

The Gray Market Weekend Wrap #5

Featuring an all-or-nothing gallery show, a Miami mini-prediction, and more



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One show worth seeing



- Emily Kam Ngwarray, *Emu Dreaming* (1995). Courtesy estate of Emily Kam Ngwarray and D'Lan Contemporary

The Hicks Collection: Eleven Exceptional Works by Emily Kam Ngwarray

Through Friday, January 10, at D'Lan Contemporary (25 E 73rd St, New York)

It's not uncommon anymore for esteemed private collections to come to market through commercial gallery shows rather than auction sales. But it's exceedingly rare for a dealer to commit to placing an entire gallery show's worth of work from an esteemed private collection with a single buyer.

That unusual ambition adds an extra layer of intrigue to **D'Lan Contemporary's** [compact survey of paintings](#) by the late **Emily Kam Ngwarray** (1910-96), whose posthumous international rise is reaching unprecedented altitude for an **Australian First Nations** artist. After an initial run at the **National Gallery of Australia** that ended

this past April, a retrospective of Ngwarray's work—billed as the first large-scale presentation of her practice in Europe—will debut July 8, 2025 at **Tate Modern**.

Ngwarray, a senior member of the **Anmatyerr** people in Australia's Utopia region, only picked up a brush for the final eight years of her life. Yet she completed more than 3,000 paintings, each one stemming from the ancestral stories and ceremonies of her community. Scholars have since identified rich commonalities between the vibrant, semi-abstract foundations of her paintings and various strains of European Modernism. The connection is remarkable given that Ngwarray grew up in a territory “devoid of settler influence” and almost never left Anmatyerr land, according to a statement from the gallery.

The 11 works on view at D'Lan Contemporary are consigned by the **Melbourne**-based chemicals magnate and philanthropist **Ian Hicks**. Hicks acquired the works together in 1997 under the counsel of the respected Australian gallerist **William Mora**, who died in 2023. Mora, in turn, was a mentor to **D'Lan Davidson**, who founded D'Lan Contemporary in 2016 after a decade specializing in Australian First Nations art at auction houses and galleries.

The three men had been working together “for many years” before Mora's death, according to Davidson, but the details for the show were only finalized sometime in the past six months. He says it represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: “I can put together 11 paintings by Emily in 18 months or two years, but I could never put together 11 paintings of this caliber. That's the reason why we're standing firm at this stage and selling the collection as one.”

The price for the trove is **USD\$6m**, with the individual works tagged “fairly conservatively” at **USD\$250,000 to USD\$750,000** each, Davidson says. He told me on Friday that one “firm” offer for the collection was “being considered presently,” with up to two more “really serious parties” in pursuit. Although he called the prospect of placing the collection with a public institution “ideal,” Davidson added that it wasn't strictly necessary. He hoped to finalize a deal by Monday morning.

One certainty, however, is that the acquiring collection will be based outside Ngwarray's home continent. “Australian institutions are really well endowed when it comes to works by Emily. There's a massive void internationally,” Davidson says. He adds that, despite the relatively small size of his gallery space on 73rd Street, the visibility it provides has helped initiate “a genuine awakening” to her practice and the wider category of Australian First Nations art outside Oceania.

If you're in or around New York, the exhibition is also probably your only chance to see pieces from all three phases of Ngwarray's painting career—her early ceremonial works, her so-called “high colorist” phase, and her late pieces echoing traditional body painting practices—without having to fly to London next year.