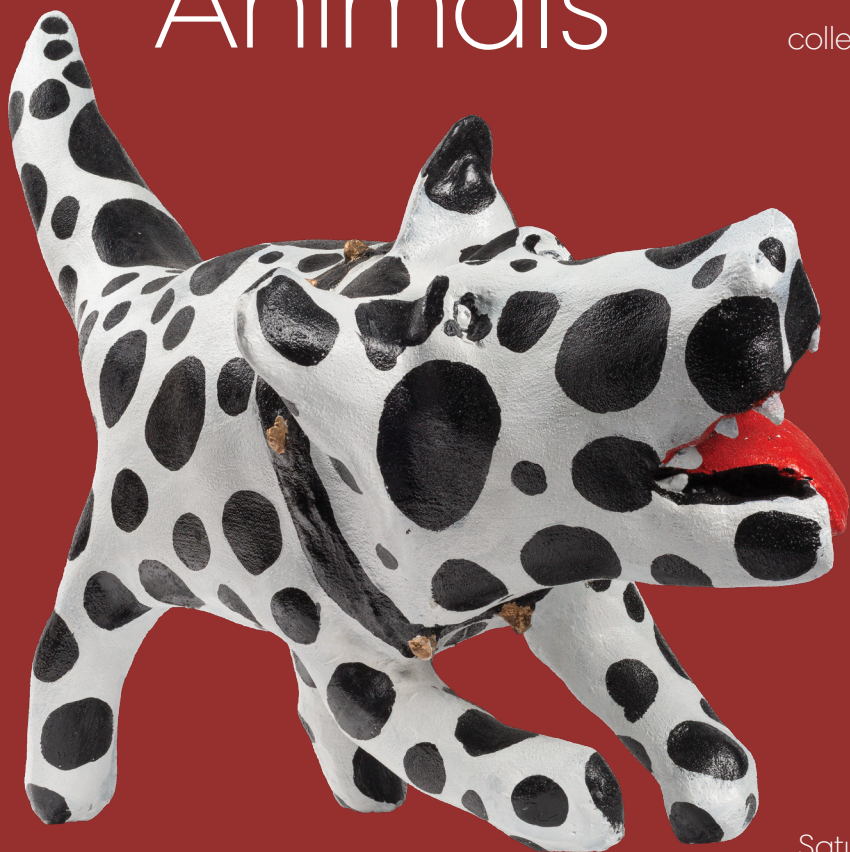


Spirit of the Animals

artworks
from the
Koorie
Heritage
Trust
collection



Saturday
27 July to
Sunday 24
November
2024

The Koorie Heritage Trust acknowledges
the Traditional Custodians of Narm,
the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung of the Kulin
Nation, on whose lands we operate.
We pay respect to their community,
their Ancestors and their Elders,
past, present and emerging.

We pay our respects to all First Peoples of
South East Australia, and particularly to
the Cultural Groups of the artists involved
in this exhibition.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
readers are advised that this publication
contains names and stories of people who
have passed away.

Cover image:
Len Tregonning (Gunai/Kurnai)
CD (Camp Dog) 2015
plaster, wire, synthetic polymer paint
AH 04040



Greg Muir (Yorta Yorta)
Bunjil 2023
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
AH 04045

INTRODUCTION

Wominjeka (Welcome)

Koorie Heritage Trust is pleased to present *Spirit of the Animals*, an exhibition that draws on KHT's extensive collection of artworks and cultural belongings to highlight the significance of animals in the cultural life of Victorian First Peoples, and their close ties to nations and clans.

These relationships extend beyond the physical and environmental to encompass deep, holistic connections embedded in cultural identity, kinship systems, ceremony and spirituality.

Mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, vertebrates, invertebrates, insects, and more, are depicted in the exhibition through over 100 works;

Including painting, animation, drawing, sculpture, tools, cultural belongings, and adornment, a small selection is included here.

Animals are of great importance in establishing First Peoples' connection to place, linking culture to Country, and strengthening clan and cultural identity.

Spirit of the Animals is dedicated to the late Uncle Greg Muir, artist and long-term friend of KHT. The exhibition begins with Uncle Greg's painting of *Bunjil* the eagle, an important Creator being for many First Peoples in Victoria.

Ngoon Godjin (thank you)

ANIMALS IN CREATION STORIES...

Animals are an important part of Creation for First Peoples. Shared since time immemorial, Creation Stories told through spoken word, song, art and ceremony, help form an understanding of the world, ways of life, behaviour, and our place within a harmonious and meaningful spiritual structure. In *Kangaroo and Wimmera River Dreaming*, Stuart Harradine shares how powerful animal ancestors helped to form the landscape in Wotjobaluk Country to the west, while in *Boorun the Protector*, Alastair Thorpe (Snr), Lyn Thorpe and Alastair Thorpe (Jnr) share the story of Boorun the pelican, travelling through Gunaikurnai Country to the east, and meeting Tuk the musk duck, to become the Father and Mother Totem Ancestors of the Gunaikurnai Dreaming.

AND AS TOTEMS

Totem animals are considered very sacred to First Peoples within nations and clans, assigning different animals to individuals or community, for which they hold responsibilities. This ensures that each animal is cared for and treasured in the world, through embedding a relationship and responsibility to care for each creature.



left image:
Stuart Harradine (Wotjobaluk)
Kangaroo and Wimmera River Dreaming
date not recorded
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
AH 02471

right image:
Alastair Thorpe Snr (Gunaikurnai),
Lyn Thorpe (Yorta Yorta),
Alastair Thorpe Jnr (Gunaikurnai / Yorta Yorta /
Gunditjmara / Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung)
Boorun the Protector, date not recorded
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
AH 02952



ANIMALS IN OBJECT-MAKING

"I'd be watching my mum making these feather flowers. She never, ever taught me how to make them. It was just more or less watching her, and she did tell me that she watched her grandmother make feather flowers, and then she made them... So great nan modernized her feather craft and made feather flowers and beautiful bouquets, which she sold for a coin to help buy food along the way. So I'm sort of keeping the process going... it's like a living art."

– Glenda Nicholls, 2017



Included in the exhibition are feather flowers by Glenda Nicholls, continuing a practice started by women forced into living on missions and reserves – established by religious and colonial authorities; these flowers would be sold to passers-by and tourists, to generate a small amount of income to support their families.

Also included is an Awl by Len Tregonning, demonstrating how every part of an animal could be used.



"These are made of all natural materials and show how the old people used every part of the animal. These are recreations of a practice that was forbidden for Aboriginal people to do. In my case my family remembered what was passed on and were able to pass some of that on to me.

The awl is from the bottom of the kangaroo foot. It's a nice thin one and you actually splinter it. The sinew came from the leg of the same kangaroo [sic]. I wrapped it around the bone as an experiment to see how strong the binding was when it dries. I used this awl to puncture the holes in the kangaroo skin leather of Maree Clarke's kangaroo tooth necklace. It makes a lovely indent and then you just push it through the leather. It makes a very fine [sic] hole and it doesn't damage the skin.

These sort of things were part of a normal travelling kit. I come from a place where you weren't allowed to keep up traditions. I learnt to chew the sinew (to soften it) from [sic] my cousin Wally Cooper, who learnt it from his family."

– Len Tregonning, 2012

left image:
Glenda Nicholls (Wadi Wadi / Yorta Yorta / Ngarrindjeri)
Feather Flower, date not recorded
Feathers, wire, plastic tape, foil
AH 00925

right image:
Len Tregonning (Gunnai)
Awl date not recorded
bone, sinew (Kangaroo)
AH 03742



Spirit of Animals.

The story of Bunjil (Creation Spirit.) Coming down to the land from the skies and bringing life into the rocks and trees – the life of which is the emu, kangaroo and brolga...

*Australian! Australian! Australian! Australian!
Australian! Australian! Australian! HISTORY!*

*Everything was full of life and happiness ...
our Old People tell us many stories of the
Dreamtime ... respect our Elders ... respect
ourselves ... respect each OTHER!*

GIFT DANCE

*This dance tells the story of the many tribes
meeting up together at a special place and
exchanging gifts in the form of song and dance ...
this is a gift from us to YOU*

– Craig Charles, inscription on canvas

Craig Charles (Yorta Yorta)
Spirit of the Animals c.1995
synthetic polymer paint and mixed media on canvas
AH 02513



ANIMALS IN ADORNMENT, AND IN CEREMONY

Animals play a pivotal part in the utilisation of materials for adornment, particularly in ceremony for First Peoples. Several of the works displayed in the exhibition are worn by First Peoples dancers during ceremonies – such as Sue Charles’ Cultural adornment sets, including headband, armband and necklet pieces made with Eastern Rosella and Lorikeet feathers.

top image:
Sue Charles (Barapa Barapa / Wemba Wemba)
Eastern Rosella feather flower cultural adornment set (armbands) 2023
Eastern Rosella feathers, 2ply basket sedge twined string and cotton thread
AH 04043
and
Lorikeet feather flower cultural adornment set (armbands) 2023
Lorikeet feathers, 2ply basket sedge twined string and cotton thread
AH 04044

left image:
Coree Thorpe
(Gunai / Yorta Yorta / Gunditjmarra / Wurundjeri)
Kingfisher (detail) 2020
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
AH 04024



ANIMALS IN FOOD AND HUNTING

Animals are not only a significant food source for First Peoples, they also feature in cultural designs, figurative elements or illustrative scenes on the surface of tools and weapons, often depicting powerful tales of battles and stories of hunting episodes. While Tommy McRae's vibrant ink drawing provides an important record of hunting a possum over one hundred years ago.

below image:
Tommy McRae (Kwatkwat)
Hunting possum date not recorded
ink on paper
AH 02512

right image:
Peter Waples-Crowe (Ngarigo)
In My Tribe 2018
single channel animation (still)
AH 04003



ANIMALS AS A METAPHOR FOR FIRST PEOPLES' EXPERIENCES

Animals are an essential part of our highly sensitive ecosystem, whilst also playing a vital role in First Peoples' culture, especially in the context of personal and familial totems. Given this close relationship that First Peoples have with animals, it is unsurprising that they can also be closely aligned with cultural and personal connections and experiences. Animals can represent the strength of continuing culture, such as the late Vera Cooper stated of *Goanna* standing tall in the exhibition;

'In most of my work I try to express cultural significance and the strength of Aboriginal people and our Yorta Yorta heritage, like our goanna's ancient survival and its powerful stand on hind legs when fighting for place land and existence'. While Peter Waples-Crowe described of his animation work in the exhibition '...I see the dingo as self and it's spirit is always with me...I honour this outsider native and ask are you in my tribe?'

List of Artworks

Alphabetical by last name.

All artworks courtesy of the Collection of Koorie Heritage Trust (KHT), Narrm (Melbourne).

Brook ANDREW (Wiradjuri)
Calar midday date not recorded
cibachrome print
930 x 1539 x 45 mm
Donated, c. 2004. AH 03440

Lance ATKINSON (Kamilaiiroi)
Untitled (kangaroo) 1998
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
1143 x 887 x 60 mm
Purchased, c. 2005. AH 03469

Trevor BROWN (Latji Latji)
Marching Emus 2003
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
1208 x 1801 x 46 mm
Purchased, c. 2003. AH 02938

Craig CHARLES (Yorta Yorta)
Spirit of the Animals c. 1994
synthetic polymer paint and
mixed media on canvas
1620 x 1333 x 68 mm
Purchased, c. 1999. AH 02513

Sue CHARLES (Barapa Barapa /
Wemba Wemba)
*Eastern Rosella feather flower
cultural adornment set
(headband and armbands)*
2023

Eastern Rosella feathers, 2ply
basket sedge twined string and
cotton thread
display dimensions variable
Purchased, 2023. AH 04043

Sue CHARLES (Barapa Barapa /
Wemba Wemba)
*Lorikeet feather flower cultural
adornment set (headband,
necklet and armbands)* 2023
Lorikeet feathers, 2ply basket
sedge twined string and cotton
thread

display dimensions variable
Purchased, 2023. AH 04044

Vera COOPER (Yorta Yorta)
Goanna date not recorded
papier mache, synthetic
polymer paint, synthetic glue
1010 x 710 x 665 mm
Purchased, c. 2004. AH 03429

Brian FIREBRACE (Yorta Yorta)
Goon Dog date not recorded
watercolour on paper
724 x 1022 x 36 mm
Purchased, c. 2007. AH 03591

Les GRIGGS (Gunditjmarra)
Dreaming in the Wrong Place
date not recorded
paint on canvas
820 x 1156 x 51 mm
Purchased, 1987. AH 00159

Trehna HAMM (Yorta Yorta)
Turtle c. 2002
reeds, plant fibre
90 x 553 x 350 mm
Purchased, c. 2002. AH 02908

Stuart HARRADINE (Wotjobaluk)
*Kangaroo and Wimmera River
Dreaming* date not recorded
synthetic polymer paint, canvas
789 x 1078 x 32 mm
Purchased, 1999. AH 02471

Patricia HARRISON (Gunai)
Emu date not recorded
plant fibre, emu feathers, wire,
raffia
355 x 180 x 265 mm
Purchased, 2010. AH 03871

Daniel HILLS (Yorta Yorta)
The One That Didn't 2023
wicker cane and paracord
240 x 460 x 210 mm
Donated, 2024. AH 04042

Zac MCCARTHY (Wadawurrung)
Overseeing Bunjil 2020
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
500 x 630 mm
Purchased, c. 2022. AH 04026

Tommy MCRAE (Kwatkwat)
Untitled (spearing fish)
date not recorded
ink on paper
430 x 489 x 17 mm
Purchased, c. 1993. AH 00735

Tommy MCRAE (Kwatkwat)
Hunting possum
date not recorded
ink on paper
430 x 489 x 17 mm
Purchased, c. 1999. AH 02512

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monero)
Shield date not recorded
wood with pyrography
70 x 668 x 195 mm
Purchased, c. 1987. AH 00083

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monero)
Platypus (Shield)
date not recorded
ironbark with pokerwork
75 x 722 x 178 mm
Purchased, c. 1987. AH 00084

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monero)
Shield date not recorded
wood with pokerwork
56 x 623 x 102 mm
Purchased, c. 1987. AH 00086

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monero)
Club date not recorded
wood with pokerwork
54 x 510 x 69 mm
Purchased, c. 1987. AH 00092

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monero)
Boomerang date not recorded
wood with pokerwork
16 x 287 x 956 mm
Purchased, c. 1987. AH 00095

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monero)
Boomerang c. 1987
wood with pokerwork
17 x 290 x 517 mm
Purchased, 2007. AH 03659

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monero)
Boomerang date not recorded
wood with pyrography
14 x 185 x 875 mm
Purchased, 2007. AH 03660

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monaro)
Shield (broad) 2009
blackwood with pokerwork
68 x 684 x 160 mm
Purchased, 2009. AH 03755

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monaro)
Boomerang 2009
blackwood with pokerwork
17 x 370 x 745 mm
Purchased, 2009. AH 03757

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monaro)
Boomerang 2009
stringybark with pokerwork
15 x 285 x 600 mm
Purchased, 2009. AH 03759

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monaro)
Club 2009
ironbark with pokerwork
20 x 804 x 230 mm
Purchased, 2009. AH 03761

Peter & Alex MONGTA (Monaro)
Digging Stick 2009
mahogany with pokerwork
29 x 845 x 39 mm
Purchased, 2009. AH 03762

MONGTA Family (Monero)
Boomerang date not recorded
wood with pokerwork
17 x 193 x 761 mm
Purchased, c. 1989. AH 00312

Greg MUIR (Yorta Yorta)
Bunjil 2023
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
510 x 1525 x 400 mm
Donated, 2024. AH 04045

Albert MULLETT (Gunai)
Richard MULLETT (Gunai &
Monero Ngarigo)
Shield date not recorded
wood with synthetic polymer
paint and pokerwork
80 x 733 x 154 mm
Purchased, c. 1992. AH 00661

Albert MULLETT (Gunai)
Richard MULLETT (Gunai &
Monero Ngarigo)
Club date not recorded
wood, synthetic polymer paint
and pyrography
17 x 642 x 158 mm
Purchased, c. 1992. AH 00669

Albert MULLETT (Gunai)
Richard MULLETT (Gunai &
Monero Ngarigo)
Shield 2009
black wattle, synthetic polymer
paint and pyrography
45 x 641 x 175 mm
Purchased, c. 1992. AH 00670

Albert MULLETT (Gunai)
Richard MULLETT (Gunai &
Monero Ngarigo)
Shield date not recorded
black wattle, synthetic polymer
paint and pokerwork
45 x 665 x 162 mm
Purchased, c. 1992. AH 00671

Collon MULLETT
Shield date not recorded
wood with pokerwork
72 x 645 x 115 mm
Purchased, c. 1989. AH 00317

Rachel MULLETT (Monero)
Babogong Moths
date not recorded
ink on paper
637 x 461 x 22 mm
Purchased, c. 2002. AH 02774

Richard MULLETT (Gunnai)
Tarragut the porcupine
date not recorded
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
413 x 487 x 32 mm
Purchased, c. 2001. AH 02682

Glenda NICHOLLS (Wadi Wadi /
Yorta Yorta / Ngarrindjeri)
Feather Flower various dates
feathers, wire, tape (51)
35 x 45 x 332 mm (approximate)
Purchased, various dates.

Lin ONUS (Yorta Yorta)
Bunyips strolling by Barmah 1986
triptych painting on canvas
637 x 1916 x 34 mm (overall)
Purchased, c. 1987
AH 00148a-c

Ray THOMAS (Gunnai)
Bataluks (lizards) and orbs
c. 2002
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
794 x 542 x 39 mm
Purchased, c. 2002. AH 03385

Djetcha (Aunty) Zeta THOMSON
(Yorta Yorta / Wurundjeri)
Yarooma date not recorded
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas board
377 x 477 x 22 mm
Purchased, c. 1989. AH 00479

Alastair THORPE Snr (Gunnai),
Lyn THORPE (Yorta Yorta),
Alastair THORPE Jnr (Gunnai /
Yorta Yorta / Gunditjmara /
Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung)
Boorun the Protector
date not recorded
synthetic polymer paint, ochre,
and synthetic glue on canvas
1730 x 2254 x 32 mm
Purchased, c. 2003. AH 02952

Coree THORPE (Gunnai /
Yorta Yorta / Gunditjmara /
Wurundjeri)
Kingfisher 2020
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
1500 x 1000 x 300 mm
Purchased, c. 2002. AH 04024

Len TREGONNING (Gunnai)
Awl date not recorded
bone, sinew (Kangaroo)
10 x 18 x 150 mm
Donated, c. 2009. AH 03742

Len TREGONNING
(Gunnai/Kurnai)
CD (Camp Dog) 2015
plaster, wire, synthetic polymer
paint
600 x 800 x 410 mm
Donated, 2024. AH 04040

Peter WAPLES-CROWE
(Ngarigo)
In My Tribe 2018
single channel animation
1:04 minutes
Purchased, 2019. AH 04003

Peter WAPLES-CROWE
(Ngarigo)
Dingo Spirit, Black and Gold
2016
stoneware: slipcast, slip and
gold
160 x 200 x 105 mm
Purchased, 2024. AH 04041

Kevin WILLIAMS (Wiradjuri)
Galang (wombat)
date not recorded
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
654 x 744 x 32 mm
Purchased, c. 1999. AH 02297

Kevin WILLIAMS (Wiradjuri)
Ninggi Pondi (Looking for Pondi)
date not recorded
synthetic polymer paint on
canvas
698 x 876 x 29 mm
Purchased, date not recorded.
AH 02981

Trina WILMOT
Snake date not recorded
carved wood with pyrography
(2)
60 x 1093 x 115 mm and
98 x 1180 x 120 mm
Purchased, c. 1998
AH 02122 & AH 02123

Maker once known
Club date not recorded
carved wood, paint
35 x 80 x 740 mm
Purchased, c. 1986. AH 00065

Maker once known
Spearthrower date not recorded
wood with pokerwork
28 x 832 x 65 mm
Purchased, c. 2003. AH 03171

Sue Charles
(Barapa Barapa / Wemba Wemba)
*Eastern Rosella feather flower cultural
adornment set (headband)* 2023
Eastern Rosella feathers, 2ply basket sedge
twined string and cotton thread
AH 04043
and
*Lorikeet feather flower cultural adornment
set (headband and necklet)* 2023
Lorikeet feathers, 2ply basket sedge
twined string and cotton thread
AH 04044



Spirit of the Animals

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