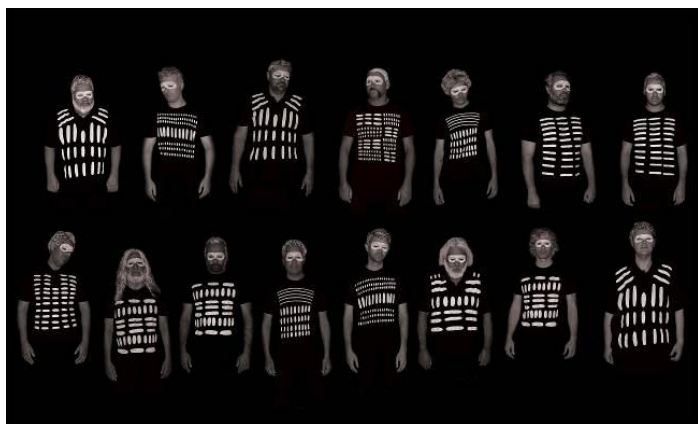


22 November 2013 – 23 March 2014 | The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia and NGV International

## Indigenous and Pacific artists



*Melbourne Now* presents the NGV's first survey of contemporary urban Indigenous art of south east Australia. The Gallery's Qantas Airways Indigenous Galleries are transformed by photographs, installation works, ceramics and innovative cultural objects that do not conform to stereotypes of Indigenous art.

A growing number of contemporary Indigenous artists throughout Melbourne, often working in circumstances of cultural dissonance, have composed a language of stylistic innovation and an

aesthetic unique to their way of experiencing and interpreting the contemporary world. Their works interrogate, chronicle and conceptualise time past, time present and time future.

### **Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser**

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser's work for *Melbourne Now* comprises a video trailer for a non-existent film noir, photographs and a diorama of a Fitzroy streetscape.

### **Tama tk Favell**

Favell's *Pacific Transformer series of linocuts, 2009-13*, for *Melbourne Now* explores and develops the idea that male spirit identity and gender transition can be expressed through iconographic tattooing. This powerful body of work on tapa cloth expresses a movement between worlds, changing form and the integration of self and culture as an alternative and/or addition to the Western medical model often proposed for transgender people.

### **Steaphan Paton**

In this provocative re-enactment of a colonial encounter, Paton explores the material and technological conflicts between cultures and the roles they play in one culture asserting dominance over another. Five Aboriginal bark shields, decorated with Gunai designs that were customarily used in combat to deflect spears, bear the force of the psychedelic arrows of a foreign power.

### **Steven Rhall**

Steven Rhall's *Kulin project* was made throughout the lands and waterways of Melbourne and its surrounds, traditionally owned by the Kulin Nation, a confederacy of five independent peoples: Wathaurung, Woiwurrung, Boonwurrung, Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung. Rhall penetrates bitumen, brick and industrial constructions, fences and urban graffiti to uncover hidden narratives and histories that endure in postcolonial Melbourne.

### **Ricardo Idagi**

Encouraged to go to art school by Eddie Mabo, Idagi creates disarmingly honest ceramic self-portraits that reveal and mock his innermost thoughts and feelings. Much of his formative work crystallises a deep reverence

for Meriam customary art, culture and ceremony that was forbidden when he was growing up. His art also unashamedly confronts the issues of white colonisation and Christianisation of the Torres Strait.

### **Reko Rennie**

Reko Rennie was born in Melbourne and grew up in the working-class suburb of Footscray. He received no formal artistic training, but as a teenager discovered graffiti, a powerful medium that enabled him to express his cultural identity and develop an interrogative and highly innovative art practice. Drawing inspiration from his Kamilaroi heritage, Rennie re-contextualises ancestral designs and reclaims native symbols of Australia in contemporary street and gallery settings, using spray paint, stencil, neon, sculpture, photography and moving images.

### **Maryann Talia Pau**

Maryann Talia Pau, often described as a 'Master Weaver', uses the language of weaving to create symbols, forms and dynamic spaces that engage with contemporary Pasifika visual culture and society. Her work in *Melbourne Now* is an installation of shell, feather and fibre breastplates and headpieces.

### **Maree Clarke**

The artist's brooding and poignant photographic images of forty-five men and thirty-eight women bearing ritual markings of mourning create a memorable symbol of collective grief for missing people, stolen Country, lost languages and silenced culture. Clarke's video interviews with the individual subjects enable the frozen portraits to come alive. Her *Kangaroo-teeth necklace*, 2013, painstakingly reclaims the now obsolete customary practice of making body ornaments from animal parts. According to custom, two teeth can be collected per kangaroo per field trip.

### **Lorraine Connelly-Northey**

Lorraine Connelly-Northey refashions discarded post-industrial materials – the detritus of colonisation into edgy conceptual sculptures. Her 7 x 3 metre *Possum skin cloak: Blackfella Road*, 2011-13, refers to an unsealed road near Swan Hill made from the soil retrieved from culturally sensitive areas that had contained middens and Aboriginal human remains. *Vessels* 2013 is a commanding assemblage of giant rusted *narbongs* (collecting bags).

### **Lisa Waup**

Melbourne-born Lisa Waup was separated from her Indigenous family at a young age, and has slowly reconnected with her Torres Strait Islander and Gunditjmara heritage. Waup received a Bachelor of Arts from RMIT University and lived for several years in Papua New Guinea, where she taught photography and printmaking at the University of Papua New Guinea. Waup recently joined Baluk Arts, an Aboriginal-owned art centre in Mornington and has created a group of five woven baskets composed of different types of emu feathers and locally found materials.

### **Clinton Nain**

Clinton Nain's work is inspired by the 1937 speech of Aboriginal political activist Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls, and his defiant words of resistance 'We soar like eagles and they feed us like chickens'. *Chicken feed*, 2013, is a monumental gestural painting that conceptualizes disenfranchised Indigenous Australians as chickens confined to a chicken coop being fed coins.

### **Brook Andrew**

Inspired by a rare volume of drawings of fifty-two Tasmanian Aboriginal crania, Andrew has created a vast *wunderkammer* containing a severed human skeleton, anthropological literature and artefacts. The focal point of this assemblage of decontextualised exotica is a skull, which lays bare the practice of desecrating sacred

burial sites in order to snatch Aboriginal skeletal remains as scientific trophies, amassed as specimens to be studied in support of taxonomic theories of evolution and eugenics.

### **Brian Martin**

Brian Martin's recent series *Methexical Countryscapes*, 2011-13, created in conjunction with his PhD research, explore the relationship between abstraction and representation. These immersive charcoal drawings are based on Martin's photographs and real experience of Country. It is the sensuous rhythm of mark-making, which differs from panel to panel, that maps the texture of Country as Martin has experienced it.

### **Brian Birch**

Brian Birch was born in Fitzroy and was unaware of his Aboriginality until he was 37. In 2006, Birch who is of Wurundjeri descent, attended Koori art classes at NMIT, Preston, in which he came to painting intuitively and swiftly developed his own visual vocabulary.

### **Bindi Cole**

Bindi Cole's early interest in photography was curtailed by a descent into depression and drugs caused by the trauma of her mother's heroin addiction and death from cancer. During a transformative prison term, Cole found Christianity and recaptured her self-belief. Cole's *Wolf in sheep's clothing*, 2013, explores the tension in herself between Christianity and Aboriginality; a conflict between different understandings.

### **Treahna Hamm**

Breastplates were given as trophies by colonisers to local Indigenous populations as way of pacifying, labeling and rewarding. Hamm's work for *Melbourne Now* is a zinc breastplate that subverts and transforms objects of disquieting and ambivalent status made by colonisers. This deep crescent-shaped object references metal breastplates, such as that of 'King Billy' (William Barak), which belonged to Hamm's Indigenous family.

### **Trevor Turbo Brown**

Trevor Turbo Brown was stolen from his Latje Latje family and grew up in a boys' home, and spent time homeless in the Mildura region. He moved to Melbourne in 1981 and became a celebrity at the Fitzroy Stars Gym. Turbo conceives and depicts people in his imagery as animals.

### **Yhonnie Scarce**

Yhonnie Scarce's *Blood on the wattle (Elliston, South Australia 1849)*, 2013, is comprised of around 400 black blown glass yams inside a Perspex, lidded-coffin. The silent finality of Scarce's chilling installation that memorialises an 1849 massacre underscores the amnesiac tendencies of contemporary Australian society in an uncompromising yet aesthetically beautiful form.

*Melbourne Now* is on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia and NGV International from 22 November 2013 – 23 March 2014. 10am – 5pm. Free entry.



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[ngv.vic.gov.au](http://ngv.vic.gov.au)

Image caption:

**Maree Clarke**, Mutti Mutti/Yorta Yorta born 1961 *Men in mourning* 2013 from the *Ritual and Ceremony* series type C photograph. Collection of the artist © Maree Clark