

REBECCA HOSSACK

ART GALLERY

OCEANIC *Land and Sea; Gods and Men*

Monday 24 September – Saturday 24 November 2018

Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery, 2a Conway St, Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6BA



Dennis Nona
*Awai tithuyil (Badu Island story -
The Pelican)*, 2006
linocut on paper
177 x 131 cm



Mathias Kauage
*Captain Cook Discovering
Australia*, 1998
pen and ink on paper
70 x 50 cm



Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri
Woman's Dreaming, 1998
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
128 x 128 cm

Seas unite as well as divide; they are agents of communication and contact, as much as bulwarks and barriers. The great Pacific Ocean – covering over a third of the globe's surface – confirms the point. It is home to myriad peoples, to tiny islands, scattered archipelagos, and one great southern continent: Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Australasia. It reaches from the vast deserts of central Australia to the volcanoes of Hawaii; from the mountain ranges of New Zealand to the river valleys of Papua New Guinea. The strong and varied cultures of these disparate lands are wonderfully distinct, yet shot through with common concerns, with moments of shared iconography, and with subtly complimentary aesthetics.

Oceanic explores the area's rich cultural heritage through paintings, prints, sculptures, textiles, tapa cloths, basket-works and carvings by contemporary indigenous artists from across its breadth. Works that in their different ways assert the primacy of place, the integration of land and water, past and present, the spiritual and the temporal.

Amongst the highlights of the show are paintings by Aboriginal desert-artist Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri (1932-2002) and the Papua New Guinean painter Mathias Kauage (1944-2003); prints by Dennis Nona (Torres Strait Islands) and John Pule (New Zealand); carvings from the Sepik River and basket-work from Arnhem Land.

The story of the indigenous peoples of Oceania has, over the last 250 years, been a story of contact with the European world. It was in 1768 that Captain Cook (as he became) departed on his famous voyage across the Pacific, to witness the transit of Venus at Tahiti. The story of this interaction, its shift from scientific inquiry to forced colonisation, is fraught with misunderstandings, with misplaced initiatives, and with grief. Often, though, it has been through art that the indigenous peoples of Oceania have maintained and developed their identities, and re-asserted their place in their own world.

The power of their cultures resonates in many spheres, not least in the artistic one. It has had a direct influence upon many of the artists in the Western canon, from Stubbs to Gauguin; from Picasso to Henry Moore; from the German Expressionists to the French Surrealists. And – as *Oceanic* makes clear - it continues to inform and inspire the contemporary Western tradition.

Oceanic at the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery complements and extends the vision of the *Oceania* show at the Royal Academy of Arts also opening this month.

Since its foundation in 1988 the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery has championed the work of indigenous artist from across the globe, particularly from Oceania. Over the past thirty years Rebecca Hossack has curated groundbreaking shows by the leading artists of Aboriginal Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands. This exhibition draws on that wealth of experience, knowledge and passion.

For further information, please contact Lily Brand: lily@rebeccahossack.com

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