



National Museums Scotland Torres Strait Islands Collection



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COLLECTIONS LEVEL DESCRIPTION

Data Entry form

Title of the Collection	Torres Strait Islands collection, National Museums Scotland
Author(s)	Eve Haddow
Curator responsible for collection (if different from author)	Principal Curator, Oceania, Americas and Africa
Date Completed	21 st August 2014
<p>There are twenty seven items from the Torres Strait Islands.</p> <p>There are three masks in the collection. One of these is an elaborate mask worn on the head during ceremonial dances made of carved and painted turtle shell depicting a human face and topped with a frigate bird (A.1885.83). The mask is adorned with cassowary feathers. The other masks are thought to be from Saibai and are made of wood in the form of an elongated human face with hair of vegetable fibre and eyes of shell inlay. These masks were bought from Edward Gerrard and Sons of London in 1885 who are known to have sold material from the Torres Straits collected by Reverend Samuel MacFarlane of the London Missionary Society at this time so it is possible the masks came through him.</p> <p>The collection includes one headdress (<i>dari, dhoeri</i>) formed of feathers and basketry. From Mer island are three wooden ear stretchers, one of which was collected on the voyage of HMS <i>Rattlesnake</i> in 1822. The collection also includes three spatulas and an arm ornament of turtle shell, thirteen arrows from Thursday Island and two hardwood spears.</p> <p>There is a contemporary art piece which depicts two stingrays entitled <i>Gubuka</i> by Dennis Nona of Badu, Torres Strait Islands, purchased in 2009.</p>	
<p>Have any aspects of the collection been published? Please provide bibliographic references if available.</p>	
<p>Idiens, D (1982), <i>Pacific Art in the Royal Scottish Museum</i>. Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Museum (A.1885.81; A.1885.83)</p> <p>Newton, D (1961), <i>Art styles of the Papuan Gulf</i>. New York: Museum of Primitive Art (A.1885.81)</p> <p>Fraser, DF (1960), 'The Decorated Headhouse of Torres Straits', <i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i>, Vol. XIX, No.1 (A.1885.82)</p> <p>Roberts, B (2009), 'Conservation of a turtle-shell mask', <i>ICON News: The Magazine of the Insitute of Conservation</i>, January 2009 Issue 20, (A.1885.83)</p> <p>Gathercole, P & A. Clarke (1979), <i>Survey of the Oceanian Collections in Museums in the United Kingdom and Ireland</i>. UNESCO.</p> <p>Kwasnik, Elizabeth (ed.) (1994), <i>A Wider World: Collections of Foreign Ethnography in Scotland</i>. National Museums of Scotland</p>	