

## The 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT9)

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Monira Al Qadiri, Senegal/Kuwait, *DIVER*, (production still) 2018, four-channel video projection: 4:3, colour, sound. Installed dimensions variable. Commissioned for APT9. Image courtesy of the artist.



Hassan SHARIF, Iran/United Arab Emirates, c.1951-2016, *Cutting and tying no.2* (detail), 2014, Cotton rope and wool 275 x 650 x 50 cm © Estate of Hassan Sharif Image courtesy: Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde.

## Steve Dow

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## Feature

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People from all over Australia sent feathers to the Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones for his installation *untitled (giran)*, part of the ninth Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane. The artwork, being installed at Queensland's Gallery of Modern Art, will combine the sounds of wind, breathing and bird calls with the soft whispering of Wiradjuri speakers.

The installation will include about 2000 handmade sculptures of six types of tools, including a *bagay* (emu eggshell spoon), *galigal* (a stone knife) and *bindu-gaany*



(freshwater mussel scraper). The feathers will be bound to each type of tool, with Jones hoping the work will encourage tactile, kinetic learning, even before the art goes on show. "Slow down, look around, listen to the birds," Jones asked of his feather-collecting collaborators.



Hassan SHARIF, Iran/United Arab Emirates c.1951-2016, *Cloth and Paper* 2005, Cloth, paper and glue, Variable dimensions © Estate of Hassan Sharif. Image courtesy: Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde.

More than 80 individual artists, collectives and group projects from more than 30 countries will be displayed at the Triennial. First among equals will be First Nations artists, including Jones and his fellow Australian Indigenous artists Vincent Namatjira, Alair Pambegan, Margaret Rarru, Helen Ganalmirriwuy and James Tylor, as well as Simon Gende from Papua New Guinea, and Lisa Reihana and Areta Wilkinson of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Jones grew up in Sydney and near Tamworth, New South Wales. His work *untitled (illuminated tree)*, 2012, recently went on public display at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, featuring wood lit by fluorescent tubes as a commentary on the effect of colonisation on the land through which the Murray-Darling flows. Jones tells Art Guide Australia his art of late has been celebrating southeast Australian Indigenous cultural practices around the Murray-Darling basin and coastlines of New South Wales and Victoria that are "unbelievably bubbling up to the surface, with weaving and carving practices".

“There is this renaissance around the south-east, with so much cultural activity that needs to be supported,” he says. The south-eastern area “is the part of Australia that was colonised the most, it produces most of our food and has a higher population. It’s a really critical part of Australia as a whole.

“It’s an extraordinary region – it’s got the world’s oldest man-made structure in the [Ngunnhu] fish traps at Brewarrina [on the Barwon river], it’s got the world’s oldest ceremonial burials out at Lake Mungo. It’s got some of the oldest art in the world. All in this little patch of country that Australians call home, and yet when people think about Aboriginality, they don’t think about here.”



Lisa REIHANA, New Zealand b.1964, *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (still) 2015–17 (detail) Single-channel Ultra HD video, 64 minutes (looped) 7:1 sound, colour, ed. 2/5, Purchased 2015 with funds from the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Foundation Appeal and Paul and Susan Taylor Collection: Queensland Art Gallery.

Also on display will be Auckland-born artist [Lisa Reihana's](#) *In Pursuit of Venus [Infected]*, a rolling animation depicting Captain James Cook's Pacific voyages. Her video work is inspired by the panoramic wallpaper *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*, designed by Jean-Gabriel Charvet in 1804 and held at the National Gallery of Australia.

Reihana, who describes herself as “native two times over” – meaning as a Māori as well as an Aucklander – was inspired by the Charvet wallpaper to consider how colonialist attitudes of entitlement and racial superiority, as well as literal pathogens, infected the colonised, and set about recasting the propaganda scroll to more realistically depict the cultures of its Indigenous characters.

An earlier version of the work is held by the National Gallery of Victoria, but it lacks an Aboriginal Australian

## presence.

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Reihana remedied this in 2016, on a trip to Sydney, when she began learning stories of the Indigenous people around Campbelltown. She then cast five members of the Aboriginal art and performance team Koomurri, who perform a welcome to country dance for the work: as one member of the team plays clap sticks, four dancers in red and yellow ochre sway their arms. Aboriginal basket weavers also make a shy appearance.

“The way I perceive Aboriginal Australia, it’s got the oldest culture on Earth, and Aotearoa – New Zealand has the youngest, the last piece of land to be peopled. And we are right next door to each other,” says Reihana.

“There’s a philosophy in Maoridom – the elder and the younger should walk hand in hand, because you share information up and down. Returning to Australia is about trying to talk about those politics – there’s a reckoning that still is yet to happen here.”

Beijing-based Chinese artist Qiu Zhijie meanwhile was on site in Brisbane through late August and September creating *Map of Utopia 2018*, an enormous ink painting. QAGOMA director Chris Saines says Qiu is “one of the most important Chinese artists of his generation and a leading figure in conceptual and new media art globally”. The artist’s mapmaking has been celebrated for its use of fine calligraphy, which Qiu began learning as a child, as well as for chronicling art and political movements that extend beyond the boundaries of the world.

QIU Zhijie, China b.1969, *Map of Utopia – People who claimed to be messiah crowded history 2015*, Ink on paper, 245 x 126 cm. Courtesy and © the artist.

The Triennial will also premiere large, round sculptural works specifically made for the event by the Tolai (or Gunantuna) people of Nangananga village in Papua New Guinea. These works are created from thousands of shells known as Tutana. This material, says Saines, is used as legal tender by the Taloi people as well as in major rites such as marriage, initiation and funerals.

Now in its 25th year, the Asia Pacific Triennial continues to be a key showcase of the work being produced in our region and a barometer of the current considerations of the region. This year’s offering promises to deliver cross-cultural insights that challenge what constitutes contemporary art.

***The 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT9)***

**Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art 24 November – 28 April 2019**

**Free admission**



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