

MEDIA RELEASE

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Colonial Narratives Interrogated in Ground Breaking Australian Art Exhibition

The National Picture: the art of Tasmania's Black War opens at Queen Victoria Art Gallery at Royal Park on Saturday 24 November and will be on display until 17 February 2019.

The exhibition unflinchingly interrogates colonial works of art created at a brutal moment in Tasmania's history.

On tour from the National Gallery of Australia and developed in partnership with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), the exhibition draws on key loans from national collections including significant works from the QVMAG collection, and examines British settlers' representations of Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

The exhibition also includes rare creative works by Tasmanian Aboriginal people of the time, as well as responses from today's contemporary artists. The result is a revelatory reconsideration of a key element of Australia's colonial past.

NGA Exhibition Curators Professor Tim Bonyhady (ANU) and Dr Greg Lehman (UTAS) shine a light on an extraordinary body of art, paying particular attention to the colonial artist Benjamin Duterrau, a vitally important but still under-examined figure. The exhibition focuses on the controversial 'Conciliator', George Augustus Robinson; and the Tasmanian Aboriginal people he attempted to 'pacify'. It spans the commencement of the 'Black War', which led to the declaration of martial law in Van Diemen's Land in 1828, the beginnings of Robinson's 'Friendly Mission', to Duterrau's death in 1851. Aboriginal oral history and works from the 20th and 21st centuries sit alongside colonial portraits of Aboriginal people, providing vital insights into events of national and international significance.

'Tasmania's visual history has much to tell about a period that we have been reluctant to properly consider,' said Dr Greg Lehman. 'The work in this exhibition provides documentation that is essential evidence for an honest engagement with our colonial past. The lessons learned in Tasmania resonate across this continent.'

City of Launceston Mayor Albert van Zetten said: 'The Queen Victoria Art Gallery provides the ideal space for the community to access exhibitions such as *The National Picture: the art of Tasmania's Black War* and *The First Tasmanians: Our Story*, which provide valuable information on Launceston's history and continuing cultural practices of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people.'

Creative Arts and Cultural Services Director Tracy Puklowski said 'QVMAG is proud to host this very necessary, meaningful and important exhibition for northern Tasmania. This period in Tasmania's history was raw and brutal and a time that many people might prefer to forget. To be able to move forward and bring communities together, the 'Black War' is a period that we must remember, acknowledge and learn from.'

Continued

At 11am on Saturday 24 November, visitors can meet with co-curators Dr Greg Lehman and Professor Timothy Bonyhady, and Daniel Thomas AM for a floor talk of *The National Picture: the art of Tasmania's Black War* and a discussion on art, history and society.

This exhibition provides a valuable educational experience for schools.

You're invited to preview the exhibition and chat with curator's Dr Greg Lehman and Professor Tim Bonyhady, and Director Tracy Puklowski today at the Queen Victoria Art Gallery at Royal Park today at 9.30am.