



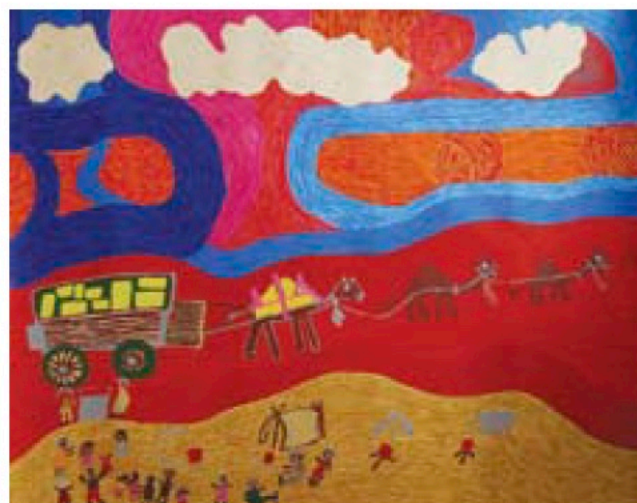
A Mimi sculpture, c.1960, from Maningrida in the Northern Territory



Above: Anthropology Museum collection administrator Jane Willcock with a Papua New Guinean mask



Main image: Conservator Kate Stanway works on coconut leaf and bark baskets from the collection



NEW ACQUISITIONS

The UQ Anthropology Museum has recently begun to purchase new acquisitions. The museum currently has a policy of acquiring work by women, especially textiles, that relate to peoples' everyday lives. This painting is by Niningka Lewis, a Pitjantjatjara artist from South Australia. In it she recalls the delight of Aboriginal people in acquiring new clothes. The painting is part of a new movement of hyper-coloured works from artists in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands region.

DISCOVERING Anthropology

CURIOUS STUDENTS AND STAFF WITNESSED AN EXTRAORDINARY REMOVAL OPERATION UNFOLD AT ST LUCIA OVER THE SUMMER BREAK.

Thousands of items including spears, shields and masks were delivered by hand to the new-look UQ Anthropology Museum, which takes pride of place on the ground floor of the renovated Michie Building.

Museum Director Dr Diana Young looks at a collection of combs from the Solomon Islands and Tonga in the new electronic compactus



The new space features specially designed exhibition cases, moveable walls, custom lighting, and equipment to project and house multimedia exhibits.

Behind the scenes, a high-tech electronic compactus and long span shelves mean researchers can access the collection with the touch of a button, with individual objects presented on pullout drawers. When the renovations are complete, larger items such as masks and drums will fringe the walls in the storage area, providing an appropriate backdrop for group tours.

Museum Director Dr Diana Young said the UQ collection started with a generous donation in 1948 of more than 1000 objects from Dr Lindsey Winterbotham. Today, the museum holds more than 26,000 items which reflect the rich cultures of the Pacific region, Indigenous Australia (including North Queensland), and also Africa and South East Asia.

Dr Young, a material and visual cultural specialist and graduate of University College London, arrived at UQ three years ago.

She and her team have wasted no time putting the new space to good use, with a stunning exhibition entitled *In the Red: on the vibrancy of things* open free to the public until December.

Dr Young said the show questioned the different meanings of the colour across time and space.

"Red 'out does' other hues. It can be a full stop; a beginning; a declaration. Yet red materials quickly fade or transform into another

hue. Exhibiting red things, things that were once red, might become red, or be imagined as red, also enables us to address the question of how museum collections maintain their vitality over time," she said.

In the Red incorporates a variety of items including boomerangs, masks, instruments, and even red feather currency from Santa Cruz. Recent acquisitions are also featured.

Dr Young said the museum was a "hidden gem", and that she was excited about promoting its treasures to students, scholars and the wider community. In particular, a 6700-strong photographic collection was waiting to be unlocked for research purposes, she said.

Working with UQ's School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering, the museum has created a custom-built online database which will ultimately house information on the entire collection.

Museum collection administrator Jane Willcock led the delicate removal operation from late last year, which involved trucks, forklifts, and a small army of staff and volunteers.

Ms Willcock said the move had allowed many of the objects to be seen in a new light, particularly those that had been hidden away. Four striking sculptures from the Solomon Islands are a case in point.

The objects had previously been stored separately on low shelves in dim light, with three of the works discovered to share similar expressions and materials, with the fourth being radically different.

"Seeing them together in some ways brings

out the animation and personality of the objects. There's also a feeling of time passing as the four items were carved over about a 70-year time period," Ms Willcock said.

Another revelation was a "necklace" that had been in a box with other items of personal adornment. Upon unwrapping the object, it was found to be an item of shell money made of glass, hand-drilled shells, and seeds.

"Objects often have what we call a social life – a secret life of their own that only the object knows about. You can piece this together, and if there's a rich story to do with the person who collected the object that's obviously very helpful too," Dr Young said.

In the Red makes a bold statement about the museum's ambitions, and what's to come. In time, an impressive lino print by renowned Torres Strait Islander artist Dennis Nona will adorn the façade of the museum, creating a design line with its sister institution, the UQ Art Museum.

"While I was told by people in the know that it was a very special collection, it really only sunk in after visiting other collections around the world," Dr Young said.

"It should be globally known, and I think that won't be too difficult once we get the catalogue online and the rolling exhibition program. In turn, I hope that will attract more researchers and acquisitions, donations and support."

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TALKING TAPA

One of the museum's most recent donations was a rare 19th century tapa cloth from Wallis and Futuna Islands by Mrs Jill Harding. Tapa is a name given to a kind of cloth made from pounded bark produced by many Pacific Island communities. The donation was inspired by a similar cloth in the museum collection which at the time featured in a national exhibition.

The cloth is made of paper mulberry bark, and was a gift to the donor's great-grandfather, Rev. John Jones, who had been a missionary in New Caledonia. He would have been given the cloth as a gift after his retirement.

To discuss how you can support the museum, contact Dr Diana Young on (07) 3365 1210 or djyoung@uq.edu.au