

MEDIA RELEASE
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NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA OPENS EXHIBITION EXPLORING THE ART OF MĀORI CULTURE

A new exhibition on the art of Māori culture opens on Saturday at the National Gallery of Australia. Spanning over 250 years, and featuring portraits of Māori men and women, *Māori Markings: Tā Moko* explores the tradition of tā moko, the unique Māori art of marking the skin, from its origin through to its contemporary resurgence.

‘In the 21st century, body adornment and marking has been embraced by many cultures and heavily influenced by Māori art’ said National Gallery Director Nick Mitzevich. ‘An exhibition celebrating Māori art and culture is long overdue in Australia with an estimated one-fifth of today’s Māori population living here. In the International Year of Indigenous Languages this exhibition invites visitors to learn more about the First Nations cultures of our region.’

To receive moko and wear the markings is considered a great cultural privilege. Using the tapping of a sharp chisel known as *uhi* to cut into the skin, tā moko marks an individual with connecting patterns that tell of prestige, authority and identity. Though based on traditional designs, the practice of tā moko allows room for artistic expression, particularly since its contemporary resurgence in the 1990s.

‘The exhibition includes important early Māori sculptures, 19th century prints, paintings and photography that trace the story of this unique cultural art form’ said Crispin Howarth, Curator of Pacific Arts. ‘Visitors will have the chance to discover some of the first illustrations of Māori people made during Captain Cook’s voyages, representations of 19th century Māori travellers – Hongi Hika and Te Pahi Kupe, as well as portraits of signatories to the Treaty of Waitangi.’

On Friday, a minute’s silence will be observed in the remembrance of the victims of the Christchurch terror attack.

This exhibition is made possible through the support and generosity of Toi Māori Aotearoa, Te Uhi a Mataora and the New Zealand High Commission.

Māori Markings: Tā Moko opens Saturday 23 March.

Join artists from Toi Māori Aotearoa for special events on Saturday 23 March

Artist talks by Tamahou Temara from (11.00am and 1.00pm)

Live demonstrations of the Māori arts of weaving and Tā moko (10.00am and 2.00pm).

Downloadable images via our [online media centre](#).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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