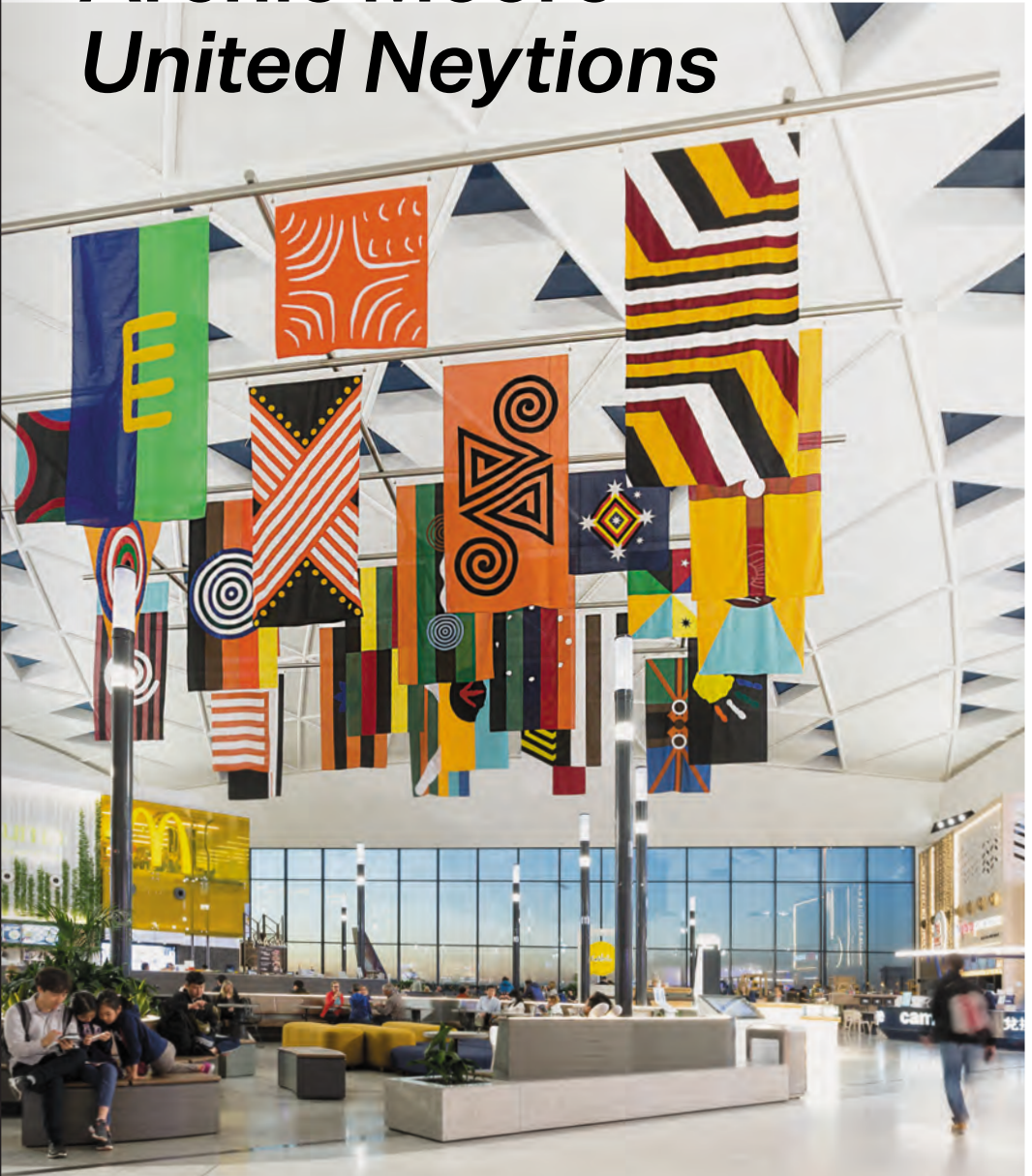


A new contemporary artwork
commission for the T1 International
Terminal by Sydney Airport and
Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia

Archie Moore *United Nations*



Artist Acknowledgement

Archie Moore

This opportunity has allowed me to give this series of flags, which celebrates issues of place and identity, the scale and status of official international flags, drawing attention to the histories, voices and presence of local indigenous people on whose traditional lands the airport (an international zone or 'no man's land') lies, and to the passage of cultures, pasts, territories, ages and cultural knowledges that airports foster.

These United Neytions, nations of the imagination, include this area of Sydney.

I would like to thank local Elders Vic Simms and Laddie Timbery, and their families, as well as the La Perouse Aboriginal Land Council, for hosting United Neytions on their land.

Cultural consultant

Djon Mundine OAM
Sydney Airport

Geoff Culbert
Sally Fielke
Sally Cummine
Matt Woods

Museum of Contemporary

Art Australia
Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE
Blair French
Amanda Thompson

Text

Larissa Behrendt

Editor

Linda Michael
Artist's representative
Amanda Rowell,
The Commercial

Project curator

Barbara Flynn,
Barbara Flynn Pty Ltd

Fabrication

Flags of All Nations

Engineer

Doug Knox,
KPH Consulting

Architect

Matthew Bennett,
Bennett and Trimble

Installation and
frame construction

Wayne Hammonds,
Quality Manufacturing
Engineers Pty Ltd

Conservation

Tess Evans,
Heights Heritage
Conservation

Design

Formist

Introduction

Geoff Culbert
CEO, Sydney Airport

United Neytions is a significant work of art by Archie Moore, one of Australia's most important living artists, which will endow Sydney Airport with a strong sense of place. In commissioning Moore in partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney Airport is extending Australia's vibrant arts culture to the public space of the T1 International Terminal and enriching the experience of the fifteen million passengers who use the space every year.

United Neytions engages with the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia and speaks broadly to themes of boundaries, identity and intercultural understanding. While the work is imbued with local significance, its symbolic language speaks directly to everyone who passes through Sydney Airport.

Moore was selected from a distinguished field of eight Australian artists by a panel chaired by project curator Barbara Flynn with representatives from Sydney Airport, MCA Australia, City of Sydney and Greater Sydney Commission.

Commissioning Partners



Museum of
Contemporary
Art Australia

Archie Moore: *United Neytions*

Larissa Behrendt

Our identity is shaped from a multitude of influences. Some of these we are born with, such as our cultural heritage; others come from external forces, such as the way in which we are treated within our society. Along the way, how we see ourselves is shaped by our experiences, our reflections, our preferences and our relationships. The tension between the fluid and fixed parts of ourselves is an important theme in the work of Aboriginal artist Archie Moore and particularly in his installation, *United Neytions*.

In putting together flags that represent different Aboriginal nations, Moore drew upon a map of twenty-eight Aboriginal nations that was published in 1900 by anthropologist R.H Mathews. Mathews incorrectly represented the diversity of Aboriginal culture, as in fact over five hundred different Aboriginal nations were sovereign at the time of Australia's colonisation, but Moore takes his reduced schema as the starting point for his own artistic investigations.

Flags are symbols of nationhood. Citizens show pride for their country by waving their national flags; they die fighting under them. Flags have such a special role to play in signifying national identity that there are special rules about when and how they can be displayed. For example, the Australian

flag cannot be raised earlier than first light or lowered later than dusk, has to be the same size as other flags flown, can only fly at night when illuminated, and cannot be allowed to fall or lie on the ground.

The elements of such a sacred object also become important. The colours and the symbols of a flag take on special meaning: for example, the red, white and blue of the Australian flag, and the Southern Cross and Union Jack.

In designing the flags for *United Neytions*, Moore researched symbols that had particular significance to the individual nations represented by Mathews, including designs, body art and dendroglyphs (designs used in tree carving). He looked at the topography of each of the nations and used salient geographical features and important landmarks in his designs. By creating flags that reflect important markers of each individual nation, Moore gives each of them a distinct identity.

Just as we as individuals can have different experiences when we are placed in different situations or contexts, works of art can also change their meaning depending on where they are placed.

Prior to being selected for *The National*, a large survey exhibition of contemporary art held in Sydney, Moore's

flags had appeared around the campus of the University of Queensland. It was a significant statement to exhibit symbols of the sovereignty of Aboriginal nations in the grounds of an elite university—a bastion of Western knowledge that had for so long excluded Aboriginal knowledges and cultures.

The display of the flags in the T1 International Terminal at Sydney Airport gives the flags another layer of meaning. They greet us as we clear security and enter the departure area, going on an adventure or returning home from visiting Australia. In this area, we are in transit.

Art works provoke questions of us as individuals, but they also speak to bigger national questions. *United Neytions*, when displayed in the Sydney International Airport, is on the land of the Bidjigal people. The flags are on Aboriginal land, a reminder that on every part of modern Australia there is an Aboriginal nation that existed for over sixty thousand years,

and that modern Australia has been on this soil for a fraction of the time that Aboriginal nations have.

And so *United Neytions* provokes larger questions about national identity and specifically poses questions about the relationship of modern Australia to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations that have been here for tens of thousands of years. Indigenous cultures are used in many ways to represent Australia and to promote tourism and Australian identity. Think of the opening ceremonies of international events held in Australia or the many ways that Indigenous cultures appear in souvenir shops. On a superficial level, Indigenous cultures are visible.

But it is on a deeper level that the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian requires more thought. What does it mean for Australian identity? Is there a way in which all Australians can see Aboriginal history and culture as part of their history and culture? Australia needs to work on reconciling this relationship. How are Indigenous cultural sites and languages protected and maintained? Why are Indigenous people still the most socio-economically marginalised? Why are there still so many negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people in popular discourse and still so little recognition of the knowledges within Indigenous cultures? What can be learned about Indigenous understandings of fire technology and sustainability of ecosystems, of their knowledge of food technology and the medicinal qualities of our native plants?

THE ABORIGINAL NATIONS OF R.H. MATHEWS (1900)



And these questions provoke other questions. What does the fluidity of Australian identity mean for our current national symbols? This is a particularly relevant conversation when it comes to flags. Australia has often engaged in a conversation about its own national flag. It is not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who question the symbolism of the Australian flag. The Union Jack in the corner of the Australian flag represents a strong link to the colonial past that sits uneasily with Indigenous people. But other Australians also question the relevance of a modern country retaining such strong symbolism of its colonial past. Discussions about Australia needing a new flag circle around. Recently, when *United Neytions* was shown in Canberra, one journalist noted that Moore's Kamilaroi flag could be the new Australian flag. While taking this on would have complications, the suggestion starts an interesting conversation.

As you head off on a new adventure or return home, Archie Moore's *United Neytions* will provoke you to think about the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Australia, the history of colonisation that is a part of the history of this nation, and to consider the resilience of the Aboriginal nations represented in the flags that you see. It also asks you to think about your own identity—what has made you the person you are, what you can learn from others, and how our history shapes us all.

Image

RH Mathews' 'Map Showing Boundaries of the Several Nations of Australia' published in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1900.

Additional Reading

Broker, David. *Archie Moore: 14 Queensland Nations (Nations Imagined by RH Mathews)*. Canberra: Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 2014. Exhibition catalogue.

Foley, Fiona, Louise Martin-Chew and Fiona Nicoll. *Courting Blakness: Recalibrating Knowledge in the Sandstone University*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Art Museum, 2015: 14–21, 118–23. Exhibition catalogue.

Goddard, Angela. *Archie Moore: 1970–2018*. Brisbane: Griffith University Art Museum, 2018. Exhibition catalogue.

Maynard, John. "Archie Moore." *The National: New Australian Art*. Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Carriageworks and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, 2017, 112–13. Exhibition catalogue.

Moore, Archie. Artist talk, *The National: Archie Moore*, <https://vimeo.com/214810579>.

—Interview with Chris Bullock, *Awaye*, ABC RN, 26 March 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/awaye/2016-03-26/7266568>.

Mundine, Djon. "Flags of Convenience: Archie Moore: The Commercial, Redfern, Sydney." *Vault*, no. 3 (April 2013): 32–33.

Thomas, Martin, The *Many Worlds of R.H. Mathews: In Search of an Australian Anthropologist*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2011.

Wyld, Frances. "Archie Moore—14 Queensland Nations: (Nations Imagined by RH Mathews)." *Artlink* 35, no. 2 (2015): 95.

United Neytions

Flag Designs

Kamilaroi Neytion



Constellation of stars is the Seven Sisters (Pleiades). Colours: blue background (night sky), others suggestive of the Australian national flag and the Aboriginal flag (sun, earth, people) combined.

Arrinda Neytion



Central desert petroglyph. Colours: red ochre (earth), black (people).

Dippil Neytion



Anonymous constellation of stars with 5, 6, 7, 8 points respectively. Colours clockwise from top left: green (forest), black (people), red (possibly a design decision), dark blue (night sky), white (sand), yellow (sun), pale blue (day sky), red ochre (earth). Divides vertically into day and night

Kogai Neytion



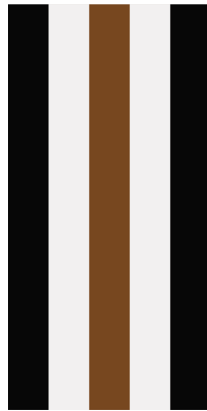
Irregular shapes are a ceremonial white stone circle. Colours left to right: black (people), green (forest), dark blue (sea), red ochre (desert), orange (sand). Very large land area. Coast to forest to desert.

Inchalachee Neytion



Red ochre (earth) with native lotus flower. Colours may be derived from shield design. (Artist comment: Inchalachee sounds like a Native American name.)

Koonjan Neytion



Shield design from Atherton Tableland. (Artist comment: Tony Albert identified it. Atherton Tablelands where Tony Albert is from.)

Joongoonjie Neytion



Shield design from northern Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. Colours: blue (sea), dark green (forest), red ochre (earth), white (clouds).

Goothanto Neytion



Cylindrical cloud formation known as 'morning glory', unique to the southern Gulf of Carpentaria. The shape is the Aboriginal symbol for cloud. Colours left to right: dark green (shrubs), red ochre (desert), dark green (shrubs), yellow (sand), pale blue (sky), dark blue (water). Transition of colours shows the perspective looking north towards the Gulf.

Mycoolon Neytion



Black shape is Battle Mountain, Mount Isa, where Kalkadoon people fought white people in a guerrilla war for ten years. They ruled the 'emu-foot' province, marking their clan territory with an emu or crane foot painted onto rocks and trees or carved into the hard granite. Red shape is the symbol for emu. Colours: Red ochre (land), pale blue (sea).

Warkemon Neytion



Shield design. Colours: top to bottom: green (forest), black (people), dark blue (sea). Dark brown, ochre and white shield design.

Kooiimerburra Neytion



Hand-print motif from rock painting. Colours from thumb to palm, clockwise: pale blue (sky), dark blue (sea), dark green (forest), white (cloud), ochre (earth), yellow (beach).

Parnkalla Neytion



Concentric circles are waterholes. Colours left to right: black (people), dark brown, ochre, red (three shades of earth), yellow (sun). Different colours of earth from Google Earth.

Yowerawarrika Neytion



Colours: black (people), yellow (sun), green (shrubs), red (earth). Arrangement is an attempt at a typical flag design.

Barkunjee Neytion



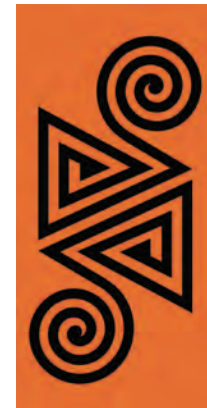
Two waterholes with a path between them; a map of how to get to a waterhole. Stripe colours from left: ochre (earth), dark green (forest), black (people).

Adjadurah Neytion



Shield design. Colours: pale blue (sea), dark blue (Lake Alexandrina, South Australia), pale green (shrubs), dark green (forest), red (earth), black (people).

Wiradjuri Neytion



Dendroglyph pattern, stylised. (Artist comment: Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi are the only two areas to produce dendroglyphs. They are neighbouring nations.)

Yeeda Neytion



Biggest nation on the map, Western Australia. White spiral from petroglyph design. Colours: dark red (earth), pale blue (sea), black (people).

Narrinyeri Neytion



Body art design. Colours: the same as those on the Aboriginal flag—red (earth), yellow (sun), black (people), plus white.

Darkinung Neytion



Shield design.

Kurnai Neytion



Shield design.

Bangarang Neytion



Petroglyph design. Colours: blue (sea), green (forest).

Booandik Neytion



Petroglyph design. Colours: green (forest), blue (sea).

Thurrawall Neytion



Shield design. Colours derived or imagined from shield design.

Thangatty Neytion



Rock art motif. Colours: green (forest), yellow (sand), pale blue (sea).

Ulperra Neytion



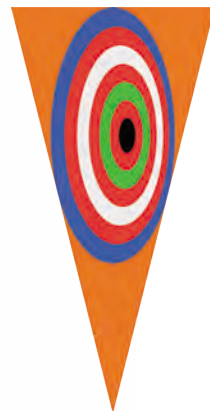
Rock art. White paint on an ochre cliff face.

Tardarick Neytion



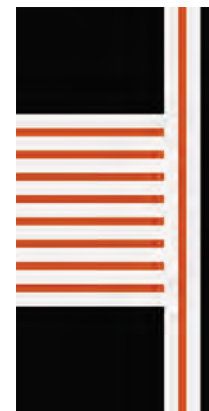
Body art design. Viewed horizontally, design relates to shoulder and chest area. Brown, orange and white ochre (body painting) on black (skin).

Kookatha Neytion



Triangular flag design. Colours: orange (beach), blue (sea), white (ochre), red (earth), green (shrubs), black (people). Concentric circles represent Woomera.

Wombya Neytion



Body art design. Shoulders and torso, stylised. White and red ochre (body painting) on black (skin).

Archie Moore

United Neytions 2014–18

Polyester, nylon, zinc-plated alloy

28 flags in two sizes:

456 × 228 cm; 228 × 228 cm

Stainless steel frame: 2000 × 1700 cm

Photo: Jessica Maurer

Archie Moore

b. 1970, Toowoomba,
Queensland

Bachelor of Arts (Visual
Arts), Queensland
University of
Technology, 1998

Selected exhibitions

Archie Moore: 1970–2018,
curated by Angela
Goddard, Griffith
University Art Museum,
Brisbane, 2018

Defying Empire: National
Indigenous Art
Triennial, curated by
Tina Baum, National
Gallery of Australia,
Canberra, 2017

The National: New
Australian Art,
Carriageworks, Sydney,
2017

20th Biennale of Sydney,
curated by Stephanie
Rosenthal, Royal
Botanic Gardens,
Sydney, 2016

Collections

Griffith University Art
Museum, Brisbane

Jumbunna Indigenous House
of Learning, UTS, Sydney

Monash University Museum
of Art, Melbourne

National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra

Newcastle Art Gallery,
New South Wales

Queensland Art Gallery |
Gallery of Modern Art,
Brisbane

Queensland University of
Technology Art Museum,
Brisbane

The University of Queensland
Art Museum, Brisbane

University of Technology,
Sydney

Archie Moore is represented by
The Commercial
thecommercialgallery.com

Commissioning Partners



Museum of
Contemporary
Art Australia

