

Entry type: Person  
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# Martiniello, Jenni Kemarre OAM

(1949 - )

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**Born** 1 January, 1949, Adelaide South Australia Australia

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**Occupation** Advocate, Artist, Educator, Writer

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## Summary

Jenni Kemarre Martiniello OAM is an award-winning glass artist, poet, writer and photographer of Arrente, Chinese and Anglo-Celtic descent. Acclaimed for her glass works, she has been actively involved in professional and community education in Canberra throughout her career. Jenni founded the ACT Indigenous Writers Group in 1999. With fellow artist Lyndy Delian, she was instrumental in the foundation of the Indigenous Textile and Glass Artists (ITAG) group. Her advocacy for Indigenous artists, and her role in connecting them with other art organisations was pivotal in helping mitigate barriers due to discrimination against Indigenous Australians. Her leadership and advocacy continued through Kemarre Arts, a social enterprise she founded in 2006. It was the Australian Capital Territory's first independent Aboriginal-run social enterprise and provided support to fellow Indigenous artists, offering writing and professional development. Through her internationally recognised art practice, creative writing and teaching, Jenni has been a powerful cultural ambassador, educator, and activist. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to the creative and visual arts in 2022.

*Jenni Kemarre Martiniello was inscribed on the ACT Women's Honour Roll in 2010.*

## Details

“Jenni Kemarre Martiniello was born Jennifer Avriel Longmore in 1949 in Adelaide, South Australia. Her father Richard was of Aboriginal and Chinese descent and her mother Betty of Anglo-Celtic lineage. Jenni had an early interest in art and took night classes at the Adelaide School of Art while attending high school. However, after graduating at age 18 from high school in 1967, she joined the Navy, ascribing her decision to a desire to do ‘something adventurous.’ Jenni worked as a radar plotter and weapons assessor as opposed to the traditional female roles of a cook or steward. She particularly enjoyed her work with weapons assessment at Nowra, New South Wales. Her two years in the Navy allowed her to meet women from across Australia, from different backgrounds and life experiences. A posting took her to Navy Office at Russell, Canberra, in 1969, where she met her husband, a first-generation Italian migrant, with whom she had four children. They divorced in 1979 after ten years of marriage. Martiniello later returned to school, studying sculpture at the Canberra School of Art, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1985, and in 1991 a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Philosophy from the Australian National University. She enrolled in post-graduate studies in Professional and Community Education at the University of Canberra (UC) in 1992. Martiniello lectured in community and teacher education at UC, as well as teaching creative writing, cultural studies, and Indigenous art history at the Yurauna Centre, Canberra Institute of Technology.

In 1999, she founded the ACT Indigenous Writers Group and in the same year edited *Black Lives, Rainbow Visions: Indigenous Sitings in the Creative Arts*, a directory of Indigenous peoples working in the visual, performing, and literary arts in Canberra. In 2002, she was awarded an ACT Creative Arts Fellowship to complete her novel *Blossoms of the Mulga*. She was Contributing Indigenous Arts Editor for *Muse Magazine* from 2000 to 2001 and coordinating editor for the first issue of *New Dreamings: Indigenous Youth Magazine*, 2002. She has won numerous literary prizes, including the Grenfell Henry Lawson Short Story Award (1999) and the Banjo Paterson Poetry Prize (2003). She has also been a judge for the New South Wales and Queensland Literary Awards.

In 2006, Martiniello founded and became director of Kemarre Arts, an organisation supporting Indigenous artists through professional development programs, grant writing and publishing. It won the ACT NAIDOC Award for Most Outstanding Agency in 2012. She founded the ACT Indigenous Textile and Glass Artists Group (ITAG) with Lyndy Delian in 2003. ITAG advocated for Indigenous artists and connected them with other arts organisations, as well as hosting exhibitions and artist workshops. Martiniello and Delian collaborated in partnership with Canberra Glassworks to create the Honouring Cultures program, which gave regional artists the opportunity to develop their glassmaking skills and international artists the chance to participate in skills exchange and collaborative work programs.

In 2011, as Thomas Foundation artist-in-residence at the Canberra Glassworks, Martiniello began experimenting with weaving patterns in glass, with a focus on traditional aboriginal practices. She was awarded the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Art Award in 2013 for her work *Golden Brown Reeds Fish Trap*, inspired by woven fish traps from northeast Arnhem Land and Cape York. She used glass to make traditional Indigenous forms, melding a non-traditional medium with traditional woven objects to create her own interpretation of two art forms. Martiniello has won numerous awards and honours for her art practice, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Visual Arts Fellowship (2013–15) and the Bay of Fires Art Prize (2016). In 2018 she was a resident artist at the Chrysler Museum of Art Glass Studio in Norfolk Virginia and at Kluge Ruhe Museum of Aboriginal Art at the University of Virginia. Her works are held in major national and international public and private collections, including the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Museum of Australia, the National Library of Australia, the Australian Parliament House, the Belau National Museum and the British Museum.

Martiniello previously held a position on the Advisory Board for the Australian Centre for Indigenous History at the ANU. She is a former member and Deputy Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australian Council of Arts and has served on Advisory Boards of the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the ACT Writers Centre, CraftACT, AIATSIS Press and the Australia Council Multicultural Arts Advisory Committee. Martiniello was the ACT Senior Australian of the Year Nominee in 2018 and was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2022 Queen’s Birthday Honours for services to the creative and visual arts. “

## Published resources

Jenni Kemarre Martiniello reinvents the ancient Indigenous tradition of weaving, but with glass, Pryor, Sally, 2018, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6069128/jenni-kemarre-martiniello-reinvents-the-ancient-indigenous-tradition-of-weaving>

Author profile: Jennifer Martiniello,  
<http://macquariepenanthology.com.au/JMartiniello.html>

Jennifer A. Martiniello | AustLit: Discover Australian Stories,  
<https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/A12927>

Award Extract - Australian Honours Search Facility,  
<https://honours.pmc.gov.au/honours/awards/2010963>

Australia's Blak History Month Profile, 2021,  
<https://www.blakhistorymonth.com/15-july-2021-jennikemarremartiniello>

Death Letter Projects,  
<https://www.deathletterprojects.com/jennifer-kemarre-martiniello>

## Archival resources

[Jenni Kemarre Martiniello interviewed by Mary Hutchison in the Centenary of Canberra oral history project, 2014](#)

### Author Details

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