A critique of the natural artefact: *anthropology, art and museology*

**Tuesday 24 September 2013** 6 – 7pm, followed by light refreshments

**Professor Nicholas Thomas** Professor of Historical Anthropology and Director Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA), University of Cambridge, UK

**The Seventh Anthony Forge Memorial Lecture**

**Conference Room** 1.02, Level 1, Sir Roland Wilson Building, Building #120, McCoy Circuit, ANU

Forty years ago Anthony Forge edited *Primitive Art and Society*, a foundational collection for the anthropology of art. In introducing the book, Forge noted that the study of art had been neglected, a casualty of the lack of dialogue between mainstream anthropology and the museums that had once been, but were no longer, central to the discipline. Since then, a rich ethnography of art has emerged, but it has remained unclear what museums can possibly contribute. This lecture offers a fresh assessment of museum collections, of the museum object, of the museum as method, of the capacity of the museum to empower not only the anthropology of art, but anthropology, conceived ambitiously as a project of social and cultural understanding.

Nicholas Thomas, who has been Director of MAA since 2006, is an anthropologist and historian. He visited the Pacific Islands first in 1984 to research his PhD thesis on the Marquesas Islands, later worked in Fiji and New Zealand, as well as in many archives and museum collections in Europe, north America, and the Pacific itself. He was the foundation Director of the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at ANU.

His books include *Entangled Objects* (1991), *Oceanic Art* (1995), *Discoveries: the voyages of Captain James Cook* (2003), and *Islanders: the Age of Empire in the Pacific* (2010), which was awarded the Wolfson History Prize.

*The Anthony Forge Memorial Lecture aims to celebrate the achievements and vision of Professor Forge, who was foundation Professor of Anthropology in the Faculty of Arts at ANU.*