

FANNY WONU VEYS

Special Section on the 2022 Meeting of Pacific Arts Association–Europe: “Gendered Objects in Oceania,” Part 1

Abstract

Fanny Wonu Vey, president of the Pacific Arts Association–Europe, describes the 2022 organisation’s annual meeting held at the Musée du quai Branly—Jacques Chirac in Paris. She introduces three essays based on papers presented at the meeting, focused on the theme “Gendered Objects in Oceania.”

Keywords: *Pacific Arts Association, Pacific Arts Association–Europe, gender, Oceania, art, Wilhelm Joest, Nendö, Santa Cruz Islands, feather money, Yuki Kihara, fa’afafine, Paradise Camp, Maisin, Papua New Guinea, barkcloth, tapa*

In September 2022, the Musée du quai Branly—Jacques Chirac (MQB) hosted the annual meeting of the Pacific Arts Association–Europe (PAA-E) in Paris. It was organised to coincide with the MQB exhibition *Power & Prestige: The Art of Clubs in Oceania* (June 7–September 25, 2022), curated by Steven Hooper with the assistance of Stéphanie Leclerc-Caffarel. As the exhibition demonstrated, clubs are, at once, sculptures, exchange valuables, markers of authority and status, embodiments of divinity, and accessories of performance. However, clubs are first and foremost weapons that may be seen as expressions of masculinity through their association with warfare.

The gender identity linked to clubs formed the inspiration of the meeting. Stéphanie Leclerc-Caffarel, curator of Oceania at the MQB, and I, president of the PAA-E and curator of Oceania at the Wereldmuseum in the Netherlands, hoped to explore whether and how objects are being gendered in Oceania. If one accepts that objects are an intrinsic part of being human and of shaping the world, they also take essential roles as things that gender bodies, social relations, and ways of being. It can, therefore, be argued that objects are important vehicles for the realisation of individual and group identities. With this idea in mind, we launched a call for papers focusing on material culture as expressions of gender identities, gendered collecting, gendered objects and art practices, and access to collections

along gender lines. This PAA-E meeting encouraged the cross-fertilisation between the ever-evolving fields of material culture and gender studies—disciplines that have not seemed to be natural allies to this point.

The meeting in Paris was well attended and offered twenty-six papers covering topics ranging from contemporary expressions of gender in the Pacific to gendered collecting and objects to gender in museums and exhibitions. There was also the preview of the Paris version of the London Pacific Fashion week, with designers from Aotearoa New Zealand (Kahuwai Clothing by Amber Bridgman, Kharl WiRepa Fashion by Kharl WiRepa and Jeanine Clarkin by Jeanine Clarkin); New Caledonia (Hadda Creations by Annie Diemene); Australia (IKUNTJI ARTISTS); American Sāmoa (Lenita’s Collection By J-Len T’s by Lenita Young); Papua New Guinea (Kenny Collection by Kenny Ng); Cook Islands (Lau Secmana by Toka Toka); and Fiji (Vulagi Design by Ana Lavekau).

This special section in *Pacific Arts* features three essays based on the papers that were presented at the 2022 PAA-E meeting in Paris. In the paper “Complexly Gendered Objects: An Analysis of a Piece of Tevau Collected by Wilhelm Joest on Nendö”, Carl Deussen unpacks the ambivalent, voyeuristic stance of the German anthropologist who provided the founding collections for the present-day Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne. Deussen explores Joest’s interactions with women as he collected feather money—objects that have complex, gendered layers of meaning—from Nendö in Santa Cruz. Bernida Webb-Binder reviews the multimedia exhibition “Paradise Camp,” which Yuki Kihara presented at the Venice Biennale in 2022. In her paper, she shows how Kihara decolonizes gender and “paradise” using a camp aesthetic and a *fa’afafine* lens. In “‘Maisin is Tapa’: Engendering Barkcloth Among the Maisin of Papua New Guinea,” Anna-Karina Hermkens describes and analyses the crucial role of Maisin women in economic, political, social, and spiritual life through their creation of tapa.

Five additional articles based on presentations given at the 2022 PAA-E meeting will be featured in the next issue of *Pacific Arts* (vol. 23, no. 2). Together, the eight papers capture some of the diversity of perspectives and approaches offered at the annual meeting and provide a glimpse of the current thinking around objects and gender in the Pacific.

Fanny Wonu Veys is curator of Oceania at the Wereldmuseum (previously the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam and the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal) in the Netherlands. She previously worked at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in

Cambridge, UK, and has held postdoctoral fellowships at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris. Veys curated the exhibitions What a Genderful World, first presented at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam in 2019 and then at the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam in 2020; A Sea of Islands: Masterpieces from Oceania at the Volkenkunde in Leiden in 2021; and Mana Māori (2010–2011) at the Volkenkunde in Leiden, for which she published a book with the same title. She co-curated Australian Art with Dr. Georges Petitjean and a barkcloth exhibition, Tapa, étoffes cosmiques d'Océanie, in Cahors in 2009 with Laurent Guillaut. Veys's research interests are Pacific art and material culture, museums and cultures of collecting, Pacific musical instruments, Pacific textiles, and the significance of historical objects in a contemporary setting.