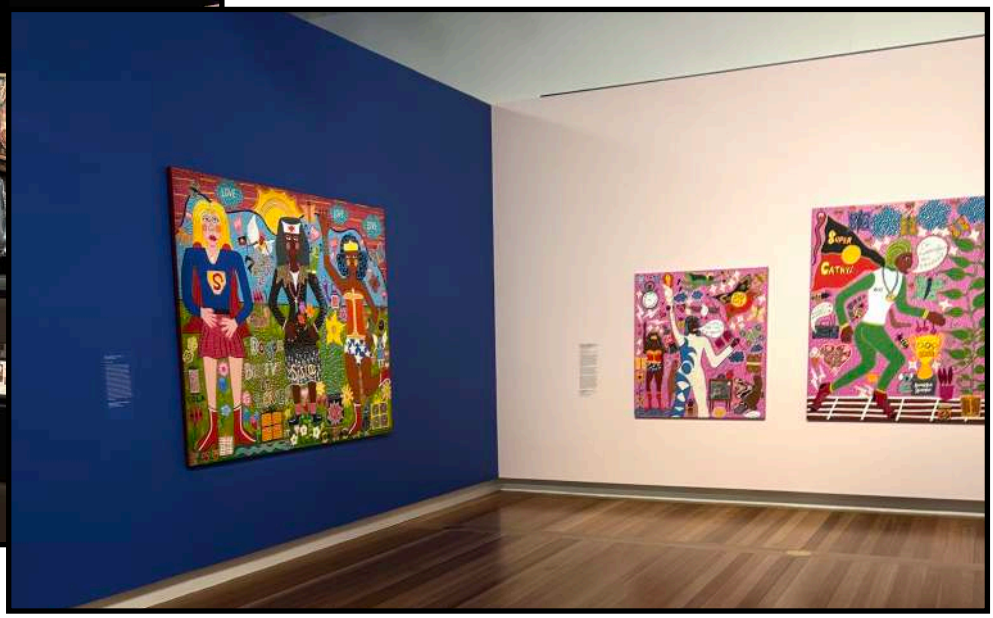


After the rain - Indigenous triennale



Goulburn exhibition

Visit of the NMA with Jilda Andrews



The *UPER KAYLENE WHISKEY* exhibition

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this summary by warmly thanking the Australian Embassy for making this trip happen thanks to their generous sponsor, as well as Culture Plus for organizing such a well-rounded and tailor-made program. These three weeks in Australia have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience, both personally and professionally. Thanks to the Eloquence Art Prize, I had the chance to discover Australia's most beautiful museum collections in person — particularly First Nations art. Among other things, I had the chance to admire in person bark paintings from Arnhem Land that I had studied so extensively as part of my 2024 research on the Karel Kupka bark paintings collection. This trip also allowed me to gain insight into various major ongoing research and museology projects, as well as to better understand the broader dynamics of the Australian arts and culture scene. Finally, on a professional level, this trip enabled me to build connections with many fascinating professionals.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales