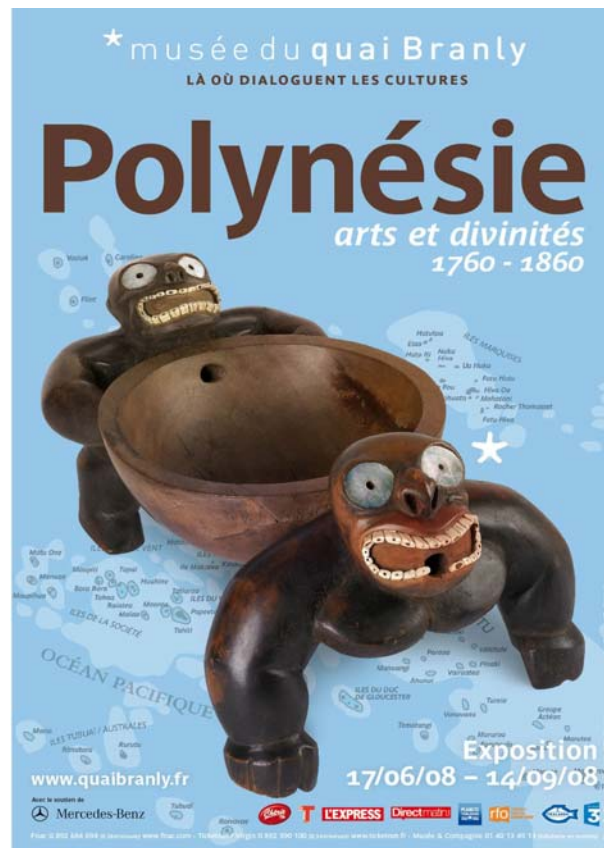




* musée du quai Branly
LÀ OÙ DIALOGUENT LES CULTURES

Art and Divinity in Polynesia, 1760-1860

17th June – 14th September 2008



Dossier Exhibition
East Suspended Gallery

Exhibition curator: Steven Hooper
Co-curator: Karen Jacobs

* CONTENTS

* INTRODUCTION by Steven Hooper and Karen Jacobs

* FOREWORD by Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, Roko Tui Bau

* EXPLORING POLYNESIA

* THE STAGES OF THE EXHIBITION

Preamble

The Sea

The Land

Marae / Temple

Collecting Polynesian Artefacts

Making divine

* COLLECTING ARTEFACTS

* ART AND AUTHENTICITY

* BRINGING THE PAST BACK TO LIFE

* STEVEN HOOPER AND KAREN JACOBS, CURATORS

* EXHIBITION CATALOGUE AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

* EXHIBITION EVENTS

* PRACTICAL INFORMATION

* AVAILABLE VISUALS

* INTRODUCTION

Polynesia, art and divinity 1760-1860, at the *musée du quai Branly*, Paris, is the most comprehensive exhibition of Polynesian art to date. This exceptional exhibition gathers together for the first time more than 250 rare works of Polynesian art from the 18th and 19th centuries, held in the collections of major British and French museums: astonishing divine images, imposing wood and stone sculptures, ivory ornaments, headdresses, decorated textiles. The exhibition invites the visitor to explore the Pacific Islands, and particularly focuses on the crucial period between 1760 and 1860, when the islands had their first contact with European travellers: explorers, missionaries, settlers and traders.

Before coming to the *musée du quai Branly*, the exhibition was shown at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, England, in 2006, under the name "*Pacific Encounters: art and divinity in Polynesia 1760-1860*". Part of the exhibition (only 80 objects) were shown in 2006/2007 at the British Museum, London, the principal lender to this exhibition, under the name "*Power and Taboo: sacred objects from the Pacific.*"



This Kava bowl, supported by two grimacing figures, was presented to Captain Charles Clerke by a chief of Kaua'i (Hawaii) on 23rd January 1778, during Cook's final voyage and the first visit by Europeans to Hawaii. It has been held in the collections of the British Museum since 1780.

UNIQUE OBJECTS EXHIBITED IN FRANCE FOR THE FIRST TIME

These rarely exhibited divine images, ivory ornaments, headdresses and decorated textiles illustrate the wealth and diversity of Polynesian art between 1760 and 1860, a period during which these objects played important roles in the cultural and religious life of the Polynesian people. The exhibition reveals the history of the collections shown, explains the role of these objects in their original context and pays homage to the skill and creativity of the people who made them.

Through these remarkable objects a variety of encounters are examined: among Polynesians themselves, between Polynesians and their gods, and between Polynesians and Europeans and their gods, chiefs and priests. The story of the collectors is also told. Who were they, and what motivated their collecting?

Many artefacts are included from all three voyages of Captain Cook (1768-1780), as well as objects collected on the voyages of Vancouver, Bligh, Dumont d'Urville and many others. The exceptional collections of the London Missionary Society, held in the British Museum, are also well represented.

This exhibition is possible because of the remarkable legacy of Polynesian objects which have survived in museums and collections all over the world. If this exhibition and these objects succeed in evoking awe, wonder and above all respect, then an important task will have been accomplished. Polynesians continue today to have a vibrant living culture and this exhibition explores an important part of their history while extending appreciation of one of the world's great but little-known art traditions.

The exhibition is curated by Dr Steven Hooper, director, and Dr Karen Jacobs, researcher, of the Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, England.



Lintel, New-Zealand / Aetearoa
© British Museum, London

EXHIBITION EVENTS

Polynesian museum curators and scholars will participate in appropriate ritual procedures that will take place at the opening and closing of the exhibition, and also in a 2-day conference at the musée du quai Branly (17-18 June 2008).

Two visiting artists, Rosanna Raymond, a Samoan born in New Zealand, and George Nuku, a New Zealand Maori, will work within the context of the exhibition.

* FOREWORD

By Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, Roko Tui Bau, Fiji

(Extract from catalogue)

When contemplating these impressive things from the past, one's imagination calls to mind the seafarers and artisans, the elaborate social hierarchies and cultural diversity which are our Polynesian heritage. This book and the exhibition it accompanies capture the essence of that wonderful legacy. It is, foremost, a tale of engagement – how these peoples in a hitherto remote corner of the globe came to terms with their environment and with the European overtures which followed.

It was to be a fruitful if sometimes painful encounter on both scores. Beginning in the age of enlightenment and concluding in the era of missionaries and colonizers, the perspectives of Polynesians and Europeans revealed in this volume speak to the verities of human nature. Wariness, distrust, misunderstanding, conflict, appeasement, accommodation, acceptance and trust occurred in varying degrees. The Polynesians' view of this process would probably have broadly echoed Talleyrand's 'J'ai vécu', when asked about his reaction to the upheavals of the French Revolution. Throughout this period, the pictorial feast now paraded before us was being amassed, recorded and documented for posterity. For that, a debt of gratitude is owed those early collectors.



Breastplate, Fiji
© CUMAA, Cambridge

Although the cultural milieus of Polynesia have been transformed, sometimes beyond recognition, the strength, pride and spirit of our Polynesian forebears are qualities which we need to rediscover. These island societies amounted to far more than the sandy beaches and palm fronds so beloved of Western perceptions. On their own terms, Polynesians were sophisticated and talented peoples – their capacity for intrigue and statecraft was no less subtle or ingenious for its tropical setting. There is no doubt that reflecting on our past can provide useful lessons for contemporary Pacific society. True, the world has changed. However, the way in which these Polynesians harnessed and husbanded their island resources, as well as cooperated with each other and with outsiders, resonates down the ages to the present.

It has been an insightful revelation to see these Polynesians through the implements and the crafts with which they shaped their surroundings. They quite simply mastered them through a combination of determination, strength, acuity and wisdom. To be able to make some connection with our ancestors through these objects is, for the writer, both a profound and humbling experience.

* ENCOUNTERING POLYNESIA

‘How can we make any progress in the understanding of cultures, ancient or modern, if we persist in dividing what the people join and in joining what they keep apart?’

Arthur Maurice Hocart, *The Life-giving Myth* (1952: 23)

The Polynesian Islands (from the Greek *poly* and *nesos*: “many islands”) were first explored 3000 years ago, by the first travellers to venture east from the Western Pacific.

Central Pacific was the last habitable region on Earth to be explored and inhabited by humans. From an archaeological point of view, the Pacific has been divided into two zones by Roger Green (1991): Near Oceania (Solomon Islands and islands to the west) and Remote Oceania (Vanuatu and islands to the east and south). The islands, which constitute what we today call Polynesia, were places which fed the imaginations of travellers of all kinds: the “Lapita* people” who moved towards the east and its unknown horizons, a thousand years before our era; their Polynesian descendants who ventured further east, north and south; and finally, later travellers, missionaries, settlers, researchers and European tourists.

People who originally came from South East Asia arrived in Vanuatu in approximately 1000 B.C., and almost immediately continued on a long journey of 1000km, against strong winds, to the islands that we today call Fiji. These people were outstanding navigators and, in all likelihood, their return visits were colonisation expeditions to occupy new fertile lands with abundant land and sea resources.

It was only in the 16th century that European travellers (Dutch, Spanish and British) began to explore the outer edges of the Pacific. The Manila galleons of the Spanish, who exchanged gold and silver for exotic Chinese products, even began to regularly cross the Pacific following an east-west route which linked the American coasts, the Mariana Islands, the Philippines and Canton. For centuries they did not encounter Polynesian islands situated to the south of the equator, nor Hawaii, situated to the north.

** these Polynesian ancestors were given this name after the Lapita site in New Caledonia where archeologists have discovered remains of dentate-stamped pottery permitting their identification.*

Feathered head/god image, Hawaiian Islands © British Museum, London



This method of exploration and crossings continued until the 1760s, when an unprecedented era of European travel began. These travellers – explorers, scientists, artists, traders, whalers, evangelists, planters and settlers of all sorts and of all origins – brought with them their own ideas about the islands they would discover.

These islands have stimulated the imagination of generations of Europeans ever since. Paradise and palm trees, people in a state of nature or pagan barbarism, free love and cheap land – the dreams and delusions of European imaginations have often proved a bitter experience both for them and for the islanders. The realities of famine and hurricane, disease and demographic collapse, murder and land appropriation – by fair means or foul – characterize the period under review. Of course, none of these was new to the region, but the encounters and collisions between islanders and outsiders during this period led to transformations of an accelerated kind which have marked the region profoundly.

In the 18th century, the entire region of the “Polynesian Triangle”, composed of Hawaii, Easter Island (Rapa Nui) and New Zealand (Aotearoa), had long been inhabited by these “Polynesians” who shared a common ancestry.

For Polynesians the islands are home, land, *fenua*, the place of ancestors, the place for descendants, the place with which one is intimately connected as part of one’s being, the place one has named, claimed and fought for.

Three thousand years of exploration and occupation have kindled within these people an identity which is intrinsically linked to the land, forests, lagoons and the open sea; all the natural elements which together form “Oceania” as evoked by the Tongan writer and researcher, Epeli Hau’ofa.

This profound link has materialised in objects, stories, oral traditions, chants, dance, monuments, constructions and other various cultural practices. *Art and Divinity in Polynesia, 1760-1860* focuses above all on objects taken in their widest context. However, these artefacts – whether figures or fish-hooks, fans or weapons – did not simply appear; they were made by individuals or groups with meticulous care and were designed with particular purposes in mind.

1760-1860, A CENTURY OF ESSENTIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Between 1760 and 1860 the cultural landscape of Polynesia changed in fundamental ways. At the beginning of this period Polynesian relationships were primarily with each other, as the powers of chiefdoms waxed and waned in different parts of the region. Christianity was virtually unknown. Europeans had been encountered briefly in several places but remained largely mysterious. By 1860 every part of Polynesia was locked into relationships of a colonial or pre-colonial kind with European powers, and most Polynesians had been, nominally at least, converted to one of various competing forms of Christianity. There are many different Polynesian views on this situation and its enduring legacy – joy that Christianity and its ‘light’ was brought to drive out darkness, pleasure in European-derived technologies, despair at disease, death and alienation, and anger at the powerlessness of those dispossessed in their own lands. Polynesia was indeed a very different place yet, paradoxically, a vigorous Polynesian identity survived, and still survives.

Art and Divinity in Polynesia, 1760-1860 concentrates on the dynamics of this century: a period of contact with European navy officers, crew members, traders, whalers, missionaries, travellers, settlers, administrators and artists, Europeans from all walks of life whose fate had brought them to Polynesia.

Relations with these visitors were, for the most part, conducted via the intermediary of objects and materials which travelled in both directions. Many of the objects collected by or presented to the Europeans were taken back to Europe and North America.



Gorget, Esatern Island/ Rapa Nui © CUMAA Cambridge

* STAGES OF THE EXHIBITION

Large standing male figure, Hawaiian Islands
© British Museum, London



The colossal Hawaiian figure, Ku, displayed in the permanent collection area, welcomes you to the exhibition. This image from Hawaii is from the British Museum and is one of only three that survive of this type. The other two are in the Bishop Museum in Honolulu and the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts.

The greetings in Polynesian languages on the stairs leading to the exhibition serve to call out a welcome to visitors to enter respectfully the exhibition space, which contains things of great historical and religious importance for Polynesians today.

The originality of this exhibition lies in its six themed stages – Introduction, The Sea, The Land, Marae/Temple, Collecting Polynesian Artefacts and Making divine – which highlight the connections and relations between the different Polynesian people originating from different parts of the Pacific.

PREAMBLE

Polynesian societies of the eighteenth century were not fixed or static. They had been changing for millennia and they continued to adapt and incorporate new ideas and techniques when Europeans arrived. This adaptability is shown here in such objects as the Fijian club with designs applied by a New Zealand Maori, and an American musket inlaid with whale ivory.



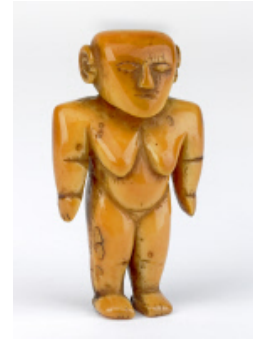
Musket, USA / Fiji © University of Aberdeen

Objects are shown from nine Polynesian regions: the Hawaiian Islands, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Rapa Nui/Easter Island, the Marquesas Islands, Mangareva and the Tuamotu Islands, the Society Islands, the Austral Islands, the Cook Islands and Western Polynesia (comprising Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and neighbouring islands).

THE SEA

The sea played a crucial role in the lives of most Polynesians. It supplied food and raw materials, and was a 'road' for travel. It was also a cosmological domain, associated with chiefs, gods and divine powers. Chiefs and gods were often symbolised by 'sea' materials such as shells, sperm whale ivory, shark teeth and turtle shell.

Polynesians were arguably the greatest navigators in human history, developing large double-hulled sailing canoes which they embellished with carvings. A thousand years ago Polynesian voyagers almost certainly reached South America, bringing back with them the sweet potato. A variety of fish were caught with nets, hooks and spears. Fish hooks were also valuable exchange items; pearl shell was highly valued and exchanged over long distances.



Female figure pendant, whale ivory
Tonga © British Museum, London

THE LAND



Fan, Marquesas Islands © British museum, London

Both land and sea as complementary zones were attributed with divine associations, often explicitly in the form of gods – for example Tangaroa was associated with the sea and Tane with the forest. These two domains, and the birds which inhabited them, provided valuable materials which were used to make cultural objects. Wood, stone and plant fibres were the most notable 'land' materials.

Great forest trees were felled after suitable offerings were made to the gods of the forest, and, until the arrival of European metal, stone adzes were used to dress timber. Finer tools of shell, bone or shark's tooth were used to bore holes and for detailed carving. Weapons – for display, attack or defence – were made mainly from wood, occasionally from stone.

MARAE / THE TEMPLE

The relationship between humans and gods – religious encounters – were extremely important. Human action alone could not guarantee success in any endeavour; divine favour was also necessary. As in most religions, this could be obtained by creating formal exchange relationships with divine powers. At the heart of this relationship were reciprocal offerings and blessings. Offerings could be made at domestic shrines or at sacred religious precincts or temples, called *marae* in many parts of Polynesia. Items offered were foods, manufactured objects, prayers, songs, dances and music. During religious rituals the abstract notion of divinity was materialised or embodied in particular objects – images, drums, stones and relics – or in special people such as priests and chiefs, who became the focus of veneration. This enclosed space in the exhibition is a respectful attempt to evoke a *marae* where important objects can be contemplated.



Figure, Mangareva © British museum, London

** The terms marae, malae or me'ae in Polynesia refer to spaces reserved for social hierarchy events: meetings, enthronement of chiefs, ceremonial meals, etc. On some islands, this was also the chief's home; elsewhere, they were the homes of ancestors or the gods. This carefully maintained space was usually kept separate from the space where the dancing took place and was more or less taboo. Stones dedicated to the ancestors were sometimes set there.*

COLLECTING POLYNESIAN ARTEFACTS



Drum, Hawaiian Islands
© British museum, London

Polynesia entered collections in Europe, notably Britain, and were subsequently donated, sold and exchanged until they found their current homes. Europeans acquired objects for scientific reasons or as mementos of travels, friendships and encounters in the South Seas. Passed down in families, many were eventually presented to museums or sold as curios.

Missionaries collected 'idols' as evidence of evangelical success. These were displayed in missionary museums where they acted as vehicles for fundraising campaigns in which the public were presented with 'idolatry' and encouraged to support mission work.

It was not only Europeans who were interested in exotic objects. Polynesians were interested in what Europeans had to offer – metal, cloth and firearms – and also in items from elsewhere in Polynesia, for example red feathers brought by Cook's vessels to Tahiti from Tonga.



Feathered cloak, Hawaiian Islands
© Hastings Museum

"MAKING DIVINE"

Wrapping, binding, containing, separating and elevating were important ways in which Polynesians sought to manage divine powers. For humans to establish productive relationships with gods, abstract notions of divinity were manifested physically in objects assembled from raw materials with particular symbolic associations, and often in human form. One such constructed artefact was the chief. At consecration the body of the chiefly candidate, probably already marked with tattoos, was transformed by being wrapped and bound. Materials used for this were barkcloth, mats and cloaks, including the magnificent feathered cloaks of Hawaii.

The body of the chief was separated from the mundane earth by textiles and special eats, and it was adorned with breastplates and other ornaments of shell or whale ivory – exotic items from the sea which gave off light and vitality.



Stool, Society Islands
© British museum, London

* COLLECTING ARTEFACTS

The exhibition also focuses on the conditions of acquisition of these Polynesian works of art.

The great majority appear to have been acquired in circumstances agreeable to both parties, and at exchange rates, in terms of European and indigenous systems of value, which were satisfactory at the time. There was tremendous mutual interest in the artefacts and materials of the other. The main concern of visiting ships was for water and food supplies, but once these needs had been satisfied, then 'natural' and 'artificial' curiosities (manufactured objects) were in demand.



Gorget, Society Islands
© British Museum, London

On Cook's voyages, scientifically minded men such as Joseph Banks, Daniel Solander, and Johann and George Forster were avid traders at every opportunity. Shells, fish, botanical specimens and local artefacts were acquired in exchange for nails, cloth, buttons, mirrors and almost any other thing available on board ship.

Cook had to give his famous 'No sort of iron' instructions to his crew at Tahiti, to prevent them from drawing nails from the ship's timbers for use in trade, not least to purchase the favours of local women.

The men of science on all three of Cook's voyages were interested in assembling collections for classification purposes. They were influenced by Enlightenment philosophies and methods of the period, when documentation of the natural world and its inhabitants was expected of those provided with an opportunity to do so. Banks, for example, seized his chance and built an eminent reputation on his scientific and other adventures as a young man in his twenties in the South Seas.²¹ Objects connected to Banks are featured in this book, and as far as we can know they were acquired on terms regarded as fair at the time. The Ra'iatean navigator Tupaia, whom Banks invited in 1769 to join his retinue, even drew him in the act of exchanging a handkerchief or sheet of barkcloth for a lobster with a man in New Zealand.

With respect of voyaging in the late eighteenth century, Britain was not the only European power mounting expeditions to the Pacific, although the British were by far the most active collectors. French expeditions under Bougainville (1766-1769), De Surville (1769-1770) and Du Fresne (1771-1773) visited various parts of Polynesia, but few if any objects are known to have survived from those voyages.

Later expeditions under La Pérouse (1785-1788) and D'Entrecasteaux (1791-1793) left significant records, but again few objects survive. The Spaniards made three expeditions to Tahiti from Peru in 1772-1776.

In terms of collecting, the British expedition under George Vancouver (1791-1795) followed a similar pattern to those of Cook. The Napoleonic Wars caused a lull in European naval expeditions during the first two decades of the 19th century, with the exceptions of the Russians, who were interested in annexing Hawaii and who mounted several expeditions which called there and at other places in Polynesia.

In terms of State-sponsored voyaging, the French and British navies were most active in the first half of the 19th century as early colonial ambitions and rivalries began to develop. French expeditions under Freycinet (1817-1820), Duperrey (1822-1825), Dumont d'Urville (1826-1829, 1837-1840) and du Petit-Thouars (1836-1839) produced illustrated published accounts and some documented collections.

The Maori cape presented to the *musée du quai Branly* was collected during Dumont D'Urville's expedition.



Bucket with lid, Tonga, Tongatapu
© British Museum, London

The **artificial curiosities (objects made by man)** aquired in the 18th century began to enter European collections, particularly in Great Britain, before being given as gifts, sold or exchanged and arriving in their current locations in museums. They became symbols of social prestige, as they had been in Polynesia, before being neglected. A large number of these artefacts have not been conserved; many others have, but they have been separated from all documentation.

The Europeans were clearly not the only exotic object enthusiasts. The Polynesians made a careful choice from amongst the objects they had to offer them. They notably appreciated exotic articles made from metal, fabric and all objects that they could incorporate into their own value systems.

The published reports of missionaries tell, often in a triumphant tone, of their victories against idol worship. The evangelist John Williams, of the London Missionary Society (LMS), on his return to Ra'iatea after having stayed in Aitutaki in 1823, wrote: "*as other warriors feel a pride in displaying trophies of the victories they win, we hung the rejected idols of Aitutaki to the yard-arms and other parts of the vessel, entered the harbour in triumph, sailed down to the settlement, and dropped anchor, amidst the shouts and congratulations of our people*".

The pious vehemence of LMS opposition to idolatry is striking, if not unexpected, and the same applied in the case of the Methodists in Western Polynesia. Those religious objects which were not destroyed by zealous converts under the direction of the missionaries were collected as trophies for despatch to missionary museums in Europe.

Here they functioned as performance indicators, to use the modern idiom, and as vehicles for fundraising campaigns in which the public was presented with the grotesque horrors of idolatry and encouraged to support continuing mission work. Everyday items, deemed not explicitly religious, were also collected to show the capacity of Polynesians for useful arts, and therefore their ability to achieve salvation. It was important for missionaries to stress that idolaters were not beyond redemption, and therefore worthy of expenditure of energy and funds.

A third category of item is that collected as a souvenir – neither for its scientific value nor as a trophy. Early voyagers and later travellers, traders, whalers, military men and administrators acquired local products as tangible mementos of travels and adventures, of friendships and encounters in the South Seas. Passed down in families, they eventually were presented to local museums or sold as curios in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Comparatively large quantities of this material were in circulation, entering private collections, being auctioned, swapped or sold on, and eventually changing identity from memento to curio to work of art.



Neck Pendant , New Zealand / Aotearoa
© British Museum, London

* ART AND AUTHENTICITY

The word “art” which appears in the title of the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue is not used lightly. The term ‘art’, used in the subtitle of this book, is not used lightly. It is one of the clichés of anthropology that many cultures do not have a word in their languages which corresponds to art, and therefore the use of the term is suspect.

There is also the ironic fact that in those European languages which have the term there is no agreement as to an appropriate definition, and such definitions as exist are regularly reassessed. ‘Art’ was not used widely for the kinds of object illustrated in this book until the twentieth century, when the scope of art shifted under the impact of Modernism. Amongst the avant-garde in European countries, art primitif was admitted into the canon of art on account of its form, and by extension as a mark of respect for those who made it. Artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henry Moore, and commentators such as Roland Penrose and Roger Fry were inspired by or celebrated primitive art in their own work. They carried naïve assumptions about the ‘artists’ and societies which produced it, but they elevated it in a way which increasingly forced people to take it seriously. It is not surprising that Picasso, Moore and Penrose all owned casts of the Rurutu casket figure in the British Museum.

Moore himself spent many hours in the 1920s in the British Museum sketching Polynesian and other sculptures.²⁷ Nowadays the demeaning ‘primitive’ art has largely been dropped and such epithets as ‘tribal’ and ‘ethnic’ are applied to works of this kind. Irrespective of the epithet, the word art is now firmly established, intended not so much to appropriate objects into European systems of classification, but to honour Polynesian skill and creativity in the same way that ‘art traditions’ from all over the world are now honoured and valued.

Most definitions of art link it to aesthetics, to assessments of beauty, taste, form and skill in manufacture.²⁸ Anyone viewing objects in this book will notice the enormous care and refinement with which they were made. These qualities were pleasing to the makers and users, and also effective, for such care was intended to please the gods as a form of sacrifice designed to bring about beneficial effects. A kind of aesthetics of divinity was in play here. Whether an object is deemed grotesque or beautiful to the Western eye is beside the point. These things were made to do a job, to have effects in the world – and they still do.

For Alfred Gell (1998) art, in its widest cross-cultural sense, was not about aesthetics or meaning, but about producing effects in the social milieu – about agency. He saw art as a system of action intended to change the world, rather than encode symbolic propositions about it. In his view an art object is something which is equivalent to a person (or a god). It need not be ‘beautiful’, nor does it need to ‘symbolize’ or ‘represent’. Rather, it is: it embodies or instantiates that to which it relates as an index. With respect to images or ‘idols’, he rejects the timid notion that they merely ‘represent’ a god, as aids to piety, but argues that they are the god – a physical instantiation of divinity. Gell’s work has profound implications for understanding Polynesian objects, chiefship and religion, and in his terms the objects shown here can be called art. The idea that gods, persons, or social agents can be substituted by objects is one which helps us comprehend the power and value which is often attributed to objects – in the case of religious relics, for example, or objects associated with famous people, such as Captain Cook



Casket figure, Austral Islands, Rurutu
© British Museum, London

Wherever art is present, ideas and anxieties about authenticity are not far behind. For a long time there was a misguided notion separating authentic and inauthentic Polynesian works of art, usually couched in terms of whether something was 'pre-contact' and made with stone tools (authentic), or made for 'sale' and not for indigenous ritual purposes (inauthentic). The fact is that the vast majority of items illustrated here, including many of the 'great' sculptures, were made with metal tools supplied by Europeans. Whether the tool used was made of stone, shell, shark tooth, shark skin, iron or steel has little to do with authenticity, but with speed of manufacture.

In addition, the great majority of things here were made for 'sale', or the local equivalent – exchange. They were commissioned, offered and presented before being used for other purposes. Objects such as Austral Islands' drums or Fiji/Tonga breastplates were in many cases made for export, because their value and effectiveness was intimately connected to their transactability. Even the elaborately carved Ra'ivavae paddles, a development of around 1820 and somewhat scorned by connoisseurs, were made not only for trade to Europeans but also for local exchanges. LMS representatives recorded several being presented with formal speeches to a chief on Ra'ivavae in 1824.³⁰ None of the things here belonged to some 'pristine/pre-contact/authentic' Polynesia, for such a construct exists only in a European imagination. Rather, these objects are the products of dynamic indigenous situations which may or may not have involved Europeans. They demonstrate initiative with new tools, ideas and materials, and they are made with greater or lesser amounts of skill.



Paddle, Austral Islands
© Exeter, RAMM

* BRINGING THE PAST BACK TO LIFE

The Polynesian people are taking back their history and are once again taking an interest in it, notably thanks to the objects which celebrate the feats and exploits of their ancestors. This is one of the reasons why the preservation of ancient artefacts is so important, because they are reassessed in the modern context as constituting our heritage. Objects now find themselves the focus of ethical and political debates about what they were in the past, about what happened to them, about what is happening to them now, and about who has rights in relation to them. This situation has also stimulated discussion about the intrinsic properties of objects, about the extent to which they embody or enshrine ancestors or ancestral powers.

Indigenous concepts, such as *taonga* (treasures, valuables) in New Zealand, are being examined and assessed in an unprecedented way as objects move to the forefront of cultural debates. In some ways it was ever thus, for objects were always important, but in different ways. In the past they were important as strategic gifts, in the present they are also important as strategic possessions. Perhaps, above all this, is their importance as inspired and remarkable creations which have the power to be inspirational still.

The last word will be left to Epeli Hau'ofa, a Tongan with a strong vision for Polynesians and their continuing artistic vigour. 'The arts of our ancestors grace the great museums of the world. We have not yet matched our ancestors, but pay tribute to them for the inspiration they give us.'

TWO CONTEMPORARY POLYNESIAN ARTISTS WHO ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE EXHIBITION

Rosanna Raymond



© Kerry Brown

Rosanna Raymond is a New Zealand born Pacific Islander of Samoan descent. She is a performance, body adornment and installation artist and poet. She was at the forefront of using art to promote a multicultural Aotearoa New Zealand. She co-curated the *Pasifika Styles* exhibition at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (2006-2008). In Aotearoa New Zealand Rosanna initiated the annual artistic fashion spectacle 'Pasifika – The Fashion Show'. As a co-founder of the 'Pacific Sisters' performance art collective, she helped in translating and performing old legends into the urban setting. When she moved to London with her family, she looked for her ancestors in museum collections. The *taonga* (treasures) in museums enabled her to re-connect with elements from her past. This entanglement with the *taonga* resulted in various poems, performances and art works.

"I think the role of the artists working alongside the taonga has been really undervalued for a long time and I know it is new territory for a lot of museums and spaces. But every time we've done one the response has been overwhelmingly positive from both public and the people that you work with, like the scholars right down to the cleaning staff and the people who turn the lights off at night. Everybody gets a really different way of interacting with us. I find that really important because the conversations range from 'Oh, that's interesting' into a deeper understanding about the way we have been represented and the housing of taonga over the last century or so."

Rosanna Raymond (interview 25 October 2007)

George Tamihana Nuku

George Tamihana Nuku was born in Aotearoa New Zealand and is of Maori (Ngati Kahungunu/Ngati Tu whare toa) and German/Scottish descent. His work ranges from pearl shell and nephrite jewellery to large sculptures in various materials. In his work he adapts the art forms his ancestors had been making for centuries and brings them to the present day by using modern materials. He has exhibited his work in various places in Aotearoa New Zealand and the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Tahiti and the United States. He has also been involved in several films, particularly the short film 'Moko – art of Nature' which shows him receiving his own facial tattoo (*moko*).

George Nuku © SCVA, University of East Anglia



"My role as a tohunga [specialist] is to make those statues walk. I have to make them walk, talk, sing, dance, breath, kill, love, everything, give birth. That is the role I must play. To make these objects – as you call them – to make them subjects. And I can only do that by taking the audience and placing them in the world that they come from, and then the audience is able to come to their own conclusions that these objects are archetypes of our own human psyche."

George Nuku (interview 13 June 2006)

* STEVEN HOOPER AND KAREN JACOBS, CURATORS



Karen Jacobs and Steven Hooper
© SCVA, University of East Anglia

STEVEN HOOPER

The Curator is Dr Steven Hooper, who was inspired as a boy by his grandfather, James Hooper (1897–1971), who amassed an extensive collection of Pacific artefacts from antique shops, auctions, local museums and other sources in Britain. James Hooper opened his collection to the public as The Totems Museum in Arundel, Sussex, between 1957 and 1963, where Steven lived with him over the ‘shop’.

After his grandfather’s death he published a 487-page catalogue of the collection, most of which was later dispersed, with many items returning to Tahiti, Fiji, New Zealand and Hawaii. One of James Hooper’s most treasured items, a Hawaiian drum collected during Captain Cook’s third voyage and now in the British Museum, will be on show in Pacific Encounters.

Dr Hooper has been Director of the Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania & the Americas at UEA since 1988. Determined to travel to the Pacific, something his grandfather had never done, he lived for over two years between 1977 and 1980 on the remote island of Kabara in Fiji, doing research in anthropology for his PhD at Cambridge University. The island had no electricity, roads or running water, although each of the four villages did have a concrete cricket pitch, courtesy of the previous British colonial administration. The inhabitants were largely self-sufficient, building their own canoes and houses, and supporting themselves by fishing and growing their own food crops.

Steven Hooper explained: “Fiji was a marvellous experience, living with people who still made beautiful things, but ever since I was a young man, inspired by my grandfather’s wonderful collection, I have dreamed of one day curating a Polynesian exhibition composed of the remarkable things in British museums. These are the finest early Polynesian collections in the world, brought back on the voyages of Cook, Bligh, Vancouver and others, including the early missionaries. They will now be displayed together for the first time in our Pacific Encounters exhibition.”

A finely carved wooden bowl supported by two grimacing figures is just one of the 273 rare and extraordinary sculptures, ornaments, textiles and valuables in the exhibition. The bowl was given to Captain Charles Clerke by a chief from Kaua'i in the Hawaiian Islands on 23rd January, 1778, during Cook's final voyage. It was Clerke who took command of the expedition after Cook's death. The bowl has been in the British Museum since 1780.

Steven Hooper's Pacific Encounters' research was part of a larger project, Polynesian Visual Arts: meanings and histories in Pacific and European cultural contexts, sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. With research colleague Dr Karen Jacobs, Dr Hooper explored Polynesian treasure troves in Aberdeen, Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Exeter, Ipswich, Glasgow, London, Oxford and even Saffron Walden in Essex. The British Museum is a major lender, and the exhibition is a British Museum Partnership UK project.

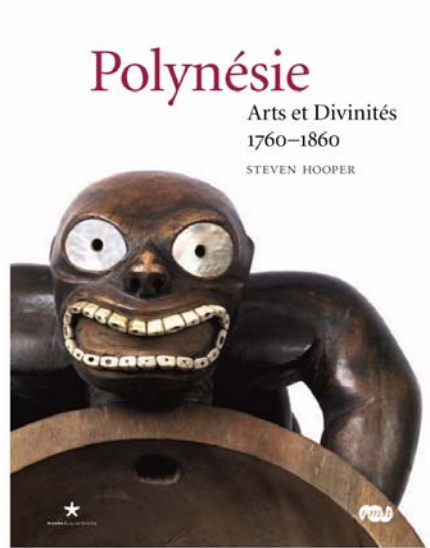
Sainsbury Centre Director Nichola Johnson added: "We are opening with a brilliant exhibition. Our status as a university museum has given us the opportunity to create an international ground-breaking exhibition in Norwich which combines serious academic research with fabulous eye-catching displays."

KAREN JACOBS

Karen Jacobs specialises in the arts of the Pacific region. Her main interests cover the study of cultural and art festivals, collecting and ethnohistory, auctions and the art market, ethnographic museums and contemporary Pacific art. She completed her PhD entitled 'Collecting Kamoro: Objects, Encounters and Representation in Papua/West New Guinea' at the Sainsbury Research Unit (2003).

The focus of fieldwork was the Kamoro Arts Festival in Pigapu village, West Papua (2000, 2001, 2002). She has worked as a consultant for the exhibition 'Papua lives: meet the Kamoro' held at the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, The Netherlands (2003) and studied the Kamoro collections at Cambridge (2004). Since 2005, she has worked as a research associate with Steven Hooper on the 'Polynesian Visual Arts' project.

* EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Polynésie, arts and divinities, 1760-1860

by Steven Hooper

288 pages, Format: 22 x 27.5cm,

300 illustrations (approx)

Published price: €39

Co-edition: *musée du quai Branly / RMN*

English edition: **Pacific encounters, Art and Divinity in Polynesia 1760-1860**

By Steven Hooper

288 pages

Published price: 25 £

The British museum

CONTENTS

Foreword

Preface

Acknowledgements

Encountering Polynesia

Polynesian Encounters

Collecting Polynesian

Chronology

- Introduction

- The Hawaiian Islands

- New Zealand / Aotearoa

- Easter Island / Rapa Nui

- The Marquesas Islands

- Mangareva and the Tuamotu Islands

- the Society Islands

- the Austral Islands

- the Cook Islands

- Western Polynesia

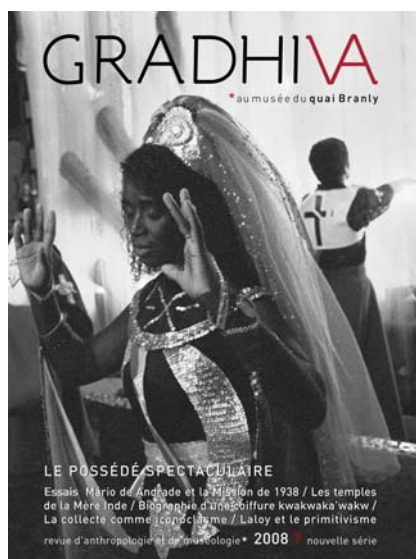
- Collectors, dealers and institutions

- Bibliography

- Index

* OTHER PUBLICATIONS

* **Gradhiva, review of anthropology and museology**



Founded in 1986 by Michel Leiris and Jean Jamin, Gradhiva was originally the organ of expression of the *Groupe de Recherches et d'Analyses sur l'Histoire et les Variations de l'Anthropologie* (Group of Research and Documentary Analyses of the History and Variations of Anthropology) (from where its title derives). In 2005, the *musée du quai Branly* took over its publication and launched a new series: Gradhiva became a review of anthropology and museology. It remains a forum for the discussion of the history of and current developments in anthropology, based on original studies and on the publication of archives and eyewitness accounts. It favours reflection via interaction between text and image, narration-representation and advocates the convergence of disciplines: anthropology, aesthetics, history, music and literature.

On the occasion of the exhibition, an article by Steven Hooper is published in the recent issue, Gradhiva n°7, spring 2008.

Steven Hooper, "Collecting as iconoclasm. The London Missionary Society in Polynesia"

In the first half of the nineteenth century many important religious objects from Polynesia were collected by the London Missionary Society and displayed in their museum in London. Several are discussed in this paper. The acquisition of these objects, often referred to as idols, was a more complex process than often imagined, and one which involved strategic choices by Polynesians as well as missionaries. It is proposed that the preservation of these objects was stimulated by the Tahitian chief Pomare in 1816, and that different kinds of iconoclastic practice were enacted, from iconoclasm by annihilation to iconoclasm by disempowerment and preservation. Polynesians and missionaries alike had clear motives to enact iconoclasm by preservation, the former to obtain trophies from rivals and supply material tokens of conversion, the latter to provide evidence of evangelical success and a means of raising funds through exhibition in the LMS museum. These actions resulted in the survival of objects that are now being re-evaluated as important items of heritage and great works of art.

Gradhiva n°7 - 176 pages, inc. 8 colour pages - 140 illustrations - €18
Gradhiva, review of anthropology and museology.
Editor in chief: Erwan Dianteill

* **Polynesian art: histories and meanings in cultural contexts**

Special issue of *The Journal of Polynesian Society* volume 116, no. 2, 2007
Guest editor: Steven Hooper
192 pages – 90 illustrations – €18

* EXHIBITION EVENTS

Symposium “Exhibiting Polynesia: past, present and future”

The symposium is jointly organised by the **Department of Research and Teaching of the *musée du quai Branly*** and by the **Sainsbury Research Unit (University of East Anglia, Norwich)**. It will bring together curators, academics and artists from the Pacific, Europe and USA.

The emphasis will be on the issues associated with the presentation, re-presentation and the representation of Polynesian artefacts.

Opening address by **Stéphane Martin**, Director of the *musée du quai Branly*

PARTICIPANTS:

Steven Hooper, Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia
Karen Jacobs, Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia
Arapata Hakiwai, Museum Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand
Adrienne Kaeppler, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC
Jeremy Coote, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford
Karen Kosasa, University of Hawaii, Manoa
Noelle Kahanu, B.P Bishop Museum, Honolulu
Sean Mallon, Museum Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand
George Nuku & Rosanna Raymond, artists, New Zealand
Jenny Newell, British Museum
Fuli Pereira, Museum of Auckland
Manouche Lehartel, curator and director of the festival, French Polynesia
Tara Hiquily, Museum of Tahiti and the islands
Maile Andrade, University of Hawaii at Manoa
Amiria Salmond, Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Practical information

The symposium will take place at the *musée du quai Branly*, in the cinema room, level - 1

Tuesday 17th June, 10am-5:30pm

Wednesday 18th June, 10am-5pm

Information and programme at:

www.quaibranly.fr (<http://www.sru.uea.ac.uk/research-symposia.php>)

Musée du quai Branly: 37, quai Branly – Debilly gate or 218, rue de l’Université, 75007 Paris

Entry and reservations

Free entry upon reservation: l.humphreys@uea.ac.uk

Language

The symposium will take place in English.

* PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Opening hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday: 11am-7pm
Thursday, Friday, Saturday: 11am-9pm

Groups: 9:30am-11am
Tuesday-Saturday
(reservation required)

Closed on Mondays, except Monday 27th
October, 3rd November, 22nd and 29th
December 2008.

Purchase your tickets in advance

- Fnac: www.fnac.com/

For museum tickets (exhibitions, cultural events): 0 892
684 694 (€0.34 / min)

For shows: 0 892 683 622 (€0.34 / min)

- Ticketnet: www.ticketnet.fr/ / 0 892 390 100 (€0.34 / min)

Information:

Telephone: 01 56 61 70 00

Email: contact@quaibranly.fr

Internet: www.quaibranly.fr

Price list

"Collections" ticket

(Permanent collections, anthropology and
dossier exhibitions):

Full price: €8.50

Reduced price: €6 (students)

"A day at the museum" ticket

(Collections + Garden Gallery)

Full price: €13 until 31st July, then €10

Reduced price: €9.50 (student)

Free entry to the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions for the under 18s, unemployed, people on social benefits, war invalids and disabled people, holders of the "Musée du quai Branly pass".

Entrance to the museum is free on the first Sunday of every month, on Monday 14th July and on Saturdays from 6pm for the unders 26s (until 30th June 2008).

Membership

The *Musée du quai Branly pass* gives you unlimited access to all the areas of the museum, allows you to jump the queue during busy periods and gives you discounts on theatre tickets and cultural events. The Pass is available for young people (€15), for individual adults (€45 until 31st July, then €35), or for partners (€70 until 31st July, then €50), and for groups (€35 until 31st July, then €25).

Pedestrian and disabled access

Entrance to the museum via no. 206 or no. 218 *rue de l'Université*, or by no. 27, no. 37 or no. 51 *quai Branly*, Paris 7^e.

Disabled access is via no. 222 *rue de l'Université*, Paris 7^e.

Public Transport

Metro: *Pont de l'Alma* (RER C), *Alma-Marceau* (Line 9), *Bir Hakeim* (Line 6).

Bus: Line 42: Eiffel Tower stop; lines 63, 80, 92: *Bosquet-Rapp* stop; line 72: *Museum of Modern Art – Palais de Tokyo* stop

River shuttle: Eiffel Tower stop (*Batobus*, *Bateaux parisiens* and *Vedettes de Paris*).

Parking

Carpark (with charge) accessible to cars via 25 quai Branly, 520 spaces.

Press contact:

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* AVAILABLE VISUALS

Download at <http://ymago.quaibrantly.fr> – access upon request

	<p>Bowl with two figure supports</p> <p>Hawaiian Islands Mid-/late 18th century Wood, pearl shell, boars' tusks l. 46.5cm © British Museum, London</p>
<p>Bowl with two figure supports</p> <p>Hawaiian Islands Mid-/late 18th century Wood, pearl shell, boars' tusks l. 46.5cm © British Museum, London</p>	
	<p>Bucket with lid</p> <p>Tonga, Tongatapu Mid-/late 18th century Wood, coir, shell beads h. 44.5cm © British Museum, London</p>
<p>Gorget</p> <p>Society Islands Late 18th century Cane, coir, feathers, dog hair, shark teeth, barkcloth, fibre h. 61.0cm © British Museum, London</p>	
	<p>Female figure pendant</p> <p>Tonga Late 18th/early 19th centuries Whale ivory h. 6.2cm © British Museum, London</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Feathered cape</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hawaiian Islands End eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries Feathers, fibre L: 82.5 cm © British Museum, London</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Whisk Handle</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Society Islands Wood H : 15.5 cm © British Museum, London</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Head of a staff god</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cook Islands, Rarotonga Late 18th/early 19th centuries Wood h. 111.0cm © British Museum, London</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Neck pendant</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Zealand/Aotearoa, North Island Late 18th/early 19th centuries Nephrite h. 8.5cm © British Museum, London</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Figure on post</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Marquesas Islands, Nuku Hiva Early 19th century Wood h. 50.2cm © Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia</p>	



Dance paddle

Easter Island/Rapa Nui
Late 18th/mid-19th centuries
Wood
h. 81.8cm
© British Museum, London

Feathered cloak

Hawaiian Islands
Late 18th/early 19th centuries
Feathers, fibre
w. 242.0cm
© Hastings Museum and Art Gallery



Casket figure

Austral Islands, Rurutu
Late 18th/early 19th centuries
Wood
h. 117.0cm
© British Museum, London

Feathered head/god image

Hawaiian Islands
Late 18th century
Feathers, basketry, fibre,
dog canine teeth, pearl shell, wood
h. 81.0cm
© British Museum, London



Fan

Marquesas Islands
Late 18th/early 19th centuries
Leaf, wood, human bone, coir
h. 49.0cm
© British Museum, London

<p style="text-align: right;">Stool Society Islands Wood L : 98.8 cm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">© British Museum, London</p>	
	<p>Shell trumpet</p> <p>Marquesas Islands Trinton shell, humain hair, bone, coir, gum L : 37.5 cm © Cambridge University Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, photo Gwill Owen</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Drum</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hawaiian Islands Wood, shark skins, coir, fibre H : 29.2 cm © British Museum, London</p>	
	<p>Lintel</p> <p>New Zealand / aetearoa Wood, haliotis shell L : 98 © British Museum, London</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Standing figure,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wood, nails Society Islands H : 52.5 cm © British Museum, London</p>	
	<p>Figure</p> <p>Wood, H : 115 cm Mangareva © British Museum, London</p>

*** PARTNERS OF THE EXHIBITION**



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