

QAG

A WORLD VIEW

THE TIM FAIRFAX GIFT



GOMA

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INTRODUCTION

'A World View: The Tim Fairfax Gift' is the story of a deep commitment to contemporary art and to the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA). Since 2002, Tim Fairfax AC has supported the acquisition of some of the most remarkable works to have entered the Collection. Reflecting this generosity, this touring exhibition presents works by both renowned and emerging artists, from large-scale artworks to intimate photographic works. The donor's willingness to venture into new collection-building territory, particularly with acquisitions from Africa, South America and the Pacific, is also apparent in the great diversity of works on display.

Art helps us to channel, refract, activate and recalibrate our understanding of the familiar, to see the world anew. The human body and human experience of the world is at the centre of all of these works. Together, they allow us to develop a richer perspective on our place in the world, and to participate more fully in the process of shaping what it might become.

These artworks invite a multi-layered perspective of the world, asking us to empathise with others. We are invited to move with a ballet of traditional hand gestures in *Siva in Motion* by Shigeyuki Kihara, and be mesmerised by Robin Rhode's animation *Promenade*. Is Michael Parekowhai's shiny, larger-than-life security guard *Kapa Haka (Whero)* an imposing or playful figure to be feared or revered?

'A World View' is a fitting tribute to Tim Fairfax AC, whose extraordinary commitment has helped to bring works by leading international artists into our state Collection for Queenslanders to enjoy now, and into the future.



ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Shirana Shahbazi's photographs explore the iconographic and compositional elements of seventeenth-century European still-life and vanitas paintings, where the fleeting beauty of a blooming flower reminds us that life is short. Yet, her glorious fruits, flowers and birds also refer to *tazhib a tashiri*, a variant of Persian miniature painting from the Kajar dynasty (1794–1925) incorporating Chinese elements.

While recalling painterly traditions from both cultures, these photographs also refer to stock images used in advertising and marketing. Shahbazi investigates representations and conventions from many cultures and media, and, in so doing, conveys a sense of the multidimensionality characterising contemporary visual culture.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shirana Shahbazi emigrated from Iran to Germany when she was 11 years old. She now lives in Zurich, Switzerland. In her photographic reinterpretations of the still-life tradition, Shahbazi explores geography, history and the mass media to address questions of cultural translation.

FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 How does the background colour affect the objects in the photographs?
- 2 What does each of these objects symbolise?



STILL LIFE: An illustration representing an arrangement of natural or man-made objects.

VANITAS: Vanitas is a genre of still-life painting that flourished in the Netherlands in the early seventeenth century. A vanitas painting contains objects symbolic of the inevitability of death and the transience and vanity of earthly achievements and pleasure.

MEMENTO MORI: Objects that remind us of the inevitability of death.



ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Alice Bayke depicts an unusual-looking woman in an ornate dress — the dark background and the figure's otherworldly demeanour contrast sharply with her wedding-like attire. The decorative embroidery of the dress echoes historical tapestries, and the artwork's kitsch aesthetic is exaggerated and complemented by the medium of the tapestry itself.

Carefully crafted, this work conveys the seamless, airless qualities of Todd's photographic works, and draws on the story of Priscilla Presley, specifically the iconic images of her dressed like a doll for her marriage to Elvis Presley in 1967. The use of props and accessories, such as wigs and false eyelashes, creates a heightened sense of melodrama that is both eerie and compelling. The sense of social claustrophobia is enhanced by the domestic associations of this closely woven tapestry.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Yvonne Todd was born in Auckland, where she currently lives and works. She is fascinated by the artificial and uncanny aspects of the everyday, and draws inspiration from commercial studio portrait photography. Her main subject is women — young women in conventional portraiture poses — who stare out at the viewer.

FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 Discuss how this artwork conveys a sense of timelessness — even though the main point of reference is an event from the 1960s.
- 2 If dolls are made to appear human, how can people take on a doll-like appearance? Find images of Priscilla Presley from her wedding day, along with other representations of women, including store mannequins and girls' toys, as well as photographs of popular musicians (such as Lana Del Rey, Katy Perry and Nicki Minaj), to inform your discussion.



ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Kapa Haka is the Maori term for the traditional performing arts, an expression of dance and song. Here, Parekowhai presents an 'everyman', recognisable as a formidable security guard, but unidentifiable as an individual. This sculpture — one of a series modelled on the artist's own brother — is a playful reference to performance in its many forms. Motionless and imposing, *Kapa Haka (Whero)* prompts us to consider ideas relating to showmanship, working life and cultural expression.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Michael Parekowhai is one of New Zealand's most important contemporary artists, showing regularly in New Zealand and internationally in major exhibitions, including QAGOMA's own Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT) exhibitions in 1999 and 2006. Parekowhai is known for his witty, larger-than-life sculptures, as well as photographs and installations. His public artwork *The World Turns* 2011–12, a bronze sculpture of an elephant and native Australian Kuril (water rat), is located on the riverfront at GOMA at South Brisbane.

FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 What does this sculpture tell us about our shared interpretation of the human form?
- 2 This work refers to the many forms of performance we encounter as part of the everyday. Discuss the performance of this 'everyday everyman'. How does the pose of the sculpture affect our response to the figure?

Yvonne Todd (Designer) New Zealand b.1973 / Victorian Tapestry Workshop Australia est.1976 / Sue Batten (Weaver) Australia b.1958 / Amy Cornell (Weaver) Australia b.1982 / Alice Bayke 2008 / Cotton warp with wool and cotton weft / 299 x 241cm / Commissioned 2006 with funds from Tim Fairfax AM and Gina Fairfax through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

Michael Parekowhai New Zealand b.1968 / Kapa Haka (Whero) 2003 / Fibreglass, automotive paint / 188 x 60 x 50cm / Purchased 2009 with funds from Tim Fairfax AM through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery



ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Ah Xian's *Human human – Bust no.5* was made using the cloisonné technique, with the assistance of craftspeople from Jingdezhen, China. Using traditional decorative design elements, such as flames and dragons, the work features a symmetrical design over a blue-green ground, a colour that, in traditional Chinese physics, symbolises wood — one of the five elements — and refers to spring, vitality and life.

An all-over design creates strange and surprising conjunctions between the image and the facial features of the bust, and the figure appears to be wearing a demonic mask, at odds with the calmness of the sculpted face. On the crown, chest and back of the bust, Tao Tieh dragon motifs appear like tattoos, a possible reference to the indelibility of cultural background. Ah Xian's sculpture explores tranquillity and disruption, beauty and aversion, tradition and innovation, life and death. However, the final impression is of a delicate balance involving all these possibilities.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ah Xian is a senior Chinese–Australian artist whose artwork exemplifies the increasingly global nature of contemporary art. Ah Xian produces his artworks in one country (China), but conceives and presents them in another (Australia). The artist's continuing investigations into historic materials has allowed his work to evolve with the reinvention of traditional arts.

FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 Why are the artist's traditional cultural practices important to him?
- 2 Think about your own culture's indelible (impossible to erase) qualities. Compare these qualities with those of another person. How do your thoughts differ?

CLOISONNÉ: In this technique, filigree copper wire defines designs which have been filled with enamels. The enamels are fixed and the object is immersed in an acid bath. The object is then fired in a large earth kiln at a low heat.



ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Promenade is an animation where the movements of the protagonist are influenced by rendered drawings. In this work, Rhode steps away from the conventions of realism and embraces the abstract. The playful tension between the protagonist and his abstracted creations leave viewers unsure of who is in control.

Promenade is related to a work commissioned by New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Rhode was invited to produce a visual sequence to accompany a performance by Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes of Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. In Rhode's animation, a solitary figure appears to conjure prismatic forms interpreting Mussorgsky's composition.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Robin Rhode was born in Cape Town and raised in Johannesburg, where he studied at the Technikon Witwatersrand and the South African School of Film, Television and Drama. In 2002, Rhode moved to Berlin, but his creative inspiration comes from his time in Johannesburg as a street artist. His work draws on his passion for breakdancing, which triggered his first animated imagery.

Rhode's art practice reflects his physical and psychological environment, and is strengthened by his spontaneity in bringing objects and abstract forms to life. He often appears as a light-footed figure in his drawings, photographs and animations.

FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 Explain the unfolding story of this animation to a friend.
- 2 How would you draw your favourite piece of music?

Ah Xian China/Australia b.1960 / *Human human – Bust no.5* 2002 / Hand-beaten copper, finely enamelled in the cloisonné technique / 43cm (ht.) / Purchased 2009 with funds from Tim Fairfax AM through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

Robin Rhode South Africa b.1976 / *Promenade* (still) 2008 / HD animation (Digital Betacam and DVD formats): 5 minutes, black and white, sound / Purchased 2009 with funds from Tim Fairfax AM through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

This publication features 5 of the 11 artists included in the 'A World View: The Tim Fairfax Gift' touring exhibition.

TOURING VENUES

Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum
16 December 2017 – 24 February 2018

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville
9 March – 15 April 2018

Gold Coast City Gallery
21 July – 9 September 2018

Cairns Art Gallery
28 September – 11 November 2018

Gympie Regional Gallery
10 January – 9 March 2019

Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery
6 April – 19 May 2019

PUBLISHER

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QAGOMA
TOURING



The Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art provides a program of touring exhibitions and related services to regional Queensland.

Cover: Shirana Shahbazi Iran/Switzerland b.1974 / [Voegel-08-2009] (from 'Flowers, fruits & portraits' series) 2009 / Type C photograph on aluminium, ed. 3/5 (1 AP) / 90 x 70cm / Purchased 2010 with funds from Tim Fairfax AM through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery