

**Burrinja Cultural Centre presents**  
**SYMPOSIUM | Pacific Art Collections**  
**The Culture of Collecting Then and Now**



Various Ingiyet stone carvings, New Britain, PNG, McLeod Gift Collection, Yarra Ranges Council

Most Pacific art collections have been amassed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>st</sup> century, through the personal efforts of collectors in the field, often at their own risk and with their own money. Yet, with increasing acknowledgement of intellectual and creative rights of indigenous communities of origin important issues of history, access and interpretation of cultural material have arisen. Consultation and collaboration have now become relevant aspects in contemporary ethical museum practice. Repatriation of cultural material including that of sacred objects and human remains is no longer unusual.

This symposium brings together experts in the Pacific arts and museum sector discussing aspects of how the nature of collecting and the engagement with collections has changed over time and examining national and global trends in managing indigenous collections.

**Saturday 7 September 2013, 11am – 4pm | Burrinja Cultural Centre, Upwey, Victoria**

Among the speakers are:

**Harold Gallasch**

Pacific art collector, curator and valuer, Hahndorf

**Jim Specht**

Senior Fellow, Australian Museum, Sydney

**Mike Pickering**

Senior Curatorial Fellow, Head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program, National Museum of Australia, Canberra

**Dion Peita**

Collections Manager, Pacific and International Collections, Cultural Collections and Community Engagement, Australian Museum, Sydney

**Grace Vele Guise**

Senior Technical Officer, Anthropology Department, Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery, Port Moresby

## Symposium Program Details



### Session 1

Harold Gallasch  
**Powerful Ingiets**

As a group, the Tolai people emigrated from New Ireland, via the Duke of York Islands, to the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain. In their new home-land they flourished, and so did their two men's secret societies, which became much more powerful. While the Tubuan society acted as a select group within the community the *Ingiets* was a fringe group, preying very much on the fears of the people, a society often using extortion and murder to gain its own ends.

The adherents to this group were rarely known, conducted ceremonies in secret, often deep in the jungle. But, by the use of sorcery, they exerted great control over the Tolai community. A part of the 'modus operandi' of the *Ingiets* was the carving of small stone statues. The spirit of evil could be infused into these carvings to the extent that, even in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, they were feared by those older people with knowledge of the *Ingiets*'s power.

### Session 2

Jim Specht  
**Collecting 'dead birds' and other 'curiosities' in the New Guinea Islands, 1875-1914**

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century was an incredible period for museums and private individuals seeking to acquire artefacts, often described as 'curiosities', from the Pacific Islands. While some of this acquisition was linked to the how-discredited view of the world's non-western peoples as representatives of stages of 'cultural evolution' earlier than that of the societies of western Europe and North America, there was also a strong commercial interest among both individuals and companies. This was particularly marked in the New Guinea islands, where German colonial interests generated one of the most remarkable phases of collecting in Pacific history. Over a period of 40 years, from 1875 to 1914, thousands of artefacts were taken to Australia, the USA and Europe. German colonial residents particularly vied with each other to make the most impressive collections for museums in German cities in the hope of attracting special honours ('dead birds') from the various Grand Duchies, Principalities and Free Cities. In the years before the Great War of 1914-1918, numerous expeditions visited these islands and further stimulated this competition. The talk will describe these activities, and discuss some of their implications for both then and now.

### Session 3

Mike Pickering  
**Old Ways and New Ways. Changes in the Ways Museums Collect**

Over the past 25 years there has been increasing self-examination by history museums on the issues of collection histories. As we look at the ways in which our objects were acquired in the past we have learnt to consider ways in which objects are acquired today. Objects in collecting institutions have arrived there through many channels – by theft, grave-robbing, lootings, police and military actions, legal process, sale, gifting, donation, and serendipity. ] Ethical engagement with collections – for research or exhibition – increasingly requires revisiting the circumstances of collection [ and collection histories ]. This is addressed in this paper, firstly through case studies of the ways in which Pacific objects have arrived in the National Museum of Australia and secondly through an examination of how the ethics of collections is affecting the museums national and international engagements.



**Session 4** Grace Vele  
**What is primitive art in PNG, the culture of collecting and preserving the cultural heritage of the country**

**Session 5** Dion Peita –  
**Understanding of Heritage, Identity and Self for Pacific Peoples in NSW**

The Australian Museum holds one of the largest and most significant collections of Pacific material in the world, 60,000 objects, and are therefore uniquely placed to develop bespoke social inclusion programs that draw on this rich collections. Since 2009 the Museum has been exploring innovative ways to work with young people from Sydney's Pacific diaspora convicted or charged with serious and violent criminal offences. Our aim is to build cultural awareness among 'At risk' youth from Pacific communities and to challenge beliefs and perceptions that being a 'warrior' is synonymous with being violent. We aim to provide young people with a sense of pride and dignity when the history of the objects is explained to them, and as their relationship to these powerful objects is revealed. As part of a broader suite of intervention programs, we contend that exposure to traditional culture can help young people break the cycle of offending, and lower the chance that they will offend again in future.

**Session 6** Panel Discussion  
**Between the Old and the New? The Future of Pacific Art Collections traversing the Traditional and Contemporary**

Dion Peita, Mike Pickering, Grace Vele, others TBC  
MC: TBC

**Exhibition Opening** **Secret Ingiets – Mysterious stones carvings and ceremonial objects of the Tolai in PNG, works from the McLeod Gift Collection**

Burrinja Gallery 4.30 pm

His Excellency **Mr Charles W Lepani, High Commissioner** for Papua New Guinea will officially open the exhibition, with **Cr Jim Child, Mayor**, Yarra Ranges Council. In the presence of **Emmanuel Mulai, Ratongaor Village**, East New Britain.

### **Film Screening of 'Savage Memory'**

From 6pm, Burrinja Theatre Documentary, 83 mins, Directed by Zachary Stuart, USA, 2012

Bronislaw Malinowski is commonly regarded as one of the founding fathers of anthropology. With extensive research on sex, magic and spirits of the dead among the Trobriand Islanders in Papua New Guinea in 1915, his work set the stage for future anthropologists. Four generations later, his great-grandson travels to the Trobriand Islands confronted by a very controversial legacy Malinowski left behind.



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