

# The Boomerang Effect

The Aboriginal Arts of Australia  
19 May 2017  
- 7 January 2018

MEG  
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VILLE DE GENEVE



## MEG Musée d'ethnographie de Genève

Press  
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**The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia**  
**19 May - 7 January 2018**  
**Preview 18 May 2017 at 6pm**

**White walls, neon writing, clean lines: the MEG's new exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia» welcomes its visitors in a space evocative of a contemporary art gallery. Here the MEG unveils one of its finest collections and reveals the wealth of indigenous Australia's cultural heritage. Visiting this exhibition, we understand how attempts to suppress Aboriginal culture since the 18th century have ended up having the opposite of their desired effect.**

When James Cook landed in Australia, in 1770, he declared the country to be «no one's land» (*terra nullius*), as he recognized no state authority there. This justified the island's colonization and the limitless spoliation of its inhabitants, a medley of peoples who had lived there for 60,000 years, societies which up until today have maintained a visible and invisible link with the land through a vision of the world known as the *Dreaming* or *Dreamtime*. These mythological tales recount the creation of the universe as well as the balanced and harmonious relation between all the beings inhabiting it.

It is told that, in ancestral times, the Djan'kawu sisters peopled the land by naming the beings and places and then lying down near the roots of a pandanus tree to give birth to sacred objects. It is related that the Dätiwuy clan and its land was made by a shark called Mäna. It is said that the mouth of the Wandjina, rainmakers whose lips were sealed by the Rainbow Snake, must not be painted, for if this were done, it would rain continuously. It is recounted that the same snake lives in waterholes and watches over the most precious source of life.

Alongside utilitarian objects and weapons (boomerangs, throwing sticks, clubs, spears, shields) and artefacts used in exchanges between communities (engraved pearl shells, message sticks), the MEG's exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia» displays works illustrating these mythological tales. Among the objects presented, two carved trees, markers of sepulchres and ceremonial spaces, stand imposingly. Displaying such pieces, whose presence is extremely rare in museums, is not obvious: these ritual monuments torn out of the landscape by the Australians recall the history of the planned destruction of Aboriginal culture. The exhibition then retraces the history which made the MEG the depository of extremely important Australian collections.

In 1963, the Yolngu from Arnhem Land in northern Australia addressed to the Australian parliament a petition written on a piece of bark, on which were both the text and traditional paintings, in the aim of regaining their land rights. This gesture marked a turning point in the process leading to the recovery of the Aborigines' first political and territorial rights.

In the 1970s, Aboriginal artists began to use acrylic paint in the famous dot painting patterns. They painted symbolically in order to conceal the sacred signs. The patterns, mostly nonrepresentational, recount episodes of their mythological tales. These works, which swiftly found an international audience, are highly political and indissociable from the Aborigines' struggle for the recognition of their culture and rights.

In towns, in the late 1980s, a form of art sometimes called «urban Aboriginal art» developed. Most of the artists belonging to this movement consider themselves to be simply contemporary artists loudly proclaiming their Aboriginal identity. The artist Brook Andrew is part of this movement and has been invited by the MEG to do a residency in the context of this exhibition. His participation and work have made it possible to create a strong dialogue between the MEG and certain indigenous communities in a collaborative anthropology approach.

How do Aboriginal artists see the museological practices involving their culture ? Brook Andrew responds by focusing his own gaze on the culture and history of Australia's first inhabitants and his reflection, by allowing indigenous personalities to express themselves, concerns, amongst other things,



the question of sacred and secret objects. Michael Cook also responds by evoking the suffering of his people, particularly those of the stolen generations, the Aboriginal children forcibly taken from their families and put in centres where they were stripped of all their traditional culture.

With the GhostNets project, presented on a monumental scale in the MEG exhibition, Torres Strait Islanders make marine animals out of bits of fishing nets lost at sea. A scourge for the marine ecosystem, the «ghost nets» are salvaged on the Australian coast by indigenous artists. They recycle them to make impressive brightly coloured sculptures which alert the public to the threat caused by this waste. Art thus becomes a tool for denouncing ecological issues.

The work undertaken by the MEG in dialoguing with indigenous populations in order to produce this exhibition attests to the museum's willingness to take into account the demands of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders with regard to the question of presenting their culture outside their land. In the exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia», speech returns to the indigenous peoples, as in the trajectory of a boomerang which goes back to its point of departure, connecting the objects, their histories and the source communities.

Since the second half of the 20th century, art has become a tool for protest and an instrument of political struggle. In a real boomerang effect, the attempts at acculturation and integration into neo-Australian culture, the destruction of intergenerational ties and the generalized denigration affecting Aborigines, have led them to strengthen their identity and demands and to display unprecedented creativity. Aboriginal artists in particular, far from conforming to an imposed creative model, have managed to find their own way of using the new plastic media of expression in order to further their cause.

## SCENOGRAPHY

### **Scenography**

The scenography of this exhibition is the work of the French-speaking Swiss designers Adrien Rovero and Béatrice Durandard (Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens). Their presentation immediately projects the public into the subject of the exhibition, Aboriginal art, by adopting the codes of contemporary art with white walls, neon lighting and clean spaces. The architecture serves the objects thanks to the simplicity of its almost invisible lines. The scenographers thus remind us that Aboriginal art makes no distinction between ethnographic objects and works of art, by using one and the same language to display its many links with the Dreaming, the land, ceremonies or ancestral laws.

On entering the exhibition, we encounter a series of empty, white picture rails, with nothing hung on them, in a white space punctuated by neon ceiling lights. This presentation is a reinterpretation of the legal principle of *Terra Nullius* or «land belonging to no one», used to justify colonization by the British regardless of the indigenous peoples who had lived in Australia for more than 60,000 years. Behind these picture rails, densely packed showcases, full of sets of objects, photographs and art works provide the opposite view of the Aborigines. The further visitors go into the room, the more they discover the complexity of Aboriginal culture and traditions. Two views, one colonial the other indigenous, thus confront each other in this first space neither empty nor full.

Like in a late nineteenth century portrait gallery, the showcases become a series of pictures punctuating the second part. Each picture represents a collector who contributed to the creation of the MEG's Australian collection. Here the choice of objects collected reveals how Aboriginal culture has been seen for more than a century. In the centre of the room, the installation by Brook Andrew, the artist in residence, dialogues with the MEG's objects, reintroducing an Aboriginal presence and a critical interpretation of the historical context in which the MEG's collection was developed.

In the third part, a series of acrylic paintings, hung on the walls, and ethnographic objects show the links of Aboriginal art with mythology, ceremonies, death, the land and protest. In the centre of this «Kunsthalle», an imposing monumental lantern lights the space. This monolith conceals an ocean of fish, ghostnets, the work of artists from the Torres Strait, made out of fishing nets washed up on their shores which are the scourge of the ocean. Under this confined space, a tiered structure – a large wooden crate – serves among other things as a mediation space.

Finally, the exhibition ends with an immersive installation by Brook Andrew, an artist of Wiradjuri descent among others. A wall painting made up of white and black patterns, a contemporary version of a Wiradjuri pattern, literally encompasses the visitors who, thanks to interviews with Aboriginal figures, are confronted with the issues concerning representations of indigenous cultures outside their lands and with new perspectives for collaboration with museums.



## NUMBER OF OBJECTS IN THE EXHIBITION

341 objets from the MEG

- 325 objects
- 16 photos

6 archival documents from the MEG

2 books from the MEG's library (Bibliothèque Marie Madeleine Lancoux)

43 borrowed works

- 35 works
- 7 photos
- 1 ghostnet installation
- Lenders : Môtiers(19 objects), Lyon (7 objects), Cambridge (7 objects), Andrew Baker Gallery(7 objects), Stéphane Jacob (2 objects), Claude Pisset (1 object)

## EXHIBITION TEXTS

### Introduction

## INTRODUCTION

### 0. «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»

In a space evoking a contemporary art gallery, the MEG unveils one of its finest collections and reveals the wealth of Australia's cultural heritage. This exhibition is an opportunity to look into the MEG's history so as to understand why, how and in what circumstances the successive Australian pieces were acquired, by following the evolution of how these objects and their creators have been seen since colonization. It also shows how Aboriginal Australians, once considered by scientists as «primitives», have become an integral part of the contemporary art market. The work undertaken by the MEG in dialoguing with indigenous populations in order to produce this exhibition attests to the museum's willingness to take into account the demands of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders concerning the question of how to present their culture outside their land.

In «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia» exhibition, speech returns to the indigenous peoples, as in the trajectory of a boomerang which goes back to its point of departure, linking the objects and their histories to the source communities. Visiting this exhibition, we understand how endeavours to suppress Aboriginal culture from the 18th century on have ended up having the opposite of their desired effect. In a real boomerang effect, the attempts at acculturation and the generalized denigration affecting Indigenous Australians have led them to strengthen their identity and demands and to display unprecedented creativity. Since the second half of the 20th century, art has become a tool for political struggle. Aboriginal artists in particular, far from conforming to an imposed creative model, have managed to use the new media for plastic expression to further their own cause.

## PART I

### 1. Australia: an «empty land» or a «full land» ?

During his first voyage of exploration in the Pacific, James Cook landed in Botany Bay (today Sydney), on 29 April 1770, taking possession of the east coast of Australia in the name of the British king, George III. The report made by the explorer in London declared Australia *Terra nullius* (a land belonging to no one). This principle, which was only invalidated by the Australian High Court in 1992, justified colonization by the British and the alienation of land.

This view of things is today still being challenged by the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders who claim they have always occupied this territory. Scientific studies have proved that populations have inhabited this vast land for 60,000 years. Arriving from Southeast Asia, they settled on the continent of Sahul, a continental shelf made up of New Guinea, Australia and Tasmania linked by land bridges until the end of the last glaciation.

Australia: an «empty land» from the colonial perspective, or a «full land» from the indigenous perspective?

## SECTION 1.1

### 1.1. At the origin of the land and its population

Aboriginal people say that the Australian continent was once a flat, monotonous place without life. Then a myriad of beings came down from the sky and out of the sea and the heart of the earth. In crossing the underground world, the land and the sky, these left material traces of their passage and actions, shaping rivers and mountain ranges, moulding the land and giving the landscape its present form. These hybrid beings, half animal half human, created and named places, separated animals from humans, but also



formulated the laws governing Aboriginal societies and to be used as an ideological and spiritual framework.

Their arrival created the beginning of what they call the Dreaming, the creation of life. Since then, these ancestral beings have visited sleeping humans in their dreams to teach them and to explain their itinerary, the social organization, laws and customs to follow. Through songs, dances and the depiction of creation stories on different media, the Aboriginal Australians reactivate the ancestral beings' power and perpetuate the ties between the living, the ancestors and the land.

## SECTION 1.2

### 1.2. Indigenous Australians: invisible or visible?

At the time of British colonization, about 750,000 individuals forming 250 linguistic groups were living in Australia. This continent country has very different regions, from the snowy mountains of Tasmania to the central deserts and tropical or temperate forests. Settlers considered the predominant hunter-gatherer economy to be backward and the rich local traditions were ignored. Driven out and dispossessed of their land, the indigenous population was decimated by military actions and introduced diseases. Long considered to be fast disappearing, it is today estimated at 670,000 people, that is less than 3% of the Australian population.

The presence of these men, women and children, invisible in the eyes of the settlers, is suggested here by sets of objects from all over Australia. The formal and aesthetic qualities of these objects demonstrate all the ingenuity and richness of their material culture.

#### 1.2.1. Boomerangs

The symbol of Australia par excellence, the boomerang is a throwing club with a wide variety of shapes, sizes and decorations. Its apparent simplicity conceals extraordinary ingenuity. Boomerangs were used for a large number of activities: in addition to their main function as hunting and fighting weapons, they were used to cut, dig, make fire by friction or as percussion instruments. Only certain models were designed to return to their point of departure.

#### 1.2.2. Spear-throwers

Spear-throwers consist of a long piece of wood with a hook on one end to attach the spear. Held by the handle at shoulder height, they artificially elongate the arm, thus increasing the weapon's throwing power. Made and used exclusively by men, spear-throwers could be multifunctional objects: they were used to cut, dig or even to make fire. Often decorated with paint and carved patterns, spear-throwers could also have a ceremonial function and communicate the emblems connected to their owner's status and authority.

#### 1.2.3. Shields

In the past, men carried shields to protect themselves from possible attacks. Found almost everywhere in Australia, shields took various shapes in order to stave off different kinds of blows: in hand to hand fighting with clubs, or battles with arrows and spears. Beyond their defensive function, shields are also used in ceremonies and reveal the identity and geographical origins of their owner. The incisions and designs on shields also represent and relate the creator ancestors' deeds.

#### 1.2.4. Clubs

Clubs are very common weapons in Australia and possess a wide variety of shapes, uses and names depending on the regions. Small throwing clubs were generally used to kill birds and small mammals, while the larger ones served as fighting weapons. Each adversary held a club in one hand and a shield in the other. Clubs could also be used as digging sticks, for digging up roots or getting animals out of tree hollows.

#### 1.2.5. Spear points

Projectiles used for hunting, fishing and fighting, spears are thrown by hand with the help of a spear-thrower. The points, carved out of rock or made from finely grained stones, are fixed to the shaft with thongs or resin. When acquired by collectors, the shafts were often broken into sections to make transport easier.

At the end of the 19th century, some Aboriginal people, from the Kimberley region in particular, began to use the glass and porcelain from telegraph pole insulators to make spear points which had fast become trade objects.



### 1.2.6. Exchanges

Far from living isolated from the rest of the world, as the European explorers believed on arrival in Australia, the different indigenous groups practised numerous exchanges between each other and with overseas populations.

Message sticks were used as memory aids and passports by those who travelled to a foreign territory in order to communicate important information. For several centuries, *riji* (engraved pearl-shells) were part of an exchange network called *wurnan* which extended across two thirds of the continent, from the north-west coast of the Kimberley to the Western Desert.

Pipes bear witness to the commercial and cultural exchanges which have existed since the 17th century between the Makassan from the south of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi and the populations of the coastal regions of Arnhem Land and the Kimberley.

## SECTION 1.3

### 1.3. Evoking presence

Paul Heinrich Matthias Foelsche (1831-1914) was a German police officer and photographer who emigrated to Australia in 1854. Having settled in Port Darwin, he took photographs for the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition of 1875 to show the new colonial settlements in the north of the country, then provided a series of Aboriginal portraits for the *Exposition universelle de Paris* in 1878. To him we owe almost 250 portraits of indigenous people, mainly from the Larrakia, Iwaidja and Woolna groups. His photos are part of the tradition of anthropometric photography advocated by evolutionist scientists endeavouring to systematically compare «racial» types and to demonstrate the «primitiveness» of Aboriginal Australians.

These prints were probably given to Eugène Pittard, the MEG's founder, by the doctor and anthropologist William Ramsay Smith (1859-1937). This friend of Foelsche's had built up a collection of Aboriginal skeletons, skulls and hair. On his death, his widow left Foelsche's negatives on glass plates and first original prints to the South Australian Museum in Adelaide.

## SECTION 1.4

### 1.4. Evoking absence

Michael Cook (1968-) is a photographer of Bidjara descent who lives in Brisbane. The *Mother* series presents a woman in an Australian desert landscape. This mother is always alone, her child absent, as though he/she had suddenly vanished although proof of his/her existence is tangible in the photographs.

Behind the patinated, aesthetic images, Michael Cook deals with a very painful chapter in Australian history, that of the Stolen Generations. Over about a century, more than 50,000 mixed-race children were forcibly taken from their families by the Australian government. In the context of a forced assimilation policy, they were put into orphanages, Christian missions and white foster homes. In a historic speech on 13 February 2008, the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd presented his official apology to the Aboriginal Australians for all the injustices endured, including the fate of the stolen generations.

## SECTION 1.5

### 1.5. Eradicating presence

Carved trees are very important for Aboriginal people, in particular for the Wiradjuri and the Kamilaroi of New South Wales who sculpted them to mark a burial place or the ceremonial ground for *bora* initiations. Once the bark had been stripped off the living tree, the carving was done at different depths in the sapwood and heart of the wood.

In the early 20th century, carved trees were cut down on a massive scale without any consultation with the Aboriginal communities. Was the aim to preserve them in a museum for future generations or to wipe out any trace of Aboriginal presence from the Australian territory? Today, fewer than a hundred carved trees still stand on their original sites.

The Island II, a work by Brook Andrew (1970-), a contemporary artist of Wiradjuri descent, evokes the presence of carved trees on the ancestral land. The artist restores to the carved trees their place as markers of sacred places and invites us to reflect critically on Australia's colonial past.



## PART II

### 2. The MEG's collection, a history of gazes

The MEG's first Australian objects arrived in Geneva in 1880. Today the collection contains almost 850 of them. From the very beginning, the Museum endeavoured to build up exhaustive, prestigious collections, despite the limited means at its disposal.

This part of the exhibition retraces the history of these acquisitions, paying attention to the evolution of the way collectors saw each of these objects and the wishes expressed by the Museum to develop its collections. It shows how the Aboriginal people, once considered by scientists as «primitive», entered the contemporary art market in the late 20th century.

In the centre of the room, the original installation by the artist Brook Andrew treats this history from the other perspective: that of the Aboriginal Australians living at the time when collectors were gathering their objects for museums.

#### SECTION 2.1

##### 2.1. The first objects (1880-1917)

On 3 July 1880, the Musée archéologique de Genève, part of whose collections would be transferred to the MEG, acquired a stone axe blade from Bryce McMurdo Wright Jr, a London minerals trader. The following year, other Australian pieces were purchased through Charles-Pierre-Étienne Martin (1846-1907), a watchmaker delegated by the watchmakers and jewellers of Geneva to represent them at the International Exhibition of Melbourne in 1880-1881.

These first objects illustrate the way in which Australia's indigenous populations were seen in the late 19th century by a Europe governed by the evolutionist paradigm. In an attempt to reconstruct the history of humanity, anthropologists of the time classified all the populations of the world according to a scale of development on which Victorian society represented the most advanced stage. Practising neither agriculture, animal husbandry, metallurgy or weaving, Aboriginal Australians were classified as belonging to the middle stage of savagery, the most primitive of the Earth's living peoples.

#### SECTION 2.2

##### 2.2 Purchases from reputable dealers

From its creation in 1901, the MEG endeavoured to enrich its collections, spurred on by its director Eugène Pittard. Between 1921 and 1957, the Museum decided to purchase Australian pieces from reputable dealers known to museum institutions: Arthur Speyer, Emile Clement or William Ohly of Berkeley Galleries.

In his correspondence with these different dealers, Eugène Pittard is concerned about the authenticity of the objects proposed to him and, above all, about the legitimate right of his partners to sell them to him. Alas, his requests for information often remained unanswered.

##### 2.2.1 The Arthur Speyer dynasty

Between 1921 and 1924, fifty-five pieces purchased from Arthur Speyer were added to the MEG's Australian collection, a small number compared to the 1066 objects from other regions of the world which he supplied to the Museum. In the inventory registers, the name «Arthur Speyer» represents not just one individual but corresponds to a dynasty of three German collectors and dealers interested in the arts of the five continents. The MEG's Australian pieces were bought from Arthur Speyer I (1858-1923) and his son Arthur Speyer II (1894-1958).

In the early 20th century, German ethnographic museums, enriched by their colonial relations but lacking acquisition funds, began to identify «duplicates» in their collections, often objects considered to be of inferior quality which they sold or exchanged for objects missing from their various departments. Thus some of the objects obtained from the Speyers come from old German collections.

##### 2.2.2 Emile Clement, an enlightened businessman

Trained as a geologist and chemist, the Silesian Emile Louis Bruno Clement (1843 or 1844-1928) maintained close relations with a number of European museums by first selling archaeological collections from Germany, then botanical and zoological specimens from north-west Australia and Australian ethnographic objects.

His eclectic career led him to practise very different activities, before undertaking three voyages to Australia between 1895 and 1900, apparently to participate in the creation and management of goldmines in the Towranna and Roebourne regions. He stayed there long enough to publish



ethnographic and linguistic notes on the Gualluma people living in this region. In 1927-1928, Clement sold the MEG some fifty pieces, mostly utilitarian objects and a few ceremonial ones.

### **2.2.3 Berkeley Galleries, an essential reference**

Between 1955 and 1957, the director of the MEG, Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach, acquired ten Australian works from Berkeley Galleries in London founded in 1941 by William F. C. Ohly (1883-1955) and taken over by his son Ernest. For more than thirty years this gallery was the reference in matters of oriental, Oceanian, African and pre-Columbian art as well as for classical antiquities and contemporary art. It was from here that the MEG's first non-utilitarian objects came, bark paintings and sculptures from the north of Australia.

Six of these pieces were collected by Reverend Edgar Almond Wells (1908-1995), the superintendant of the Milingimbi Methodist Mission between 1949 and 1959 and of the Yirrkala mission between 1962 and 1963. This enlightened missionary had studied anthropology and took an interest in Aboriginal culture whose artistic production he wanted to encourage.

## **SECTION 2.3**

### **2.3 Maurice Bastian, a diplomat in the MEG's service**

A doctor in law, Maurice Bastian (1906-1994) worked in the Federal Department of Politics in Bern before joining the National Commission for UNESCO. Victim of a wave of redundancies, in 1953 he decided to settle in Australia where he stayed twice before returning definitively to Switzerland in 1960. Soon after his arrival in Melbourne, he contacted the director of the MEG, Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach, who harboured a strong desire to make the Australian collection one of the most important in Europe. After an initial gift of three bark paintings in 1955, fifteen cases full of objects of various kinds were sent up until 1960 by Bastian himself, to whom the Museum awarded the title of «correspondent member». A true benefactor, Maurice Bastian donated 416 objects, that is almost half the MEG's Australian collection.

#### **2.3.1 Exchanges with the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne**

So as to be able to offer important pieces to the MEG, Maurice Bastian contacted one of Australia's most prestigious museums, the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne. Between 1956 and 1960, through him the MEG acquired forty-nine Australian objects in exchange for a series of pre-Columbian Peruvian pieces. Bastian personally chose the objects which he packed up with the curator of the Australian museum's Anthropology Department, Aldo Massola (1910-1975). The quality of the pieces selected is unquestionable: among them are fourteen objects collected by the famous anthropologist Walter Baldwin Spencer and his field collaborator Francis James Gillen.

#### **2.3.2 Aldo Massola's collection**

Maurice Bastian reinforced his collecting strategy by establishing relations with eminent Australian collectors likely to let him have Aboriginal objects. In 1960, he gave several rare, old pieces from Aldo Massola's private collections to the MEG. The inscriptions found on certain shields and clubs show they were gathered in the 1860s. A secretive person, Bastian was discreet about the conditions of these transactions. In a letter to Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach, Bastian revealed that Massola had preferred to let him have them «rather than the Americans», recalling the fierce competition between the different ethnographic museums.

#### **2.3.3 From stone tools to watercolours**

In 1956 and 1960, Maurice Bastian gave the Museum more than a hundred stone tools: scrapers, knives, blades, axes, cutters, etc. All these objects reinforced prejudices against a people considered to belong to the Stone Age. In most cases, Bastian did not communicate his sources. A mysterious man who liked to give himself the title of former diplomat, in the 1980s he donated his archives to several Swiss institutions. In 2016, a magnificent discovery was made in his correspondence deposited at the MEG: three watercolours by Arrernte artists of the Hermannsburg school (Northern Territory), including one by the famous artist Albert Namatjira (1902-1959), considered at the time an example of successful assimilation. The two men had met in June 1955 and Namatjira had given him his painting as a souvenir.

## **SECTION 2.4**

### **2.4 Georges Barbey, a tireless traveller**

Georges Barbey (1884-1963) is another important figure who helped to build up the MEG's Australian collection. At retirement age, this wealthy banker became a great traveller under the influence of Eugène Pittard who communicated his ethnographic enthusiasm to him. Possessing an iron constitution,



he travelled across many countries. In 1958-1959, he spent three months in Australia for the purpose of developing the MEG's collections for the big «Australia» exhibition which took place at the Musée Rath in 1960. Thanks to Maurice Bastian's advice, Georges Barbey met the best specialists of the Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide museums. He returned with a hundred and sixteen objects which he gave to the Museum.

#### **2.4.1 Father Ernest Ailred Worms' collection**

Many objects given by Georges Barbey came from Father Ernest Ailred Worms (1891-1963), a self-taught ethnologist who had been a missionary in the Kimberley for thirty years with whom Barbey became friends.

Worms particularly collected ritual objects marking the passage from childhood to adulthood. Of the six stones made of iron ore concretions slightly remodelled by Aboriginal people, four were phallic stones shown to initiates by the masters of ceremonies in which circumcision and subincision were practised. According to Worms, these six stones were meant to encourage fertility.

#### **2.4.2 A set of objects related to death**

Among the Yolngu of Arnhem Land a dead person's bones were gathered up and put in a hollow log (*dupun*), painted with his clan's main patterns. At the close of the ceremony bringing the funeral cycle to an end, the deceased once more became part of his clan's spiritual world. The *dupun* was put in place vertically then abandoned to the elements.

The *kurdaitcha* shoes, made of finely woven emu feathers and human hair stuck together with blood, were used by sorcerers on revenge expeditions. A person wearing these left no footprints and his identity thus remained unknown.

### SECTION 2.5

#### **2.5 Karel Kupka, a promoter of Aboriginal artists**

In 1966, seven bark paintings were added to the MEG's Australian collection thanks to the French artist, anthropologist and collector of Czech origin Karel Kupka (1918-1993). Gathered in the Northern Territory in 1956 and 1963, these barks were painted by the artists Paddy Compass Namatbara, Jimmy Midjawmidjaw, Nangunyari-Namiridali, Dhawarangulil and Nagaguma.

Though Kupka seemed initially to be attracted by Aboriginal Australia in a quest for the origins of art, he was one of the first to recognize that Aboriginal painters had individual talent and to oppose the anonymization process of «primitive» artists. He carefully documented his acquisitions, by describing the techniques used, individual styles, the formal organization of images, as well as the subjects depicted. In order to honour individual talent and creativity, he gave the title of «master painter» to those who had long been considered skilled craftsmen merely reproducing identical patterns inherited from their ancestors.

### SECTION 2.6

#### **2.6 Claude Albana Presset, an impassioned ceramic artist**

The Genevan ceramic artist Claude Albana Presset (1934-) has had close ties with the MEG for many years. In 1998, she was commissioned by the Museum to complete its Australian collection. During her stays in the north of the country, she gathered a collection of paintings on bark and Arches paper. Twenty-eight bark paintings thus entered the collection with one painting on paper, supplemented by two works acquired in 2010. In 2016, Claude Presset gave the MEG a sculpture by the artist Owen Yalandja in anticipation of the «Boomerang Effect» exhibition.

All these works, acquired in Aboriginal cooperatives and art centres, are richly documented and authenticated. These official structures provide support and artistic materials to Aboriginal people in remote communities and today constitute the first rung on the distribution chain of indigenous art.

### SECTION 2.7

#### **2.7 Brook Andrew, an artist in residence at the MEG**

The sculptures of Brook Andrew present the artist's personal archives and act as a physical barrier whose purpose is to disturb our perception of the «white cube» containing the MEG's exhibition. The artist's aim is to create an experience which challenges the usual practices of museographic presentation, which enables him to infiltrate and go beyond it through chaos and mess. This deliberate strategy shakes up the idea that Aboriginal cultures are stale, old and authentic, when in fact they are dynamic and alive.



**Mirror I-VI, Habitat and Fuselage I-IX  
by Brook Andrew (1970-)**

2017

Works done during a residence at the MEG

The six Mirror freestanding sculptures in sapele, a tropical African timber traded from colonial times, are long didactic panels housing historical archives and bearing the artist's touch. They are made up of paintings, collages and objects collected by the artist himself, thus offering a new interpretation of the history of populations often trapped in a «primitivist», colonial view. The two Habitat sculptures evoke a cabinet of curiosities. The small Fuselage shelf sculptures, placed in showcases by the artist, are intended to disrupt the meaning of the objects exhibited by the MEG and to establish other connections.

**PART III**

**3. Indigenous arts, at the heart of connections with the ancestral land**

The arts of the Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders are characterized by their rich diversity of media and techniques: painting on bark, canvas and paper; sculpture in wood and bronze or out of plant fibres and fishing nets. Whether done for internal use or intended for the art market, these creations constantly assert their links with the ancestral land and the immemorial times of the world's creation.

Produced for religious, political, social, utilitarian or didactic purposes, indigenous arts are connected with their creators' history, their view of the world and their ceremonial life. Most of the works done today are revisited and updated versions of their links to the ancestral land. They offer us a point from which to observe and interpret the life of Indigenous Australians, their laws and what matters to them.

**SECTION 3.1**

**3.1. Creating the world**

The Dreaming is both an account of creation and a «manual for life». Each group or individual has a privileged relationship with one or another Dreaming, always associated with a site. These myths are powerful purveyors of rules and meaning. It is they that determine Aboriginal people's social and cultural life, their rights and duties, as well as each person's place in the universe. They also explain why one animal has short legs and another rough skin, why a mountain rises in a certain place and is so named... These creation stories are passed down from generation to generation and are celebrated in order to perpetuate the ties between the living, the ancestors and the land. Since the 1970s, in some regions of Australia, these mythologies have also been expressed in acrylic paint, a new technique adopted by indigenous artists.

**3.1.1. The Wagilag sisters**

In the centre of Arnhem Land, it is told that the Wagilag sisters had incestuous relations with members of their clan. Forced to flee, they made for the north and the sea. They set up camp on the edge of a waterhole at the bottom of which lived the Rainbow Serpent. One of the sisters gave birth there and the smell of placental blood awoke the snake. Disturbed, he swallowed the women along with their child and all their possessions. The reptile recounted these events to the other sacred pythons who explained to him the mistake he had made in swallowing beings belonging to his group. He fell ill from this and collapsed, leaving the marks of his body on the ground. He spat out the two women who turned into two rocks.

**3.1.2. The Djang'kawu sisters**

The Djang'kawu sisters began their journey by leaving Baralku Island aboard their canoe to reach the eastern coast of Arnhem Land. Once on shore, the women moved around with the help of two digging sticks. Every time they set up camp, they dug a well with their sticks. Then they planted them behind a spring of water so they would turn into trees. After exploring and naming different places, they lay down under the leaves of a pandanus tree and gave birth to sacred objects and many children. They continued to travel and repeat the same sequence of events, until they had peopled the landscape.

**3.1.3. Bäru the crocodile**

In the north-east of Arnhem Land, the wife of Bäru the crocodile left to look for snails. On her return, she lit a big fire to cook them. She wanted to talk to her husband but he was fast asleep and did not answer her. Annoyed, she began to throw burning hot snail shells at his back. Bäru woke up very angry with his wife. During their argument, they rolled into the fire and Bäru threw a log into the flames. The fire then spread across the dry bush. In order to put a burning log out, Bäru flung it into the sea. It sank and got stuck between sacred rocks where it is said to be still burning today.



#### **3.1.4. The Wandjina**

The Wandjina are mythical beings from the sky and sea. Since they bring rain, control the elements, ensure the fertility of the ground and natural species, they are considered rainmakers. They have no mouth for the Rainbow Serpent sealed their lips. If their mouth were to be painted, it would rain constantly. Representations of the Wandjina are specific to the Kimberley region where a great deal of rock art is to be found. Each image is said to be the result of the actions of a Wandjina ancestor who lay down in a cave to turn into a painting and imprint their image on it.

#### **3.1.5. The Mimi**

The Mimi are spirits specific to the rocky country of western Arnhem Land. These long, slender beings, who are very shy, are so delicate they are afraid of strong winds which could break their bones. For safety, they take refuge in rocky crevices during the day and only come out at night. It was they who taught the Aboriginal people's ancestors how to hunt, prepare game and make fire.

The Mimi are benevolent to humans although they are described as trickster spirits. They play tricks on people, particularly by luring them into the forest to disorientate them. Only children can see them. Aboriginal painters often claim to have caught sight of them during their childhood.

#### **3.1.6. The Yawkyawk**

The term Yawkyawk means «girl» and refers to young female spirits. These live in waterholes on the land of a certain number of Aboriginal clans of western Arnhem Land. They can have long hair evoking the climbing flowers of green seaweed. Instead of feet, they have a tail like fish, like our mermaids. They live in creeks and rockpools, avoiding humans. Mythological tales recount how the Yawkyawk changed their form after diving into the water to escape the Rainbow Serpent who was pursuing them.

#### **3.1.7. The elusive Sesserae**

Sesserae was a young member of the Tuluqui tribe who lived alone on Badu Island, at Tulu. He was pursued by men from the neighbouring clan who wanted to know his secret for being so happy and well-fed. Indeed Sesserae had discovered how to successfully fish for dugongs, a highly-coveted marine mammal. While trying to escape these men who wanted to get his secret out of him, he turned himself into a bird, a kind of wagtail. Today, Sesserae continues to elude the inhabitants of Badu Island and is still considered a cheeky, insolent bird, keeping to his egotistical habits and not sharing his food with the Torres Strait Islanders.

## **SECTION 3.2**

### **3.2. Celebrating the world**

Thousands of sung, danced and painted stories spread all over the Australian continent to relate the shaping of the world and its different ecosystems by ancestral beings. These mythological stories, which make up the Dreamtime, are passed down from generation to generation according to precise rules of filiation. Every group is responsible for sacred places, staging the mythical events associated with them and thus permanently renewing ties with the ancestors.

The Dreamtime is not just a historical past, but a continuous process ensuring that life forces are preserved. Men, women, young and old, sing, dance and paint in order to evoke the power of the mythical beings who renew the fertility of the earth and of people. These ceremonies represent the ancestral revelations and perpetuate links between the living, their world and that of the Dreamtime.

#### **3.2.1. Ritual and ceremonial objects**

All aspects of life are imbued with and marked by the Dreamtime. At rituals and ceremonies, the indigenous populations use objects made to symbolize and confirm the links between people and the land, between the physical and spiritual world. Often these objects are painted with a system of patterns which codifies the relation between the ancestral being, the land and the social group. These paintings are not merely representations of the ancestors, but their manifestations which have direct effects, from the Dreamtime to the present.

#### **3.2.2. Aboriginal musical instruments**

Music is an integral part of ceremonies. Musical instruments include the didjeridoo, bullroarer and clapsticks, as well as objects used in an unusual way, such as boomerangs which become percussion instruments when beaten.



The didgeridoo is a wind instrument from north-east Australia, made from a tree trunk hollowed out by termites. Reserved for public ceremonies and festivities, it usually accompanies songs and the playing of clapsticks.

### 3.2.3 Women's ceremonies

Outside observers, often men, long believed that rituals were reserved exclusively for men. However, women have proved to have their own rituals, totemic and territorial celebrations which they perform in parallel to those of men.

Since the 1980s, women from several communities in the Central Desert have been painting canvases with acrylics, reusing the traditional patterns traced on the ground or finding inspiration in body paintings.

## SECTION 3.3

### 3.3. Honouring the dead among the Tiwi

The Tiwi from Bathurst and Melville Islands honour their dead in rituals called Pukumani which impose sexual, behavioural and food taboos during the mourning period.

A few months after a death, tutini posts are erected on the tomb. There can be as many as twenty of them, their number and height indicating the status of the deceased. Bark baskets called tunga are often placed on top of them. Once put up, the tutini are abandoned until they disintegrate in bad weather.

At Pukumani ceremonies, the Tiwi wear bracelets and other ceremonial objects as a sign of mourning. Their dances and songs enable the spirit of the deceased to find its way in the spirit world where it will live from then on.

#### 3.3.1. The creation of death

The Tiwi recount that formerly death was unknown. At Yipanari, on the eastern point of Melville Island, a man, Purukupali, married a woman, Bima, who gave him a son, Jinani. One day, Bima left her child to go and join her lover Tapara, Purukupali's brother. Jinani died of hunger and heat, leaving his father in despair. During a fight between the two brothers, Tapara died and became the moon. Purukupali took his son's body and plunged into the sea, announcing that from then on that all human beings would have to die like his son. Purukupali then showed the Tiwi how to bury the dead, carve posts and organize *Pukumani* ceremonies to enable them to enter the spirit world.

## SECTION 3.4

### 3.4. Tracing the land, the sea and the sky

Journeying over the land, in the underground world, under the water or in the heavens, the ancestral beings travelled the continent, leaving their marks and shaping the land by giving it its present form. Thus were born waterholes, rocks, sand dunes, islands, hills and constellations. These sacred places are linked by tracks forming a physical, mental and spiritual geography. A land ownership system and rich toponymy inscribe indigenous identity on the Australian land.

This section of the exhibition deals with the complexity of the mythical stories which meet in the landscape, ancestral knowledge and conflictual land policies. It also reminds us that colonization and globalization have disrupted the environment and life of the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

#### 3.4.1. Reading the land

The first inhabitants of Australia read the land like a book, interpreting all the features of the landscape as living traces left by the ancestral beings. Their paintings, on bark and canvas, can be read like geographic maps, which use a symbolic language to represent plots of land and important sites. They do not follow the conventions of scale and orientation of cartographers.

Some paintings show a land modified by the arrival of the settlers who, above all, divided it up with barbed wire in order to raise cattle.

#### 3.4.2. Protecting the land, ghostnet art

An environmental drama is being played out in the north of Australia: drift nets from industrial fishing are causing the death of many marine animals and ending up on the coast.

In an attempt to rid beaches of this waste by valorizing it, a collective artistic project came into being at the initiative of an art centre: the creation of monumental sculptures representing marine animals, which are at the same time endangered species, totemic figures and the inhabitants of a claimed land. The activity has become a real artistic genre testifying to the knowledge and many skills passed on from generation to generation by the Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal coastal communities.



The works presented here were all made in the Torres Strait at the Erub Arts Centre, except the whale which was created at the Tjutjuna Arts and Culture Centre (South Australia).

### 3.4.3. Claiming the land

Marcia Langton, an anthropologist of Yiman and Bidjara descent, reminds us that the foundation of Aboriginal Law lies in the common ancestry of living beings and the land. The creative spiritual forces are passed on from generation to generation, notably in paintings, making of them, literally, title deeds. Hence, in recent decades, paintings have been used to prove land rights and express the land claims of indigenous peoples.

For these communities, art is a strategy for survival and a tool in the fight for the cultural and political recognition of populations long colonized and marginalized.

## PART IV

### 4. Challenging the dominant narratives

Proposing an immersive experience, Brook Andrew's installation is entirely covered with a wall painting of black and white optical patterns, a contemporary rendering of traditional tree carvings (dendroglyphs) of the Aboriginal people from New South Wales.

The artist thus questions ethnocentric attitudes towards indigenous peoples and shows that the dominant narratives are often misinterpretations. Incorporating into his sculptures historical documents from his own archives as well as objects found in Geneva, he confronts us with the rules and codes prevalent both in Western and indigenous cultures. The video interviews with Aboriginal representatives and experts offer a range of different points of view on cultural and religious issues as well as on the protocols for museums to follow when dealing with the Indigenous Australian cultural heritage. By challenging the normal modes of museum display, Brook Andrew calls into question our way of interpreting and consuming narratives and ideas.

#### *Immersive room installation*

**by Brook Andrew (1970-)**

2017

Work done during a residence at the MEG

## PUBLICATION

### Catalogue



#### ***The Boomerang Effect.***

#### ***The Aboriginal and Island Arts of Australia***

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Edited by the exhibition's scientific curator, this very richly illustrated catalogue is supplemented by contributions from Aboriginal art specialists and echoes the work and demands of two internationally renowned Aboriginal figures.

## SUMMARY

### **Avant-propos**

Boris Wastiau, directeur du MEG

#### **1. L'effet boomerang. Les arts aborigènes et insulaires d'Australie**

Roberta Colombo Dougoud (MEG)

#### **2. La culture des Aborigènes d'Australie**

Philip Jones University of South Australia, Adelaïde (AUS)

#### **3. Les photographies de Paul H.M. Foelsche**

Roberta Colombo Dougoud, Pierrine Saini et Clotilde Wuthrich (MEG)

#### **4. La collection australienne du MEG, une histoire de regards**

Roberta Colombo Dougoud, Pierrine Saini et Clotilde Wuthrich (MEG)

##### **4.1 Les premiers objets (1880-1917)**

##### **4.2 Les achats auprès de marchands réputés**

La dynastie Arthur Speyer et les objets «doublons»

Emile Clement, un entrepreneur éclairé

Les Berkeley Galleries, une référence incontournable

##### **4.3 1955-1960, les années australiennes du MEG**

Maurice Bastian, un diplomate au service du MEG

Georges Barbey, un infatigable voyageur

L'exposition «Australie» de 1960 au Musée Rath

Karel Kupka, promoteur des artistes aborigènes

##### **4.4 Acquisitions récentes**

Claude Albana Pisset, une céramiste passionnée

L'art des *ghostnets* ou comment protéger le territoire

#### **5. L'art, la religion et la mort dans les îles Tiwi**

Eric Venbrux, Radboud University, Nimègues (NL)

#### **6. Conversation avec Brook Andrew**

Roberta Colombo Dougoud, Pierrine Saini et Clotilde Wuthrich (MEG)

#### **7. Entretien avec Marcia Langton**

Roberta Colombo Dougoud, Pierrine Saini et Clotilde Wuthrich (MEG)

#### **8. Michael Cook, voir au-delà des apparences**

Roberta Colombo Dougoud, Pierrine Saini et Clotilde Wuthrich (MEG)

#### **9. La portée mondiale de l'art autochtone australien**

Nicholas Thomas, director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge (UK)

### **Bibliographie**

### **Remerciements**

### **Biographie des auteurs**

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#### Media partners

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## KEY INFORMATIONS

### **The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia. From 19 may 2017 to 7 january 2018**

Temporary exhibition

#### **Press conference**

Wednesday 17 May 2017 at 10am at the MEG

#### **Vernissage**

Thursday 18 May 2017 at 6pm at the MEG

6.30pm, official speeches

9pm-midnight, festivities

#### **Public opening**

Friday 19 May 2017 at 11am



## PRATICAL INFORMATION

### MEG

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Open from Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am to 6 pm  
Closed on Mondays, 25 December and 1 January  
Bus: 1,2,19, 35 Tram: 12,15  
Admission 9/6 CHF  
Free admission on the first Sunday of the month. Free for visitors under 18.

Information:

Follow us on **Facebook**

Register on [www.meg-geneve.ch](http://www.meg-geneve.ch) to receive our newsletter, **InfoMEG**

Audioguides are available at the reception desk.

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*The **MEG** (Ethnography Museum of Geneva) is a public institution which was founded by the Genevan anthropologist Eugène Pittard (1867-1962) in 1901. The museum curates objects illustrating human culture throughout history. It has a collection of some 80,000 works and a library with over 50,000 documents on world cultures. The MEG also houses a unique music library, the Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP), with over 16,000 hours of folk music recordings; the core of the archives is a collection of over 3,000 hours of historic recordings amassed by Constantin Brăiloiu between 1944 and 1958. Admission to the permanent display of a thousand objects from the five continents is free. The MEG also offers the public a cultural and scientific outreach programme, concerts, film and lecture cycles and stage shows. Since October 2014, the MEG has had a new building in which to display its riches. It was designed by the Zurich firm Graber & Pulver Architekten and stands on the site occupied by the MEG since 1941.*



**A selection of objects in the exhibition**  
**«The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**



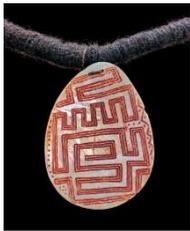
**1. Boomerang**  
 Western Australia, King Sound Gulf  
 Bardi. Mid 20th century  
 Wood, natural pigments  
 Gift of Maurice Bastian in 1957  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 026811  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**2. Set of boomerangs**  
 Australia  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**3. Mask mawa**  
 Australia, Queensland, Torres Strait, Saibai Island  
 Early 20th century  
 Wood, plant fibres, shells, pigments  
 Acquired from Hans Himmelheber in 1932  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 013621  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**4. Engraved pearl-shell riji**  
 Western Australia, Kimberley, Beagle Bay, Dampier Peninsula  
 Nyul Nyul. Late 19th-first quarter 20th century  
 Pearl-shell, hair, plant fibres, ochre  
 Acquired from Emile Clement in 1928  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 011751  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**5. Sketches of objects proposed to the MEG for purchase by Emile Clement**  
 United Kingdom, Sussex, Hove  
 1928  
 Ink on paper  
 MEG, Archives de la Ville Inv. 350 R 391



**6. Engraved pearl-shells riji from Western Australia**  
 Northern Western Australia  
 First half 20th century  
 Pearl-shell, ochre, plant fibres  
 Gift of Maurice Bastian in 1957 and 1960  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**7. Spear points from Western Australia**  
 Western Australia  
 Mid 20th century  
 Wood, stone, resin, pigments  
 Gift of Maurice Bastian in 1958  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**8. Spear points from the Kimberley**

Western Australia, Kimberley  
First half 20th century  
Glass  
Acquired from Friedrich Weber in 1943  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 019587  
Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**9. Ceremonial board**

Central Australia  
Arrernte. Mid 20th century  
Wood, feathers, pigments  
Gift of Maurice Bastian in 1956  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 025215  
Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**10. Stone axe**

Central Australia  
First half 20th century  
Stone, wood, plant and animal fibres, resin, pigments  
Gift of Maurice Bastian in 1957  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 026810  
Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**11. Carved tree**

Australia, New South Wales  
Wiradjuri or Kamilaroi. Late 19th-early 20th century  
Wood  
Gift of the Trustees of the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne in 1960  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 028252  
Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**12. Bark baskets *tunga***

Australia, Northern Territory, Melville Island  
Tiwi. Early 20th century  
Eucalyptus bark, plant fibres, pigments  
Exchange with the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne in 1956; collected by Walter Baldwin Spencer in 1912  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 025559  
Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**13. Statue of Purukupali**

by Paddy Henry (Teeampi) Ripijingimpi (c. 1925-1999)  
Australia, Northern Territory, Bathurst Island, Nguiu  
Tiwi. 1970s  
Wood, pigments  
Acquired by André Jeanneret in 1979 at Tiwi Pima Art in Nguiu  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 040353  
Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**14. Gee-am shields from Victoria**

Australia, Victoria  
 Second half 19th century  
 Wood, ochre  
 12/15: Gift of Maurice Bastian in 1960; formerly in Aldo Massola's collection  
 14: Acquired in Paris in 1940  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 028286  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**15. Fish-shaped statuette**

Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Crocodile Islands, Milingimbi  
 Yolngu. Mid 20th century  
 Wood, natural pigments  
 Gift of Georges Barbey in 1960  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 029136  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**16. Wooden cross waninga**

Australia, Northern Territory, Alice Springs  
 Arrernte. Mid 20th century  
 Wood, plant fibres, ochre, emu down, blood?  
 Gift of Georges Barbey in 1960  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 028315  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**17. Sac Dilly bag**

Australia, Northern Territory, central Arnhem Land, Crocodiles Islands, Milingimbi  
 Yolngu. Mid 20th century  
 Pandanus fibre, Trichoglossus haematodus blue-headed lorikeet feathers, pigments  
 Gift of Georges Barbey in 1960  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 029121 *dilly*  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**18. Yawkyawk sculpture**

by Owen Yalandja (1962-)  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Maningrida  
 Kuninjku, Dangkorlo clan, Yirritja moiety. 2013  
 Wood, pigments  
 Gift of Claude Albana Pisset in 2016; acquired in 2013 at the Maningrida Arts &  
 Culture Art Centre  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 066899  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**19. Yawkyawk sculpture**

by Owen Yalandja (1962-)  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Maningrida  
 Kuninjku, Dangkorlo clan, Yirritja moiety. 2013  
 Wood, pigments  
 Gift of Claude Albana Pisset in 2016; acquired in 2013 at the Maningrida Arts &  
 Culture Art Centre  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 066899  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**20. Yawkyawk sculpture**

by Owen Yalandja (1962-)  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Maningrida  
 Kuninjku, Dangkorlo clan, Yirritja moiety. 2013  
 Wood, pigments  
 Gift of Claude Albana Pisset in 2016; acquired in 2013 at the Maningrida Arts &  
 Culture Art Centre  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 066899  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**21. Owen Yalandja (1962-) painting the Yawkyawk sculpture**

Photo by Claude Pisset in 2013  
 © Claude Pisset



**22. Bark painting**

by Jimmy Midjawmidjaw (c. 1897-1985)  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Croker Island, Minjilang  
 Kunwinjku. Circa 1963  
 Eucalyptus bark, pigments  
 Acquired from Karel Kupka in 1966; collected in 1963  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 033600  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**23. Peinture sur écorce attribuée à Wandjuk Marika (1927-1987) ou à son père**

Bark painting  
 by Wandjuk Marika (1927-1987) or Mawalan Marika (1908-1967)  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Yirrkala  
 Yolngu, Rirratjiriu clan, Dhuwa moiety. 1957-1959  
 Eucalyptus bark, pigments  
 Gift of Georges Barbey in 1960; collected in 1959 at the Methodist Overseas Mission in  
 Darwin.  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 028257  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



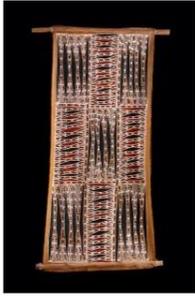
**24. Goanna (monitor lizard), bark painting by Mickey Daypurryun 1 (c. 1929-1994)**

Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Elcho Island, Galiwin'ku  
 Yolngu, Liyagawumirr clan, Dhuwa moiety. Late 1990s  
 Eucalyptus bark, pigments, wood, plant fibres  
 Acquired from Claude AlbanaPisset in 2001; purchased in 1998 at the Elcho Island Art  
 and Craft Cultural Centre  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 054295  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**25. Djirikitjgagurtha (The Quail and the Fire), bark painting**

by Nancy Gaymala 1 Yunupingu (1935-2005)  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Biranybirany  
 Yolngu, Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety. Late 1990s  
 Eucalyptus bark, pigments, wood, plant fibres  
 Acquired from Claude Albana Pisset in 2001; purchased in 1998 at the Buku-  
 Larrnggay Mulka Cultural Centre at Yirrkala  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 054293  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**26. Bultjan (The Fire), bark painting**

by Peter Dajin Burarrwanga (1953-)  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, Elcho Island, Galiwin'ku  
 Yolngu, Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety. Circa 2002  
 Eucalyptus bark, pigments, wood, plant fibres  
 Gift of the SAMEG; acquired from Claude Albana Presset in 2010; collected in 2002  
 at the Elcho Island Art and Craft Cultural Centre  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 065791  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**27. Watercolour on paper**

by Albert Namatjira (1902-1959)  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Hermannsburg (Ntaria)  
 Arrernte. 1955  
 Paper, pigments  
 Gift of Maurice Bastian in 1982 or 1984  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 066687  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**28. Kisay Dhangal (Dugong swimming under the moon)**

by Alick Tipoti Zugub (1975-)  
 Australia, Queensland, Torres Strait, Badu Island  
 Kala Lagaw Ya. 2015  
 Bronze, pearlshell  
 Australian Art Network, Sydney



**29. AlickTipoti carving the *Kisay Dhangal* sculpture**

Photo: © Roger D'Souza Photography



**30. Beginning of Creation**

by Barbara Weir (1945- )  
 Australia, Northern Territory, Utopia  
 Atnwengerrp. 2002  
 Acrylic on canvas  
 Musée d'art aborigène australien «La grange», Môtiers



**31. Wagyl Disturbed**

by Geoffrey Gordon Ponde Lindsay (c. 1952-1998)  
 Western Australia, Perth  
 Ngarrindjeri. 1988  
 Acrylic on canvas  
 Musée d'art aborigène australien «La grange», Môtiers



**32. Minyma Tjuta (Seven Sisters Dreaming)**  
 by the Spinifex Women's Collaborative  
 Western Australia, Tjuntjuntjara  
 Pitjanjatjara. 2010  
 Acrylic on canvas  
 Musée d'art aborigène australien «La grange», Môtiers



**33. Merad Turtle-Turtle from Underdown Cay**  
 Collective work done at the Erub Arts and Cultural Centre  
 by Jimmy Kenny Thaiday, Jimmy John Thaiday, Lorenzo Ketchell, Ellarose Savage,  
 Emma Gela, Ethel Charlie, Florence Gutchen, Alma Sailor, Nancy Naawi, Nancy Kiwat,  
 LaviniaKetchell, Racy Oui-Pitt, Marion Gaemers, Sue Ryan, Lynnette Griffiths  
 Australia, Queensland, Torres Strait, Erub Island  
 Meriam Mer. 2015  
 Polypropylene twine on metal frame  
 Acquired from the Erub Arts and Cultural Centre in 2017 through Stéphane Jacob  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 067008



**34. The Erub Arts and Cultural Centre collective creating the Merad Turtle (2015)**  
 Photo: © Erub Arts / © Lynnette Griffiths



**35. Ged Nor Beizam Home Reef shark**  
 Collective work done in the Erub Arts and Cultural Centre  
 by Jimmy Kenny Thaiday, Jimmy John Thaiday, Lorenzo Ketchell, Ellarose Savage, Sue  
 Ryan, Lynnette Griffiths  
 Australia, Queensland, Torres Strait, Erub Island  
 Meriam Mer. 2015  
 Polypropylene twine on metal frame  
 Acquired at the Erub Arts and Cultural Centre in 2017 through Stéphane Jacob  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 067009



**36. The Erub Arts and Cultural Centre collective creating the Ged Nor Beizam shark (2015)**  
 Photo: © Erub Arts / © Lynnette Griffiths



**37. Mary, 19, from the Alligator River (Daly's wife)**  
 by Paul Heinrich Matthias Foelsche (1831-1914)  
 Photography taken between 1877 and 1893  
 Port Darwin or Port Essington in the Northern Territory  
 Silver print on paper pasted on cardboard (circa 1913)  
 Probably acquired by the doctor and anthropologist William Ramsey Smith (1859-1937)  
 MEG Inv. ETHPH 421288  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**38. Name unknown, from the Adelaide River**  
 by Paul Heinrich Matthias Foelsche (1831-1914)  
 Photography taken between 1877 and 1893  
 Port Darwin or Port Essington in the Northern Territory  
 Silver print on paper pasted on cardboard (circa 1913)  
 Probably acquired by the doctor and anthropologist William Ramsey Smith (1859-1937)  
 MEG Inv. ETHPH 421317  
 Photo: © MEG, J. Watts



**39. Undiscovered #4**

by Michael Cook (1968-)  
 Australia, Queensland, Brisbane  
 Bidjara. 2010 (edition 1/2)  
 Inkjet print on paper  
 Michael Cook & Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane



**40. Pram – Mother series**

by Michael Cook (1968-)  
 Australia, Brisbane  
 Bidjara. 2016 (edition 2/8)  
 Inkjet print on paper  
 Michael Cook & Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane



**41. The artist Brook Andrew**

Photo: © Trent Walter



**42. The artist Brook Andrew**

Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**43. The artist Brook Andrew in residence at the MEG**

Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**44. The artist Brook Andrew in residence at the MEG**

Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**45. The artist Brook Andrew in residence at the MEG**

Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**46. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**

Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part I: Australia: an «empty land» or a «full land»  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**47. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**  
 Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part I: Australia: an «empty land» or a «full land»  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**48. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**  
 Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part I: Australia: an «empty land» or a «full land»  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**49. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**  
 Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part II: The MEG's collection, a history of gazes  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**50. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**  
 Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part II: The MEG's collection, a history of gazes  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**51. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**  
 Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part II: The MEG's collection, a history of gazes  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**52. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**  
 Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part III: Indigenous arts, at the heart of connections with the ancestral land  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**53. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**  
 Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part III: Indigenous arts, at the heart of connections with the ancestral land  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**54. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**  
 Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens  
 Part III: Indigenous arts, at the heart of connections with the ancestral land  
 Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**55. Exhibition «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**

Scenography: Adrien Rovero Studio, Renens

Part VI: Challenging the dominant narratives

Photo: © MEG, J.Watts



**56. Poster «The Boomerang Effect. The Aboriginal Arts of Australia»**

Design: Saentys & Brook Andrew / MEG, J.Watts

Images available in high definition on: [www.ville-ge.ch/meg/presse.php](http://www.ville-ge.ch/meg/presse.php)