



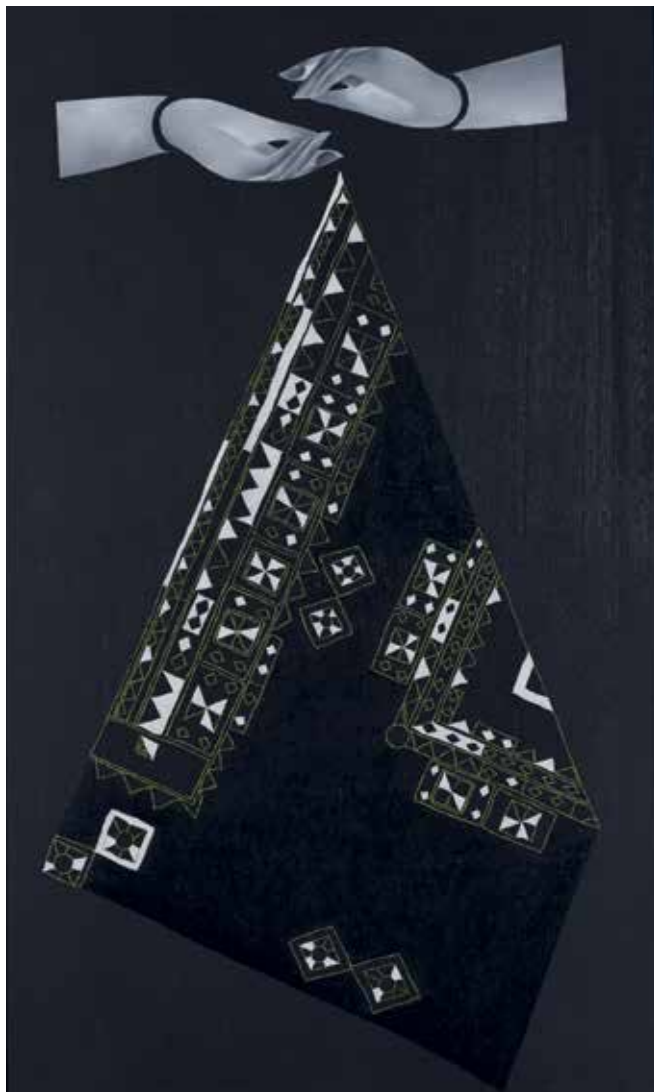
ASIA PACIFIC CONTEMPORARY

'Asia Pacific Contemporary' celebrates the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art's (QAGOMA) flagship exhibition series, the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT), now in its tenth iteration. Featuring works that have appeared in the Triennial since its debut in the 1990s, and across media from painting and sculpture to video, performance and works on paper, 'Asia Pacific Contemporary' showcases art from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Taiwan, Vanuatu and Vietnam.

The first APT was presented in 1993. Over the years, social, economic and technological transformations have intensified, and artists have kept pace, creating vibrant and innovative work shaped by a complex interplay of customary practices, cultural encounters and unprecedented social change. During this time, the field of contemporary art has grown and diversified, with First Peoples communities and emerging centres throughout the Asia Pacific region providing vital new perspectives on art and life. As a result of collecting

strategies that operate in conjunction with the Triennial, QAGOMA has unrivalled holdings of Asian and Pacific art — including internationally significant works and in-depth representations of leading artists — dating from the 1980s to the present day. Drawing on this collection, 'Asia Pacific Contemporary' presents a panorama of the practices that have made APT so central to understandings of contemporary art in the region.

Included in APT2 and APT4, Indonesian artist **Heri Dono**'s practice draws on the epic narratives of traditional Javanese culture and its mythological figures, often part human and part bird or beast. Epic tales are retold through *wayang* or shadow puppets, which often parody society and its foibles. In these paintings, Dono creates his own grotesque bestiary to comment on the comedy and tragedy of the human condition. The coloured figures in red, yellow and green represent Indonesia's three rival political parties from the 1990s. In contrast, the white 'superman' figure represents power, the intangible element each party strives to attain — a message that remains universal in its relevance.



Svay Ken's paintings are a unique document of Cambodian society and its transformations. The artist took up painting late in life to support his family and began by selling his paintings to patrons at the hotel where he worked. He later set up his own gallery and painted every day until his death in 2008. 'Sharing knowledge', which features Khmer text and related imagery providing moral and spiritual advice to the younger generation, was the artist's last major series. Painted in 1994, *The people on 18 April, 1975* and *Vietnamese planes and Pol Pot soldiers in battle, 1979* recall significant historical events from a personal perspective.

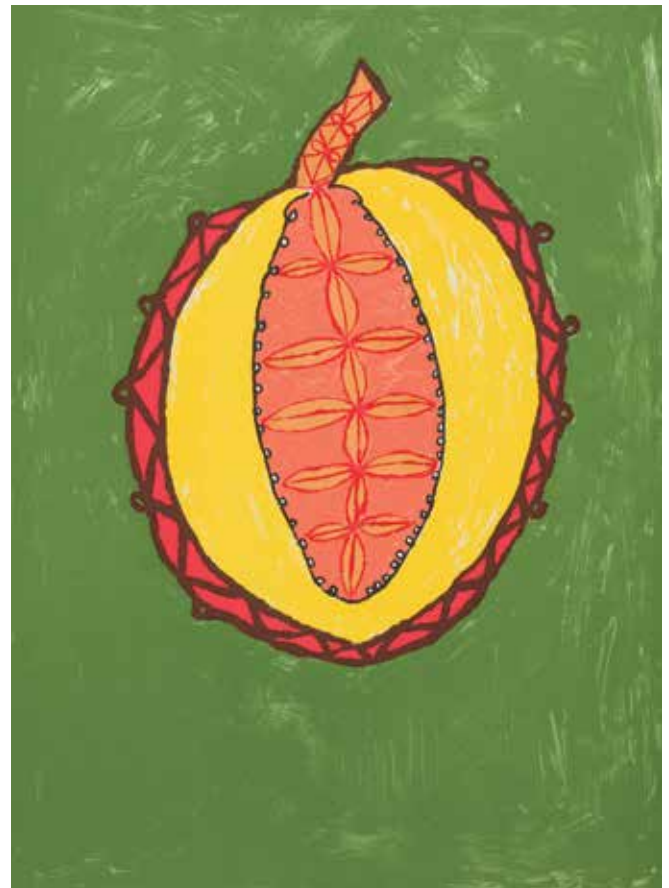
Like Svay Ken, **Dang Thi Khuê** has lived through a tumultuous period of history in her country. Her 1995 triptych (*Light and a pair of hands, A pair of hands and stars* and *Space and a pair of hands*) shows the geometric designs characteristic of the textiles of the ethnic communities in North Vietnam, along the borders of Laos and China, while the hands repeat symbolic gestures, known as mudras, made by divinities in Buddhist and Hindu iconography. By transferring the gestures from deities to mortal women, she associates the symbolic functions of guardian, instructor and preserver to pay homage to the role of woman as teacher, mother and healer.





Working from photographs and from life, in *Mother* (from the 'Appearance and reality' series) 1998, **Natee Utarit** presents three renderings of his mother, viewed from behind. For Utarit, painting serves as a channel of communication between interior and external worlds, reality and imagination, seeing and feeling. The work is an attempt to depict the space shared by mother and son; it refers to the notion that perception depends not only on physical and environmental factors, but also on the relationship between the viewer and the object.

Performance and music are central elements of art and culture throughout Asia and the Pacific and are key components of the APT. **Lee Wen** contributed the performance *Journey of a yellow man no. 13: Fragmented bodies/shifting ground* 1999 to APT3 and, in doing so, created one of the abiding images of the exhibition series. 'Yellow Man' is Lee Wen's best-known performance persona and allowed him to interrogate social and cultural norms. Stripping to his underwear, the artist coated himself in yellow paint — an exaggeration of his Chinese-Malay ethnicity — and undertook actions in a variety of spaces, from conventional galleries to city streets. From 1994, Lee Wen staged the Yellow Man's journeys in a range of international locations (including Brisbane), broadening interpretations of his colouring as he moved between cultural contexts.



APT3 also featured an iconic performance by **Michel Tuffery** titled *Povi tau vaga (The challenge)*, for which the artist made a group of sculptural 'bulls' from branded corned beef tins. The two-hour performance was a collaboration with artist Patrice Kaikilekofe (Futuna/New Caledonia) and brought together dancers from the island of Futuna and local performers from Samoan and Indigenous Australian communities. The bulls were mechanised and animated through gas fire and low-tech explosives, enacting a celebratory and vibrant battle. As sculptural objects, the bulls provide a comment on Polynesians' changed eating habits with the introduction of new commodities, and challenge stereotypes of the Pacific as a fertile and abundant tropical paradise.

The **Mataso Printmakers of Vanuatu**, whose works featured in APT6 (2009), adapt images of local fauna and flora, such as fish, butterflies, fruit, turtles and mythical hybrid creatures, combined with other sources, such as commercial packaging, tourist imagery and advertising. This combination of painterly, hand-drawn imagery and the layering of bold colours and textural effects is refreshing, expressive, and rooted in their locale.

APT7 celebrated the vibrant contemporary art of Papua New Guinea with a major collaborative presentation of works by artists from the East Sepik and New Britain regions. **Kwoma Arts**, a group of seven artists from the Upper Sepik villages of Tongwinjamb and Mino, translated the familiar form of the village *koromb* (spirit house) into an installation using new materials. In a palette of black, white, red and yellow, the designs reflect the individual artists' clan totems, including the animals, plants, birds and spirit figures.



The various elements point to the historical significance of architecture and performance in the lives, beliefs and social relations of the people in these regions. Works by **David Yamanapi** and **Isaac Kapun** focus on the slit drum or *garamut*. The sound of drums being beaten marks many important events in the part of Papua New Guinea in which these artists live. In the latmul village of Yenchen, the *garamut* is customarily played by two people working on either side of the drum to create short and longer sounds with different-sized beaters. Kapun chosen to model his distinctive *garamut* (slit drum) on the face and form of *Kulinginbu*, an latmul fish spirit.

Masks created in New Britain and the Sepik were historically made and danced to activate vital connections to land, genealogies, ancestors and resources. The **Uramat people** of the mountainous area behind Rabaul in East New Britain create towering masks of bark cloth decorated with bold geometric patterns. These masks belong to a group called *mandas*, which are worn in daytime ceremonies. *Mandas* are associated with women and the realm of the garden and; the men who wear them are believed to take on feminine identities, which they lose once the mask has been removed. The dance is performed in slow, ponderous movements, symbolising the slow growth of garden trees and plants. New Zealand artist **Graham Fletcher**'s 'Lounge Room Tribalism' paintings draw on a history of modernist appropriations of ethnographic objects in movements such as Cubism, Surrealism and Expressionism. Working from periodicals, design books and online resources to represent the fashionable interiors of the 1950s and 60s, in which Pacific cultural items are artfully displayed according to ideas of chic modernism, Fletcher creates fictitious spaces for these objects. The carefully crafted and realised masks and clubs raise questions of 'context, assimilation, ownership and authenticity'.



A work that invites us to consider how preconceptions about people and social relations become set into prejudice, *OTHER* 2009 is the seventh and final title in a series of thematic, moving-image montage works by Australian artist **Tracey Moffatt**, in collaboration with editor Gary Hillberg. The work wittily juxtaposes snippets from Hollywood classics and Indian cinema, and excerpts from genres ranging from musicals to Westerns, to reflect on how cinema has depicted romantic relationships between peoples of different races, cultures and genders. As the title suggests, each partner in these pairings is considered 'other'.

Rather than observing consumer culture from a distance, Indian artist duo **Thukral & Tagra** are utterly immersed in it and turn its fervent language to their own ends. Their group of portraits of young men who have left home to pursue a supposedly better life overseas is from the ongoing series 'Effugio/Escape'. Commenced in 2003, the series is informed by interviews with young male immigrants, the artists' own personal experiences, and their observations of the ways in which social aspirations and values of consumption disrupt a sense of authenticity, family and home.

Yang Fudong and Risham Syed used very different mediums to reflect on cities and experiences of urban alienation. **Yang Fudong's** playful video *City light (Chengshi zhiguang)* 2000 presents a central protagonist in the guise of a young professional, accompanied by his embodied shadow as they take turns to lead each other in everyday actions, moving in

and out of sync. Their whimsical routine describes a serious dislocation of body and soul divided, made weary by the unfamiliarity of Shanghai's rapidly changing surroundings, following an intensive program of building and development after China's shift to an open-door economic policy was instituted by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. **Risham Syed** draws on the refined tradition of South Asian miniature painting, an art form that has seen a revival in Pakistan since the 1980s. Departing from the figure as a central motif, Syed concentrates on empty, in-between spaces around the ancient city of Lahore, which has witnessed numerous transformations under Turkish, Mughal and British rule. The last 20 years have seen increasingly rapid development and growth; Syed's paintings focus on the backs of buildings that will soon disappear, transformed by impending development. By capturing and freezing these temporary spaces in her delicate paintings, Syed metaphorically frames the space of change.

Several artists represented in 'Asia Pacific Contemporary' draw on and reference traditional techniques or customary practices. For example, in *I am a rock* 2012, **Tomoko Kashiki** develops an unconventional treatment of *nihonga* (traditional Japanese painting). The women in her paintings are almost always artfully and ambiguously distorted. Elongated limbs curve in graceful yet uncanny arcs, conforming less to the logic of anatomy than the artist's aesthetic requirements. **Zheng Guogu's** studies of *qi* inform his 'Visionary transformation' series — *qi* being the fundamental life force or energy flow of traditional Chinese medicine and

martial arts. Zheng's paintings incorporate geometric and iconographic elements derived from Tibetan Buddhist *tangka* painting, but these are distinguished by synthetic-looking hues, while layered imagery and vibrant optical effects replicate the flow of *qi*.

Innovation on tradition is also apparent in works by Pushpa Kumari, Idas Losin and Lorraine Connelly-Northey, artists from First People's communities in India, Taiwan and Australia, respectively. In her intricate works on paper, **Pushpa Kumari** retains the delicate lines, geometric patterns and elaborate symbolism of Mithila art, a style used for several centuries in the northern regions of India and Nepal to decorate houses, while addressing new subjects, such as women's rights and the catastrophic Himalayan tsunami of 2013. She was taught by her grandmother, the acclaimed Mithila artist Mahasundari Devi. Kumari also taught her brother-in-law, Pradyumna Kumar, one of the first generation of male artists to practise this form.

Lorraine Connelly-Northey's powerful works speak of the practices of her mother's Waradgerie (Wiradjuri) country, contextualising them within contemporary society. Connelly-Northey reconfigures traditional forms, recycling abject, cast-off elements into harmonious works. Containers and vessels such as the narbong (string bag) are unexpectedly and delightfully transformed

by rough materials (rather than natural fibres) and a dramatic increase in scale. Connelly-Northey radically revises the material culture of her ancestors, celebrating the resilience and strength of Aboriginal peoples.

With its lustrous gold background, *Floating 2017* belongs to a group of **Idas Losin's** paintings that reflect on the significance of fishing for the Tao people of Lanyu (Orchid Island), off Taiwan's south-east coast. The symmetrical *tartara* vessels depicted in her works, with their distinctively upturned bow and stern, are typically decorated with carved and painted geometric emblems representing the sea, ancestral beings and the flying fish that play a major role in ceremonial cycles. With eyes at both ends, the boats are seen as extensions of the human body, linking heaven and earth.

As these varied and compelling artworks demonstrate, the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art is a pre-eminent platform for the art of Asia, Australia and the Pacific, surveying our vast and dynamic region through exhibitions, publications, forums and cultural exchanges. The diverse works in 'Asia Pacific Contemporary' reflect the APT's embrace of contemporary art in all its forms, from the ceremonial to the conceptual, and from the deeply personal to the resolutely social.



NOOSA REGIONAL GALLERY

10 DECEMBER 2021 – 27 FEBRUARY 2022

LOGAN ART GALLERY

4 MARCH – 16 APRIL 2022

STANTHORPE REGIONAL ART GALLERY

7 MAY – 3 JULY 2022

JOHN MULLINS MEMORIAL ART GALLERY DOGWOOD CROSSING, MILES

9 JULY – 20 AUGUST 2022

TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL ART GALLERY

10 SEPTEMBER – 30 OCTOBER 2022

ARTSPACE MACKAY

2 DECEMBER 2022 – 5 FEBRUARY 2023

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18 FEBRUARY – 16 APRIL 2023

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REDLAND ART GALLERY

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PERC TUCKER GALLERY, TOWNSVILLE

4 NOVEMBER 2023 – 20 JANUARY 2024

GLADSTONE REGIONAL ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

3 FEBRUARY – 20 APRIL 2024

HERVEY BAY REGIONAL GALLERY

4 MAY – 14 JULY 2024

Images

Cover image: Graham Fletcher / New Zealand b.1969 / *Untitled* (from 'Lounge Room Tribalism' series) (detail) 2010 / Oil on canvas / 150 x 120cm / Purchased 2010 with funds from the Estate of Lawrence F King in memory of the late Mr and Mrs SW King through the QAG Foundation / © Graham Fletcher

P1. Heri Dono / Indonesia b.1960 / *Bis kota (City bus)* 1994 / Synthetic polymer paint and collage on cardboard / 66 x 77cm / Purchased 1995. QAG Foundation / © Heri Dono

P2. Dang Thi Khuê / Vietnam b.1946 / *Light and a pair of hands (left-hand panel of triptych)* 1995 / Oil on canvas / 122.5 x 72cm / Purchased 1996. QAG Foundation / © Dang Thi Khuê

P2. Svay Ken / Cambodia 1933–2008 / *One who feeds and looks after one's parents so well that they do not have any problems will be prosperous in this world and the next world* (from 'Sharing knowledge' series) 2008 / Oil on canvas / 80 x 99.5cm / Purchased 2008. The Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund / © Svay Ken Estate

P2. Svay Ken / Cambodia 1933–2008 / *One who is rich and has abundant food but hides delicious food for himself is subject to ruin* (from 'Sharing knowledge' series) 2008 / Oil on canvas / 79.5 x 99.8cm / Purchased 2008. The Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund / © Svay Ken Estate

P3. Lee Wen / Singapore 1957–2019 / *Journey of a yellow man no. 13: Fragmented bodies/ shifting ground* (still, detail) 1999 / Videotape: 10:30 minutes, colour, stereo / Purchased 2000. QAG Foundation / © Lee Wen Estate

P3. Simeon Simix / Mataso Island, Vanuatu b.1981 / *Paw paw/coconut* (from 'Bebellie' portfolio) 2007 / Screenprint on Magnani paper / 76 x 56cm / Purchased 2008. QAG Foundation / © Simeon Simix

P4. Sepa Seule / Mataso Island, Vanuatu b.1983 / *Afokka and mango (Avocado and mango)* 2008 / Screenprint on Arches paper / 58 x 40.6cm / Purchased 2009 with funds from the Bequest of Grace Davies and Nell Davies through the QAG Foundation / © Sepa Seule

P4. Ngari Isaac / Uramat clan, Nguarhi family, Papua New Guinea b. unknown / *Varhit 2017* / Nine works: Varhit masks and ururaga (aerial): barkcloth with natural pigments, synthetic polymer paint, texta, cane, wood, bark twine, feathers / Installed dimensions variable / Gift of the Indigenous Uramat Identity of Gaulim and Wunga villages through Gideon Kakabin and the QAGOMA Foundation 2018 / © Ngari Isaac

P5. Risham Syed / Pakistan b.1969 / *Untitled 1* (from 'Lahore' series) 2015 / Synthetic polymer paint on canvas on aluminium / 10.2 x 15.2cm / Purchased 2015. QAGOMA Foundation / © Risham Syed

P5. Risham Syed / Pakistan b.1969 / *Untitled 2* (from 'Lahore' series) 2015 / Synthetic polymer paint on canvas on aluminium / 10.2 x 15.2cm / Purchased 2015. QAGOMA Foundation / © Risham Syed

P5. Zheng Guogu / China b.1970 / *Grand Visionary Transformation of Hevajra* 2016 / Oil on canvas / 197 x 134cm / The Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art. Purchased 2017 with funds from Michael Sidney Myer through the QAGOMA Foundation / © Zheng Guogu

P6. Idas Losin / Taiwan b.1976 / *Floating* 2017 / Oil on canvas / 135 x 179cm / Purchased 2019. QAGOMA Foundation / © Idas Losin

All artworks are in the Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.

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The Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Gallery stands in Brisbane. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present and, in the spirit of reconciliation, acknowledge the immense creative contribution First Australians make to the art and culture of this country.

Project Team

This QAGOMA resource has been developed by Henri van Noordenburg and Terry Deen, Head of Learning.

Touring Exhibition Coordinator: Henri van Noordenburg, Project Officer, Regional Services

Curatorial coordination: Reuben Keehan, Curator, Contemporary Asian Art, and Abigail Bernal, Associate Curator, Asian Art

Text: Abigail Bernal, Associate Curator, Asian Art

Design: Hayden Roberts, Graphic Designer

Editing: Stephanie Kennard, Acting Editor

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