

# THE NATIONAL PICTURE

The art of  
Tasmania's  
Black War

Learning program

# An Education Resource

Centre for Learning and Discovery

  
Tasmanian  
Government

TASMANIAN	
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## Disclaimer

Any links to websites that have been included in this guide are provided for your convenience only. TMAG does not accept any responsibility for the accuracy or availability of any information or services on any other website.

## Cover image

Benjamin Duterrau

*The Conciliation* (detail) 1840.

Collection: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, AG79

# Introduction

*The National Picture: The art of Tasmania's Black War* exhibition presents a collection of works that catalogue and respond to a seminal moment in the history of Australia. **The Black War** describes the period of open hostilities between Tasmanian Aboriginal people and European colonists that occurred in the early nineteenth century; a history that has traditionally been framed from a resolutely colonial perspective. Artworks can give us a window into the history of events and personal narratives that frequently belie their original purpose. As such, this exhibition provides us with an opportunity to question and challenge the conventional historical narrative while reflecting on the history of a people who were invaded, abused and dispossessed of their country. The effects of that tragedy continue to reverberate in the lives of their descendants, as Australia continues to grapple with questions around treaties and **race relations**.

Importantly, *The National Picture* is being shown concurrently with an exhibition of works by colonial artist **Thomas Bock**, at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG). Hence, a unique opportunity exists for visitors to compare a range of colonial artworks and artefacts in the same venue. As well as these two significant exhibitions, there are also a variety of other artworks and artefacts throughout the museum and art gallery that inform a rich dialogue around Tasmanian colonial and Aboriginal history, as well as some intriguing works that posit a contemporary response to these earlier works.

For students, this exhibition provides a rare opportunity to engage with a wide range of artefacts and artworks that are particularly significant to our understanding of Tasmanian history and the visual legacy of our colonial and Aboriginal artists. The issues and questions that are raised through a contemplation of these works articulate directly with a variety of history and visual art research strands and help to contextualise important historical events that have ongoing **relevance** to contemporary Australian society. In this guide, students and teachers are directed to videos, websites and activities that can be used to scaffold learning opportunities that respond to Australian Curriculum (ACARA) standards. Specific content descriptors are provided where appropriate and the guide is populated with hyperlinks to direct students to additional information and activities.

Further discussion of the scope and relevance of *The National Picture* can be found [here](#).



Benjamin Duterrau, *Series of people*



Benjamin Duterrau, *Series of people*



Artist Unknown, *Aboriginal raid on Milton Farm (c 1832)*



Benjamin Duterrau, *Series of people*

## Purpose of this Guide

This guide is designed to complement a visit to *The National Picture: The art of Tasmania's Black War* exhibition. Its aim is to provide a framework of engagement activities for senior secondary and tertiary students to participate in a socio-cultural and art-historical discourse around the artworks and issues presented in the exhibition.

The activities in this resource are divided into three phases.

- Pre-visit (engage) activities, prepare students for their visit to the museum by helping them understand the curatorial premise of the exhibition as well as some of the language associated with The Black War. Activities in this stage require students to read, watch, research, imagine and create. In this phase, students also engage with some rudimentary skills through which they will be able to analyse/critique the artworks in the exhibition from an informed viewpoint.
- In the visit phase (respond), students have the opportunity to view the artworks and practice their critiquing skills in situ. Using the tools they have developed in-class, they will share their responses to selected works with each other, presenting their critiques, employing appropriate language and demonstrating their contextual understanding. Students will also be directed to other works within TMAG to compare and contrast with selected images in *The National Picture*.
- Post-visit (reflect) activities direct students to focus on their reflections by responding to quotes, creating artworks and composing texts based on their understanding of the issues highlighted in the exhibition.

The activities in this resource articulate with a number of secondary and senior-secondary **ACARA - visual arts** standards and can be differentiated where necessary.

Specifically, the Australian Curriculum recommends the following sample questions which can be used to provoke student engagement with artworks. Each of these can be employed to direct student inquiry in relation to *The National Picture* exhibition:

What meanings are intended by the artist(s) and understood by the audience(s)?

- Forms: How have the elements, media and instruments been organised and arranged?
- Societies: How does it relate to its social context and that of its audience?
- Cultures: What is its cultural context and what does it signify?
- Histories: What is its place in terms of historical forces and influences?
- Philosophies and ideologies: What are the philosophical, ideological and political perspectives?
- Critical theories: What important theories does it include?
- Institutions: How have institutional factors enabled or constrained its creation?
- Psychology: What processes of the mind and emotions are involved?
- Evaluations: How successful is it in terms of its audiences, contexts and the artist's intentions?

ACARA, 2011, *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Arts*



Benjamin Duterrau, *Series of people*



Benjamin Duterrau, *Series of people*



Benjamin Duterrau, *Series of people*

# ENGAGE

Prior to visiting the exhibition, you may wish to take the opportunity to talk with any Aboriginal students or educators in your group, class or community. Please note the exhibition contains particularly sensitive material for Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Tasmanian Aboriginal people may wish to provide cultural perspective on elements of the exhibition and the issues that it raises, or they may wish to process the exhibition more privately. Before visiting the exhibition, educators should take a quiet moment to explain to Aboriginal students what the exhibition is about and then ask the students to let them know if they wish to speak about anything to the group.

As an initial engagement activity, students should read the 'Introduction' wall text composed by the exhibition curators (Appendix B), and view a video created by the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) to complement the exhibition.



Benjamin Duterrau, *The Conciliation* (1840)

## Colonial Art

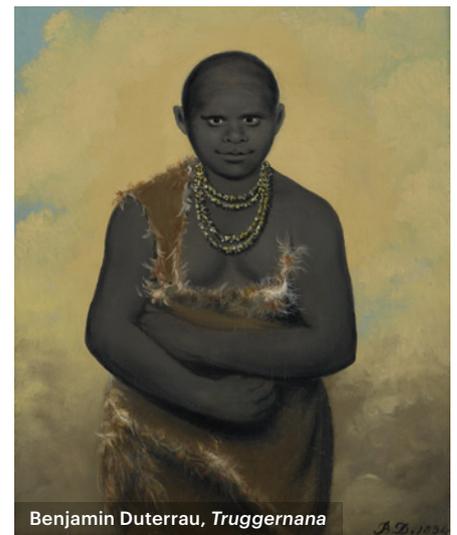
Art produced in the establishment period of a new colony is often termed '**colonial art**'. Primarily produced by artists from the colonising nation, colonial art frequently depicted an idealised representation of the 'new territories' and the Indigenous people invaded and displaced by the colonial power. Colonial art is often referred to by the name of the colonised territory or the colonial power rather than a specific time period. Thus Tasmanian colonial art refers to art produced in Tasmania by European artists in the first hundred years of European occupation and although related to colonial art from other regions and countries, represents an idiosyncratic representation of the island's landscape and its people.

One of the purposes of colonial art was to document the acquisitions of the colonial power and suggest its success in subduing the Indigenous population. A desire to evoke a 'sense of home' in a new and foreign land resulted in a host of romanticised depictions of bucolic Tasmanian **landscapes** where settlers survey vistas of ordered, verdant pasturelands. Greg Lehman suggests that the absence of Tasmanian Aboriginal people in many of these works are evidence of an attempt to erase or deny their presence and present the land as *terra nullius* and thus ripe for the taking.

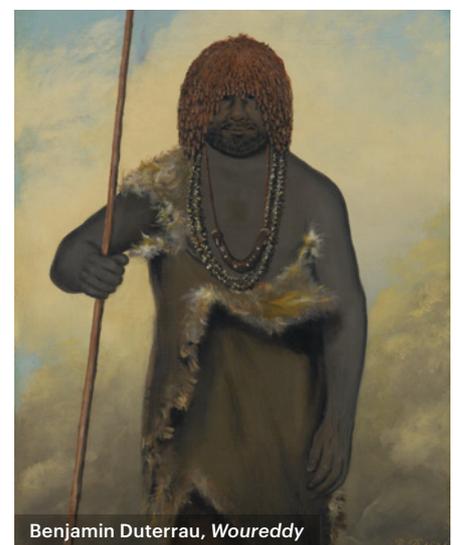
Artistic depictions of Tasmanian Aboriginal people interacting with European colonisers such as those illustrated in Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1840) are also highly **contrived** and represent a distinctly European viewpoint in which Europeans depict themselves as kindly benefactors with conciliatory and inclusive intentions. This is characteristic of the distinctly European lens employed in colonial art more generally.

▶ In this **video**, The National Picture curators Dr Greg Lehman and Professor Tim Bonyhady, introduce the premise and discuss some of the artworks in the exhibition, providing important artistic and historical context and highlighting the contemporary significance of the issues that the exhibition raises.

A further pre-visit engagement activity asks students to read the catalogue essay by **Franchesca Cubillo**, Senior Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, NGA: 'Interrogating the colonial narrative, a contested history' (Appendix A). Provocations from Cubillo's essay and the introductory video are referenced in a series of activities that can be undertaken prior to visiting the exhibition.



Benjamin Duterrau, *Truggernana*



Benjamin Duterrau, *Woureddy*

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## Engage activities

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After watching the NGA video and reading Franchesca Cubillo's essay (Appendix A), consider and respond to the following questions. Responses could be in the form of short answers to each question, the selection of one of the questions as an essay topic or through the suggested alternative activities.

1. Franchesca Cubillo reminisces about her experience of education at secondary college and states that she was 'again reminded that Australia's history was written and taught from the European perspective of the coloniser'.
  - › What are the implications of this statement and how do you think colonial artworks have contributed to this perception?
2. Recent **controversy** surrounded the proposed display of a New Zealand colonial artwork: ***View of Mt Egmont, Taranaki, New Zealand, taken from New Plymouth, with Maoris driving off settlers' cattle*** (1861) by **William Strutt**. Considered by many to be an example of colonial propaganda; opposition to its display focussed on its depiction of Maori people in an unfavourable light. Several Tasmanian colonial artworks could similarly be viewed as representing Tasmanian Aborigines unfavourably to suit a colonial narrative.

**Julie Gough** is a Hobart-based artist, writer and curator and her work is featured in *The National Picture*. Her work explores the representation of Aboriginal histories, particularly in Tasmania where her maternal heritage is linked to Tebrikunna country, far north-eastern Tasmania. In this **video** about her work she proposes that we should view colonial art as 'a crime scene'. She talks about the importance of continuing to interrogate the past, and of asking 'what happened next?'

- › Select a colonial artwork that you believe unfairly or untruthfully represents Tasmanian Aborigines and consider ways that you might change or manipulate the image to subvert that narrative.
3. Art has been used as a political tool throughout history and has significantly contributed to the proposition of particular causes and ideals. Eugene Delacroix's famous celebration of the ideologies underpinning the French revolution ***Liberty leading the people*** (1830), was painted just ten years before **Duterrau's *The Conciliation***. More recently Norman Rockwell's politically charged ***The Problem We All Live With*** (1964), became a notable image in America's Civil Rights movement. Yorta Yorta artist ***Lin Onus' Fruit bats*** (1991) can also be considered an example of political art in its poignant reflection on colonisation in which Onus appears to suggest the reclaiming of place by traditional inhabitants. Look at Robert Rauschenberg's iconic collage ***Retraoactive 1*** (1964).

- › Think about issues that are of political significance to you and use found imagery to **collage** your own piece of political art. **(ACAVAR130)**
4. One of the pivotal artworks in the exhibition is *The Conciliation* (1840) by Benjamin Duterrau. Greg Lehman describes this work as a representation of an early treaty or promise between European colonisers and Tasmanian Aborigines.
    - › What is your understanding of this agreement and why do you think that Lehman suggests that this promise was broken?
  5. Compare Duterrau's ***The Conciliation*** (1840), with Tasmanian artist Geoff Parr's ***The National Picture*** (1985).
    - › Try to restage all or part of *The Conciliation* in your classroom? Alter where particular people or objects are situated. Photograph each image and discuss how the changes contribute to the meaning in your tableau.
  6. **Theresa Sainty**, a prominent member of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, comments on some of the portraits of Tasmanian Aboriginal people in the exhibition, stating that the representations seem contrived as the subjects are dressed in 'white people's clothes' and given European names. Greg Lehman suggests that many of these portraits 'say more about how Europeans saw themselves than they do about the Aboriginal people being represented'.
    - › What reasons do you think colonial artists would have had for contriving an identity for the Aboriginal people they depicted?
  7. Contemporary Australian Aboriginal artist **Christian Thompson**, frequently creates contrived photographic **self-portraits**. In doing this, Thompson decides how *he* wants to be viewed.
    - › Create your own self-portrait in whichever medium you choose. Play with your identity: dress up, obscure your features, surround yourself with objects that convey particular meanings. These can be portraits of the 'real you', the person you choose to be, or a figure of fantasy. **(ACAVAM125)**

**Consider:** Why are artworks important sites for learning about culturally situated stories and events?

# RESPOND

## Critiquing Art

Art criticism helps us to understand the meaning behind artworks. The creation of art has been a characteristic of every culture and civilization in the history of the human race. Through art we celebrate beauty and life, memorialise the dead, and express our fears and aspirations, our beliefs and our values. Sometimes the only thing we know about a particular people is through the artefacts and artworks they left behind. We do not all need to be artists to care about art and have an interest in understanding its many and varied roles. Art analysis conventionally begins with an **approach** that focuses on three general categories that are used to compose an effective critique. These include descriptions of form, content and context.

### Form

When we speak about the form of an artwork we are describing its constituent elements. We might like to think of form in terms of 'how' the artwork has been created. Formal considerations include elements such as colour, line, dimension, medium, shape, texture, scale etc. These descriptions are primarily derived observationally, although some additional research may be required to identify medium.

Follow the links **here** for descriptions of some of the **materials** commonly used by nineteenth-century artists.

Consider: *How does the way that artworks are displayed mediate our response to them?* (ACAVAM129)

### Content

Descriptions of content are also primarily derived through observation and relate to 'what' the artwork is (painting, sculpture, installation etc.) and what it is about. So here we are thinking about the subject matter of the artwork. In describing a painting for example, we would talk about whether it is a portrait or a landscape, figurative or abstract, realistic or fanciful, or combinations of these elements. We would describe what is happening within the artwork and the way the space on the canvas or paper is used.

### Context

Context refers to our understanding of 'why' an artwork has been created and 'who' the artist is. Here we consider the purpose and meaning of the artwork: Was it made to commemorate a particular event or person, or to respond to a specific ideology? Was the artist commissioned to create the work? What were the social and political sentiments (if any) that informed its creation? Context is largely dependent on the time and place in which the artwork was created, and might include discussions of genre or movement and where the artwork sits within the artist's wider practice.

### Materials for exhibition visit

**Students should bring a means for making notes in response to the exhibition (a visual journal, tablet, note book, pencils). A mobile device would also be particularly useful for photography and due to the many additional resources accessed through hyperlinks throughout this resource.**



## Respond activities

Respond activities are scaffolded around the following artworks, all of which are part of *The National Picture* exhibition apart from *Mithina* [Mathinna] (1842) which can be found in the adjoining Thomas Bock exhibition. Other artworks referenced in these activities can be found within TMAG. It is recommended that class groups be divided into pairs for these activities.



*Wurati* [**Woureddy**] (1835)  
Benjamin Law, cast plaster,  
painted, 75 x 48.3 x 27 cm



*Trukanini* [**Trucanniny**]  
(1836) Benjamin Law, cast  
plaster, painted,  
66 x 42.5 x 25.6 cm



*Tanalipunya* [**Tanleboueyer**]  
(1834) Benjamin Duterrau, oil  
on linen canvas, 87 x 71 cm



*Mithina* [**Mathinna**] (1842)  
Thomas Bock, drawing in  
watercolour, 30.2 x 24.9 cm



***The Conciliation*** (1840) Benjamin  
Duterrau, oil on canvas, 119 x 168 cm



*Aboriginal Raid on Milton Farm* (c 1832)  
Artist unknown, oil on board,  
26.2 x 35.2 cm



***The consequence of chance*** (2018)  
Julie Gough, calico, pine, cardboard,  
lights, 240 x 150 x 240 cm



***Mills' Plains, Ben Lomond, Ben Loder and Ben Nevis in the distance***  
(1836) **John Glover**, oil on linen canvas, 76.2 x 152.5 cm



***Governor Arthur's proclamation to the Aboriginal people***  
(1829 – 30) after  
George Frankland, oil  
on board, 36 x 23 cm



*Amelia and her little Bobby* (1845) John  
Skinner Prout, pencil  
and watercolour,  
23 x 17 cm

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## Respond activities

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1. In pairs, look for the artworks (previous page) within the gallery.
  - › Select one of the works and spend some time discussing its characteristics with your partner.
  - › Record your observations based on what you can see, and use the categories of form, content and context to jointly compose a critique. Some of the information you will need can often be found in the label descriptions which accompany the artwork and may include the date the work was created, the name of the artist and the title of the work. The wall texts (Appendix B) will help to inform your understanding of context.
  - › When you have composed your critique, present your analysis to another pair of students and listen to their presentation around their selected work.
  - › Be sure to critique each other's analyses and question the presenters about what they have discovered.
2. **The gaze** is a concept that is frequently discussed in relation to visual art, and significantly informs the viewer's relationship to a depicted subject. Find Benjamin Law's busts of *Wurati* (1835) and *Trukanini* (1836) and consider the gazes expressed in these representations. Write down what is different about the gazes and suggest why they may have been depicted in this way? How does *Wurati's* gaze make you feel, compared to that of *Trukanini*?
  - › Re-enact these gazes with your partner and consider and discuss the dynamics of power that are expressed in the gaze.
3. Visit Thomas Bock's portrait of *Mathinna* (1842) and read her tragic **story** (listen to Tasmanian author Richard Flanagan's interview if you have time). Following this, find Gordon Bennett's ***Home décor (relative/absolute) – flowers for Mathinna***, (1998) see illustration on this page. The picture hangs in the Henry Hunter Galleries, TMAG. In this painting, Bennett has reproduced Bock's portrait along with a number of other Australian artworks. This technique is called '**appropriation**', described by Robert Atkins as "the practice of creating a new work by taking a pre-existing image from another context...and combining that appropriated image with new ones" (Atkins 1997).
  - › Imagine that you are **Gordon Bennett** and that this is your painting. Write a statement that outlines why you created the work and what you are trying to convey about Mathinna's story and the history of the relationship between Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal people more generally.
4. Visit **Michael Cook's** exhibition ***The Mission***, in the Salon Gallery, TMAG. Compare Cook's portraits with **John Skinner Prout's** depictions of Tasmanian Aboriginals at **Wybalenna**.
  - › What are the similarities and differences you can identify between the two collections of portraits? Discuss the use of mediums and techniques in the works. What mediums do you recognise, and how do you think they are being used by the two artists? How do you 'read' the artworks here and how is that reading informed by the time in which they were created and the differing perspectives of the artists? (**ACAVAR131**)
5. Compare **Julie Gough's** *The consequence of chance*, 2018, with the five Proclamation Boards (George Frankland's Boards) on display in Gallery 1. What do you think Gough is saying in this work? How does the title affect the way we interpret its meaning?
  - › Try composing your own title for this installation that reflects its dialogue with the Proclamation Boards and expresses how you understand its meaning.



Gordon Bennett, *Home décor (relative/absolute) – flowers for Mathinna*, (1998)

**Consider:** *What are the techniques and strategies that artists use to communicate a narrative and ideas through their artworks. How does medium aid or inhibit an artist's ability to convey meaning?*

# REFLECT

Franchesca Cubillo asks us to 'consider the multiple voices within this complex chorus'. Reflect on your experience with the artworks within the gallery and consider the voices that you have heard. How have the artworks within this exhibition altered or enhanced your understanding of Tasmania's colonial history and the 'unfinished business' that continues today?

## Reflect activities

1. Write a letter to a Tasmanian colonist. Acknowledge their experience as newcomers in a strange land but explain to them the significance of the decisions they make in regard to the traditional owners of *Iutruwita* (Tasmania). Refer to artworks you have seen in the exhibition to inform your correspondence.
2. Revisit an activity you chose in the Engage section. Having seen and reflected on the Exhibition, what would you alter in your original answers or making activity. Alternately, revisit Greg Lehman's statement, suggesting that many of these portraits 'say more about how Europeans saw themselves than they do about the Aboriginal people being represented'. Has your understanding of Lehman's statement changed in any way having viewed the exhibition? How?
3. Appropriately alter a historical portrait and alter it to produce a new image that reflects your own experience and values. Write an artist statement that acknowledges the original image and explains what alterations you have made and the intentions behind the new work. ([ACAVAM128](#))
4. Consider the following quotes that can be found within the exhibition. Listen to their voices and select one to create your own response. Think about the context of when it was said or written, and how the author has represented their viewpoint. Identify an artwork or artefact in the exhibition that you think resonates with your selected quote and compose your own quote that reflects upon your engagement with this work. Share your reflection with your peers.
5. Compose a poem that reflects on your engagement with the exhibition. Write from the perspective of a person depicted in one of the artworks you have considered. Try to represent the emotions or sentiments they would have been experiencing at the time they were portrayed. ([ACELT1815](#))



Julie Gough, *The consequence of chance* (2018)

## Multiple voices

*'Parrawar, parrawar, go away you white buggers! What business have you here?'*  
**Unnamed warrior, 21 February, 1830**

*'You take it him own country, take it him black woman, kill't right out, all him litta child – den you put him in your gaol... I nebber like dat way. You better kill it right out.'*

**Black Tom to Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur, 1828**

*'A settler named Gurlay, who is a monied man and has two maximum grants at the Eastern Marshes, said if I succeeded in getting the natives I ought to have £20,000, and he would put down his £100. He has a large property.'*

**George Augustus Robinson, 3 October, 1831**

*'... the adoption of any line of conduct, having for its avowed or for its secret object the extinction of the native race, could not fail to leave an indelible stain upon the character of the British Government'*

**Sir George Murray, British Secretary of State for the Colonies to Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur, 1830**

*'We are claiming Land rights. What is wrong with that? It is our ancestors calling from their graves. Claim what is rightfully yours.'*

**Furley Gardner, Launceston Examiner, 11 April, 1977**

*'I like stringing shells and Mum and Granny used to do it, ... it's you have the shells, you have the needle and the cotton and you just go... you can either string shells or you can't'*

**Joan Brown, Elder necklace maker, 1995**

*'While I'm making a spear sometimes I cut myself – and I'm thinking about the hunt, how I'm going to throw it, how I'm proud of what I'm making. So my blood, my intention, my ochre from my country is in my spear. I become part of the spear.'*

**David Mangenner Gough, 2018**

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# Appendix A

## Interrogating the colonial narrative, a contested history

*When I matriculated from a private Catholic girls' college in 1980, I possessed a basic notion of Australian history and had been taught that Australian history formally began in 1788. The syllabus provided regrettably little information about Aboriginal peoples, other than general references to 'conflict' on the frontier (particularly Botany Bay) at the time of 'settlement' and some early representations of Aboriginal people in colonial Australian paintings.*

*Having grown up surrounded by the rich and complex cultures of multiple Nations of Indigenous peoples of the Northern Territory, this information sat uncomfortably with me. I was mindful of diverse and ancient languages, rituals, ceremonies and art that dated back tens of thousands of years. It was difficult for me to equate the Indigenous history of this continent with the formalised white Australian history that was being taught in all public and private secondary schools of the day. I was young and naive at the time, however, and therefore did not question the information or challenge the commonly accepted narrative.*

*I studied Australian art in my final year at secondary college. Chapter one of the main textbook, Bernard Smith's Australian art 1788-2000, book was unfortunately titled 'The first artists 1788-1824'. I was again reminded that Australia's history was written and taught from the Eurocentric perspective of the coloniser. In spite of this, during the course I saw (for the first time) Aboriginal people represented in paintings and illustrations from the late 1800s and early 1900s by artists such as the Port Jackson Painter, TR Browne, Joseph Lycett, Augustus Earle, Benjamin Duterrau, Robert Dowling and John Glover. Regrettably, these representations were presented in the context of the Australian landscape, as ethnographic props serving an illustrative purpose.*

*I looked at these images with mixed emotions; it was strange to see people like myself, brown-skinned and belonging to this land, depicted in a non-complimentary, exaggerated and sometimes distorted manner, or depicted as part of the flora and fauna of the region. These figures appear on the margins or were depicted from a distance—most often small in scale and lacking detail, positioned in ways that revealed their disempowerment. They rarely look directly at the viewer or are placed centrally within the image. The composition of Dowling's Group of natives of Tasmania 1859 and Benjamin Duterrau's The conciliation 1840 are exceptions but, even so, we cannot be certain if these artists portrayed living, named individuals who had agency over the way in which they were depicted.*

*I was ever conscious that these depictions of Aboriginal men, women and children were the earliest European representations of Indigenous people, and yet we know so little of who they were, what clan they belonged to or what their story was. They are lost within a colonial narrative in which they were represented by non-Indigenous people whose agenda for depicting them in this fashion was problematic and questionable.*

*When I looked at these images, therefore, I immediately saw trauma and sadness, and a missed opportunity to understand and or depict respectfully the First Peoples of this continent. Unfortunately, unlike the Europeans populating these colonial paintings, there are few magnificent complimentary portraits identifying heroic/noble Aboriginal ancestors, nor are there intimate depictions of Aboriginal families. In the majority of cases, individuals are not named and nor is their country (according to the Indigenous names of these places) but, rather, Australia's First Peoples are depicted in small social gatherings as part of the natural landscape of the region.*

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*Ironically, as part of my lessons in Australia's art history, I learnt the biographical details of celebrated white artists (some of whom were convicted convicts) and their artistic capacity but, at no point, did I learn anything about the Aboriginal people they portrayed—their names, language group or clan, or of the particular location from which they came.*

*It is difficult for Aboriginal people to look at paintings, illustrations and photographs from this time because they portray the period when our Country was invaded and our people treated without respect: marginalised, segregated and enslaved. We are equally mindful of the remarkable decline in numbers of people belonging to the various Indigenous Nations of Australia that occurred because of deaths associated with introduced foreign diseases or systematic killings and massacres as a result of frontier conflict. These images represent a traumatically false and biased colonial history. These works do not accurately capture the Aboriginal perspective and narrative of this historical period, and this absence is deafening. There is one painting in this exhibition from this early period and it stands out in this cacophony of colonial discourse.*

*It is timely for us to reconsider the Aboriginal narrative within these works of art. It is challenging, courageous and necessary. We must look beyond these depictions of predominantly anonymous Aboriginal figures and draw upon the historical record to understand what took place at this time. We must also consider Aboriginal oral history and contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal responses to this imagery so as to reinstate a more accurate picture of what was occurring at this time.*

*We must also reconsider these paintings, illustrations and sculptures—created by non-Indigenous people (with one exception) for a non-Indigenous audience—to fully understand the nature of these works of art, the intention of the artists who created them and the nature of the society that sought out this narrative. In the study of art history, we must always refer to the multiple perspectives at play in the creation of works of art—the artists, their peers, the broader society and the content of the work.*

*This exhibition attempts to do this and looks to a particular and traumatic period in the history of Tasmania's settlement/invasion/colonisation between 1830 and 1851. It considers the artistic imagery and historical narrative that emerged from this community. And it asks us to contemplate how and why Aboriginal people were depicted in this manner. As part of widespread community consultation and the employment of two art historians (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who specialise in this area—Greg Lehman and Tim Bonyhady—this exhibition allows for the development of a Tasmanian Aboriginal narrative that contests these well-known images from the frontier.*

*While we can never right the wrongs of the past, as a society we can acknowledge the truth, in all its complexity, and work towards understanding our shared history with respect, patience and humility. It is when we do this collectively that we can truly work towards reconciling our Nation.*

### **Franchesca Cubillo**

Senior Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art  
National Gallery of Australia

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# Appendix B

## The National Picture gallery all texts by curator's Greg Lehman and Tim Bonyhady

### Introduction

Until the start of the 1830s colonial artists in Van Diemen's Land, as Tasmania was then known, rarely depicted Aboriginal people<sup>1</sup>. This changed with the end of Tasmania's 'Black War', a term commonly used at the time to describe the intense conflict and bloodshed triggered by settlers occupying Aboriginal land.

Benjamin Duterrau, a newly arrived free settler and artist, was at the forefront of depicting Aboriginal people. Several other artists, including John Glover, Thomas Bock, Benjamin Law and William Buelow Gould, also played vital roles as Tasmania eclipsed New South Wales as the centre of colonial art.

Portraits became popular, and interest in painted memorials of the culture of Aboriginal people grew as colonists sought to come to terms with the decimation they had wrought on the island's First Nations. Representations of the 'conciliation' or 'pacification' of the Tasmanians by the Methodist bricklayer George Augustus Robinson became Duterrau's great obsession.

The magnum opus of this project was a monumental painting that Duterrau called *A National Picture* 1843. Now lost, it is known only through smaller surviving versions and studies. Imbued with sympathy for Tasmania's Aboriginal people, Duterrau's project was exceptional in its ambition, resulting in Australia's first history paintings.

This period provides an intense and defining example of the complex role that artists played in documenting Aboriginal lives during the traumatic events that continue to haunt our national conscience.

### The Black War

In 1826, Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur proclaimed the circumstances that would justify the use of any violence by settlers against the Aboriginal people of Van Diemen's Land:

*If it should be apparent that there is a determination on the part of one or more of the native tribes to attack, rob or murder the white inhabitants generally, any person may arm, and, joining themselves to the military, drive them by force to a safe distance, treating them as open enemies.*

This proclamation can be considered the beginning of Tasmania's Black War. Between 1826 and 1831, official roving parties were formed and a military campaign involving over 2000 soldiers and colonists was aimed at removing 'wild Aborigines' from settled areas. In addition, the opportunistic massacres inflicted by settlers led to the killing of at least 750 Aboriginal people. Over 150 settlers also died and another 180 were injured<sup>2</sup>.

Australia's most clearly defined frontier war culminated in 1828 with a series of proclamations by Governor Arthur declaring martial law 'against all the black or aboriginal Natives within every part of this island', and calling for Aborigines to be 'expelled by force' from the settled districts, 'by whatever means a severe necessity may dictate'.

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## George Frankland's Boards

At the height of Tasmania's Black War—with verbal negotiations having manifestly failed to secure peace between the invaders and Aboriginal people, and the invaders' guns yet to prevail—the colony's Surveyor General, George Frankland, looked to a visual language as a catalyst for peace in a colony torn apart by frontier conflict. Having observed that Aboriginal people had a pictorial language used in decoration and ceremony, Frankland suggested in 1829 that the government employ art as a novel means of communication.

This resulted in a series of boards designed by Frankland, probably painted by convict artists, which were intended for distribution around the colony. Divided into four bands, Frankland described them as depicting 'the real wishes of the government' and 'the desired termination of hostility'. George Augustus Robinson described them as 'a means of facilitating a friendly communication with the aborigines in the interior'.

While intended to be ephemeral, seven have survived in public collections, five in Australia, one in Britain, and one in the USA. They have come to be regarded as iconic, defining images of colonial Australia. This exhibition is the first to bring the five so-called Proclamation Boards held in Australian collections together. All seven are published in the accompanying book, thereby revealing their similarities and differences. Their message was equal justice for all but, instead, they have come to symbolise the ongoing struggle for the rights of Indigenous Australians.

## A sense of self

Cultural items that were created by Tasmanian Aboriginal people and collected during the period of the Black War are often represented as ethnographic objects and valued as relics of the past. These items, however, are much more than simple tools or decorations. Rather, they are spiritual expressions of the maker's identity.

Knowledge of resources gathered from Country, and the selection and preparation of materials, and skilled crafting of each object, were the culmination of countless generations of accumulated cultural expression. This process enacted the makers' relationships with their ancestral lands, with Elders who passed on knowledge and practices to them, and with family members who would take responsibility for their continuation.

Tasmanian Aboriginal people continue today to make canoes, shell necklaces, baskets and spears as a way of respecting their ancestors and honouring their culture. The creation of each object is part of a rich process of storytelling and, like the sharing of culture, involves innovation and renewal. For Tasmanian Aboriginal families who live with the legacy of the Black War, it is also an act of healing.

## 'Remarkably striking portraits'

Tasmanian artists in the 1830s tried to exploit the colonial appetite for portraits of Aboriginal people by using an unprecedented array of media of varying cost. Works ranged from Benjamin Duterrau's etchings, which went on sale for one shilling and sixpence each; Thomas Back's watercolours, which he probably sold for £3 or £4; to Benjamin Law's plaster busts, priced at 4 guineas. Duterrau's oil paintings, the most expensive at £20, were greeted by the *Hobart Town Courier* as 'remarkably striking portraits'.

As usual with art production, status mattered. The colonists were particularly interested in portraits of Aboriginal leaders. The artists' prime subjects in Tasmania were the Aboriginal people who accompanied George Augustus Robinson on his expeditions across the island. This was not just because some colonists valued their role in assisting Robinson but, also, because they were the Aboriginal subjects most available to artists as sitters. Several key figures, most notably *Trukanini*, *Wurati* and *Manalakina* were depicted by at least three different artists.

The most remarkable of these portraits were by Duterrau. His first four oil paintings of Aboriginal Tasmanians depicting *Wurati*, *Trukanini*, *Manalakina* and *Tanalipunya* were bought by the colonial government in 1837 in response to a public petition. This was the government's first acquisition of art works. Displayed initially in the colony's Legislative Council, they were acquired as a 'memorial' to Tasmania's Aboriginal people.

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## A lost grand history of painting

Benjamin Duterrau began working in late 1832 on a series of drawings, engravings, portraits in oil and bas-reliefs of Tasmanian Aboriginal people. He cast them as players in a dramatic re-enactment of the historic agreement that brought an end to the Black War in the colony of Van Diemen's Land.

These studies culminated in *A National Picture*, which Duterrau completed in 1843. The painting is recorded as having measured 3.3 x 2.4 metres, making it one of the largest works in oil produced in the Australian colonies. Duterrau intended it to be a grand history painting in the tradition of artists like Benjamin West and Jacques-Louis David. Influenced by Raphael's School of Athens 1509-11, and tapestries created for the Vatican Palace, the artist sought to create not just a document of history, but a scene of complex moral drama invested with ambiguity and tension. The smaller *Conciliation*, which Duterrau completed in 1840, is a sketch for the larger work, and provides clear indications of its composition.

Today, little is known about *A National Picture*, other than details of its hinged frame and its sale at auction after the artist's death in 1851. The great painting was purchased by Duterrau's friend, Alexander McNaughtan and a note to this effect on a copy of the auction catalogue is the last known documentation of this important work. Whether it survives, and its possible whereabouts, remains one of Australia's enduring art mysteries.

## 'Occupations and amusements'

When Benjamin Duterrau produced his etchings and paintings of Tasmanian Aboriginal people making and throwing spears, hunting and dancing, he conceived them as an ethnographic series depicting 'Occupations and amusements'. Duterrau's figure compositions with rudimentary landscape backgrounds were unusual in colonial Australia. He created versions of *Timmy throwing a spear* and *Jack, a native surprised* with the figures 'about six feet high', which were unmatched in size elsewhere. It is not known if these works survive.

Other artists were also interested in the ethnographic. George Augustus Robinson began his expeditions believing that there was no point in him making drawings because of his lack of training and limited ability as an artist. He soon decided, however, that some visual records were better than none and made several drawings of hunting, dancing, dwellings and much else that are rich in otherwise unrecorded information.

Robert Neill, an employee of the British Army's commissariat, also made drawings on an exceptional scale and produced small paintings from the 1820s. John Glover also had a major interest in Aboriginal people. While he depicted them as *staffage* - the contemporary term for small figures within landscapes - he did so with genuine ethnographic intent, to record what he termed 'the customs of the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land'.

## Robinson, the Pacificator

George Augustus Robinson's expeditions for the colonial government between 1830 and 1834 resulted in him becoming known as both the 'Conciliator' and 'Pacificator' of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. While Benjamin Duterrau used the term 'Conciliator', Robinson came to prefer 'Pacificator' - a term that, with hindsight, better fits him.

Robinson was responsible for the first pictorial records of his expeditions, but most of the art depicting him was produced later, when he was for a time something of a colonial celebrity. Eager for enduring fame, Robinson understood how images could serve his purpose and encouraged and commissioned works that promoted his achievements and status.

Duterrau's *National Picture* project was the apogee of the artistic commemoration of Robinson's expeditions. By working in so many media across almost a decade, writing and talking about his subject, modifying it and depicting it on a vast scale, Duterrau made this episode of history his own.

Colonists also celebrated Robinson by giving him works of art. One of these tributes was the silver cup he received from the people of Bothwell. Others were from individuals. Duterrau presented Robinson with a portrait of Woureddy. John Glover gave him his painting *Natives at a corrobory, under the wild woods of the country* 1835, expecting that it would become the frontispiece of a book Robinson hoped to write about his expeditions.

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## Exile to Wybalenna

At the end of the Black War, Lieutenant Governor George Arthur exiled the Tasmanian Aboriginal people who had been 'captured' by George Augustus Robinson to Flinders Island in the Bass Strait. The Aboriginal Establishment there was called Wybalenna, or 'Black Man's House'. The only European artists to visit Wybalenna were John Skinner Prout and Francis Simpkinson de Wesselow, in 1845. While Prout was a professional artist who supported himself principally through his watercolours and lithographs, art teaching and subscription lectures, Simpkinson was a keen amateur who was employed as an officer at Hobart's Magnetic Observatory.

Prout's and Simpkinson's portraits and landscapes from the island record the lives and surroundings of the survivors during their 15 years of imprisonment. The people at Wybalenna suffered shocking neglect. A combination of contaminated water and an inadequate diet dominated by salt meat took its toll, along with poor medical care and unsuitable housing. Effectively, they had been sent there to die.

However, the residents of Wybalenna were far from a defeated people. They refused to give up their language, or cultural practices such as shell necklace making, and would leave the Establishment to go on hunting trips. Many recommenced ceremony in an act of cultural reassertion. Prout's drawing of *Rrumathapana* (King Alexander) shows him wearing a feather headdress, with ochre and charcoal facial decoration.

## Return to Oyster Cove

In October 1847 Sir William Denison, the new governor of Van Diemen's Land, closed the Aboriginal Establishment at Wybalenna and transferred its 47 surviving residents to Oyster Cove, near Hobart. This was, in part, the result of a petition to Queen Victoria, the first ever written by Australian Aboriginal people. In it, Walter George Arthur and six other men stated:

*we were not taken prisoners, but freely gave up our country to Colonel Arthur ... after defending ourselves... Mr Robinson made for us and with Colonel Arthur an agreement which we have not lost from our minds since and we have made our part of it good.*

After 15 years in captivity, the survivors of the Black War were finally returned to their country where they were allowed greater freedom. Some of these people made long treks to visit their traditional homelands from which they had been removed as children.

Charles Edward Stanley, Governor Denison's private secretary, soon visited Oyster Cove to sketch the Aboriginal people living there. Later that year, Thomas Browne used the newly invented daguerreotype camera to create the first photographic image of Tasmanian Aboriginal people, posed in a scene echoing Benjamin Duterrau's *A National Picture* 1843.

## Unfinished business

Despite the variety of approaches by colonial artists to their subject, representation of Tasmanian Aboriginal people in 19th century art left a legacy of little benefit to the generations of families who survived the Black War. Neither the romanticised depictions of Aboriginal people in Glover's landscapes, nor the dignified portraits by Bock or Prout, were enough to dispel the strongly held desire for 'the Aboriginal problem' to be consigned to the past.

Petitions and letters from exiled Aboriginal leaders at Wybalenna to remind of agreements freely entered into were not properly addressed by colonial governors of the time. However, the scale of a systematic campaign described by many as a genocide, and its profound influence on the very foundations of Tasmania's history, have ensured that the consequences of this violent period are unable to be contained in the past.

The symbols of justice carried by Frankland's boards, and the dramatic portrayal of a negotiated end to the Black War captured in Duterrau's *A National Picture* have endured as powerful subjects of reflection by contemporary artists. Many artists, whether Aboriginal, or as advocates for social justice and truth in history, have re-examined and re-interpreted works of art from this period as reminders of the enduring relevance of such important, yet unresolved issues in Tasmanian history. The power of such works is testament to how strongly these continue to resonate for Aboriginal people across the whole of Australia.

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## Appendix C

### **Alphabetical list of Aboriginal people including their family members, their Country, and the artists who depicted them**

Banna/Barnaby Rudge, brother of Lanne, Cape Grim (Prout)

Bobby, son of Kittewer, Wybalenna (Prout)

Drinene/Neptune, husband of Kittewer and father of Moriarty, North Coast (Prout)

Dromedeener/Daphne, mother of Walter, Oyster Bay (Prout)

Drueretattenananne/Cranky Dick, Ben Lomond (Prout, Simpkinson)

Drunameliyer/Caroline, wife of Moomereriner, Swanport (Prout)

*Kalamaruwinya*/Calamarowenye/King Tippo, Kangaroo Point (Simpkinson)

Kickerterpoller/Black Tom, Swanport (Glover)

Kittewer/Amelia, mother of Bobby, Cape Grim, wife of Drinene (Prout)

Lanne/Billy, brother of Banna, Arthur River (Stanley) *Laratung*/Larratong, Robbins Island (Bock)

Little George, possibly son of Maccame and Kittewer, Wybalenna (Stanley)

Luggenmenner, Ben Lomond (Robinson) Maccame/Washington, Big River (Glover, Stanley)

*Malapuwinarana*/Maulboyheener/Timmy, Cape Portland (Duterrau, Bock, Gibson)

*Manalakina*/*Manalagena*, husband of Tanlebonyer, Georges River (Duterrau, Dumoutier, Glover, Bock)

Maryann, wife of Walter, north-east Tasmania (Brown, Stanley)

Maytepueminer/Matilda, Swanport (Stanley)

*Mithina*/Mathinna/Mary, daughter of Towterer, Wybalenna (Prout, Bock)

Moomereriner/*Rrumathapana*/King Alexander, husband of Drunameliyer, brother of *Tanalipunya*, Big River (Prout)

Moriarty, son of Drinene, Wybalenna (Prout)

*Multiyalakina*/Eumarrah/Kanenerlargena, Port Dalrymple (Glover)

*Muntena*/Moneneboyerminer, Port Dalrymple (Glover)

*Muntipiliyata*/Mayerloowermerlargener/Montpelliater, Big River (Glover)

Myunge/David Bruny, son of *Wurati*, Bruny Island (Brown)

*Namplut*/Numbloote/Jenny/Jinny, wife of Maulboyheener, Big River (Bock)

Neenevuther, Port Davey (Robinson)

Noeminerdrick, Port Davey (Robinson)

*Prupilathina*/Legalle/Probeletter/Jemmy/Guenny, Hampshire Hills (Bock, Dumoutier)

Sunamena (pidgin for 'my son'), son of Muntena, Port Dalrymple (Glover)

*Tanalipunya*/Tanlebonyer/Telliacbuya, wife of *Manalakina*, sister of Moomereriner, Swanport (Duterrau)

*Tanaminawayt*/Tunnerminnerwait/Pevay/Jack, Cape Grim (Duterrau, Bock, Gibson)

*Tawtara*/Towterer, father of Mithina, Point Hibbs (Gould, Robinson)

Thermanope/Augustus, Macquarie Harbour (Prout)

Tillarbunner/Jack Allen, Pipers River

Timbruna, wife of Muntena, Port Dalrymple (Glover) Tinganoke, Port Davey (Stanley)

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Trerpumeleher/Edmund, Big River (Stanley)

*Trukanini*/Trucanini/Lallah Rookh, wife of *Wurati*, Port Esperance (Duterrau, Law, Prout, Simpkinson, Bock)

*Tukalunginta*/Tongerlongter, Oyster Bay (Bock)

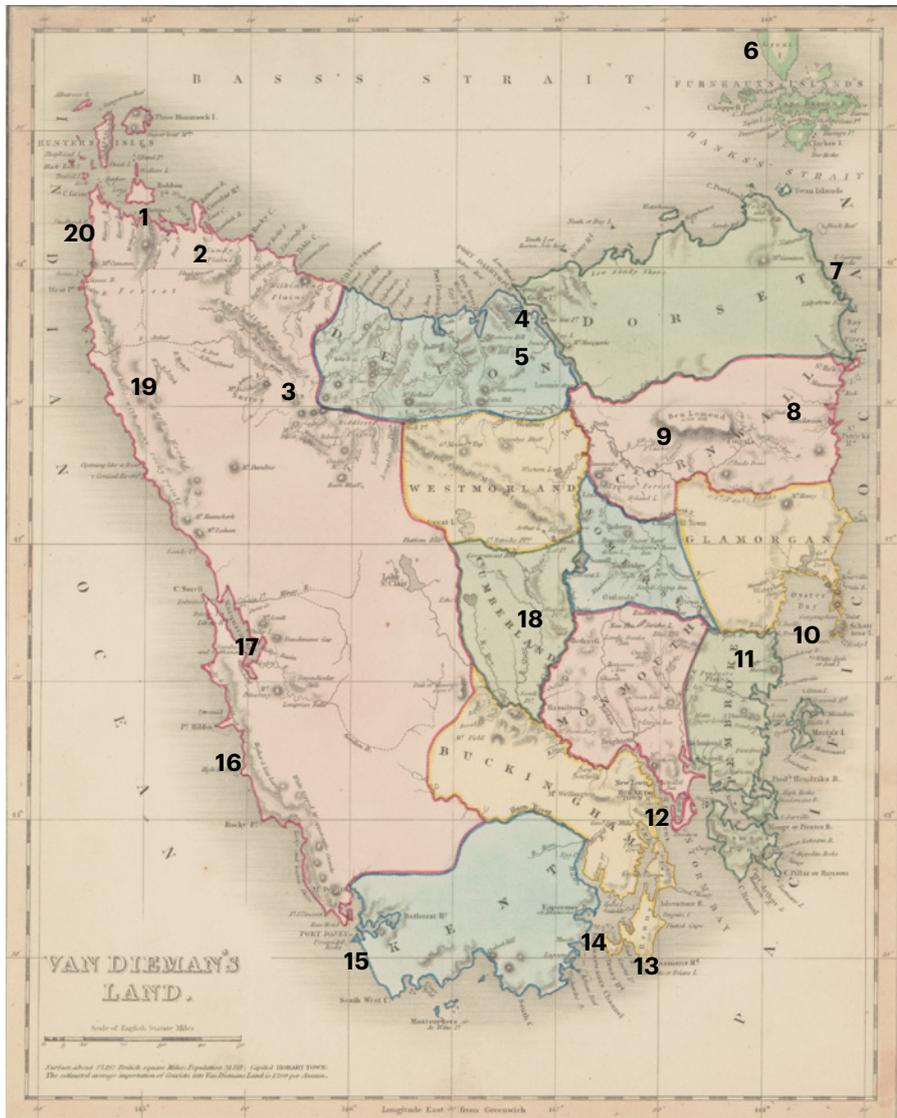
Walter George Arthur, husband of Maryann, Ben Lomond (Brown)

Wanwee, Big River (Glover)

*Wurati*/Woureddy, husband of Trucanini, father of Myunge, Bruny Island (Duterrau, Law, Glover, Bock)

*Wutapuwitja*/Wortabowigee/Fanny, wife of *Tanaminawayt*, Port Dalrymple (Bock)

## Appendix D

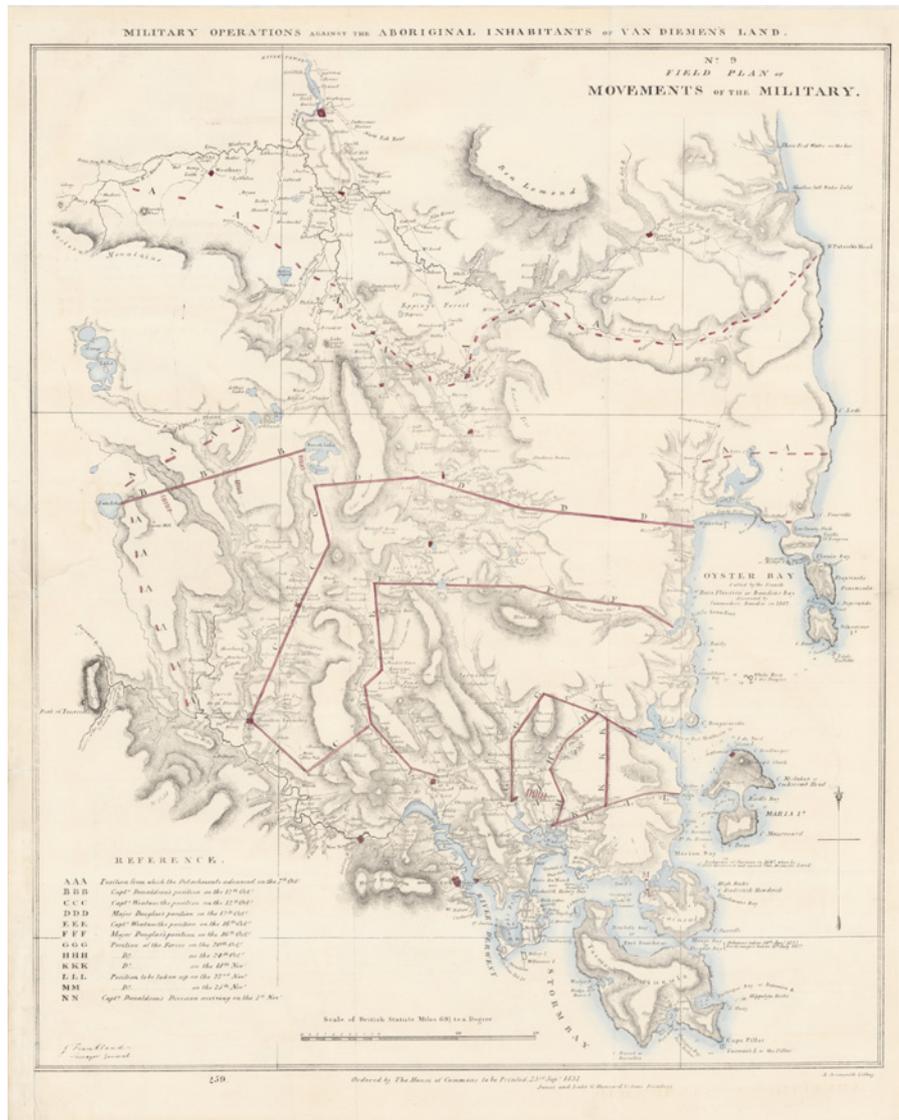


### **Van Dieman's Land 1860, showing the homelands of Aboriginal people depicted by artists**

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Robbins Island  | 11. Swanport          |
| 2. Circular Head   | 12. Kangaroo Point    |
| 3. Hampshire Hills | 13. Bruny Island      |
| 4. Port Dalrymple  | 14. Port Esperance    |
| 5. Pipers River    | 15. Port Davey        |
| 6. Wybalenna       | 16. Point Hibbs       |
| 7. George Rocks    | 17. Macquarie Harbour |
| 8. George River    | 18. Big River         |
| 9. Ben Lomond      | 19. Arthur River      |
| 10. Oyster Bay     | 20. Cape Grim         |

John Dower, Van Dieman's Land, drawn & engraved by J. Dower, Pentonville, London, 1860. Hand-coloured engraving. [National Library of Australia](#)

# Appendix E



**George Frankland's Field plan of military operations against the Aboriginal inhabitants of Van Diemen's land, 1831**

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The French expeditions of Baudin and D'Entrecasteaux made landfall between 1792 and 1802 and made many dozens of sketches – some of which became prints depicting Tasmanian Aboriginal people and cultural material. After their visit there was a gap in time during early British colonisation of almost 3 decades where, tellingly, almost no artwork depictions of Aboriginal people were made, apart from by Robert Neill, whose work is in The National Picture

<sup>2</sup> Note: Specifying exact numbers of Aboriginal People killed during Tasmania's Black Wars is problematic for a range of reasons and the numbers quoted represent an estimate based on the exhibition curators' research to date.