

press release

## **The *Songlines* exhibition brings one of the great Indigenous Australian creation narratives to the Humboldt Forum.**

**17.06.-30.10.2022**

**Press conference with live stream: 16.06.2022, 10:00 a.m.**

**Advance booking now at [humboldtforum.org/songlines](https://humboldtforum.org/songlines)**

**Multimedia scenography in dialogue with an over 60,000 year old culture – the next special exhibition at the Humboldt Forum is based on an extraordinary curatorial model. *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* was conceived and curated exclusively by a team of Indigenous Australian representatives, headed by Margo Neale, Senior Indigenous Curator of the National Museum of Australia, Canberra. With its innovative multimedia design, contemporary art and performance *Songlines* tells one of the central creation stories of the Australian continent.**

The special exhibition *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* offers a multisensory encounter with this unique culture, presenting dances and songs, images and objects with which Indigenous communities express their relationship to nature and landscape, to their Country. The accompanying programme includes Workshop spaces, film screenings and guest performances with Indigenous artists as well as guided tours. The exhibition is based on a ten-year research project on the preservation of Indigenous knowledge initiated and led by Indigenous representatives in collaboration with the National Museum of Australia and the Australian National University.

### ***Songlines* and their meaning**

Songlines are epic Indigenous sagas, foundational to the creation of the Australian continent. A network of cultural routes and stories crisscrossing the country, they map the routes and activities of the Ancestral beings all over Australia. Through story, song and visual culture like ceremonial performance or rock art, songlines transmit cultural values and religious as well as ecological knowledge from generation to generation. As a system of knowledge, they document Indigenous Australians' rights to their land as well as their responsibility to care for and preserve it.

### **The story of the *Seven Sisters***

At the center of the narrative: seven sisters who cleverly and cunningly elude a male pursuer with magical powers. Their journey takes them from the Australian desert up into the universe—fleeing from their shape-shifting pursuer, the women cross three deserts and finally fly into the sky, where their story is reflected in the constellation of Orion and the Pleiades. An immersive multimedia dome developed and designed especially for the exhibition offers a multi-dimensional experience of the stories and the vast knowledge and experience they contain. Up to 30 visitors, sitting up or lying down, are virtually transported to Walinynga (Cave Hill) and experience a 360-degree vision of this rare Seven Sisters rock art site.

### **The Exhibition**

The visitors' path through the exhibition can thus be experienced as a journey inscribed on the floor like a large imaginative map. The visitors follow the route of the Seven Sisters through paintings and objects, photographs, films and sculptural installations. They are welcomed by the so-called *Virtual Elders*, life-sized videos of the members of the Indigenous Board of Trustees.

Margo Neale, Senior Indigenous Curator, National Museum of Australia: "This grand drama of intrigue, mystery and beauty encompasses the passion and danger of creation, desire, love, flight and survival, and like all such narratives retains its relevance and universality. The lessons imparted continue to have critical contemporary relevance to movements such as the Black Lives Matter, Me-Too and other environment and climate concerns. Australian Aboriginal people managed this continent sustainably for 60,000 plus years. Yet in only 250 years since the arrival of the British, it is in dire straits. How? The answers lie in the *Songlines*."

Hartmut Dorgerloh, General Director of the Humboldt Forum: "*Songlines* presents an extraordinary encounter with the art and cultures of Indigenous communities at the Humboldt Forum. The programme is an important contribution to presenting this new site of international polyphony, transdisciplinarity and experiential knowledge to a broad audience. And it opens up new perspectives on how the Humboldt Forum can become an important site for self-determination, participation, transmission and mediation."

### **Cultural education and events**

A series of events and an educational programme, developed together with representatives of the National Museum of Australia, expand and deepen the exhibition experience before *Songlines* will continue its journey to the Musée du quai Branly in Paris.

Some of the Indigenous curators and artists featured in the exhibition will be present at the Humboldt Forum for the opening: in a week of artists' workshops and guided tours, they will provide a personal insight into the stories and objects of the *Songlines* exhibition.

In June 2022, the Humboldt Forum will screen popular films by Indigenous Australian filmmakers. The films will be followed by discussions with artists, curators, academics and the audience.

In October, contemporary Indigenous performances and theatre installations from Australia will reflect a variety of artistic positions, translating the exhibition experience into a performative framework at the Humboldt Forum.

Guided tours exploring different media, such as painting, performance, film and multimedia installations, will visualize Indigenous knowledge and social experiences to an international audience. For the educational programme, the National Museum of Australia will also provide objects and stories that refer to the daily life and surrounding of the communities represented.

Accompanying the exhibition, the Hirmer-Verlag is publishing a comprehensive catalogue in German (372 pages, 300 illustrations, 24.90 euros).

*Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* is an international touring exhibition produced by the National Museum of Australia with the ongoing support of the traditional Aboriginal custodians and knowledge holders of this story.

16 June 2022 — 31 October 2022

Presented by the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (SHF) in partnership with the Ethnologisches Museum (EM) – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

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