



Art

Emily Kam Ngwarray review – connected to something far beyond the art world

★★★★☆

Tate Modern, London

The Indigenous Australian artist started painting as an old woman, making over 3,000 extraordinary works in just a few years. Emerging from a profound sense of place, they leave the viewer teetering with wonder

Adrian Searle

Tue 8 Jul 2025 18.04 BST

Painting quickly and directly, with few revisions and no changes of heart, Emily Kam Ngwarray's art is filled with exhilarations and with difficulties. Part of the pleasure of her art is that it is so immediate, so visually accessible, with its teeming fields and clusters of finger-painted dots, its sinuous and looping paths, its intersections and branchings, its staves and repetitive rhythms. You can get lost in there, and sometimes overwhelmed. You can feel the connection between her hand and eye, and the bodily gestures she makes as she paints.

Ngwarray's paintings might well remind you of a kind of gestural abstraction they have nothing to do with, and which the artist would never in any case have seen. The things we look at in Ngwarray's art are about an entirely different order of experience to the similar kinds of brushstrokes driven this way and that around other, more familiar canvases we might also find in Tate Modern, where her retrospective has arrived from the [National Gallery of Australia](#). But this similarity is also one of the reasons Ngwarray became famous in the first place.