

# Theatre of the World

23.6.12 – 8.4.13



Curated by Jean-Hubert Martin

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MUSEUM OF OLD  
AND NEW ART

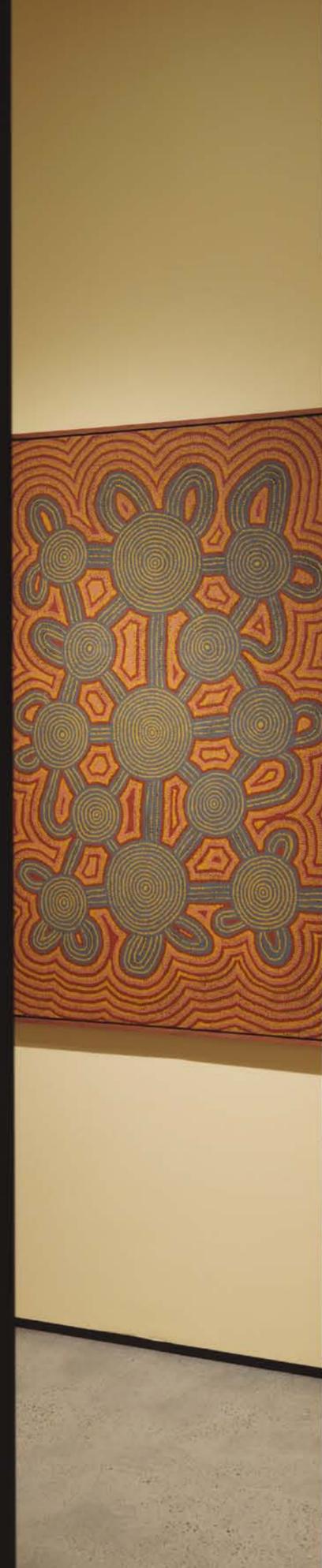
Tasmanian Museum  
& Art Gallery





















































## Abstraction

Although it is often said that geometry does not exist in nature, this is not entirely true. Anyway, the practice of geometric patterning in many archaic cultures proves the human ability to create without copying nature and to elaborate a visual language that is completely distinct from representation.

<span></span>	
On wall: <i>Dari</i> (feather headdress), Island of Mer, Torres Strait, Queensland, Australia, 31	
Mummified cat, Egypt, 326	
Armband, Malaita Island, Solomon Islands, 203	
Beaded face for a mummy, Egypt, 151	
Beaded hat, Nigeria, West Africa, Yoruba people, 199	
Woven arm bracer, Ambryn or Malekula Island, Vanuatu, 149	
On shelf: Feline effigy vessel, North America, Anasazi, 37	
Pyrite (iron sulphide), from the Navajún mine, La Rioja Province, Spain, MONA 2012.001	
Yixing teapot, Yixing, Jiangsu Province, China, 202	
Collection of Cetoniinae (flower chafer beetles), 85	
Door jamb from the tomb of Nefer-wenet, probably Saqqara, Egypt, 197	
<i>Aufstieg</i> (Ascent), Wassily Kandinsky, 196	
Barkcloth: <i>Ngatu tahina</i> , Tonga, 283	

## Majesty

Barkcloths (tapa), classified here according to cultures, are traditionally used for various purposes—from dress to ceremonial gifts with great symbolic value. Except for two anthropomorphic pieces from Vanuatu, they show an incredible creativity in geometry. Some of them have extremely sophisticated systems of shapes in different layers.

The two human figures in the middle of the room show how humans deal with the body. Some, like the Egyptians, try to keep it for eternity by mummification and symbolic identification with the gods; others seek to degrade and destroy it—as in the concentration camps.

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Coffin of Iret-Heru-ru, Egypt, 300	
<i>Grande Figurine (Femme Leoni)</i> , Alberto Giacometti, 301	
and barkcloths, see pp. 78–92	
<i>Grande Figurine (Femme Leoni)</i> , Alberto Giacometti, 301	
and barkcloths, see pp. 78–92	
Barkcloth: <i>Siapo tasina</i> , Samoa, 265	
<i>Grande Figurine (Femme Leoni)</i> , Alberto Giacometti, 301	
Fijian barkcloths, see pp. 78–81	

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Coffin of Iret-Heru-ru, Egypt, 300	
and barkcloths, see pp. 78–92	
<i>painting as visitor, as neighbour, definition/method no. 503</i> , Claude Rutault, part of the artist's actualisation at MONA 2012, painted MDF and incorporating barkcloth no. 234, 212	
Barkcloth: <i>Siapo mamanu</i> , Samoa, 267	
<i>painting as visitor, as neighbour, definition/method no. 503</i> , Claude Rutault, part of the artist's actualisation at MONA 2012, painted MDF and incorporating barkcloth no. 234, 212	

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Barkcloth: <i>Siapo mamanu</i> , Samoa, 267	
<i>painting as visitor, as neighbour, definition/method no. 503</i> , Claude Rutault, part of the artist's actualisation at MONA 2012, painted MDF and incorporating barkcloth no. 234, 212	

## Align

The simplest signs, such as lines or holes, can become symbols of the whole, of a totality in touch with the cosmos.

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<i>Wall Drawing #394: A 12" (30 cm) grid covering the wall. Within each 12" (30 cm) square, a vertical, horizontal, diagonal right or diagonal left straight, not straight or broken line bisecting the square</i> , Sol LeWitt, 46	
No title ( <i>Awelye</i> ), Emily Kame Kngwarreye, 302	

<span></span>	
<i>Wall Drawing #394: A 12" (30 cm) grid covering the wall. Within each 12" (30 cm) square, a vertical, horizontal, diagonal right or diagonal left straight, not straight or broken line bisecting the square</i> , Sol LeWitt, 46	

<i>Concetto spaziale</i> (Spatial Concept), Lucio Fontana, 356	
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## Crossing

In a previous room, barkcloths were shown for their own sake; here they hang in conjunction with western contemporary abstract art. They are not shown here, as too often in museums, as a source for modern art, but as more or less synchronic phenomena of independent creation. They should be evaluated with the symbolic importance accorded them within their own original contexts. Old dichotomies of art and craft issued by the colonial west are no longer valid. Globalisation demands new interpretation grids. Barkcloths are no more or less decorative than contemporary abstract paintings; indeed the compositional structures here, alternating positive/negative and front/back patterns, are strikingly similar.

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Barkcloth: <i>Ahu</i> , Tahiti, French Polynesia, 281	
<i>Untitled</i> , Tom Chamberlain, 210	
Barkcloth, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 245	
<i>painting as visitor, as neighbour, definition/method no. 503</i> , Claude Rutault, part of the artist's actualisation at MONA, 2012, barkcloth, painted canvas; courtesy of the artist © Claude Rutault	

<span></span>	
<i>Wear No. 4</i> , Neil Haddon, 195	
Barkcloth: <i>Siapo</i> , Futuna Group, Wallis and Futuna, 296	
Shield, Northeast Queensland, Australia, 194	
<i>Modernity Will Not Seduce Me</i> , Peter Peri, 208	
Barkcloth: <i>Siapo mamanu</i> , Samoa, 257	
Foreground: <i>Chaise</i> , 1992, Wayne Hudson, MONA 2007.070 © Wayne Hudson	











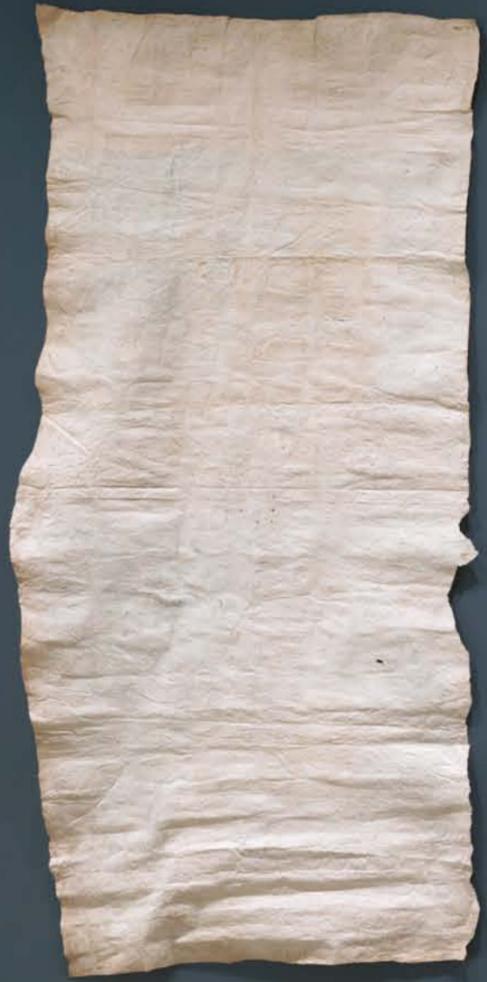














## Domesticate

Human beings are impressed when animals possess capabilities and powers that we do not. We have tried very hard to acquire these: the ability to fly, for example. Sexual intercourse with animals is an ancient and recurrent fantasy in which humans are able to interact as equals with or play with other beings; and sometimes become the plaything of a divinity in disguise (like Leda and her swan). Humankind remains, nevertheless, one link in the chain of predators.

Hound, Fox and Partridge from *Various Birds and Beasts Drawn from the Life*, Francis Barlow after Frans Snyders, 320

*Stealth*, Herbert Dicksee, 321

*Skull*, Jan Fabre, 322

*P XIII*, Berlinde De Bruyckere, 357

*Family of the Future*, 9, Oleg Kulik, 328

### Civility

Art has always been linked to power and aristocracy. It is therefore quite rare to find portraits of lower-class people in nineteenth-century art, such as the working poor, beggars and tramps depicted by Dempsey. In recent times, representations of the most diverse human situations have proliferated in photography—including the odd marriage recorded by Mikhailov.

Pestle in the form of a finger, Possibly Italy, 313

*Untitled*, Jannis Kounellis, 314

*El Disparo*, Sandra Vásquez de la Horra, 315

*Cary, Billsticker, Yarmouth*, John Dempsey, 343

*Sir Walter Scott in the Character of Peter Pattieson*, Robert Scott Lauder, 50

## Contention

Dialogue often turns into conflict. Human beings still think that they can end the life and diffusion of an idea or a faith by killing those who promote it. We are all still stuck with this incredibly primitive idea. Misinterpretations of monotheist religions have led to numerous wars, some of them still going on. People may think they can resolve the eternal question of destiny and free will through religious belief—like the soldier in the First World War who was saved when the Bible in his pocket stopped a bullet. His pal in obscurantist faith says his daily Muslim prayers on a carpet adorned with a machine gun.

*Hanging Man/Sleeping Man*, 1989, Robert Gober; courtesy of Robert Gober Studio © Robert Gober

*December* from *Fields of Ecstasy*, Alasdair McLuckie, 361

*Head With Arm (Yellow)*, Susan Rothenberg, 360

Bullet-proof glass test panel, from Risdon Prison, Tasmania, Australia, 362

Foreground:

*Memory of Matter*, Petroc Sesti, 363

*Hanging Man/Sleeping Man*, 1989, Robert Gober; courtesy of Robert Gober Studio © Robert Gober

*Colonial Head—Kelly Gang*, Sidney Nolan, 358

*Untitled (Osama)*, Wim Delvoye, 359

Foreground:

Afghan war rug, Afghanistan, c. 1993; private collection

*Hanging Man/Sleeping Man*, 1989, Robert Gober; courtesy of Robert Gober Studio © Robert Gober

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Afghan war rug, Afghanistan, c. 1993; private collection

Foreground:

*Great Deeds Against the Dead*, Jake and Dinos Chapman, 374

*Hanging Man/Sleeping Man*, 1989, Robert Gober; courtesy of Robert Gober Studio © Robert Gober

*Great Deeds Against the Dead*, Jake and Dinos Chapman, 374

*Jesus Christ!*, Daniel Boyd, 370

*Crucifix*, Sidney Nolan, 371

*Comrades*, 1915, James Prinsep Beadle, TMAG AG134

In case:

Trench art, Thuin, Belgium, 369

Pocket Bible with bullet scar, used in France, 368

*In the Name of God (Koran)*, Gregory Green, 364

Box of fuses (time and percussion), 367

















