



Large  
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# Oceania

Introduction

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# Audio tour



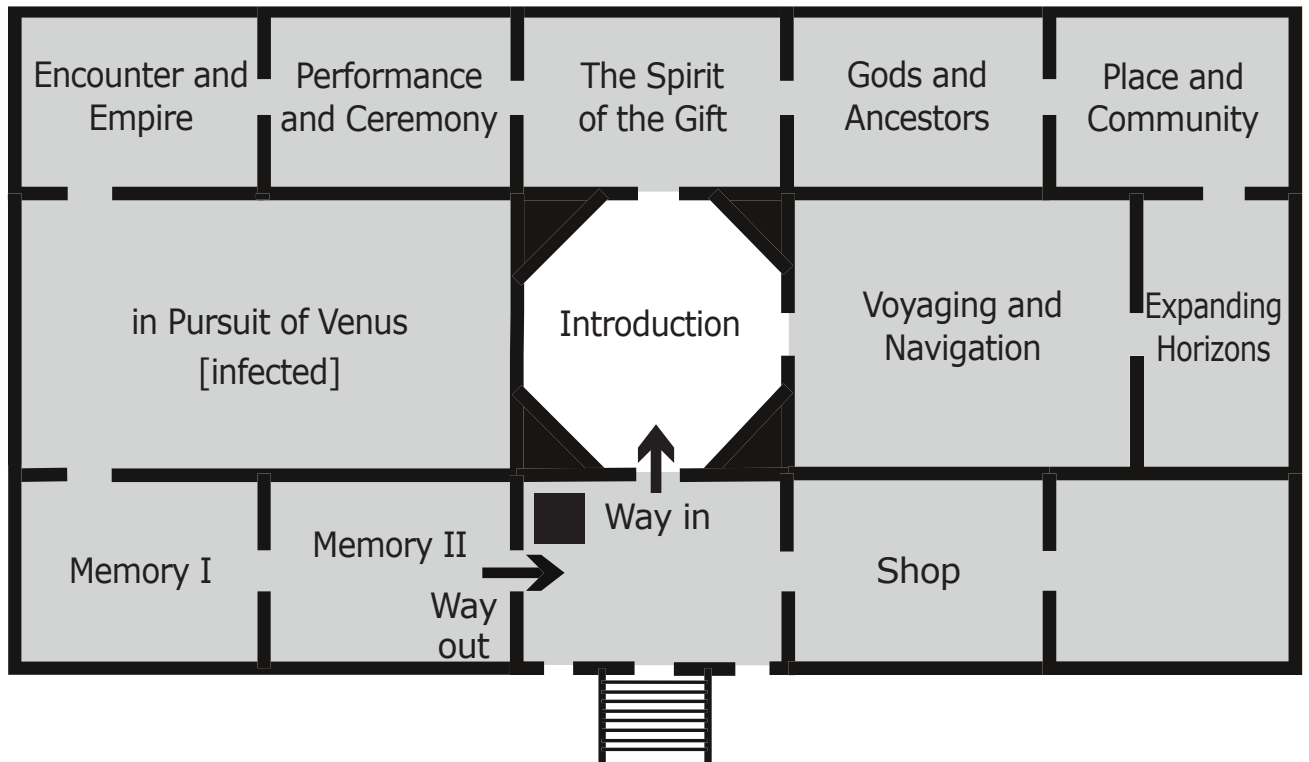
Main commentary



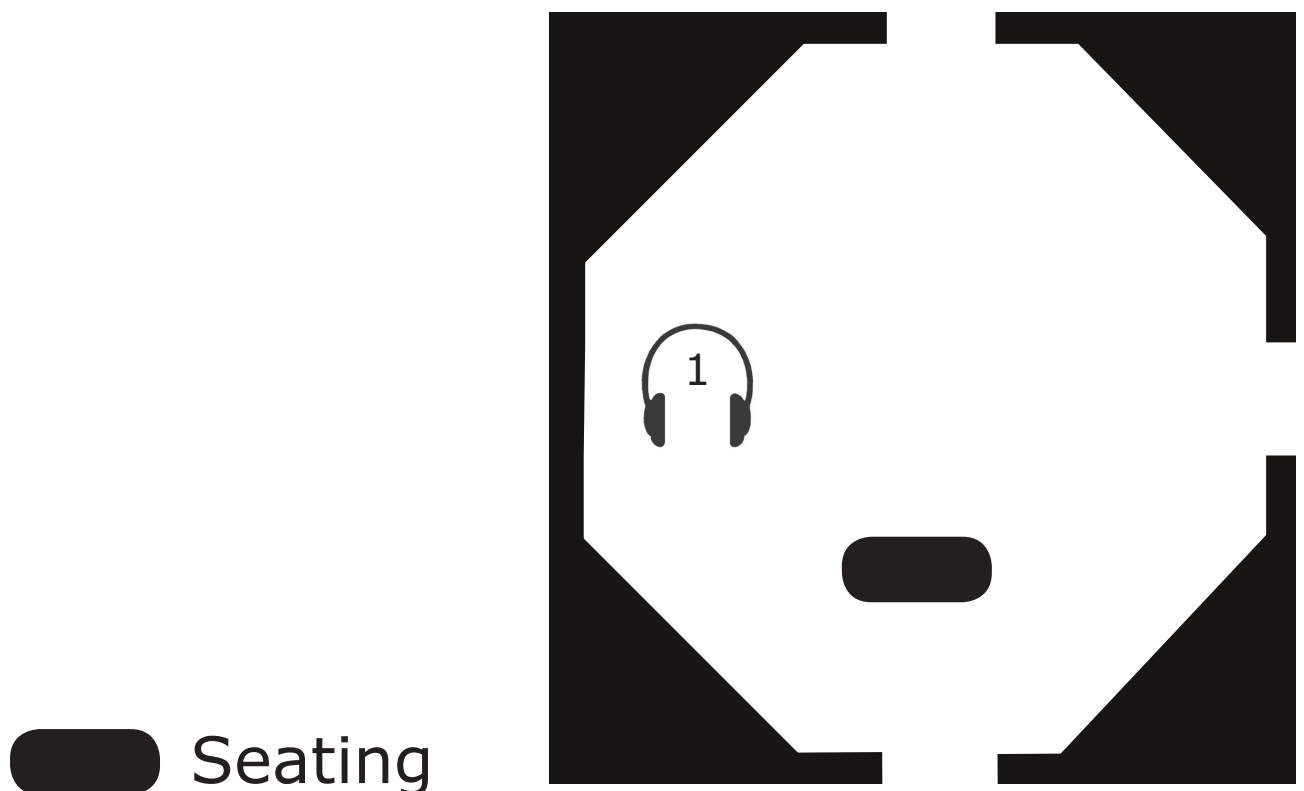
Descriptive commentary



Introduction to the exhibition



# Introduction



# Oceania

Main Galleries

29 September – 10 December 2018

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# Introduction to the exhibition

**Oceania** takes us on a voyage through art, history and encounter across an area covering a third of the world's surface. Over thousands of years people settled many of the countless islands and archipelagos that lie scattered across the Pacific Ocean.

What links all these places is water, as evoked here by the installation 'Kiko Moana' by the Mata Aho Collective, four Māori women artists from New Zealand.

Within Oceania, Islanders encountered each other through voyaging and trade, stimulating artistic innovation.

From the eighteenth century, Europeans began to claim sovereignty over the area. Without taking into account any of the cultural history, European geographers subsequently divided Oceania into three regions: Polynesia (literally “many islands”), Melanesia (“black islands”) and Micronesia (“small islands”).

Islanders responded to both the challenges and opportunities offered by empire. Although early contact led to confrontation and depopulation, it also brought new artefacts, materials and ideas.

The creation of magnificent art traditions on the body, in the natural world and by way of performance, were and remain embedded in rituals, beliefs and social relationships, and expressed relations with kin and ancestors.

In the twenty-first century, contemporary Islander artists such as Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner of the Marshall Islands have responded to the continuing threats to culture and the environment.

From the first voyage of Lieutenant (later Captain) James Cook in 1768, artefacts were eagerly collected by Europeans.

Although there is a tendency to think that these objects were taken as “colonial loot”, most were gifted or exchanged willingly by Islanders who also wanted in return what the visitors had to offer.

Across the world, museums today actively collaborate with Islander communities and artists, some of whom see these artefacts as emissaries for their cultures. As such, these objects represent the legacy of both historical and current relationships.

## **List of works**

# **Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner**

Tell Them

Marshall Islands

Film, performance 3 minutes 22 seconds

2012

Poetry by Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner

Film by Masahiro Sugano

© Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner/Studio Revolt

# **Mata Aho Collective**

Kiko Moana

New Zealand

Polyethylene and cotton thread

2017

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand

Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington



# Your feedback, please

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Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access & Communities Manager



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# Oceania

Voyaging and  
Navigation

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# Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



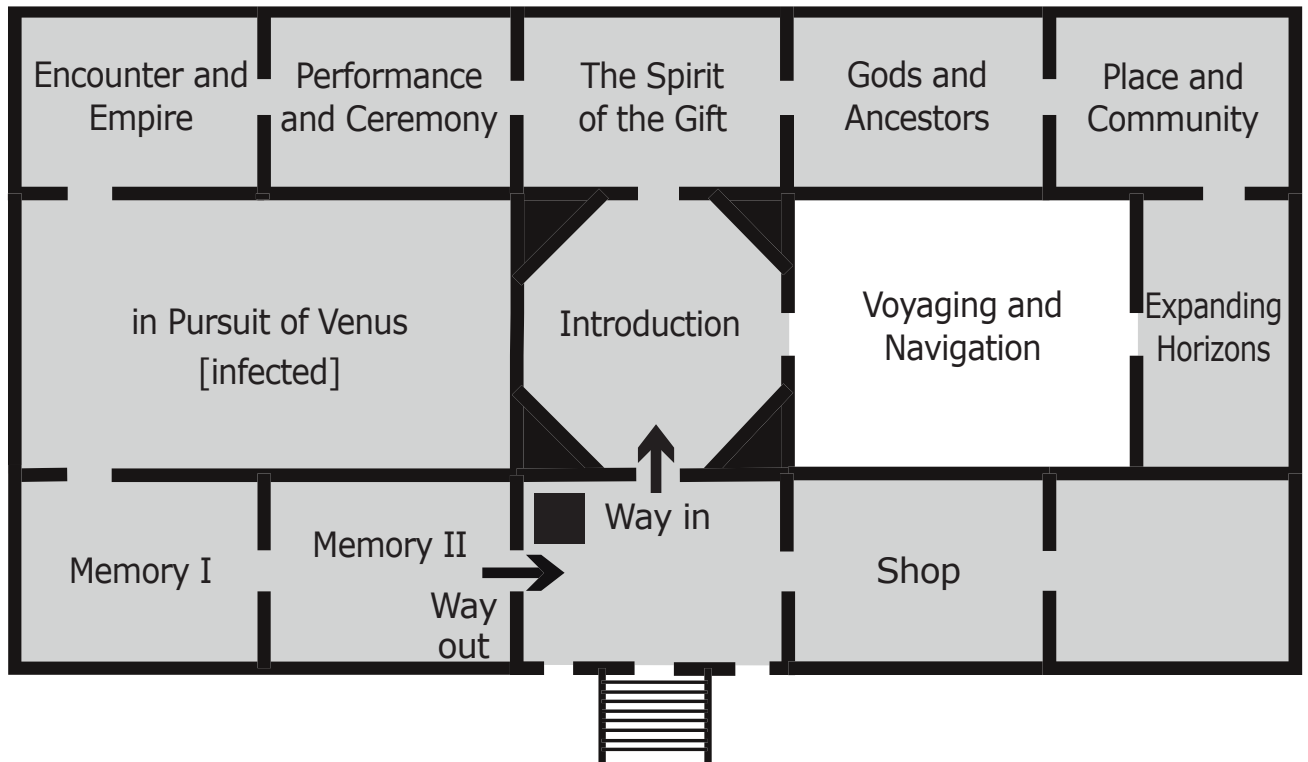
Canoes



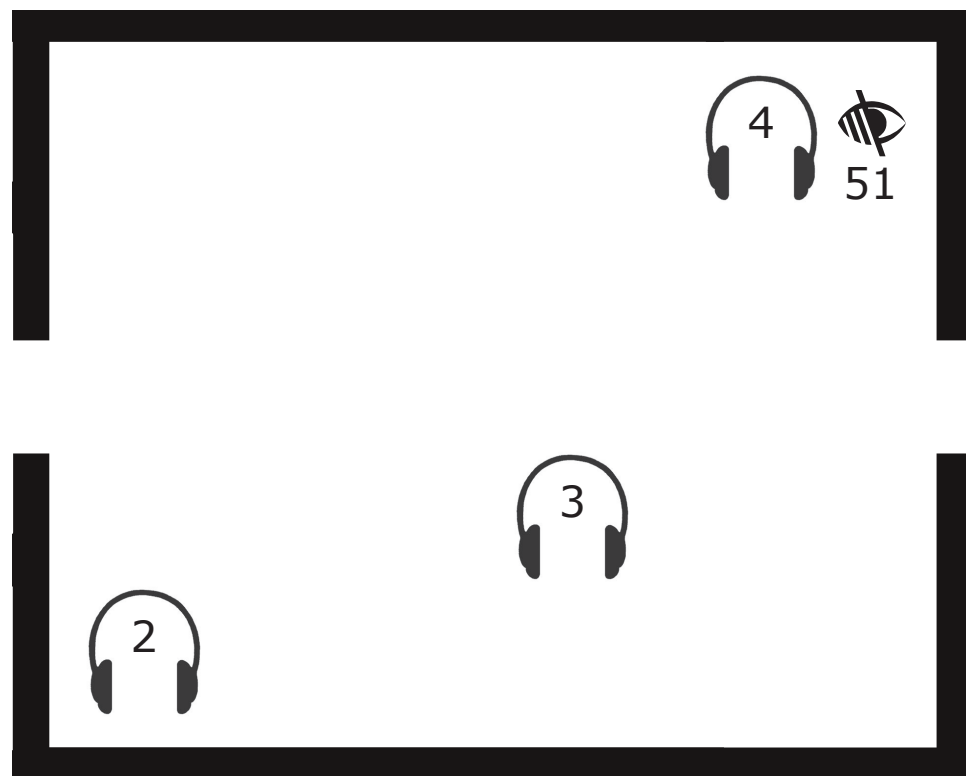
Navigation chart



51 **Sabi** or **savi**, canoe shield with crocodile-form prow



# Voyaging and Navigation



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# Voyaging and Navigation

Human settlement of New Guinea and the adjacent Bismarck Archipelago occurred over 30,000 years ago.

Movement into the Pacific islands to the east began with the migration of the Lapita peoples (named after their distinctive style of pottery) of east and south-east Asia, who spread with remarkable rapidity through Melanesia into Polynesia from about 1350 BC onwards.

Subsequently people voyaged further, settling the Hawaiian Islands, Rapa Nui and New Zealand between AD 800 and 1200.

'Tangonge', one of the earliest known wooden carvings in New Zealand, reflects that movement through its iconographic similarity to the Tahitian carving placed alongside it.

What connected Oceania also separated it: water.

Islanders overcame this substantial, and dangerous, physical barrier by becoming sophisticated navigators. They learnt to use the ocean currents, prevailing winds, the sun and stars, as well as the movement of whales and birds, to travel vast distances.

Knowledge of nearby islands was recorded on stick charts.

Those who undertook these crossings were on the open ocean and out of sight of land for long periods. Their ventures embraced the sea in a fashion unprecedented in human experience.

When Captain Cook reached Rapa Nui in 1774, he wrote that “it is extraordinary that the same Nation should have spread themselves over all the Isles of this Vast Ocean from New Zealand to this Island which is almost a fourth part of the circumference of the Globe”.

Canoes were constructed for different purposes: inter-island voyaging, trade and exchange, war, fishing and ceremonies. Used in lagoons, up and down rivers, and on the open sea, they were not just vessels but aesthetic expressions of a group’s genealogy and spiritual strength.

Elaborate canoe prows and decorated paddles reflected status and power as well as the distinct styles of island and clan groups, whilst charms protected those who were on board.



**List of works (clockwise in order of hang)**

# **Sculpture of two double figures and a quadruped**

Tahiti, Society Islands

Ficus wood

c. 1690–1730

Collected by Captain James Cook between April and July 1769

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# **Tangonge, the Kaitaia carving**

Māori people, Kaitaia, North Island, New Zealand

Wood (Podocarpus totara)

1300–1400

Collection of Auckland War Memorial Museum

Tāmaki Paenga Hira

One of the earliest known art works in New Zealand, '**Tangonge**' was discovered buried in swampy ground in 1920. Thought to be part of a ritual threshold, it is made of totara (*Podocarpus totara*), a tree native to New Zealand.

At the centre stands a '**tiki**', an ancestor or god image. Very different in style from later Māori art, the figure bears a striking similarity to a Tahitian carving collected during Cook's first voyage.

The two carvings, seen here together for the first time, illustrate the early movement of culture and beliefs across the Pacific.

# **Canoe paddle**

Asmat people, south coast of  
West Papua

Wood

Mid-twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Steering oar**

Kairiru Island, Papua New Guinea

Wood, paint

Early twentieth century

Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, Staatliche  
Kunstsammlungen Dresden

# **Canoe paddle**

Asmat people, Unir River, south coast of West Papua

Wood, lime and ochre pigments, feathers

Collected by Hendrikus Albertus Lorentz in 1909–1910

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Paddle**

Santa Cruz or Reef Islands,  
Solomon Islands

Wood, pigments

Nineteenth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Paddle**

Dibiri Island, Bamu Delta, Papua  
New Guinea

Wood, imported buttons

Late nineteenth or early twentieth  
century

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of  
Cambridge

# **Hoe, paddle**

Māori people, Northern New  
Zealand

Wood

Nineteenth century

Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich

# **Paddle**

Santa Isabel Island (?), Solomon Islands

Wood, paint, mother of pearl

Early nineteenth century

Acquired by William Hamilton in 1825

Musée de Boulogne-sur-Mer

# **Nguzunguzu, figure from a canoe prow**

Marovo Lagoon, New Georgia, Solomon Islands

Wood, shell inlay

Nineteenth century

Collected by Eugen Paravicini in 1929

Museum der Kulturen Basel

This enigmatic figure formed the prow ornament at the front of a war canoe (**'tomoko'**). It was probably made towards the end of the nineteenth century, not long before colonial "pacification" of the region brought an end to local fighting.

Clasped like an offering in the figure's hands is a pigeon, a bird revered for its capacity to fly dead straight over great distances towards remote islands: here, it symbolises navigational virtuosity.

## **Taurapa, canoe sternpost**

Māori people, New Zealand

Wood, shell

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century

Collected by the French navigator Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville in 1826–1829 or 1838–1840

Musée national de la Marine, Paris

# **Lagim and tabuya, canoe splashboard and prow**

Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea

Wood, paint

Early twentieth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

# **Canoe splashboard**

Louisiade Archipelago, Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigment

Early nineteenth century

Collected by Captain Owen Stanley, commander of the HMS Rattlesnake, in 1849

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum



# **Canoe prow**

Wakde-Yamna area, Humboldt Bay, north coast of West Papua

Wood, paint

Early to mid-twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Canoe prow**

Kamoro people, south coast of West Papua

Wood, limewash

Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands



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# **Sabi or savi, canoe shield with crocodile-form prow**

Kaminimbit village, Iatmul, Sepik  
River region, Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigment, fibre, cowrie shells

Early twentieth century

Collected by Felix Speiser in 1930

Museum der Kulturen Basel

## **Tupaia**

Drawing of a Tahitian scene

Society Islands

Pencil and watercolour on paper

April–July 1769

The British Library, London

Tupaia (c. 1725–1770) was a priest and navigator from the Society Islands, who joined Cook's first voyage in 1769.

He became the first Islander known to have drawn on European paper, depicting key aspects of Tahitian life and society including temple precincts, musicians, and here species of native plants and canoes bearing warriors.

Tupaia was instrumental in helping the HMS Endeavour to navigate and communicate in the southern Pacific, but his role was diminished from Captain Cook's official record of the voyage. Only through recent scholarship have his remarkable deeds and drawings gained recognition.

# **Titere**

Drawing of four kites

Māori people, England

Ink on paper

1818

Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries –  
Ngā Pātaka Kōrero o Tāmaki

# **Tuai (known as Thomas Tooi)**

Drawing of two waka (canoes)

Māori people, England

Ink on paper

1818

Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries –  
Ngā Pātaka Kōrero o Tāmaki

# **Tuai (known as Thomas Tooi)**

Drawing of Korokoro's moko  
(face tattoo)

Māori people, England

Ink on paper

1818

Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries  
– Ngā Pātaka Kōrero o Tāmaki

# **Aqo**

Four drawings of maritime scenes  
with canoes

Simbo, Western Solomon Islands

Pencil on paper

1908

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of  
Cambridge

This extraordinary collection of pencil drawings were made by Aqo (fl. 1890–1910), a Roviana man, for the British anthropologist A.M. Hocart (1883–1939).

They illustrate a series of narratives, mostly concerning mythical events associated with the gods ('tamasa') but also describing recent history. Although some sequencing occurs, several tales interweave across each page, and their meaning is not always clear.

Aqo included a self-portrait, swimming from one sinking canoe to another during a fateful headhunting raid.

## **Bonito-fishing canoe**

Makira (San Cristobal), Solomon Islands

Wood, pearl shell, fibre

Late nineteenth century

Übersee-Museum, Bremen

# **Navigator's weather charm**

## **Caroline Islands**

Stingray spine, vegetable fibre, coral

Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Collected by the artist Paul Jacoulet

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

# **Hos, navigator's weather charm**

## **Lamotrek Atoll, Yap Archipelago, Caroline Islands**

Wood, pigment, stingray spine, fibre and shell

Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Collected by the ethnographer Augustin Krämer in 1909–1910

Linden-Museum Stuttgart

# **Fishhook**

## **Hawaiian Islands**

Bone, fibre

### **Eighteenth century**

Collected by Lieutenant Spelman Swaine during the voyage of Captain George Vancouver, in 1791–1794

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# **Fishhook**

## **Society Islands**

Pearl shell, bone, fibre

### **Eighteenth century**

Collected during the first voyage of Captain James Cook, 1768–1771

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge



# Fishhook

## Society Islands

Shell, fibre

## Eighteenth century

Collected during the first voyage of Captain James Cook, 1768–1771

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# Navigation chart



## Marshall Islands

Wood, fibre, snail shells

## Nineteenth century

Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg

# **Navigation chart**

## **Ailinglaplap Atoll, Marshall Islands**

Wood, cane and shell

Nineteenth century

Possibly collected by the ethnographer Paul Hambruch during the Hamburg Südsee-Expedition of 1908–1910

Linden-Museum Stuttgart

# **Navigation chart**

## **Marshall Islands**

Wood, fibre, snail shells

Nineteenth century

National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen

# **Stone relief from a meeting house**

Yap, Caroline Islands

Coral stone

Nineteenth century

GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

# **Wuramon, soul canoe with figures of turtles, birds and humans**

Asmat people, Central Asmat region, south coast of West Papua

Wood, natural dyes and pigments, fibre

Mid-twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands



# Canoe

Wuvulu, Western Islands,  
Bismarck Archipelago, Papua  
New Guinea

Wood, paint

Before 1900

Museum für Volkerkunde Hamburg

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Expanding Horizons

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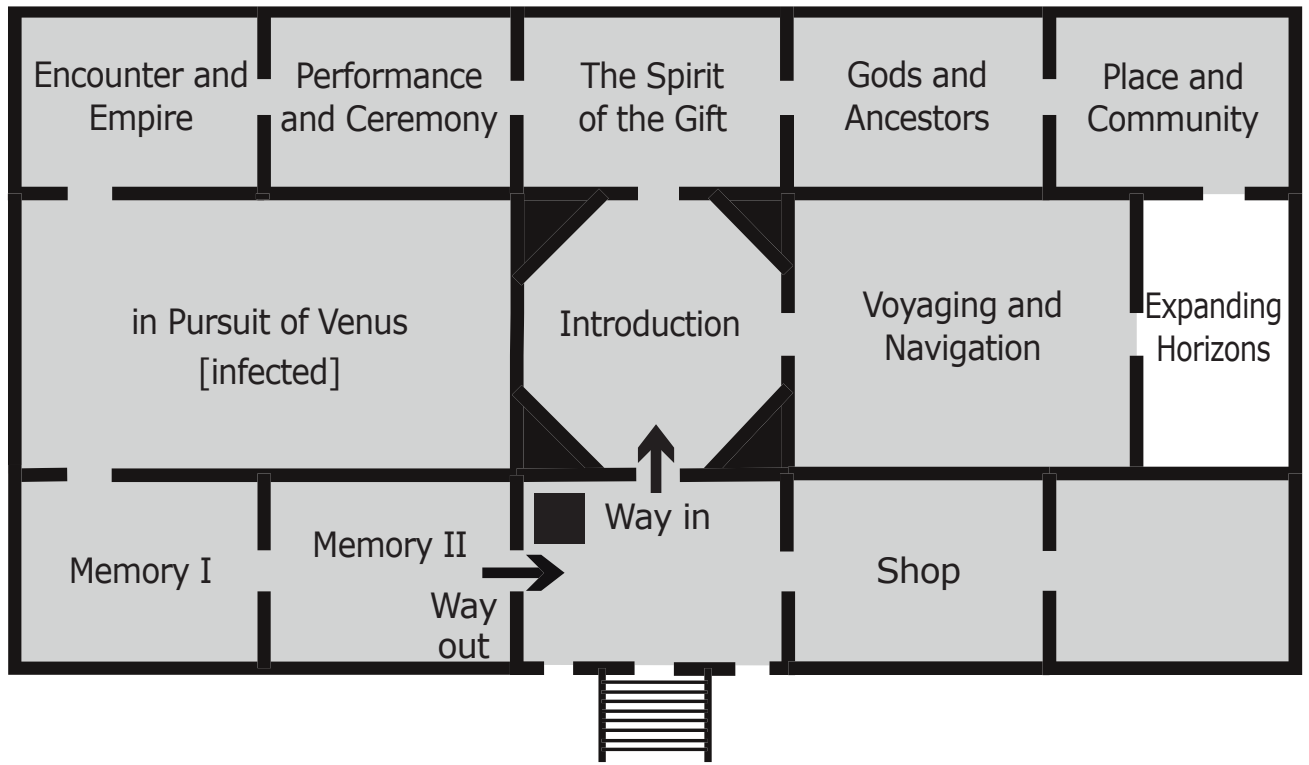
Main commentary



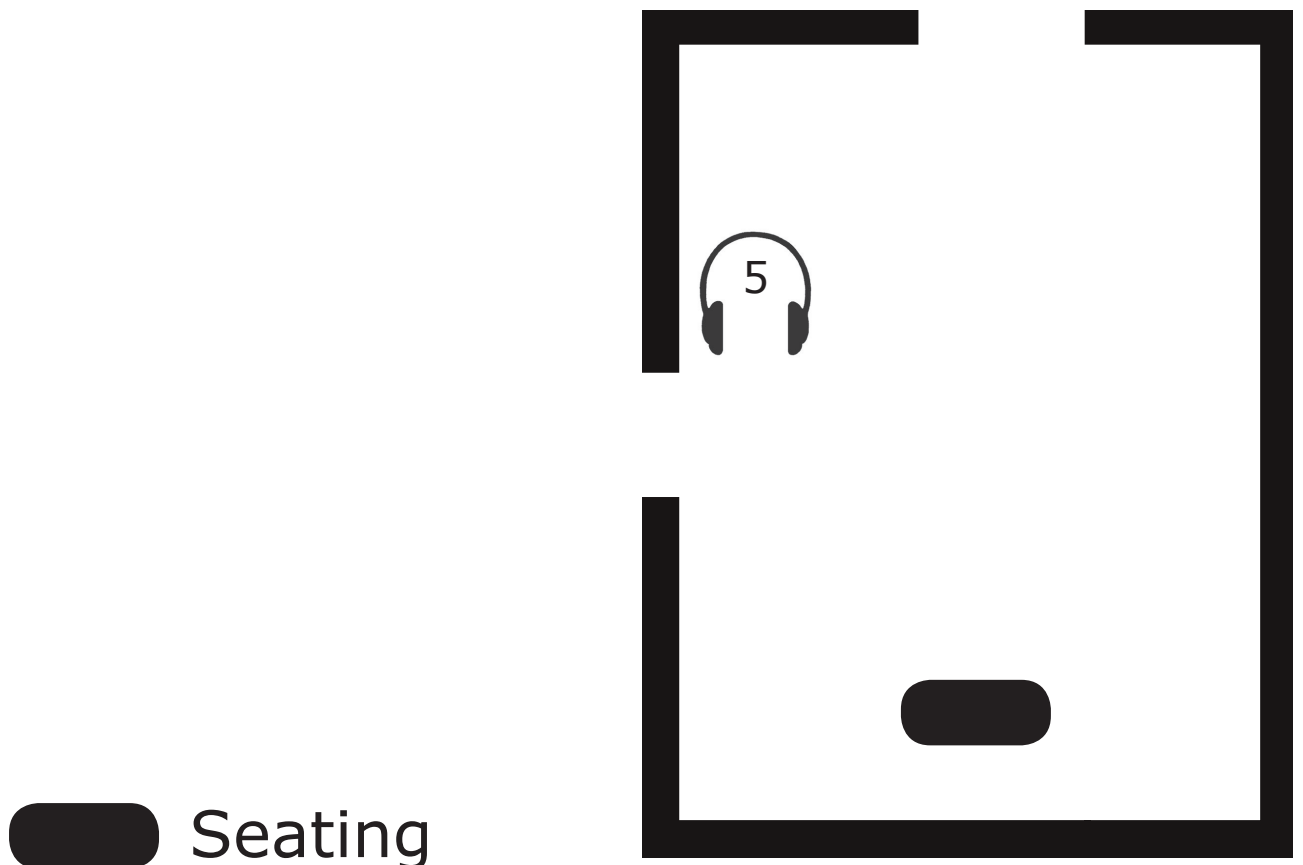
Descriptive commentary



Hoe, Maori canoe paddles



# Expanding Horizons





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# Expanding Horizons

Michael Parekowhai's '**He Kōrero Pūrākau mo Te Awanui o Te Motu: story of a New Zealand River**' bridges the Pacific Islander and European worlds, much like the trading of material objects that took place during the age of empire.

The two decorated Māori paddles, for instance, were gifted to Captain Cook in 1769.

The last 250 years has been marked by the journeys such artefacts have made. As cross-cultural encounters gained momentum in the late eighteenth century, Europeans began to avidly collect what they described as "artificial curiosities".

For their part, Islanders were keenly interested in exchange that brought them European novelties.

By the late nineteenth century, ethnographic collecting had become a form of imperial commerce in itself, and tens of thousands of objects made their way into museums throughout Europe and elsewhere.

Artefacts of Islanders' heritage have been understood in different ways over time: as scientific specimens, as heathen "idols" and as masterpieces of so-called "primitive" art.

Despite this, they have retained different meanings and values for Islanders themselves. Museum practice today aspires to engage in dialogue, to recognise and affirm the original values and narratives Islanders attach to these works, often conferring them with powerful new meanings in the process.

Islander voyagers likewise entered new realms during the age of empire. They crewed European ships, visited ports in Asia and the northern hemisphere, and often returned to settle on islands other than their own.

During the twentieth-century, they increasingly travelled as labour migrants, consequently creating new communities; while in the twenty-first century, rising sea levels threaten to make further voyages of relocation inevitable.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

### **Hoe, canoe paddles**



Māori people, New Zealand

Wood, paint

Eighteenth century

Collected during the first voyage of Captain James Cook, on 12 October 1769

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

### **Worrumbi or elayaborr, shield**

Mendi or Wola people, Southern Highlands, Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigment, fibre

Mid-twentieth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

# **Shield**

Humboldt Bay, north coast of  
West Papua

Wood

Late nineteenth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Substitute trophy head**

Purari delta, Papua New Guinea

Wood, ochre

Early twentieth century

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of  
Cambridge

# Tiki akau or katina, figure of a god or ancestor

Marquesas Islands

Wood

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

This **tiki** figure, representing an ancestor, formed a supporting post for a house on a **me'ae** (sacred precinct) where ancestors were commemorated, sacred objects kept and important rites performed.

The proportion of the head is deliberately exaggerated, as the head was understood to be the locus of knowledge, sanctity, power and identity.

# **Club**

Balade Harbour, New Caledonia

Wood

Eighteenth century

Collected during the second voyage of Captain James Cook, 1772–1775

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# **Taumi, gorget**

Society Islands

Fibre, feathers, shark teeth, dog hair

Late eighteenth century

Lent by National Museums Liverpool, World Museum



# **Te otanga, armour, helmet and trident**

Kiribati

Armour: coconut fibre, human hair

Helmet: fish skin

Trident: coconut palm wood, shark teeth, human hair,  
palm fibre, palm leaf

Late nineteenth century

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of  
Cambridge

## **Headdress**

Roro people, Yule Island, Papua  
New Guinea

Fibre, feathers, shell

Early twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Kavat mask**

Baining people, New Britain,  
Papua New Guinea

Fibre, bamboo, barkcloth, paint

Collected by the German ethnologist Richard Parkinson  
between 1890 and 1913

Museum der Kulturen Basel

# **Flute stopper**

Biwat language group, Yuat River,  
Sepik River region, Papua New  
Guinea

Wood, cassowary feathers, teeth, shells, turtle shell,  
fibre, pigments

Early twentieth century

Museum der Kulturen Basel

# **Female figure with child**

Ifar village, Lake Sentani, north coast of West Papua

Wood

Collected by the Swiss anthropologist Paul Wirz in 1926

Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Museum der Kulturen Basel

A form of sculpture usually found in men's ceremonial houses, this mother and child figure is thought to represent a maternal founding ancestor of the clan.

The anthropologist Paul Wirz (1892–1955) collected this sculpture in 1926, by which time the traditional life of Lake Sentani villages was being suppressed.

The Lake Sentani sculptures Wirz acquired became very popular with European collectors who were keen to acquire fashionable “primitive art”.

# Drum

## Ra'ivavae, Austral Islands

Wood, fish skin, coconut fibre

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Across eastern Polynesia, drums were associated with sacred precincts (**marae**), temples and rituals. Their deep, resonant sound marked the sanctity of the moment, a state of **tapu** (sacredness), and the presence of gods.

Following conversion to Christianity, many Islanders were encouraged to surrender their drums to missionaries or give them away in trade.

# **Shield**

Kundima village, lower Yuat River,  
Papua New Guinea

Wood, paint, fibre, cassowary feathers

Early twentieth century

Collected by Gregory Bateson

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of  
Cambridge

# **Suspension hook, mother and child**

Iatmul people, Kanganaman  
village, East Sepik Province,  
Papua New Guinea

Wood

Mid-twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Female figure**

Attributed to Giri people, lower  
Bamu River, East Sepik Province,  
Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigment, shell, vegetable fibre

Early to mid-twentieth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

# **Female tattooed figure**

Aitutaki, Cook Islands

Wood, pigment

Eighteenth or early nineteenth century

Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich

# Shield

Unir River, northwest Asmat,  
south coast, West Papua

Wood, paint

Late nineteenth or beginning of  
twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

The decorations on this elegant shield reveal its forbidding purpose. A stylised face looks out of the upper section, and in the centre a flying fox (**tar**), a large fruit bat, is represented by two curving forms linked by a fan-shaped tail.

In Asmat culture, a tree can symbolise a human being, its fruit the human head; hence the fruit-eating **tar** evokes the success of a swift, aggressive headhunter.

# **Vayola, war shield**

Trobriand Islands, Papua New  
Guinea

Acacia wood, cane, ochre, charcoal and lime

Late nineteenth century

National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen

# **Michael Parekowhai**

He Kōrero Pūrākau mo Te Awanui  
o Te Motu: story of a New Zealand  
River

New Zealand

Piano, wood, ivory, brass, lacquer, steel, ebony, pāua  
shell, mother of pearl, upholstery

2011

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand

Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington



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Place and Community

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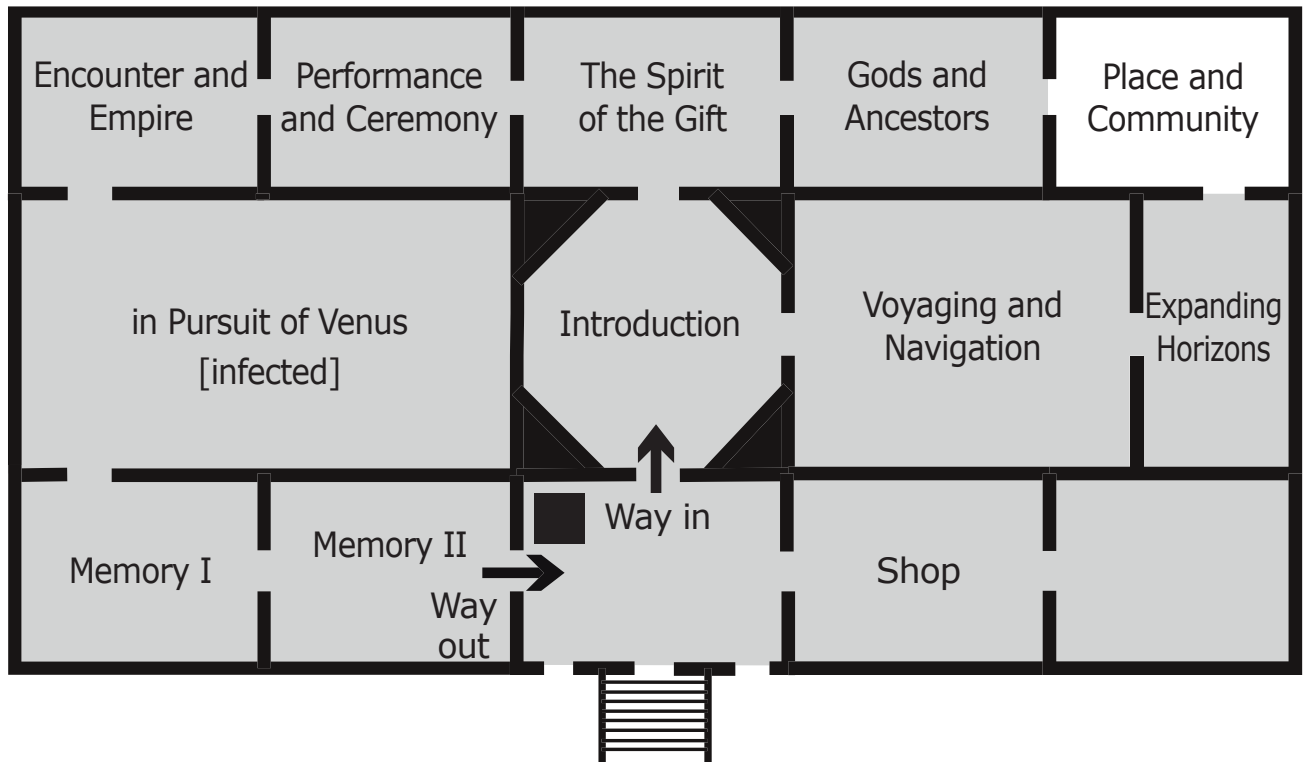
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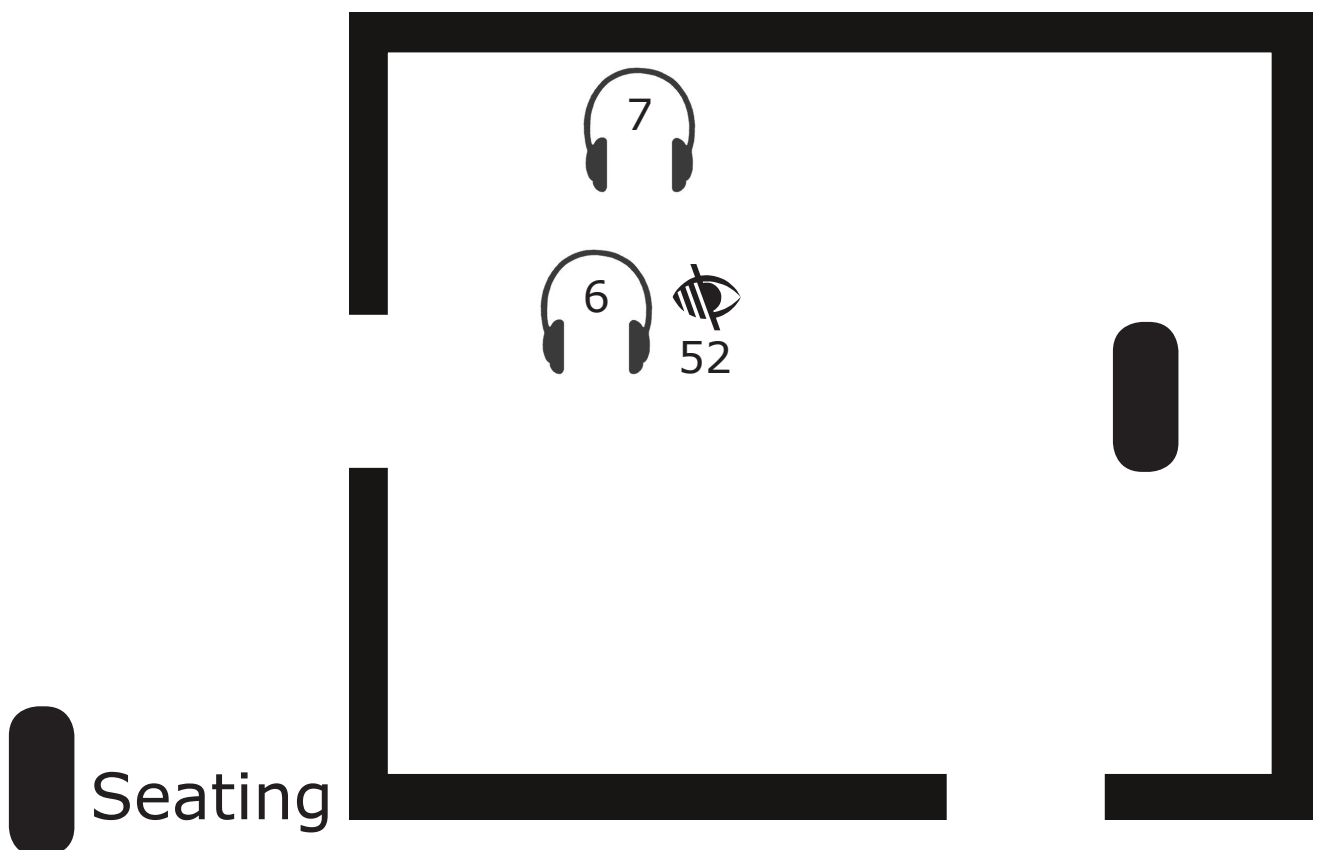
52 Decorated beam



Poupou, Māori wall carving



# Place and Community



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# Place and Community

As islands were settled, they transformed from purely natural environments to inhabited places. Human occupation modified them physically, as slopes and valleys and the interiors of larger islands were cultivated and irrigation systems introduced.

Fishponds and temples were constructed on shorelines.

Throughout Oceania, communities built houses for individuals and for collective and ritual purposes, reflecting social hierarchies and gender divisions.

The buildings were decorated with spectacular painted façades and great carved posts and finials that represented ancestors and mythic creatures. Stone walls and raised platforms demarcated sacred precincts.

In some places, structures sheltered the large canoes that were vital to ritual fishing expeditions or warfare. The structural beams of these shelters featured stories of maritime accomplishment, such as the one from the Solomon Islands decorated with frigate birds and bonito (a predatory fish related to tuna).

Oceanic places were marked and defined by many forms of architecture and art, much of which was enthusiastically collected by Europeans.

Space was not confined by the physical world; rather, it was viewed as an environment defined by activity and seasonality as well as cosmological and mythological formation.

Ceremonial precincts witnessed performances and rituals. Creation myths, maintained through oral histories, spoke of the different beginnings of islands.

In some cases, terrain rested on the back of a crocodile; elsewhere, islands were fished up from the depths of the ocean, drawn to the surface by a deity or demi-god.

All areas on and around the islands – seas, reefs, streams, forests and mountains – were inhabited by spirits to whom daily rituals were offered to ensure success in fishing and hunting.



**List of works (clockwise in order of hang)**

## **Gable sculpture with figure and fish**

Asei village (?), Lake Sentani,  
north coast of West Papua

Wood, pigment

Late nineteenth or early twentieth  
century

Collected by the Swiss anthropologist Paul Wirz in 1926

Museum der Kulturen Basel

## **Gable sculpture with emaciated figure and hybrid bird**

Asei village, Lake Sentani, north  
coast of West Papua

Wood, pigment

Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Collected by the Swiss anthropologist Paul Wirz in 1926

Museum der Kulturen Basel

## Ahuia Ova

Drawing of a **dubu** (ceremonial platform)

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Graphite and red crayon on paper

1903–1904

Collected by the Cooke-Daniels Expedition in late 1903 or 1904

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

These drawings were made by Ahuia Ova (1877–1951), a Koita chief, in response to questions from British ethnographer Charles Seligman (1873–1940) about local life and beliefs.

One features a **dubu**, a wooden ceremonial platform, with yams heaped underneath and bananas strung around in preparation for a feast. The other shows two octopus-like **urita**, a form of supernatural creature, and figures performing a ritual to stop them causing sickness.

## Ahuia Ova

Drawing of two urita  
(supernatural creatures)

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Graphite and red crayon on paper

1903–1904

Collected during the Cooke-Daniels Expedition in late 1903 or 1904

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Decorated beam from a bai (chief's meeting house)**

Palau

Wood, paint

Early to mid-nineteenth century

Collected by the German ethnologist and animal ecologist Carl Semper

Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

The chief's meeting houses of Palau were commonly decorated with incised and painted images on their facades and interior beams. These represented well-known myths, as well as other narratives known only by those able to access these buildings.

Among the stories featured on this beam is the comic tale of a dissatisfied wife, who sent her husband in search of a man with such an elongated penis that it extended across a lagoon to reach her.



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# Decorated beam

Uki, southeast Solomon Islands

Wood, paint, shell

Mid-nineteenth century

Collected by Julius L. Brenchley on 30 August 1865

Maidstone Museum & Bentrif Art Gallery

# Poupou, wall carving



Te Arawa, Māori people, New Zealand

Wood, inlaid eyes of haliotis shell

1840–1860

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Attributed to Karibwongi Ragerage**

House post

Makira (also known as San  
Cristobal), Solomon Islands

Wood

Nineteenth or early twentieth century

Collected by the art dealer Pierre Langlois in the 1960s

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

# **Tutulu, ceremonial house post**

Buliali, Emira Island, Bismarck  
Archipelago, Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigments

# Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Collected by the colonial administrator and anthropologist Ernest W. P. Chinnery

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

## **House post**

Doyo village, Lake Sentani, north coast of West Papua

Wood

Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Collected by Carel Maria A. Groenevelt in 1952

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Façade sculpture representing Dilukai**

Palau

Wood

Late nineteenth or early twentieth  
century

Collected by the German ethnographer Augustin Krämer  
in 1910–1911

Linden-Museum Stuttgart

There are many myths to explain the recurring figure of Dilukai, who is always shown as a naked young woman with genitals clearly on display.

These range from a father punishing his promiscuous daughter (an understanding later favoured by missionaries wishing to dissuade such behaviour), to a goddess bringing luck to a village either through warding away evil spirits or bringing fertility.



# **Orator's stool**

Iatmul people, Kabriman village,  
Blackwater River, middle Sepik  
region, Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigment, conus shell

Mid-twentieth century

Collected by the ethnographer Alfred Bühler in 1959

Museum der Kulturen Basel

# **Malu semban, openwork board**

Sawos people, Sepik region,  
Papua New Guinea

Wood, fibre

Early twentieth century

Collected by Gregory Bateson between 1929 and 1934

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of  
Cambridge

Openwork boards of this kind are thought to have been used as marriage gifts, accordingly moving from village to village.

Carved from the buttress roots of large trees, they are varied in form; this board features two faces, and a field of stylised birds' heads with prominent hooked beaks.

Birds were prominent in the mythology of the region, but it is unclear whether those depicted here represent any specific species or narrative.

## **Finial sculpture**

Gaikarobi village, Wosera-Gaui area, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Wood

Mid-twentieth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

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Large  
Print

# Oceania

Gods and Ancestors

**Do not remove from gallery**

# Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



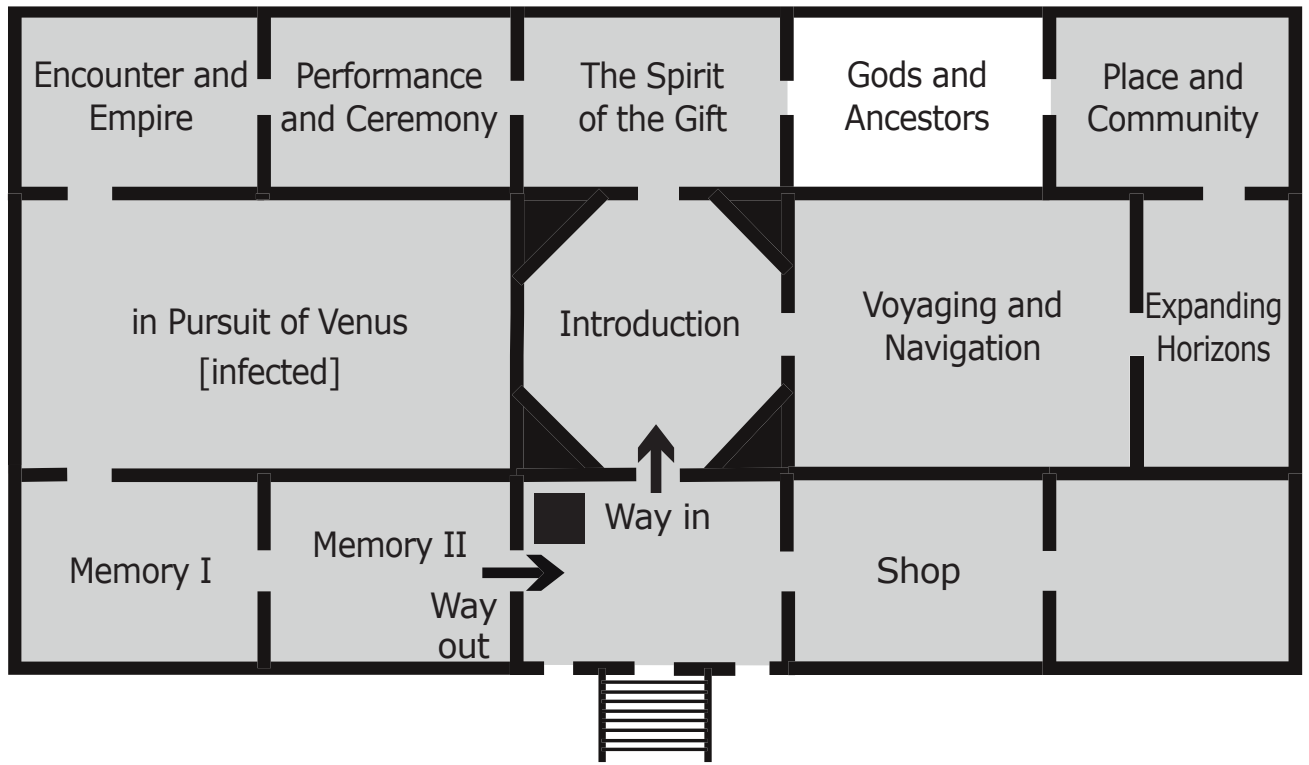
**Tino aitu**, male deity figure known as  
Ko Kawe (Kave)



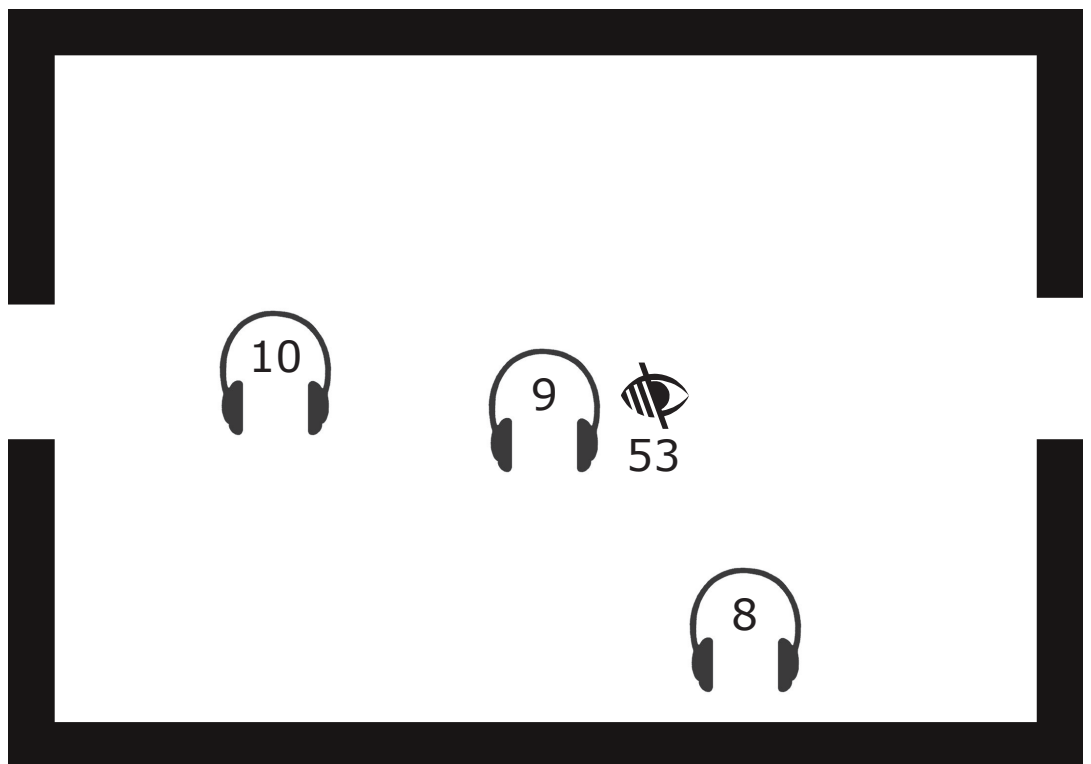
53 Deity figure known as **A'a**



Uli figure



# Gods and Ancestors



# Oceania

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Gods and Ancestors

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# Gods and Ancestors

Throughout the Pacific, ancestors, gods and spirits recalled the creation of the world and the composition of the cosmos, and reflected the tension between such opposing forces as war and fertility.

Making offerings to those who came before helped Islanders maintain their identities and cement their place in the world. These various beings were represented through diverse forms and a broad range of materials: from the humble to the valuable, from the transient to the permanent, from the small to the large.

The **Moai Hava**, from Rapa Nui, was one such ancestral figure, originally located at a sacred burial site.



Houses featured named ancestors and genealogies, recorded movement and settlement, and commemorated the recently deceased. Architectural elements dramatised the power and accomplishments of particular groups and were often built to confront and impress visitors through their size and the extent of their decoration.

Elaborate meeting houses held great gatherings, and village plazas witnessed diverse communal performances.

Although Oceanic art was a manifestation of individual and collective identity, it was also a story of affinity. To this end, it represented relationships linked with places of origin and with other island groups, and it remained an expression of defiance in the context of conquest and upheaval.

Art enabled Islanders to create and inhabit places in dynamic and evolving ways, all the more so when cross-cultural encounters brought new intruders with claims upon the physical and spiritual realms of the islands' inhabitants.

Although today many Islanders are Christian, a regard for ancestors and Indigenous knowledge make ancestral spirits and ancient deities enduringly relevant.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

# Moai Hava

## Rapa Nui

Basalt

c. 1100–1600

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

**Moai** are ancestral figures that overlooked sacred precincts (**ahu**) and burial sites, and were central to life in Rapa Nui for more than a thousand years. By the time this **moai** was collected, smallpox and slavers had decimated the island's population and the indigenous religion was all but lost.

Local people called the sculpture "Moai Hava", and it was assumed this was the name of the god or ancestor – recently however, **hava** has been translated as "lost" or "dirty", suggesting a meaning closer to "lost god".

# **Ti'i, god image with two heads**

Tahiti, Society Islands

Cordia wood

Early nineteenth century

Collected by Captain Sampson Jervois of HMS Dauntless in January 1822

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Tino aitu, male deity figure known as Ko Kawe (Kave)**



Nukuoro, Caroline Islands

Wood

Nineteenth century

Probably collected by the Polish ethnographer and collector J. S. Kubary in 1877

Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg

# **Model of Waiet**

## **Mer Island, Torres Strait**

Wood, shell, turtle shell, cassowary feathers, feathers, pigments

**c. 1905**

Commissioned by the anthropologist Alfred Haddon

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# **Mimia, male carved figure**

## **Kiwai Island (?), Western Province, Papua New Guinea**

Wood and pigment traces

**Late nineteenth or early twentieth century**

Collected during the Cooke-Daniels Expedition in 1904

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

Among the Kiwai people of the Fly River delta, human figures known as **mimia** were central to male initiation rites performed as part of a cyclical ceremony. Focused on preparation for warfare, the ceremony included organised fighting and trials by fire.

**Mimia** figures were kept in the men's house (**darimo**), where they were decorated with pigments and body ornaments before being shown to initiates.

## Uli figure



Central New Ireland, Bismarck  
Archipelago, Papua New Guinea

Wood, natural pigments (including lime and soot), shell,  
plant fibre

Early twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands, on  
loan from Universiteitsmuseum Groningen, Netherlands

# **Deity figure known as A'a**

## **Rurutu, Austral Islands**

Sandalwood

Late sixteenth or seventeenth century

Presented by Rurutu Islanders to the missionary John Williams in 1821

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Female figure**

## **Amaile village, Aleipata district, Upolu, Samoa**

Wood, shell

Early nineteenth century

Collected by the Rev. Thomas Heath in 1839

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Female and male figures**

Kranket Island, Madang Harbour,  
Astrolabe Bay, Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigment

Late nineteenth or early twentieth  
century

Linden-Museum Stuttgart

# **Female figure with child**

Ussiai people, Manus Island,  
Admiralty Islands, Papua New  
Guinea

Wood, paint

Nineteenth or early twentieth century

Museum der Kulturen Basel



# To'o, woven image of the god 'Oro

## Society Islands

Wood, coconut fibre

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Wrapping and binding were very important in Polynesia, and often used in the creation of sacred god-images.

This type of image, made with woven fibre, is associated with the god 'Oro, around whom a cult developed in the Society Islands in the 1700s during a time of societal change. These images were kept in specially made containers on **marae** (sacred precincts).

During the first HMS Endeavour voyage, Joseph Banks (1743–1820) shocked Islanders when he disrespectfully thrust his hand into one of these containers.

# Ki'i, temple of Kū-kā'ili-moku, the god Kū, the island snatcher

Attributed to the Kona coast,  
Hawai'i

Breadfruit wood

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth  
century

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

Hawaiian life was pervaded by opposition and hierarchy, juxtaposing chiefs and people and the principles associated with the gods of war (**Kū**) and peace (**Lono**).

This figure represents **Kū**, associated with authority, strength and prosperity. Here he grimaces with the fearsome “mouth of disrespect” and wears a **malo**, a loincloth that was ceremonially made and ritually presented to the figure.

In contrast, the figure of **Lono** displayed nearby expresses genealogy and connectedness through the arc above his head, which is a prolongation of his backbone.

## **Ancestor figure named Popua**

Nukumanu, Papua New Guinea

Wood, fibre, shell

Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Collected by Captain Karl Nauer in 1913

GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

# **Male deity figure known as Rao**

Mangareva, Gambier Islands

Wood

Collected by the Picpus Missionary Order in 1834–1836

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

# **Bisj, ceremonial pole**

Amborep village, central Asmat,  
south coast of West Papua

Wood, pigment

Mid-twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Sculpture of the god Lono**

Hawaiian Islands

Wood

Late eighteenth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

## **Yipwon figure**

Korewori River, Angoram, East  
Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Wood

Nineteenth or twentieth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

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Large  
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# Oceania

The Spirit of the Gift

**Do not remove from gallery**

# Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



The Spirit of the Gift: Overview

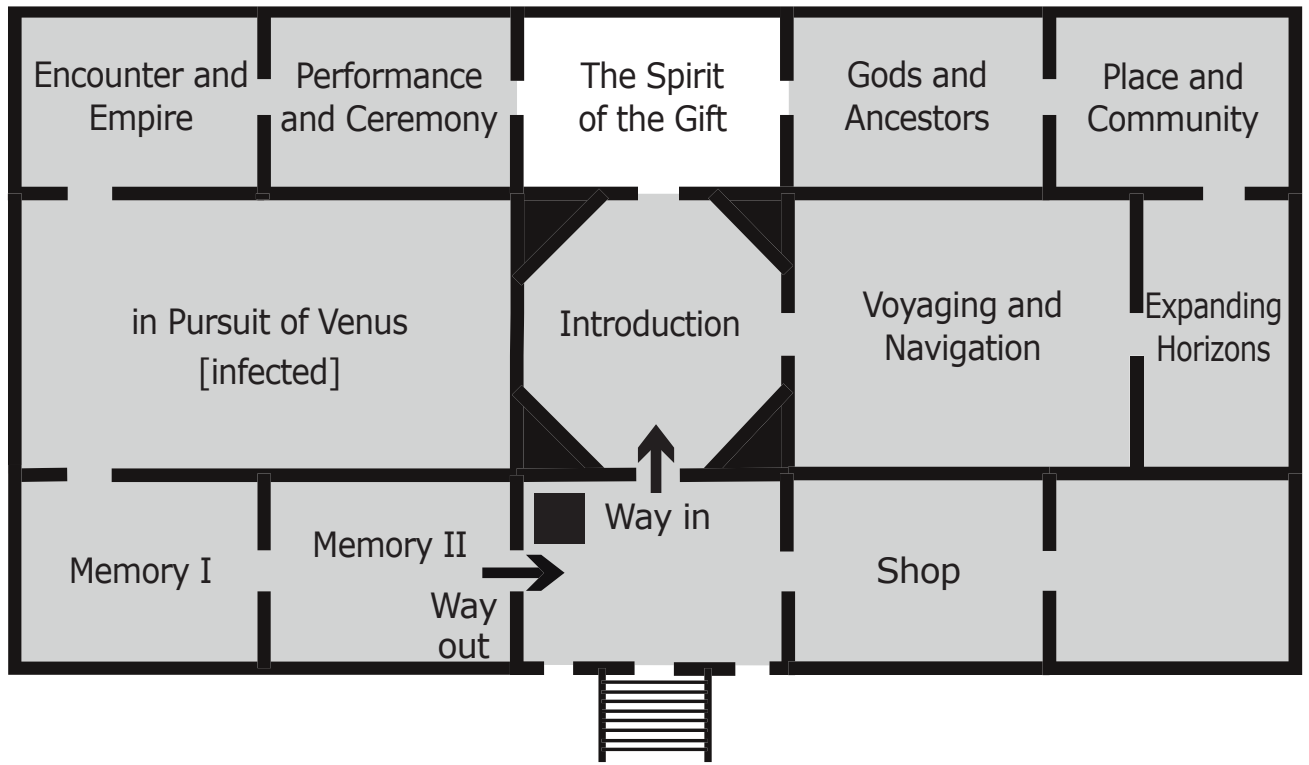


Akua hulu manu, Feathered god image

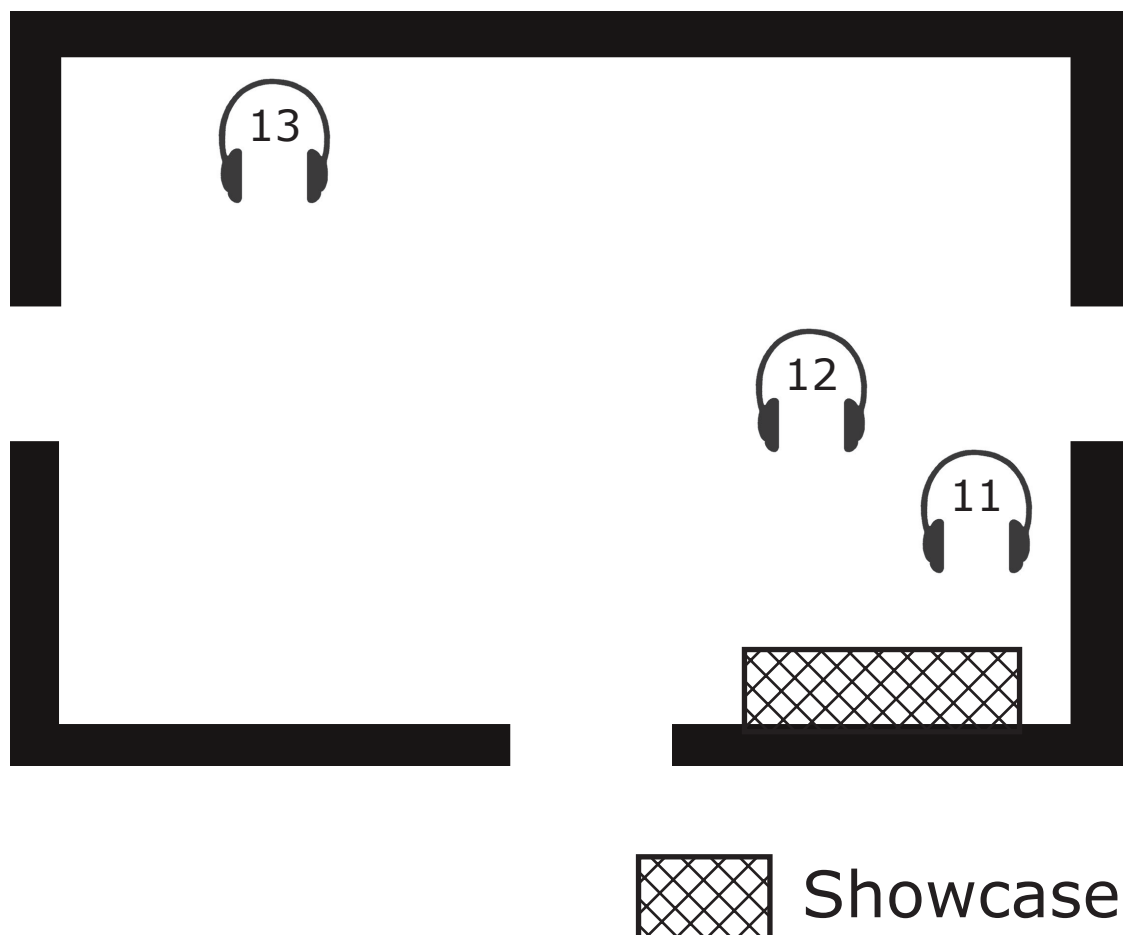


Le Ageagea o Tumua, 'ie tōga, fine mat





# The Spirit of the Gift



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# The Spirit of the Gift



The act of gifting, often in the form of the ceremonial exchange of high value objects, remains central to life across Oceania.

People sustained lifelong obligations to kin, to whom presentations would be made at times of marriage, birth or death. Life was thus defined less by social groups than through relationships.

Gifts were made under different circumstances and were designed to ensure particular outcomes: peace and reconciliation, the transfer of land, or the acquisition of ritual knowledge.

Gift exchanges between different Islands and clans were likewise highly significant. Great ceremonial offerings of food or valuables were presented. These were deliberately competitive, ensuring that recipients would be obliged to ensure an equally sumptuous offering in return.

Designed as spectacle, gifts were frequently highly aestheticised. Among the many artefacts that constituted gifts were fabrics. Across Oceania, barkcloth, made from the paper mulberry tree, was delicately stained or painted with dynamic, geometric motifs and botanical images of growth and fecundity.

Some was made for wrapping around the body; others were joined to form vast fabrics that were spread across the ground for people to walk on during significant public events such as the marriages and funerals of nobles.

In some archipelagos, like the Trobriand Islands, social relationships involved spectacular canoe voyages and the gifting of intricate shell valuables. Items such as finely woven mats and textiles and exquisite featherwork were often among the most prized.

Cross-cultural gifts were made strategically during the first encounters with Europeans.

Chiefs publicly presented works bearing extraordinary spiritual power to visitors such as Captain Cook. These gifts were not expressions of obeisance however, but efforts to shape relationships with people who appeared, suddenly, from unknown worlds.

Through the power of the gift they aimed to bring these evidently powerful and potentially dangerous outsiders into the web of engagements, alliances and obligations that regulated Islanders' lives.

List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

# **Akua hulu manu, feathered god image, probably Kū the god of war**

Hawaiian Islands

Fibre frame, human hair, pearl shell, seeds, dog teeth,  
feathers

Late eighteenth century

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Akua hulu manu, feathered god image**



Hawaiian Islands

Fibre, feathers, human hair, pearl shell, seed, dog teeth

Late eighteenth century

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# Showcase

## **‘Head’ of money**

Houaïlou (?), New Caledonia

Flying fox fur, lizard bones, shells, fibre

Early twentieth century

Collected by the missionary and ethnologist Maurice Leenhardt

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

The Kanak people used “money” in a diverse range of social transactions. These valuables were intricately composed artefacts, made up of woven fibre, flying fox fur, lizard bones, shells, European red wool, and other elements.

Some, like this example, had a head and arms; others featured a carved wooden face. These were valued items in and of themselves, rather than tokens representing a fixed value.

# **Mwali, armshell**

Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea

Pandanus leaf, glass, fibre, cone shell, cockleshell

Early twentieth century

Collected by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in 1915–1918

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Soulava, necklace**

Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea

Shells, seeds, glass beads, pandanus leaf

Early twentieth century

Collected by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in 1915–1918

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum



# Necklace with seventeen fish

Fiji (but possibly made in Tonga)

Whale ivory, shell, coconut shell, fibre

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century

Acquired by Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon or Lady Gordon in 1875–1876

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

This unique necklace features seventeen ivory fish, hanging as if they have been caught on the lines of shell and coconut beads.

Such materials were common to high-status articles of personal ornament in Fiji, but the significance of this particular design is not known.

Although it was acquired in Fiji, it may have been made originally in Tonga or Samoa, travelling to Fiji through multiple giftings.

# **Double-figure hook**

Fiji or Tonga

Whale ivory, glass beads, fibre

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century

Collected by Sergeant Tevita Madigibuli, and presented by him to Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon in 1876

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# **Necklace**

Tobi Island, Palau

Sea urchin spines, fibre

Before 1912

Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich

# **Necklace of eight anthropomorphic figures**

**Fiji**

Whale ivory, fibre

**Nineteenth century**

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

## **Necklace**

**Wuvulu, Papua New Guinea**

Shark vertebrae, shell (*Cassis rufa*), glass beads, fibre

**Before 1909**

Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich

# On the wall

## Masi, barkcloth

Matuku or Moala, eastern Fiji

Barkcloth, dyes

Mid- to late nineteenth century

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

The value of barkcloth (**masi**) lies as much in its creation as its presentation and display: harvesting, beating and decorating these cloths is an incredibly time-consuming process that represents the effort and enterprise of a whole community.

Early European explorers, including Captain Cook, did not understand this value when **masi** were presented to them, at times causing great offence. This barkcloth, with a different design on each side, was probably hung over a beam to divide a room in a large chiefly house.

# Barkcloth

## Aitutaki, Cook Islands

Barkcloth, pigment

Nineteenth century

Collected by Bishop John Richardson Selwyn of the  
Melanesian Mission

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of  
Cambridge

# Le Ageagea o Tumua, ‘ie tōga, fine mat



Samoa

Pandanus leaf, feathers

Nineteenth century

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand  
Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington

# **`Ahu`ula, feather cloak**

## **Hawaiian Islands**

Feathers, fibre, painted barkcloth (on reverse)

## **Early nineteenth century**

Belonged to King Kamehameha II (Liholiho), and brought by him to England in 1824

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# **Siapo mamunu, painted barkcloth**

## **Samoa**

Barkcloth, ochre

## **Late nineteenth or early twentieth century**

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# Flax cloak with **tāniko** border

Māori people, New Zealand

**Muka** fibre from **harakeke**, flax (*Phormium tenax*), dye

Eighteenth century

Collected during the first voyage of Captain James Cook, 1769–1770

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Māori cloaks exemplify ancestral **mana** (spiritual power), and were often highly important gifts and heirlooms. The Māori see the interweaving of threads in textiles as closely related to the concept of genealogy (**whakapapa**), through which people are joined together.

Their creation, involving the preparation and weaving of many hundreds of threads, entailed complex technical, ritual and customary understandings. Such technologies are still in use, as in the creation of the monumental 'Kiko Moana' (displayed nearby).

# **Tivaevae ta'orei, patchwork quilt**

Cook Islands

Cotton

c. 1900

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand

Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington



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Large  
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# Oceania

Performance and  
Ceremony

**Do not remove from gallery**

# Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



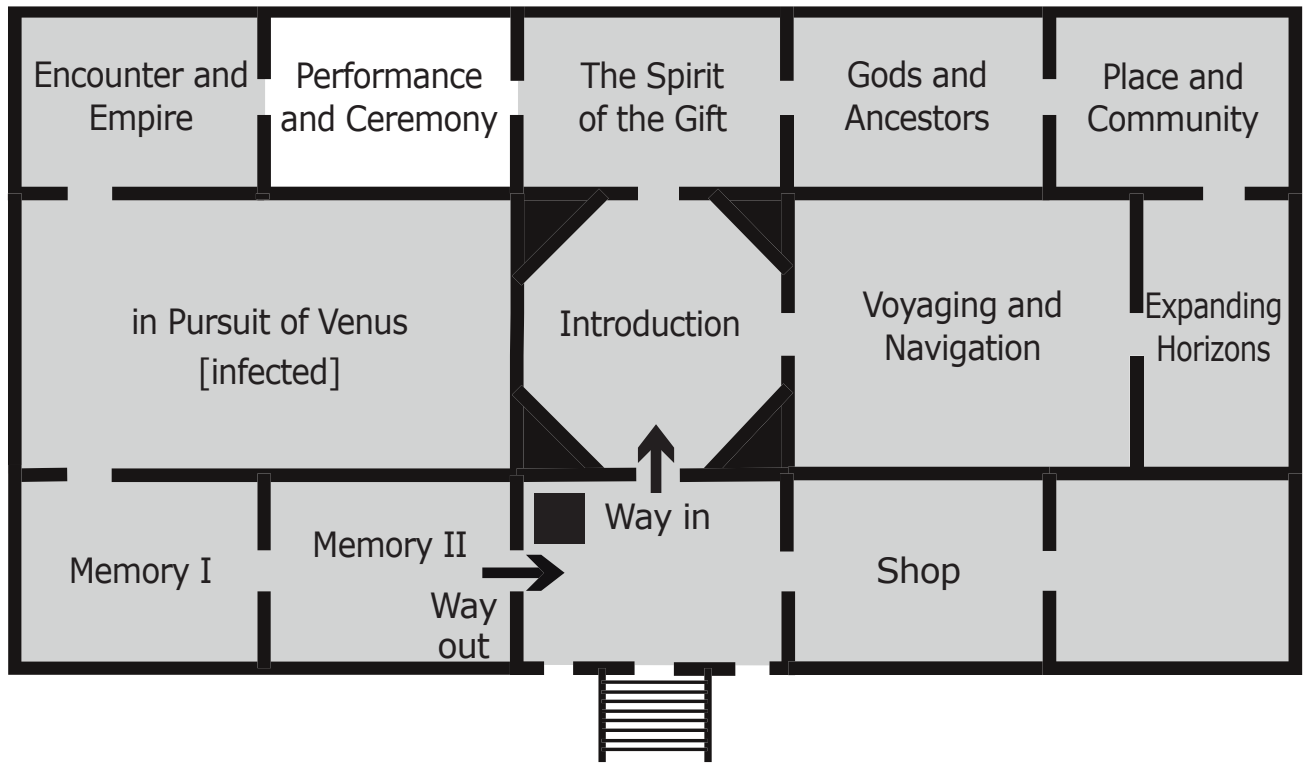
54 Heva tupapau, known as “the  
Costume of the Chief Mourner”



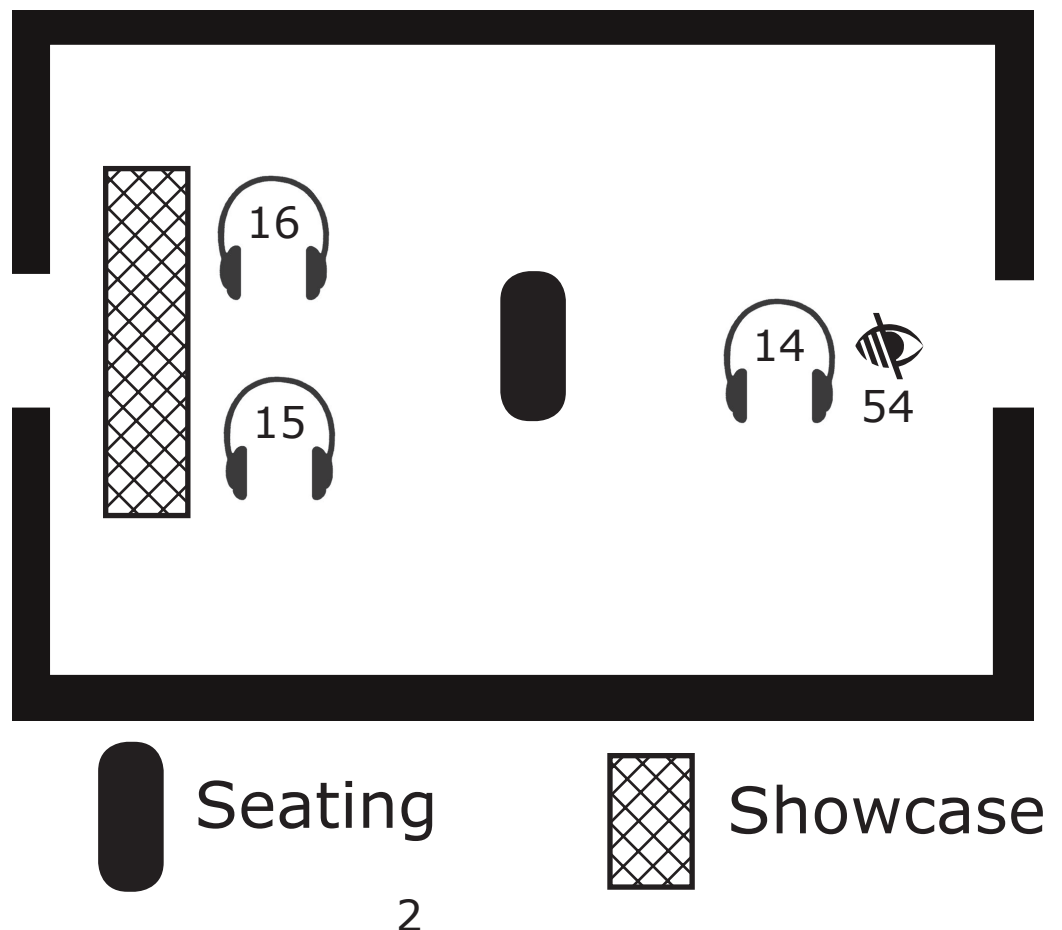
Carved figure known as Pepe



**Krar**, composite mask



# Performance and Ceremony



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# Performance and Ceremony

Across Oceania, routine activities such as cultivation and fishing were disrupted by dramatic, occasionally frightening, ceremonial activities, which sometimes required years of preparation.

Some ceremonies were enacted seasonally, while others may have only taken place once or twice in the course of a lifetime. Compared to the time required to prepare for them, these ceremonies were relatively brief but nonetheless intense and dramatic events.

Frequently, Islanders were terrified by masks or effigies representing malevolent spirits, their fear heightened by sounds emanating from hidden drums and sacred bullroarers.

Elsewhere, headhunting raids, warfare, the inauguration of chiefs, fishing expeditions, deaths, marriages and other alliances were all marked by ceremonies of various kinds.

Elaborate costumes such as the Chief Mourner's costume, one of only six in existence, convey the magnitude of the events they were created to commemorate.

The body was a particular focus of ritual attention. Across New Guinea, male and female initiation was a protracted, staged process, subjecting novices to ordeals and body modifications such as scarification.

In Polynesia and Micronesia, tattooing marked status, authority, ancestry and rites of passage, as well as infusing the body with power and protection.

Although deadly, warfare was also articulated as aesthetic performance, complete with dances and ritual challenges.

Shields, spears and other weapons were elaborately decorated. Clubs and axes were also widely employed in dance, not just as an expression of aggressive vigour but to convey unity.

Today, body art and performative traditions, adapted and revived to become integral to contemporary life and identity, continue across the region.

International gatherings such as the Festival of Pacific Arts, which has rotated around island nations since the 1970s, demonstrate how significant the practice of performance – through large gatherings of harmoniously and brilliantly decorated and choreographed people – remains.



## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)



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# **Heva tupapau, known as “the Costume of the Chief Mourner”**

Tahiti, Society Islands

Pearl shell, feathers, turtle shell, coconut shell, coconut fibre, barkcloth, pigments

Eighteenth century

Collected by Lieutenant Francis Godolphin Bond of HMS Providence in 1792

Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter

# **Tupaia**

Drawing of dancing woman and  
chief mourner

Society Islands

Pencil and watercolour

June–August 1769

The British Library, London

# **Aiainunu, mask**

Gulf of Papua, Papua New Guinea

Wood, barkcloth, cane, pigment

Late nineteenth century

Collected by the explorer Theodore Bevan in 1887

The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin

# Showcase

## Dance wand

Baining people, New Britain,  
Papua New Guinea

Barkcloth, pigment over cane or wood frame

Late nineteenth century

Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, Staatliche  
Kunstsammlungen Dresden



## Carved figure known as Pepe

New Britain, Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigment, fibre

Nineteenth century

Collected by the German ethnologist Richard Parkinson  
in the 1880–1890s

GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Staatliche  
Kunstsammlungen Dresden

# Fan

## Rarotonga, Cook Islands

### Early nineteenth century

Plant fibre, wood

Collected by the Quaker minister Daniel Wheeler in 1836

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

In the Cook Islands, fans were high status items that had ritual as well as quotidian uses.

They could be spun between the palms of the hands, to animate the images of ancestors and gods that formed their handles – in this case probably of the fisherman's god, Tangaora.

# Tahi'i, fan

## Marquesas Islands

Woven pandanus leaf, coconut fibre, wood, bone

### Early nineteenth century

Linden-Museum Stuttgart

# Qana vivi, pandanus textile

Ambae, Vanuatu

Pandanus fibre, dye

Early twentieth century

Collected by Felix Speiser c. 1911

Museum der Kulturen Basel

Red-dyed pandanus textiles are highly prized on Ambae, where only women can plait, dye and exchange them. This mat is a **qana vivi**, a garment worn by women in the early twentieth century wrapped around the hips.

Today, **qana vivi** and other textiles are used as valuables in the gift exchanges made at marriages and other important occasions. They are laid on the dancing ground in great heaps, demonstrating their maker's work and the strength of their contribution to their families and communities.

# **Figure (mask attachment)**

Sulka people, New Britain, Papua  
New Guinea

Tree bark, wood, human hair

c. 1914

Museum der Kulturen Basel

# **Dance paddle featuring animals and European figures**

Bougainville, Papua New Guinea

Wood, paint

Late nineteenth century

Collected by Rudolf von Benningsen, Imperial Governor  
of German New Guinea, in 1900

Linden-Museum Stuttgart

# **Wenena gerua, headcrest ornament**

Siane people, Eastern Highlands,  
Papua New Guinea

Wood, paint

Mid-twentieth century

Collected by the Swiss anthropologist Paul Wirz

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Mawa mask**

Saibai Island, Torres Strait  
Islands

Wood, pigment, shell, feathers

Nineteenth century

The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin

# **Shield**

Central Highlands, Papua New  
Guinea

Wood, paint

Late twentieth century

Collected by Christian and Annemarie Kaufmann-  
Heinimann in 1971–1973

Museum der Kulturen Basel

# **Shield**

Abau people, Idam or Green River  
valley, upper Sepik River region,  
Papua New Guinea

Wood, paint

Mid-twentieth century

Museum der Kulturen Basel



# **Culacula, club**

Fiji

Wood

Mid-nineteenth century

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# **Shield with inlaid shell**

Solomon Islands

Fibre, resin, paint, pearl shell, shell

Mid- to late nineteenth century

On loan from National Museums Scotland

# **Pakipaki, war club**

Tonga

Hardwood

Early to mid-eighteenth century

Collected on the voyage of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux in 1793

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Ceremonial adze**

New Caledonia

Jadeite, wood, shell, plant fibre, bat (flying fox?) fur

Nineteenth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

# **Apa'apai, rhomboidal club**

Tongan Islands

Wood

1770s

Collected during the second or third voyage of Captain James Cook, 1772–1775 or 1776–1779

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# **‘U’u, club**

## **Marquesas Islands**

Wood (**toa**, *Casuarina equisetifolia*)

## **Early nineteenth century**

Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich

**‘U’u** were objects of mana (spiritual power) and status for Marquesan chiefs and warriors. Surprisingly heavy, they are made from *Casuarina equisetifolia*, a dense wood called toa (also the word for “warrior”) that is deeply stained, often to near-black.

This **‘u’u** features multiple stylised faces, a form of decoration that developed around the 1780–1790s as Islanders began to have access to iron tools brought by European ships.

# Gizu

**Krar**, composite mask

Nagir, Torres Strait Islands

Turtle shell

Late nineteenth century

Collected by the anthropologist Alfred Haddon in August 1888

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

# Koka, dance “shield”

Buin, Autonomous Region of  
Bougainville, Papua New Guinea

Wood, chalk, ochres

Late nineteenth century

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Shield**

Mengen people, New Britain,  
Papua New Guinea

Wood, fibre, feathers, paint

Late nineteenth or early twentieth  
century

Linden-Museum Stuttgart

# **On the wall**

## **Mark Adams**

30.6.1985. Chalfont Crescent,  
Mangere, South Auckland.

Jim Taofinu'u. Tufuga tatatau:  
Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II

New Zealand

C Type prints

1985

Courtesy of the artist

**Tatau** is an unbroken tradition in Samoa, maintained by a few titled tattooing families. One of its finest practitioners was Sulu'ape Paulo II (1949/1950–1999), who emigrated to Auckland in the 1970s where he tattooed fellow migrants like Jim Taofinu'u.

Traditionally young men acquired the **pe'a** – a tattoo from the waist to the bottom of the knees – as a rite of passage into manhood and service. Today, having the **pe'a** signifies a deep commitment to the culture.

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Large  
Print

# Oceania

Encounter and Empire

**Do not remove from gallery**



# Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



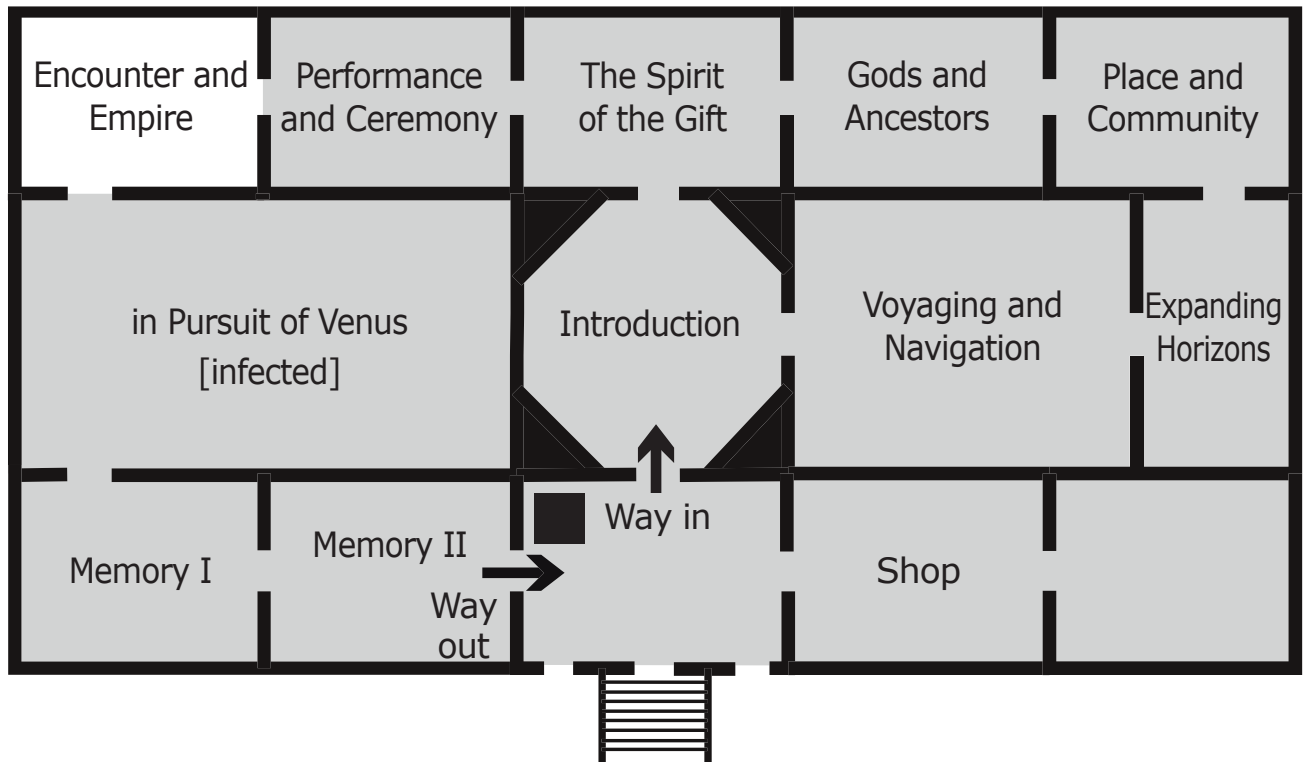
Pennant flag of the Union of Tūhoe



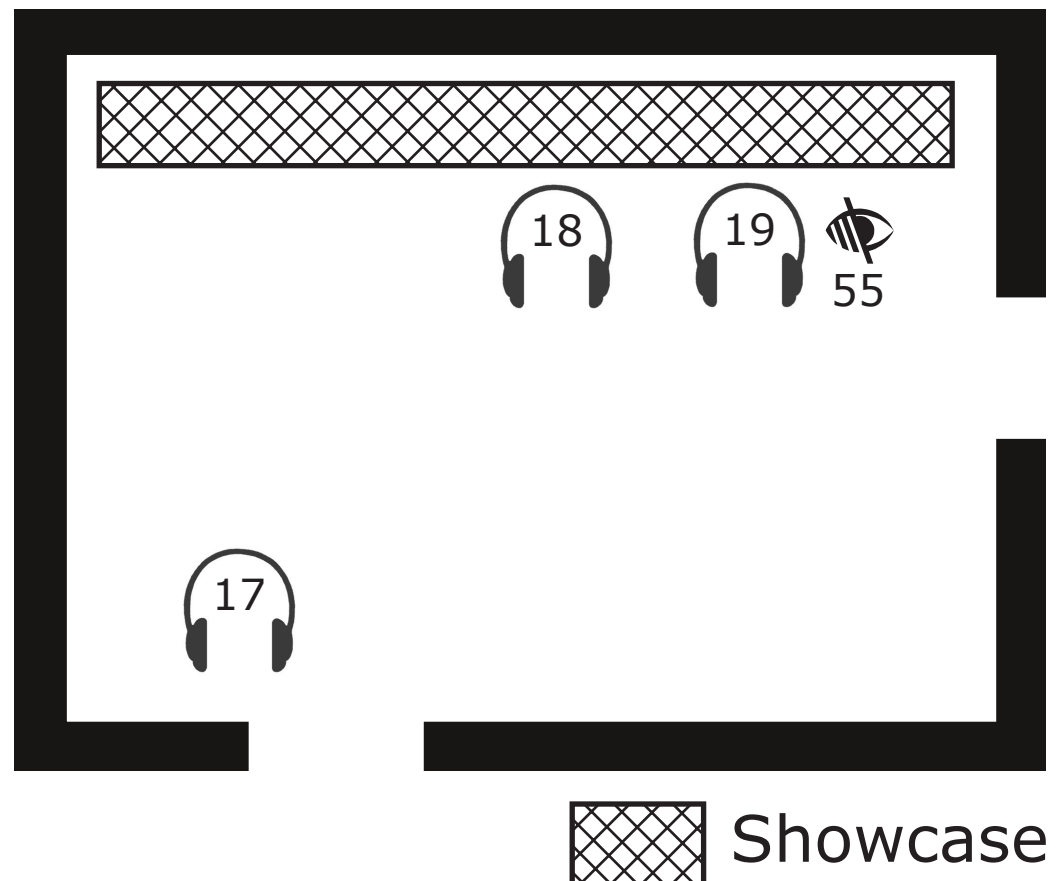
Painted barkcloth representing the  
Titikaveka church



55 Feast trough in the form of a  
crocodile



# Encounter and Empire



# Oceania

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# Encounter and Empire

Cultural interactions took place between Islanders long before the arrival of Europeans.

The exchange of motifs, styles and artefacts meant that iconographies and objects were frequently used beyond the communities that made them. Contact with Europeans, especially from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, led to new kinds of artistic innovation.

The practices of scientific illustration, for example, witnessed during the voyage of the HMS Endeavour, encouraged the Raiatean navigator and high priest Tupaia to experiment with drawing on paper, the first Islander to do so. Such illustrative approaches to subject matter had few precedents in traditional Pacific art.

Throughout Oceania, textiles and barkcloth enjoyed considerable social as well as spiritual significance. These values were transferred to European cloth, which became sought after by Islanders. They recognised that flags and ensigns were fabric items specifically associated with power and sovereignty.

The Tūhoe pennant from the mid-nineteenth century New Zealand wars, for instance, is both an expression of tribal resistance and of Indigenous forms of Christianity. Flag-derived designs were also reproduced in tattoos, on fabrics and in personal ornaments.

Christian missionaries were prominent agents of change.

Some actively encouraged Islanders to reject or destroy what they perceived to be pagan idols. However, religious change was largely brought about by Islanders themselves, who had diverse reasons for adopting what they saw as new gods and narratives.

European powers, driven by imperial ambition, asserted their sovereignty over the region, resulting in violent intrusion, war, the introduction of disease, sexual abuse, and the appropriation of land and exploitation of labour.

The imposition of colonial law was accomplished in part through punitive operations, which enabled individuals to obtain artefacts such as the imposing Roviana feasting trough.

Yet despite such examples of looting, artefacts reached European collections and museums as much because Islanders themselves keenly engaged in colonial commerce. Objects were explicitly produced for trade, and new types of artefacts, the precursors of modern tourist souvenirs, were created.

**List of works (clockwise in order of hang)**

# **Hiapo, painted barkcloth**

Niue

Barkcloth, pigments

c. 1888–1890

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

# **Pennant flag of the Union of Tūhoe**



Māori people, New Zealand

Cloth

c. 1860s–1870s

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand

Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington

# **Tene Waitere**

## **Tā Moko panel**

Māori people, New Zealand

Wood, shell, paint

1896–1899

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand

Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington

In 1896 Augustus Hamilton (1853–1913), founding director of the National Museum in Wellington, commissioned this panel from the Māori artist Tene Waitere (1853/1854–1931), to illustrate male and female tā moko (facial tattoos).

Waitere created one of his most ambitious works, distinguished by arresting juxtaposition between the flat relief, with its heavily decorated, conventionally schematised forms, and the innovative naturalistic heads.



Waitere was among the first Māori to embrace an individual artistic identity of a modern kind: this work bears a carved signature on the reverse.

## **Showcase**

# **Shield with image of the Phantom**

Wahgi Valley, Papua New Guinea

Wood, rope, pigment, plastic

Late twentieth century

Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

Fighting among the Wahgi in the 1980s spurred the return of war shields. These were hybrid creations, combining old patterns with images appropriated from sources like product labels and comic strips.

Since being introduced by American soldiers during World War Two, the Phantom was a favourite. A fighter for justice with many forbears and called “The Man Who Cannot Die”, the Phantom was easily adapted to express Wahgi ideals of warrior virtue and ancestral power.

## **Ngatu, barkcloth**

### **Tonga**

Barkcloth, pigments

Late nineteenth century

Courtesy of Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester

# **Moai papa, female figure**

## **Rapa Nui**

Toro miro wood (*Sophora toromiro*), obsidian, bone

**c. 1850–1870**

Associated with Princess Titaua of Tahiti (1842–1898), who moved to Scotland during her marriage to George Darsie

On loan from National Museums Scotland

# **Paddle inscribed “ATOPA 1846”**

## **Ra'ivavae, Austral Islands**

Wood

**1846**

National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen

# **Painted barkcloth representing the Titikaveka church**

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

Barkcloth, pigments

c. 1842–1846

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of  
Cambridge

# **Attributed to Patoromu Tamatea**

**Whakapakoko**, Madonna and  
Child

Māori people, New Zealand

Wood, shell

Mid-nineteenth century

Collection of Auckland War Memorial Museum

Tāmaki Paenga Hira

Māori conversion to Christianity prompted artists to adapt carving practices to reflect their new beliefs. This 'Madonna and Child' represents the mother of Jesus with a full-face **tā moko**, a tattoo usually reserved for high-ranking men, to indicate her importance.

It may have been carved for a Catholic church but rejected by a priest who did not appreciate its significance. Today, however, this rare sculpture is a powerful image of cultural cross-fertilisation.

## Crucifix

### Solomon Islands

Wood, pigments

Early twentieth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris



55



19

# **Feast trough in the form of a crocodile**

Kalikongu village, Roviana lagoon,  
Solomon Islands

Carved wood, shell inlay, pigment

Late nineteenth century

Confiscated during Admiral Edward Davis's second voyage on the HMS Royalist, between 3rd June and 25th August 1891

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

## **Figure**

Fiji

Fern wood, whale's tooth, shell, fibre

1880s

National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen

# **Aqo**

## **Figure of a woman**

Simbo, western Solomon Islands

Wood, pigment, fibre

c. 1900

Collected by the colonial administrator Arthur Mahaffy between 1896 and 1904

The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin

As well as producing the drawings of canoes displayed in 'Voyaging and Navigation', Aqo (fl. 1890–1910) created many sculptures of Islanders that reflect considerable familiarity with the naturalist European tradition.

Here he merges the Oceanic and the European: this female figure is depicted in traditional clothing and includes the common practice of shell-inlay decoration.

Ago never travelled beyond the Solomon Islands, so his knowledge of European artistic techniques shows that European images, and perhaps even sculptures or plaster casts, made their way to the islands.

## **Engraved bamboo**

New Caledonia

Bamboo, ochre

Late nineteenth century

On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum

## **European figure**

Sorol Island, Yap

Wood, fibre, paint

Late nineteenth century

Collected by the botanist Georg Volken in 1899–1900

Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum – Kulturen der Welt,  
Cologne



# **European figure**

Babelthuap, Palau

Wood, paint

Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

# **Male figure**

Keenakap, central Asmat, West Papua

Wood, paint, fibre

1950s

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

# **Female figure**

Keenakap, central Asmat, West  
Papua

Wood, paint, fibre

1950s

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

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Large  
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# Oceania

in Pursuit of Venus  
[infected]

**Do not remove from gallery**

# **in Pursuit of Venus [infected]**

One of the most spectacular expressions of the European imagining of Oceania was 'Les sauvages de la mer Pacifique', a 20-panel luxurious wallpaper inspired in some aspects by accounts of Captain Cook's voyages.

Designed by Jean Gabriel Charvet and printed from woodblocks by Joseph Dufour in Mâcon, it was first shown in Paris in 1806 at the 'Exposition des produits de l'industrie française'. The resulting panoramic vision of the peoples, costumes, customs and environments of the Pacific was highly romanticised.

The New Zealand artist Lisa Reihana has reappropriated this idealised view of Oceania in order to create the multi-layered video work 'in Pursuit of Venus [infected]'.

Part re-enactment, part animation and part enlargement of the original panorama, it exemplifies the continuing vitality of Indigenous performance in the present.

Through an unfolding anthology of stories of science, encounter, ritual and violence drawn from first-hand accounts, the work reveals the early contact between Islanders and Europeans as a theatre of many different dramas.

The title of the work derives from Captain Cook's first voyage: commissioned by the Royal Society in London, Cook had been tasked with tracking the path of the planet Venus in the southern hemisphere.

One of the most destructive aspects of the European "discovery" of Oceania that impacted directly on Islander populations was the rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

These caused extensive infertility and contributed, along with other diseases to which the Islander population had no immunity such as measles and tuberculosis, to the catastrophic depopulation that many islands and archipelagos suffered over the course of the nineteenth century.

Reihana's use of the term "infected" in the title of her work highlights that harm, but also points to the manifold ways in which these encounters affected the bodies, lives, experiences and cultures of the peoples of both the Pacific and Europe.

# **Lisa Reihana**

## **in Pursuit of Venus [infected]**

### **New Zealand**

Single-channel video, UltraHD, colour, 7.1 sound  
64 minutes

**2015–2017**

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Patrons of the Auckland Art Gallery, 2014.

Additional support from Creative New Zealand and NZ at Venice Patrons and Partners.



Large  
Print

# Oceania

Memory I

**Do not remove from gallery**



# Audio tour



Main commentary



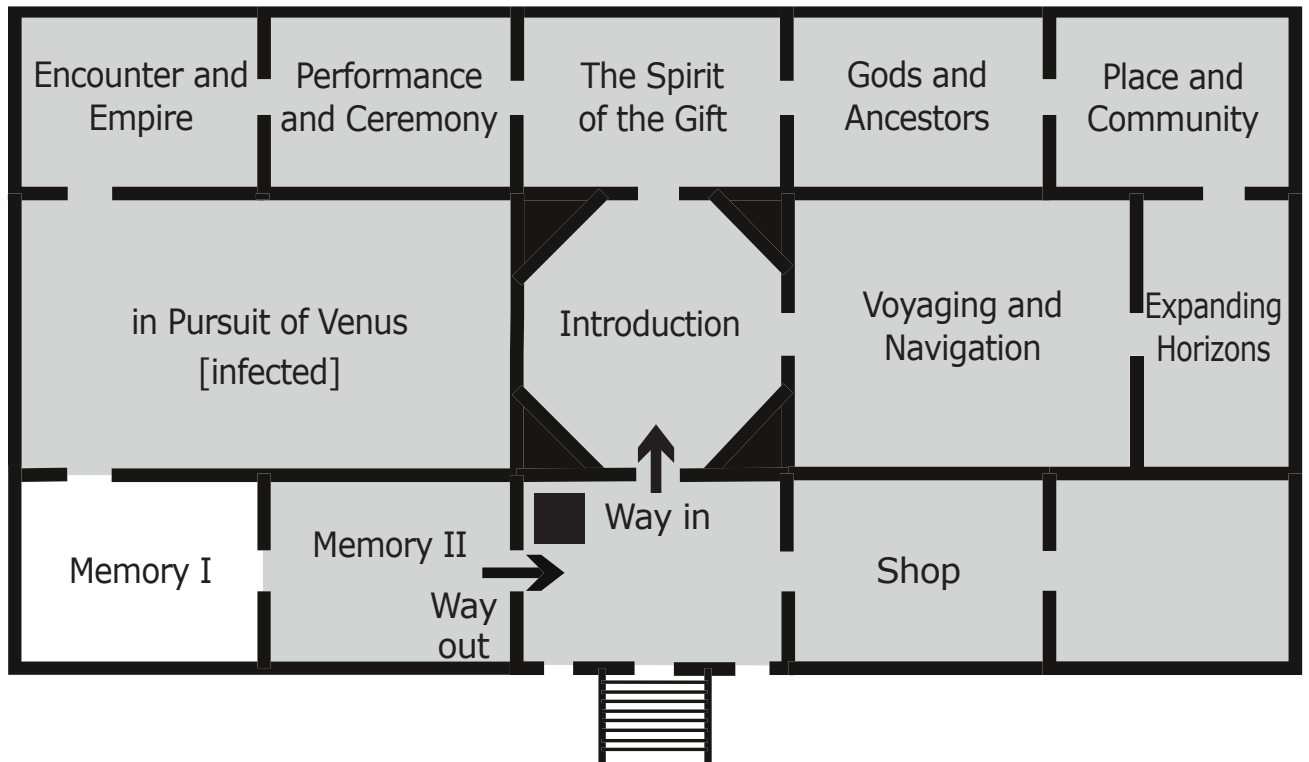
Descriptive commentary



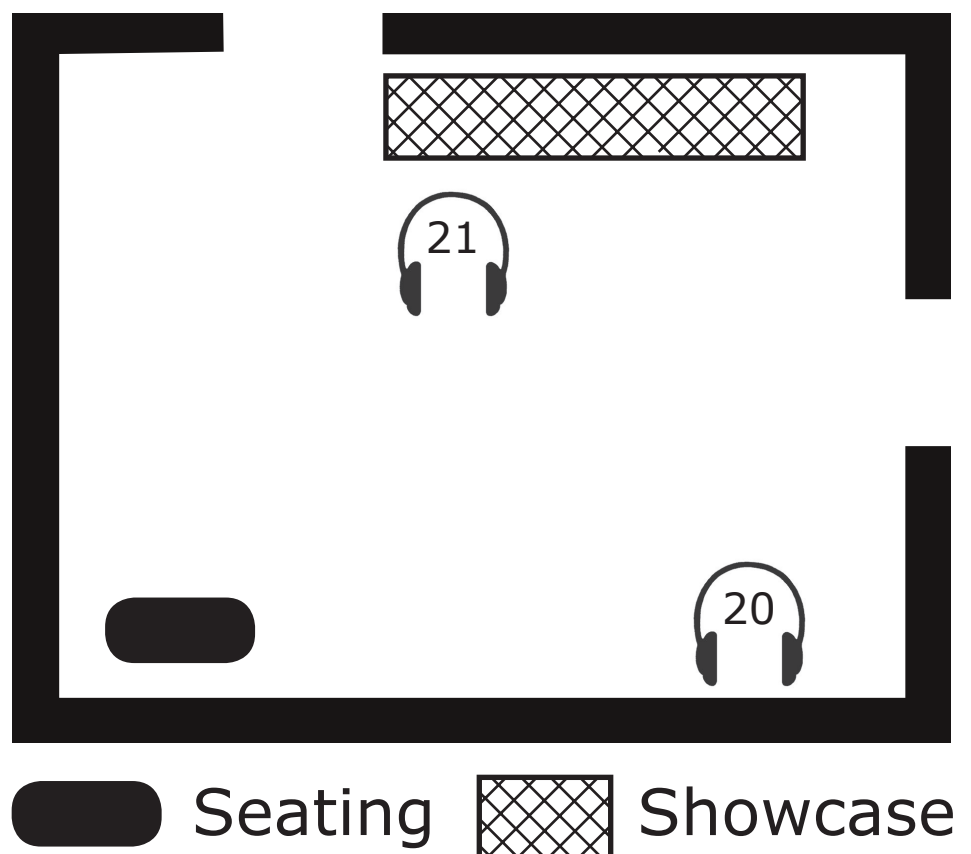
Portraits from the series 'The Presence of Sunlight Falling'



**Korwar** and **Mon** spirit figures



# Memory I



# Oceania

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# Memory I

Across Oceania, ancestors are sources of power, identity and privilege.

Diverse art forms commemorate the dead and celebrate their accomplishments in life. The founders of particular communities were embodied in figure sculptures within ceremonial houses.

They therefore remained present in the architecture and the environment occupied by people; they were also remembered in shrines, reliquaries and effigies, and worn as pendants and adornments close to the body.

Since the nineteenth century, portrait photographs were kept and revered.

Major rituals followed death and secured the dead a place in memory. But the lingering presence of the recently deceased was both undesirable and potentially dangerous.

**Malangan** were created for the practice of secondary funerals, which took place long after death and marked the final passage of the dead to the spirit world.

Memory became even more significant following cross-cultural encounters, particularly once communities suffered the disruption brought about through colonisation and processes of modernisation; in the nineteenth century, **malangan** funerals proliferated as a consequence.

Acute depopulation across many islands and archipelagos, coupled with the loss of people through abduction for forced labour, meant generations were lost.

Where ancestral lands were appropriated, connections between inhabited places and ancestral histories were severed.

Commemoration and loss, together with the struggle to retrieve place, identity and history, are central themes for contemporary artists of Oceania. Some turn to archives and museum collections as conduits for artistic, personal and collective projects of ancestral reconnection.

The series 'The Pressure of Sunlight Falling', for example, by Fiona Pardington recuperates nineteenth century casts of Islanders made from life by Pierre Dumontier as ancestral portraits.

While the dislocation from the cultural milieu and island homes inherent in twentieth century migration is explored by the Niuean artist John Pule in 'Kehe tau hauaga foou' ('To all new arrivals').

List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

## Showcase

### Altar group



Mayalibit Bay, Waigeo Island,  
West Papua

Early twentieth century

Acquired by the ethnologist J. C. van Eerde in 1929

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

**Left to right:**

**Korwar**, spirit figure of the wife  
of the oldest son of the head of  
the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth

**Mon,** spirit figure of the oldest son of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth

**Korwar,** spirit figure of the second wife of the oldest son of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth

**Korwar,** spirit figure of the wife of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth

**Mon,** spirit figure of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth



**Korwar**, spirit figure of the adopted son of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth, skull

**Korwar**, spirit figure of the second wife of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth

**Korwar**, spirit figure of the first wife of the second son of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth

**Mon**, spirit figure of the second son of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth

**Korwar**, spirit figure of the second wife of the second son of the head of the Mayalibit Bay altar group

Wood, cloth

**On the wall**

**Fiona Pardington**

Portrait of a life cast of Faustino-Tchargualoff (painted), Mariana Islands

New Zealand

Archival photographic inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper mounted onto 5 mm Kapa

2010

With thanks Musée de l'Homme (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris

Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, New Zealand



# **Fiona Pardington**

## **Portrait of a life cast of Matoua Tawai, Aotearoa, New Zealand**

Archival photographic inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper  
mounted onto 5 mm Kapa

**2010**

With thanks Musée de l'Homme (Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris

Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, New Zealand

# **Fiona Pardington**

## **Portrait of a life cast of Ma Pou Ma Tekao (painted), Gambier Islands New Zealand**

Archival photographic inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper  
mounted onto 5 mm Kapa

**2010**

With thanks Musée de l'Homme (Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris

Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, New Zealand

# **Fiona Pardington**

Portrait of a life cast of Kakaley  
(painted), Solomon Islands  
New Zealand

Archival photographic inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper  
mounted onto 5 mm Kapa

2010

With thanks Musée de l'Homme (Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris

Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, New Zealand

# **Fiona Pardington**

Portrait of a life cast of Tou Taloa  
(painted), Samoa  
New Zealand

Archival photographic inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper  
mounted onto 5 mm Kapa

2010

With thanks Musée de l'Homme (Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris

Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, New Zealand

# Hei tiki, anthropomorphic ornament

Māori people, Cape Terawhiti area, New Zealand

Nephrite (greenstone), haliotis shell, resin

Collected by Johann Reinhold Forster during the second voyage of Captain Cook, 1773–1774

Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

The **hei tiki** is the most famous genre of Māori personal adornment.

They are closely associated with mourning and remembrance. The figure may represent a specific deity, but also a beloved ancestor whose spirit is present in the stone, so that as they are worn around the neck the deceased remains with their descendant.

**Hei tiki** are made from **pounamu** (greenstone), a stone with sacred importance for Māori. This example is one of the earliest collected by a European.

# Fish malangan

New Ireland, Papua New Guinea

Wood, paint, fibre, shell

Early twentieth century

Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, Staatliche

Kunstsammlungen Dresden

**Malangan** sculptures were associated with funerary ceremonies occurring some years after death, marking the final passage of the deceased to the spirit world.

Visually and conceptually complex, individual sculptures did not represent the dead person, but carried attributes, motifs, designs and figures associated with the clan's origin myths.

This **malangan** has been identified as a "big-mouth fish" (known as **lakau**). The figure attached to its tongue represents someone in the process of death.

# Kobbu, mourner's hood

Yei-Anim or Marind-Anim people,  
south coast, West Papua

Fibre, barkcloth

Early twentieth century

Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands

Funeral rituals were of major significance for the Marind-Anim as well as other south-coast peoples of Papua.

After the burial, a widow, together with other female relatives, would wear a **kobbu** (mourner's hood), with other mourning garments such as fibre armlets and leg-bands, their bodies rubbed with white clay for the duration of a period of segregation and fasting.

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Large  
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# Oceania

Memory II

**Do not remove from gallery**

# Audio tour



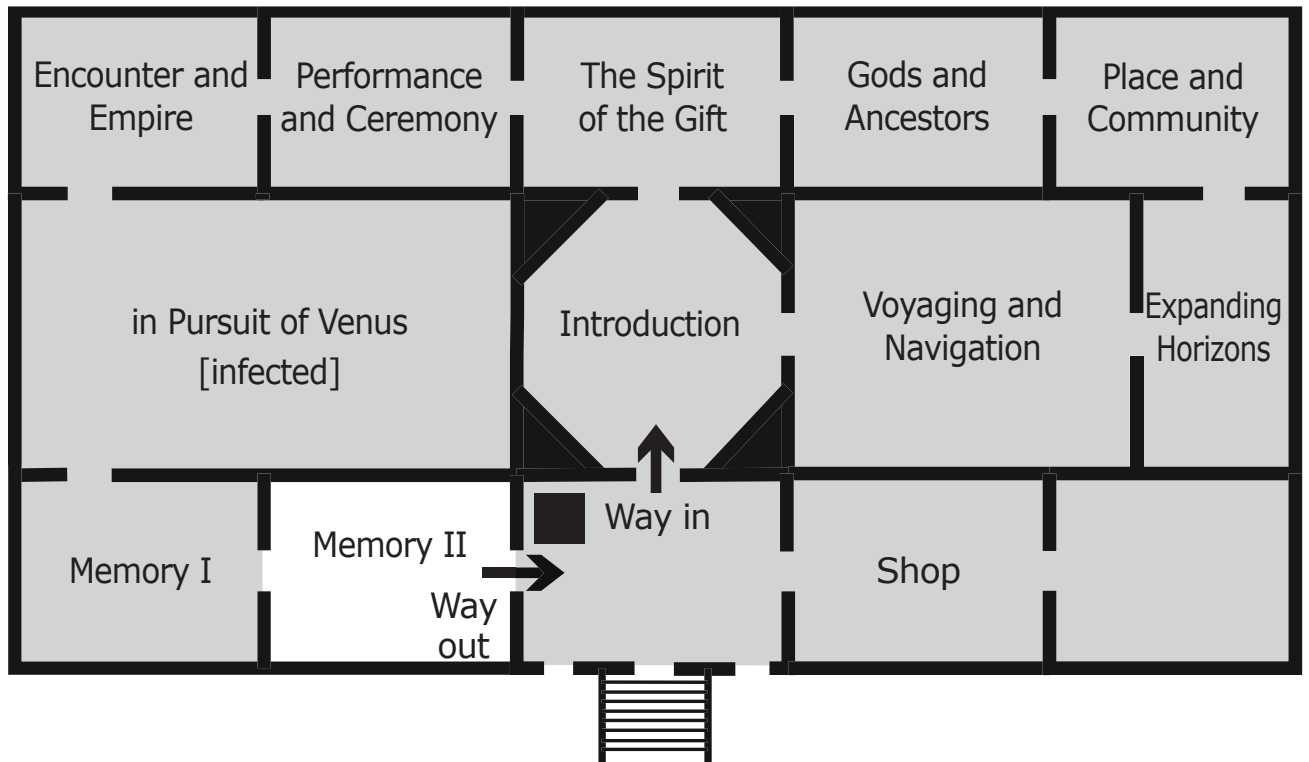
Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



56 To All New Arrivals, John Pule  
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# Memory II



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**List of works (clockwise in order of hang)**

## **Reliquary in the form of a crocodile**

Porapora, Angoram, East Sepik,  
Papua New Guinea

Vegetal fibres, shells

Mid-twentieth century

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris

Within Sepik men's houses, relics of various kinds were preserved.

Some were displayed openly; others, like this rare crocodile reliquary, were hidden and made accessible only to initiated men of appropriate status on special occasions.

Crocodiles were considered a founding ancestor, suitable for containing items central to the village's history. This reliquary holds a wooden club, said to have been carried by one of the group's ancestral warriors.

# **Taloi Havini and Stuart Miller**

**Jedi, Buka and Jennifer, Buka,** from the series 'Blood Generation' Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea; Australia

Digital prints, edition 10

2009

Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer

Bougainville Island has exceptional mineral reserves, and from the 1970s was the location of the largest open-cut copper mine in the world.

During the 1980s this project collided with local self-determination, leading to a decade of civil war.

Those born during the conflict are referred to by their parents as the “blood generation”, a term that forms the title of this series by Taloi Havini and Stuart Miller and which records the impact of the mining and the conflict on the island and its inhabitants.

## Yuki Kihara

### Siva in Motion

### Samoa/New Zealand

Single channel high-definition video, silent 8 minutes  
14 seconds

2012

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, commissioned 2012

**Siva in Motion** draws on layered cultural and art historical frameworks.

Dressed in a Victorian mourning dress, Kihara assumes the fictitious character of Salome while performing a **taualuga** – a traditional “**Siva Sāmoa**” (Samoan dance).

Inspired by conversations with survivors of the 2009 tsunami, 'Siva in Motion' describes the movements of the wave which took the lives of more than 189 people in American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga.

# **Mask**

## **Hienghène, New Caledonia**

Wood, coconut fibre, European cloth, human hair, feathers

### **Early twentieth century**

Collected by the zoologist Paul Montague in 1914

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Masks of this type were associated with the spirit world and used for the mourning ceremonies of chiefs; the human hair attached to the mask was supplied by mourners.



Like other masks of its type, it consists of a carved wooden face with an exaggerated nose and grimacing mouth, the narrow opening of which provides the only means of vision for the wearer. Unusually, this figure is smoking a European pipe.

**John Pule**



**Kehe te hauaga foou (To all new arrivals)**

Niue/New Zealand

Enamel, oil, pencil, pastel, oil stick and ink on canvas,  
five panels

2007

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Patrons of  
the Auckland Art Gallery, 2007

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