



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE



# Cultural Commons

Strategy 2020-2025



*Cultural Commons is an inspired, visionary attempt to bring to life the unique artistic, archival and cultural wealth inherited by the University from generations of donors, philanthropists and alumni. It aims to integrate and embed more deeply our cultural treasures in the research and learning that takes place across the disciplines.*

– Professor Duncan Maskell, Vice-Chancellor (15 July 2020)

Image: Tom Nicholson, *Towards a glass monument...*  
[detail] 2017-19



## Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land on which we work, the Boonwurrung, Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples and the Yorta Yorta nation. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other First Nations people this document may come across.

Image: Maree Clarke, *Ancestral Memory* 2019  
Installation view of visitors at Old Quad

## Foreword

For tens of thousands of years the lands and waterways of the Yarra and Port Phillip regions have been walked and cared for by men, women and children of the Kulin nations, among them the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung peoples. To the north and east Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung people have likewise nurtured the lands and rivers of central Victoria. The continuing culture of our First Peoples, the first sovereign nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, offers a fertile and deep-rooted vision of human values embedded in and with a particular geographic place.

As we consider our notion of place, The University of Melbourne seeks more than just close collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands peoples. As far as possible, we seek to embrace the values-based outlook of those who have nurtured lands and culture throughout millennia – passing knowledge from generation to generation, encouraging diversity in the earth, caring deeply about place.

This goes to the core purpose of the University as a place for curating, challenging, creating and disseminating knowledge. We will work together and alongside communities of origin to provide a platform for students, staff members and the wider community to deepen their understanding of contemporary and traditional cultures, values and knowledge.



# The Cultural Commons

The University’s cultural commons shows an enduring relationship with communities of origin and tells a uniquely Australian story. It honors 65,000 years of First People’s knowledge, and demonstrates 200 years of engaging with European heritage, generations of migrant stories and a rich blend of contemporary experiences, art and knowledge.

Our Cultural Commons includes:

- First Peoples’ collections, including the Leonhard Adam Collection from Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Asia, America and Africa and the Donald Thomson Collection with artefacts from over 90 communities of origin
- A historic and contemporary collection of cultural and scientific significance, valued at more than \$350m
- Dynamic and enlivening infrastructure at Southbank and Parkville, that adds cultural capital to our city
- A rich and enduring legacy of student theatre and the Melbourne Theatre Company, drawing audiences of more than 250,000 people
- A cultural footprint beyond city and state through regional campuses and international partnerships

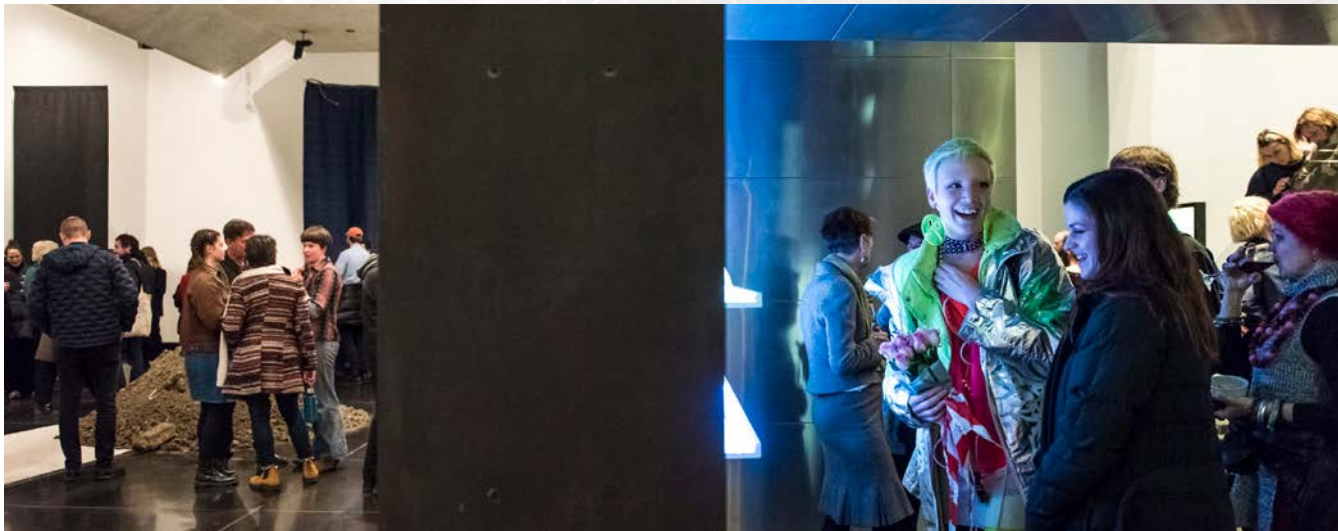
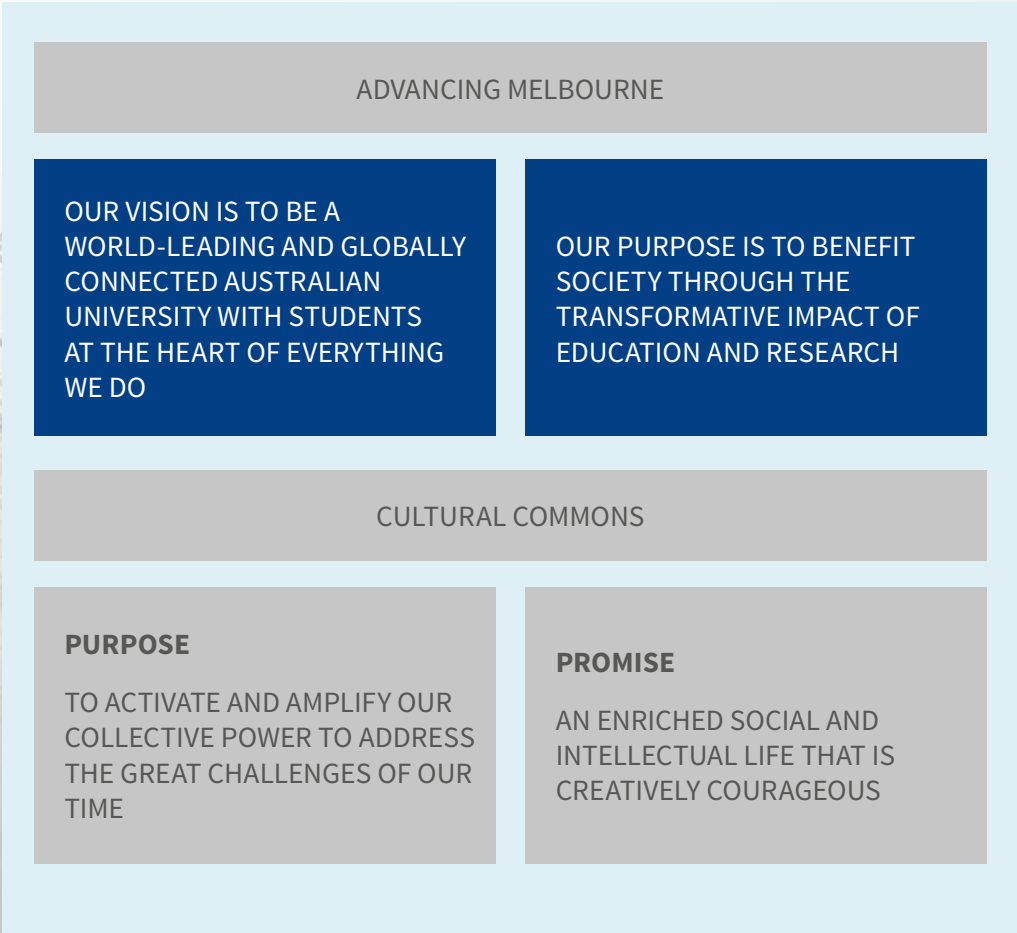


Image: Installation view of The Garden of Forking Paths: Mira Gojak & Takehito Koganezawa, Buxton Contemporary 2018–2019, with Mira Gojak, Silence 2005 (foreground); Floating eclipse 2013-14 (background), photography Christian Capurro

# Cultural Commons Strategy

*What we value, hold, discover and create and what collectively helps us to understand what it means to be human.*

*We do this together and with respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait laws and customs.*







# Cultural Commons outcomes

ADVANCING MELBOURNE	CULTURAL COMMONS GOALS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
PLACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Connect, engage and inspire</b> our communities</li> <li>■ Ensure our Museums and collections are appropriately cared for, supported and integral to <b>Australia's cultural fabric</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Our cultural collections and venues are valued and help shape our sense of place</li> <li>■ Communities of origin are integral to the care and custodianship of First People's collections</li> <li>■ Our campus and on-line cultural experiences reflect our place, and build our reputation as a globally connected creative university</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reputation</li> </ul>
COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Enrich the social and intellectual life</b> of our students and communities in order to empower them with the skills, resilience, courage and creativity to address the great challenges of our time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The University cultural offer and environment attract a diverse audience and the best talent from Australia and around the world</li> <li>■ The University is known as a hub for diverse and influential creative voices and an exchange of knowledge and ideas</li> <li>■ Our online community is connected though compelling cultural content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Student Outcomes</li> <li>■ Globally recognised high quality research</li> <li>■ Staff Outcomes</li> </ul>
DISCOVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provide a <b>catalyst for innovation</b> in research and teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We provide innovative research opportunities and connections for our students to a global community of scholarship</li> <li>■ We work with Australia's First Peoples to embed perspectives and values in our cultural work</li> <li>■ We are known as a leader in innovation in learning and teaching methods supported by excellent cultural infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Community impact</li> <li>■ Evidence of Strategic Engagement</li> </ul>
EDUCATION		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We are a collaborator and inspire new research and enhance interdisciplinary connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Financial and Environmental Sustainability</li> </ul>
GLOBAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Attract international students, researchers and collaborators through our cultural assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The University's cultural assets and associated scholarship are recognised nationally and internationally</li> <li>■ We build a strong and vibrant network of national and international University collaborators</li> <li>■ Our model for museological practice is admired and adopted by other leading Universities across the world</li> </ul>	

Image: Installation view of a visitor with the *Biometric Mirror* by Lucy McRae, Niels Wouters & Nick Smith (Australia), Science Gallery Melbourne

# Theory of Change: Cultural Commons

CULTURAL COMMONS GOAL	INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES	OUTCOMES	ACTIVITIES	INPUTS
Ensure our Museums and collections are appropriately cared for, supported and integral to <b>Australia's cultural fabric</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop our precincts and campuses to contribute to social, economic and cultural wealth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our cultural collections and venues are valued and at the forefront of our sense of place</li> <li>Communities of origin are integral to the care and custodianship of First People's collections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and align policies, protocols and guidelines to reflect and recognise Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights, and build strategies to increase Indigenous opportunity and engagement</li> <li>Establish an integrated operational structure to support diversity, collaboration, efficiency and sustainability</li> <li>Ensure an appropriate and sustainable model of Governance for the Museums and Collections Department</li> <li>Develop and implement a Collections Strategy and associated business case</li> <li>Build philanthropic, Government and commercial support for the UoM museums and collections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate University representation on PCG groups</li> <li>Appropriate representation of First Peoples on governing and advisory bodies, including participation of communities of origin in the governance and management of cultural heritage</li> <li>Workforce plan in place and ensure team has appropriate expertise</li> <li>Establish team processes and culture, including focusing on cultural safety</li> <li>Build a culturally competent team</li> <li>Communication and engagement with University staff, leadership and students and with external audiences and stakeholders</li> <li>Work closely with Advancement and build an appropriate pipeline of support</li> </ul>
<b>Connect, engage and inspire</b> our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance reconciliation and reciprocal learning with Indigenous peoples and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our campus and on-line cultural experiences reflect our place, and build our reputation as a globally connected creative university</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver compelling platforms to communicate Cultural Commons and the Museums and Collections venues, online and on-site</li> <li>Ensure all venues and programs are student-focused</li> <li>Develop a model for engagement with and management of First Peoples' collections that recognises and reflects First People's rights in relation to their cultural heritage</li> <li>Engage cross-faculty leadership, students and alumni</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication and engagement with University staff, leadership and students and with external audiences, alumni and stakeholders</li> <li>Audience development plans in place</li> <li>Engagement plans in place</li> <li>Appropriate representation of First Peoples on governing and advisory bodies, including participation of communities of origin in the governance and management of cultural heritage</li> </ul>
Enrich the social and intellectual life of our students and communities in order to empower them with the skills, resilience, courage and creativity to address the great challenges of our time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultivate a culture and environment that will be attractive to the best talent from around the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The University cultural assets and environment attract and retain the best talent from Australia and around the world</li> <li>The University is known as a hub for diverse and influential voices and the creation and exchange of knowledge and ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver an engaging, student-focused program of exhibitions and events</li> <li>Embed collaboration and student-led events into programming</li> <li>Build a pathway program to engage school students in University life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audience and student engagement plans in place</li> <li>Ensure processes and pathways for student inclusion in Cultural Commons projects</li> </ul>
Provide a <b>catalyst for innovation</b> in research and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support cross-disciplinary, innovation and collaboration</li> <li>Intensify our commitment to an exceptional student experience that continues beyond graduation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We provide innovative research opportunities and connections for our students to a global community of scholarship</li> <li>We work with Australia's First Peoples to embed perspectives and values in our cultural work</li> <li>We are known as a leader in innovation in learning and teaching methods supported by excellent cultural infrastructure</li> <li>We actively contribute to new research and enhance interdisciplinary connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver a cohesive and vibrant academic program across all venues and collections</li> <li>Develop a best practice case study for collection integration within the community of scholarship</li> <li>Build a model of research engagement that is mutually transformative, enriching the cultural commons through research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with academics, researchers and students</li> <li>Benchmarking – national and international</li> <li>Program review and analysis</li> <li>Capture and enhance research benefits to museums and collections</li> </ul>
Attract international students, researchers and collaborators through our cultural assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen relationships with a global community of scholars, partners and alumni, and ensure that curriculum is informed by a global range of perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The University's cultural assets and their integral place in teaching, learning and research are recognised nationally and internationally</li> <li>We build a strong and vibrant network of national and international University collaborators</li> <li>Our model for museological practice is admired and adopted by other leading Universities across the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broaden our high-level advocacy – identify our global partners</li> <li>Develop an exemplar model for the management, accessibility and engagement with collections in University museums</li> <li>Develop a model for collections management and engagement that recognises First People's cultural and intellectual property rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International benchmarking and network building</li> <li>Best practice modelling of national and international communities of practice for each museum</li> <li>Engagement with communities of origin including participation in the governance and management of cultural heritage</li> </ul>



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