

Cargo Culture

an assemblage of objects

Ex.1

13 feb - 7 mar

chap
ter

Cargo Culture draws from the idea of cargo cults - systems of belief that emerge around the arrival of material goods, where objects, such as art, become charged with meaning far beyond their utility.

The works presented in Cargo Culture are drawn from a personal collection consisting of over 100 artworks by artists from across Australia and the globe. They have been accumulated over decades, not by way of a single curatorial thesis, but proximity - through studios, exhibitions, conversations and chance encounters.

One day before the exhibition opening, a fleeting activation of the same name transpired across the city in a rental truck turned art gallery. This activation inserted artworks into unconventional public environments, in loading bays, side streets and outside major office buildings, stripping away the rituals of the gallery and inspiring new possibilities for art viewing. In motion, the works became interruptions rather than destinations.

Cargo Culture's iteration at Chapter Gallery manifests as an extended conversation with this personal collection: where the truck was fleeting, a ritual of appearance and disappearance, the gallery offers duration, giving the works time to assert what they carry. In their display, proximity becomes a key agent.

Objects and artworks placed alongside one another begin to generate conversations that could never have been predicted at the moment they entered the collection. Formal tensions, conceptual overlaps, geographic distances, and generational gaps create contrasts that are unexpected and often deeply rewarding.

Art is a primary language through which we understand who we are, what we value, and how we remember. There are works in this collection that are not liked in any conventional sense - works not chosen for ease or harmony - but they are significant works, and they provide conceptual sustenance. That tension is essential.

Following this moment of exposure provided by Cargo Culture and Chapter Gallery, the collection will return to a state of private, continuous growth and renewal. With no linear progression or curatorial thesis, the viewer is left to ponder how shall this collection evolve?

List of Works

1. Nell Pearson, *untitled*, 2012, watercolour on paper.

As if suspended in mid air, this fluid evocation of a crucifixion drips as gravity drags its slippery form down.

2. Matthew Couper, *Winter Supremus*, 2024, oil on canvas.

Referencing the legend of the True Cross, *Winter Supremus* distils a religious symbol whilst referencing Kazimir Malevich's Suprematist abstraction.

3. *I Escaped From Devil's Island*, 1973, print on paper.

Saved from a bundle of cinema posters in the 1970s, this bold graphic relic celebrates pulp spectacle, encapsulating an iconic era of B movies.

4. David McDonald, *Van Gogh*, 2012, oil on metal beer bottle cap..

Van Gogh is notable for its gold background, a fundamental basis of classic portraiture. Its' tiny scale and familiar imagery of renowned post-impressionist, Vincent Van Gogh, is juxtaposed with the disposable quality of the bottle-top it's painted upon.

5. Oscar Perez, *Coat Hanger (Jesus Welcomes You)*, 2005, cast resin.

Shown recontextualised from part of a series of three, a trinity, this cast resin hand while playful in its bright blue tones, is starkly macabre. Both practical and conceptual in design, one may query why a person would own a work of such nature.

6. Candice Milon, *Tete Sur Table #1*, n.d. photograph.

Meaning "head on table", this photograph entered the collection via gift. Although unconventional for its owner's taste, it takes on new life when placed alongside other works.

7. Alethea Richter, *Pixel Itch (S1a- S1d)*, 2022, silkscreen on BFK rives.

Visually pixelated yet created through gentle human touch, these hand-woven silkscreen prints explore the complexities of experience associated with the post-digital age.

8. David Bromley, *Mallory*, 2013, screenprint on paper.

Loved by some, questioned by many, this particular work of Bromley was uncovered tucked away in the corner of a second-hand store a decade prior. The presence of *Mallory* in the collection prompts enquiry into taste and popularity, and how quickly celebrated images slip from prestige to kitsch.

9. J.T. Hicks, *Agnes Belle Yancy*, 1894, photograph.

Uncovered at a local market near Las Vegas, this settler portrait carries the striking directness of early photography; direct and grim. *Agnes Belle Yancy* was part of the family of early colonial settlers in the region.

10. Matthew Couper, *The Chief Mourner and the Last Drops*, 2017, ink on paper.

Produced during a Paris residency yet shaped by desert memories of Utah, this intricate work binds pilgrimage, landscape and myth into a finely wrought symbolic theatre.

11. Uji 'Hahan' Handoko, *Fine Art is Death*, 2012, hand-coloured screen print on paper.

'Hahan' Handoko is an artist whose work dances between the realms of 'high art' and 'low art,' critiquing and engaging with the expanding global art market.

12. Robert McLeod, *Untitled 1-4*, n.d., mixed media on card.

McLeod works ostensibly with broken down caricatures, colliding colour and form to create abstract compositions.

13. Fiona Lascelles and Tony Nyberg, from the series *If We Catch You Talking To A Stray Dog*, 2016, photographic print on paper.

Part of a larger photographic series staged from imagined deaths confessed at parties, this work blends morbidity and play to make you wonder: how would you die?

14. Matthew Emery, *Australia Day 1 & 2*, 2011, gouache on paper.

Created after completing a funded research project into American graphic novel culture, Emery utilises dry comic humour to interrogate Australian nationalism and pride.

15. Matthew Couper, *Untitled (Retablo series)*, 2011, oil on tin.

Using the pragmatic workman style of Mexican retablo paintings, Couper creates intimate symbolic scenes of his continuing assimilation as a New Zealander now living in the desert of Las Vegas.

16. B.J. Pierce, *no title 1-3*, 2018, acrylic on board.

Sturdy and compact, these abstract panels were encountered in an undercroft gallery and acquired on instinct, their tough materiality hopeful to last the test of time.

17. Brett Nannup, *Frozen Tears 2*, 2007, woodcut print on paper.

Nannup is a Noongar artist with ancestral ties to the Binjareb and Wilman peoples. Trained in printmaking by his mother, Laurel Nannup, this work captures grief through the tears of Nannup's ancestors, frozen in time.

18. Rob McLeod, *Untitled a & Untitled b*, n.d., mixed media on aluminium cans.

A culmination of leisure, boredom and creative inclination, these sculptures are fashioned from crushed beer cans spontaneously generated from the artist's beer drinking sessions.

19. Maker Unknown, *Edith*, 1945, hand-coloured photograph.

This delicate hand-coloured portrait created at the close of the WWII generation offers insight into a societal structure on the brink of collapse. Positioned in conversation with the artworks surrounding, what story is being told?

20. Maker Unknown, *Woven Fish Traps*, n.d., reed.

Purchased from a solitary maker in a shed outside of rural China, these baskets represent connection and community, objects found by chance, shaped by patience, and gathered through curiosity.

21. Provincial Grand Black Chapter of Queensland, *Form of Application for Membership*, c. 1900s, print on paper.

Entering the collection through happenstance, these membership documents from the Grand Black Chapter Lodge of Queensland reveal the systems of control of an era not long past, enveloped in the coded language of fraternal power.

22. Ben Pearce, *title unknown*, 2011, acrylic on canvas.

Created as a study for Pearce's large sculptural works, Pearce's rock formations echo the allegory of Plato's Cave, stacked playfully, teetering precariously.

23. Maker Unknown, *Dhazai Country*, c. 1970, paper in wooden frame.

Art has the power to illuminate or manipulate, inspire or deceive. This Cultural Revolution propaganda poster celebrates agricultural abundance in a time amid famine. Portrayed in this contemporary gallery context, it reveals the persuasive aesthetics of ideology and the tension between constructed image and lived reality.

24. Dylan Sarra, *Petroglyph IV & Petroglyph V*, 2021, print on paper.

Sarra tells the story of the Burrall Burrall (Burnett River) Petroglyphs - the largest site of Aboriginal rock-engravings in east Queensland. Cut out and removed from their traditional site in the 70s, the displaced stone blocks of petroglyphs highlight important conversations about repatriation of cultural objects and artefacts across the country.

25. Brett Graham, *Kereama*, 2021, screenprinted Muriwai black sand and silver glitter on paper.

This print is modelled on the gun turrets of the Pioneer, one of the armed steamers commissioned by the New Zealand Government to invade the Waikato in 1863. Created with Muriwai black sand which holds significant spiritual meaning, the surface of the gun turret is elaborately embellished with a cast relief ornamental pattern. The intricate patterning emulates the wedding cake design of Queen Victoria in 1840 – the same year that Māori and the Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi.

26. Peter Hughes, *Those who should've been home in bed*, 2007, acrylic on board.

A raucous conglomerative portrait of night-time figures; police, revellers, misfits, rendered with raw immediacy and an unsettling bluntness of humour.

27. Peter Hughes, *Jack Lives Here*, 2007, acrylic on board.

Created with bold colour and brushstrokes, this work asks simple, insistent questions like a cacophony of thoughts whirling around the subject's mind.

28. Walter Ohlson, *Bethel Print Series*, n.d., print on paper.

Two parts of a set of nineteen discovered second-hand, this near-complete didactic series revives Catholic symbolism through a post surrealist and illustrative language that is positively bizarre when viewed in the modern day era.

29. Sebastian Moody, *Think Bigger*, 2009, screenprint on mirror.

Instantly recognisable to residents of the city, Moody's provocation sits at the gateway of Fortitude Valley. Big thoughts lead to big emotions and placed on a mirrored surface, it offers reflection into how our minds influence us.

30. Gregor Kregar, *Matthew: 12*, 2011, ceramic with glaze.

Seeming more at home in a tourist shop than an art gallery, Kregar investigates the role of sheep, rugby and the religious symbolism of the animal in New Zealand society.

31. Gail Mabo, *Tagai (excerpt)*, 2020, sand and cast bronze.

A jar of sand in the shape of stars, one grain magnified into the bronze sculpture beside it, quietly shares a significant moment between father Eddie Mabo and daughter Gail Mabo, who poured this sand into her hand and asked her and her siblings to look for Tagai, the constellation of stars that custodians and visitors to Zenadeth Kes (The Torres Strait) consult to guide them safely across the seas.

32. Maker Unknown, *Cultural Revolution Figures*, c.1960, ceramic and glaze.

These ceramic reproductions of Cultural Revolution Figures were once common domestic ornaments, decorative items that subtly signalled political alignment. Like decorations in Western homes, they marked status and belonging. Now in a contemporary context, they preserve a vivid record of loyalty to ideology.

33. Piers Secunda, *Taliban Bulletholes*, 2010, cast paint.

Cast paint directly moulded from a scarred remnant wall of gun violence caused by the Taliban, a texture of destruction that brings to viewers attention the absences created by war.

34. Ronnie van Hout, *Failed Robot*, c. 2023, wood coated acrylic and doll parts.

Part childlike toy, part uncanny being, this geometric robot teeters between nostalgia and horror, its toothy grimace and uncanny eyes hinting at something human concealed beneath mechanical skin.

35. Scott Eady, *Princess XL (fountain #1)*, 2015, cast bronze marrow on wooden stool.

Created as a play on Duchamp's readymades, Eady takes furniture and marrow, stripping them of their utility and transforming them into an art object. Not to be used, but simply observed.

36. Scott Eady, *Staff (title)*, 2015, cast bronze pinecone and fennel branch.

Cast from a wild fennel branch from the artist's property and crowned with a cast bronze pinecone, this work evokes Dionysian ritual and procession, tempting you to grasp it and take it further on to journey.

37. Amelia and Luca, *Children's Drawings*, 2025, mixed media on paper.

Culminated from a collaborative domestic ritual, these spontaneous drawings capture the eye and bring joy through each miniature window of creativity.

38. Paul Maseyk, *September; October (2) and October (1)*, 2011, acrylic on board.

Primarily working in ceramic, Maseyk uses techniques of mark making and wiping away to create this series of geometric paintings.