



La Perouse Museum



1 April - 16 October 2022

FREE ENTRY


Randwick City Council
a sense of community

La Perouse Museum
1542 Anzac Parade, La Perouse
9093 6190, lp@randwick.nsw.gov.au
randwick.nsw.gov.au

Opening hours
Wednesday, Friday | 10am - 2pm
Saturday, Sunday | 10am - 4pm

Randwick City Council and La Perouse Museum acknowledge the Bidjigal and the Gadigal people who occupied the Sydney Coast, as the Traditional Custodians of the area on which the Museum stands and serves. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging.

French Explorers – Voyages to Australia introduces some of the great 18th and 19th century French explorers who visited these shores. This exhibition celebrates one of the La Perouse Museum's key storytelling themes; European Arrivals and the French Connection. Through rare objects, archives, costumes and even a ship cabin installation, this show chronicles the personalities of the men – and women – who played a major part in the strong ongoing connections between France and Australia.

This exhibition has been made possible with the generous support of the following individuals and organisations: Dr Edward Duyker OAM, FAHA; Anne Boillon, Consule Générale, Consulat Général de France à Sydney; Joël Hakim; The Friends of the Lapérouse Museum Inc.; the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA); John Mullen and the Silent World Foundation Museum, Thomas Creative; the artist Paul Mason.



"Lesueur and Péron's cabin, French Explorers" Photography by David Thomas

Jeanne Baret



Voyage 1766 - 1768

aboard Bougainville's ship Étoile

Jeanne Baret is perhaps one of the greatest discoveries of this exhibition. She was the first woman to sail around the entire globe in a time when Navy regulations strictly prohibited a woman from boarding a ship.

Baret was a botanist in her own right but was also the housekeeper, nurse and lover of botanist Philibert Commerson. Commerson was invited by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville to join his 1766-69 expedition but was in poor health. Unable to join him aboard as his nurse, she dressed as 'Jean' and became Commerson's male assistant instead.

There are differing accounts on how she was discovered. Some say she was immediately recognised as a woman by the Tahitians while others report the sailors had suspected her for some time and forcibly stripped her while ashore at Papua New Guinea. Either way, by the time the expedition passed through Australia's Great Barrier Reef and reached Mauritius in 1768 her identity was known to de Bougainville. As commander, he must have been relieved to escape official censure from France when she and Commerson decided to

remain on the island. Commerson died in 1773 and Jeanne returned to France the next year, thus completing her full circumnavigation of the globe.



Jeanne Baret, 1817, artist unknown. In *Navigazioni di Cook pel grande oceano e intorno al globo, 1816-1817*, Milano: Sonzogno e Comp. Courtesy of State Library of NSW.

Louis François Marie Aleno de Saint-Aloüarn



Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne



Voyage

Aloüarn 1771 - 1772 / Dufresne 1771 - 1772

Gros Ventre / Marquis de Castries and Mascarin

Dufresne and Saint-Aloüarn play a seminal part in the story of the French in Australia. They were the earliest French explorers to land in Australia.

Dufresne reached Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in early March 1772 and was the first European explorer to meet the Indigenous peoples of Tasmania, before they were devastated by the impact of colonialism. Close behind Dufresne came St Aloüarn, who set off in 1771 with fellow explorer Yves-Joseph de Kerguelen-Trémarec primarily to search for the mysterious Terra Australis (Antarctica). However, they were separated by bad weather and while Kerguelen turned back, St Aloüarn sailed on and anchored at Cape Leeuwin (Western Australia) in March 1772, just two weeks after du Fresne.

These events marked the beginning of an enduring French legacy. 2022 is the 250th anniversary since these first French explorers landed.

St Aloüarn
attempted to make
a claim of sovereignty -
ultimately unsuccessful
- over Western
Australia.

Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de Lapérouse



Voyage 1785 - 1788

on La Boussole and L'Astrolabe

The legacy of Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de Lapérouse, spans the globe.

Lapérouse's mandate, given by King Louis XVI, was influenced by the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment. He was to lead a voyage of scientific and political discovery and to complete James Cook's unfinished mapping of the Pacific.

He was one of the first Europeans to explore the coasts of North America, Alaska and Russia, and regularly sent instalments of journals, maps, artworks, letters and dispatches back home throughout his voyage.

However, his disappearance after leaving Botany Bay in 1788 is a key part of his story. From letters sent back with the British, Lapérouse's superiors were aware he planned to visit New Caledonia before turning home, but France grew worried when a year passed with no news. It is said that the last words of King Louis XVI on the way to the Guillotine were, 'Any news of Lapérouse?'

His disappearance became one of the greatest mysteries of the age and was instrumental in drawing French explorers out to the Pacific in a quest to find him.

Lapérouse was not the first French explorer to die on his voyage. However, he was the first to have his whole expedition, ships and all, disappear without a trace. We now know Lapérouse was shipwrecked off the coast of Vanikoro in mid-1788.



Bottle of Lapérouse – This unassuming object in the Museum's collection, found in an Aboriginal midden represents a profound meeting of cultures. Photo by Glenn Duffus.

Lapérouse: The Adventure Continues

A message from the Consule Générale, Consulat Général de France à Sydney

Lapérouse is arguably the most brilliant and tragic figure in 18th century Pacific exploration. The expedition he led was the biggest scientific exploration ever planned by France, epitomizing the search for progress through science and discovery during the Enlightenment when the mapping of the world echoed the mapping of human knowledge, or Encyclopaedia. The disappearance of La Boussole and L'Astrolabe after they left Sydney endowed the expedition with a mythical aura. Many expeditions followed in search of Lapérouse.

In 1864 a street of the Haussmannian Paris, close to the Champs-Élysées was given his name. This original street sign of this "Rue de La Pérouse" is made of enamelled lava manufactured in the Manufacture de Sèvres.

Two centuries later, the legend of Lapérouse and the values of adventure and scientific discovery are more than alive. In February 2022, a project was launched at the One Ocean Summit in Brest, to build a replica of the frigate La Boussole, an idea supported by the President of the Republic of France.

The adventure continues...

Anne Boillon
Consul General de France
Sydney, 14 February 2022



Parisian Street Sign "Rue La Pérouse" (c. 1864). Gift of the Consulate General of France. La Perouse Museum Collection.

Nicolas Thomas Baudin



Voyage 1800 - 1804

on Le Géographe and Le Naturaliste

Nicolas Baudin is one of the most famous of all the French explorers who visited Australia, and with good reason.

Under orders from Napoléon, Baudin led a voyage of discovery and national pride that resulted in an enduring scientific and cultural legacy for both France and Australia.

The four-year voyage returned with thousands of specimens that were later donated to the National Museum of Natural History in Paris. This scientific bounty led to a greater understanding of Australia's unique biodiversity. Additionally, the expedition's charts, published in 1811, produced the first complete map of Australia's coastline.

But Baudin's expedition had problems as well as success. There was a divide and a lack of understanding between the new profession of 'scientist' onboard and the sailors. Baudin was caught between both worlds as he was from a working-class background, but had the status of ship commander.

This conflict, and widespread ill-health, amongst the crew resulted in the voyage being cut short. Tragically, Baudin died of tuberculosis in Mauritius on the return journey. In the end only three of the original 24 scientists returned to France in 1804.



Empress Josephine's Coastal Profile Reliquary (2017)

Paul Mason

Kauri, pewter, nylon, Kimberly coastal rocks.

40 x 30 x 25cm

*For Sale – contact La Perouse
Museum Reception*

Many of the specimens from Nicolas Baudin's 1800 – 1804 expedition were sent to the Empress Josephine's personal gardens at Malmaison.



Rose de Freycinet



Voyage 1817 - 1820

aboard her husband's ship L'Uranie

40 years after Jeanne Baret comes another remarkable woman in maritime history. Rose de Freycinet secretly boarded her husband's ship L'Uranie and recorded her experiences in various letters and journal entries which were eventually published.

Rose married the naval officer Louis Claude de Saulces de Freycinet in 1814. In 1816, Freycinet's proposal to command the first scientific global circumnavigation since Baudin was accepted by the French Navy. Determined not to be separated, the devoted newlyweds hatched a plan to smuggle Rose aboard dressed as a man.

Unlike Jeanne, Rose had the support of the commander of the voyage; her husband Louis. Her deception did not last long and soon became public knowledge. Though she disobeyed Navy regulations, the Uranie did not reach a French port for more than a year and so the Navy was unable to discipline them both. The public, on the other hand, was delighted with the romance of her story.

Her private correspondence to her dear friend Caroline de Nanteuil was eventually published in 1927, giving a uniquely personal insight into her adventures. After nursing her husband through a cholera outbreak in Paris, she herself succumbed in 1832.



Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville



Voyage 1826 - 1829

on Astrolabe

While commanding the ship Astrolabe, named in memory of Lapérouse, d'Urville helped solve one of the greatest maritime mysteries of the age.

D'Urville had visited Botany Bay in 1824 where he re-marked the gravesite of Père Receveur, the priest from Lapérouse's fateful voyage. In 1827 d'Urville was in Tasmania, part way through a new voyage to further explore Australia and the South Pacific, when news reached him of an Irish trader discovering the wreck of a French ship off the Solomon Islands. D'Urville altered course and arrived in Vanikoro the next year where he confirmed the wreck as L'Astrolabe, second ship in the long-lost Lapérouse expedition. Whilst there he salvaged an anchor and a canon, and made the first educated guess on how the wreck had happened and where the other ship, La Boussole, might lie.

D'Urville returned to France not only with news of Lapérouse, but with over two thousand specimens of flora and fauna and extensively revised charts of the South Seas. His next expedition in 1840, resulting in his discovery of land in Antarctica, was the last major French

expedition of exploration. He died eighteen months later in the Versailles rail accident, France's first railway disaster, bringing the legacy of the French explorers to a close.



Replica Sword Hilt, from the 1826 original.
Courtesy of the Friends of the Lapérouse Museum.

Hopkins River Trade Reliquary (2014) (reconstructed)

Paul Mason

Diorite (Gunditjmara country),
casuarina, Australian cedar,
brass, gold leaf.

53 x 44 x 17cm

Private Collection

The La
Perouse Museum
invited the artist
Paul Mason to contribute
some of his extraordinary
work to this exhibition.
We extend our gratitude
to Mr Mason.



Hyacinthe Yves Philippe Potentien, baron de Bougainville



Voyage 1824 - 1826

on Thétis and Espérance

Hyacinthe de Bougainville commissioned the construction of the Lapérouse Monument that still stands proudly on the La Perouse Headland today. Whilst in Sydney for three months during his global voyage, he made a pilgrimage to Lapérouse's landing place, then known as the French Garden.

In his diary de Bougainville wrote, "As soon as I had heard that there were relics of the La Perouse's [sic] stopover in Botany Bay, I had hit upon the idea of erecting a monument to our illustrious and unfortunate compatriot on the very

spot from which his last message had been dispatched." After being granted permission by Governor Brisbane, he laid the Foundation Stone in September 1825 and the monument was completed in 1829.

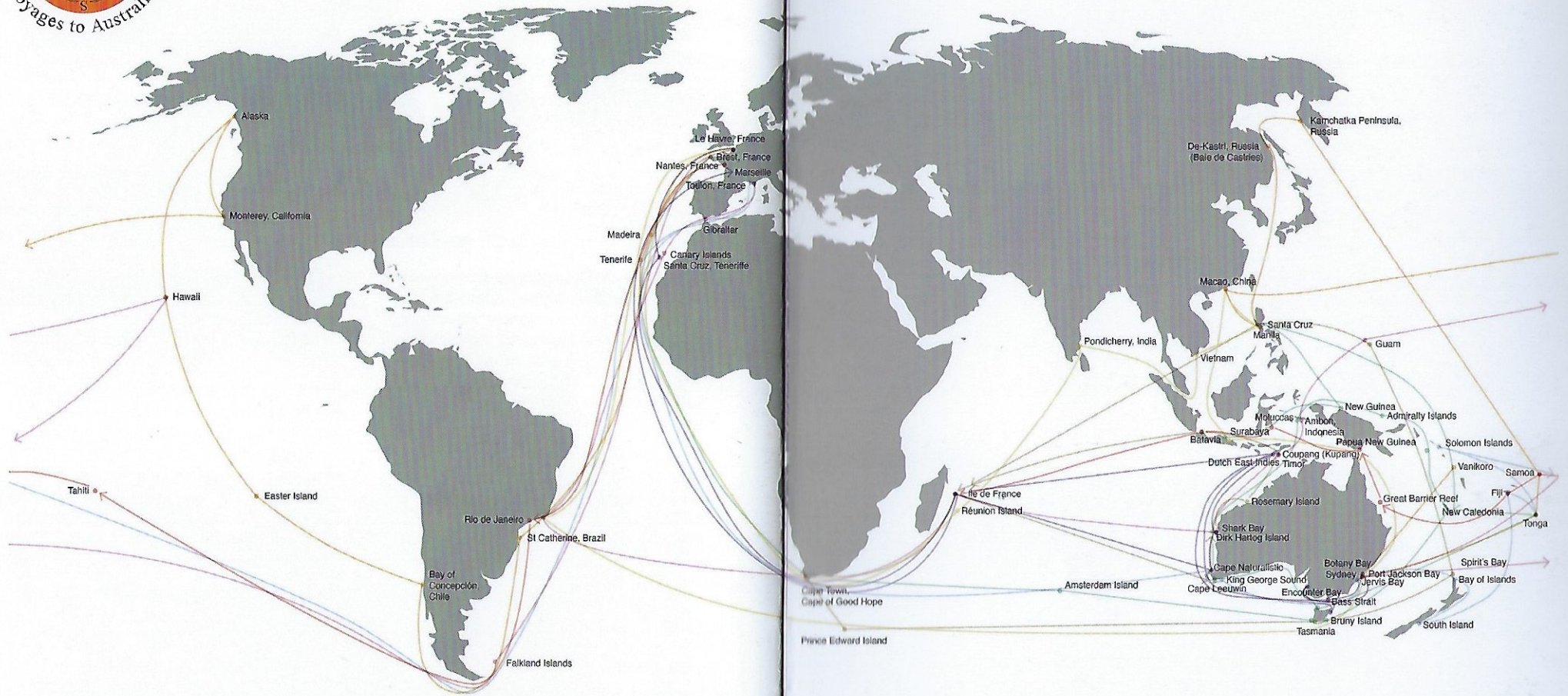
De Bougainville was also connected to other famous French expeditions. He had been a midshipman in Baudin's expedition twenty years earlier, and his father Louis-Antoine de Bougainville was the first Frenchman to circumnavigate the world – with Jeanne Baret disguised aboard.



Monument Eleve a la memoire de La Perouse, 1825. Lithograph. La Perouse Museum Collection



The Combined Voyages of the French Explorers from 1766 - 1829



Jeanne Baret
Voyage 1766 - 1768

**Louis Francois Marie
Aleno de Saint-Aloïarn**
Voyage 1771 - 1772

**Marc-Joseph
Marion du Fresne**
Voyage 1771 - 1772

**Jean-François de Galaup,
Comte de Lapérouse**
Voyage 1785 - 1788

**Joseph-Antoine Raymond
Bruni d'Entrecasteaux**
Voyage 1791 - 1793

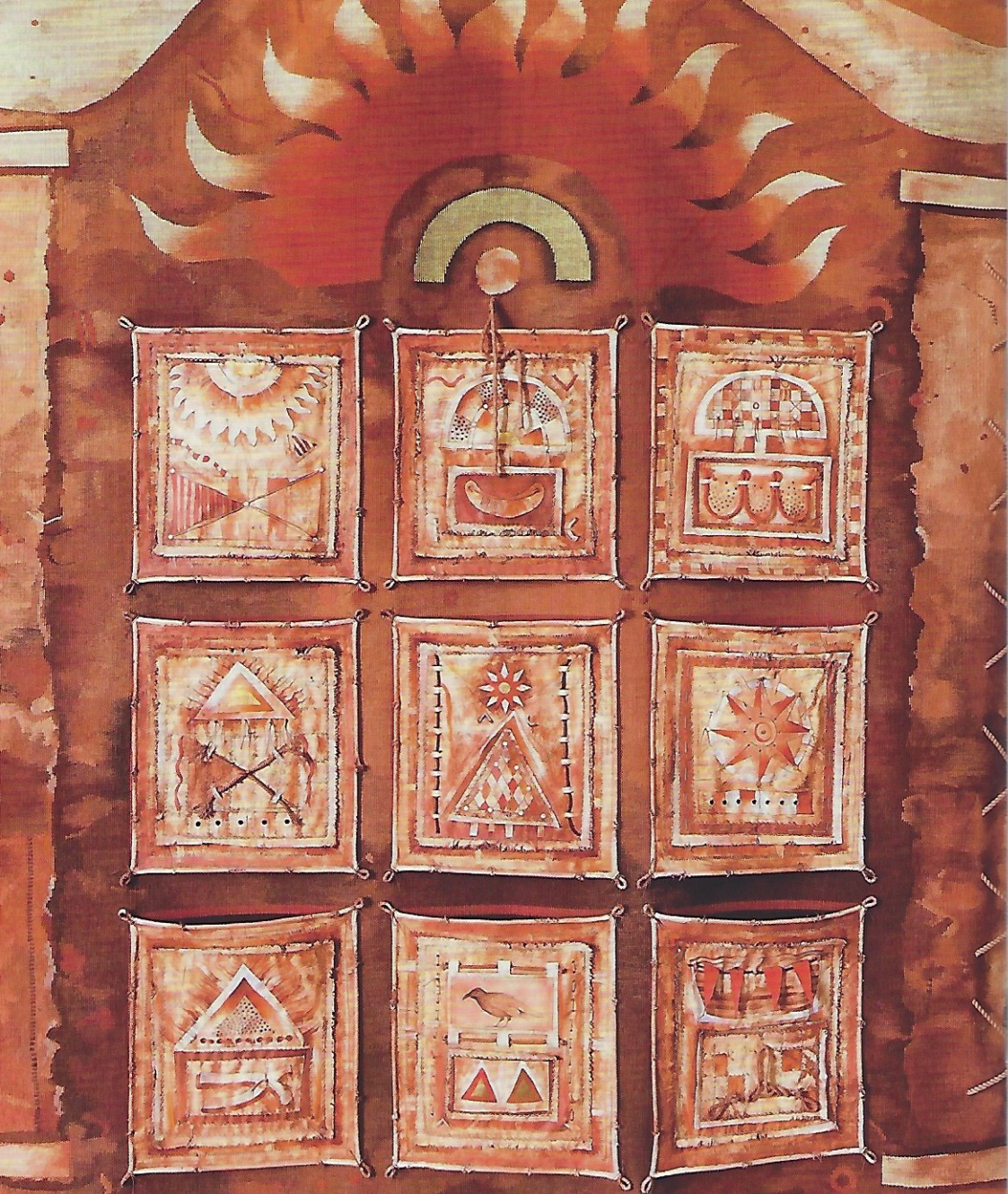
Nicolas Thomas Baudin
Voyage 1800 - 1804

Rose de Freycinet
Voyage 1817 - 1819

**Hyacinthe Yves Philippe Potentien,
baron de Bougainville**
Voyage 1768 - 1769

**Jules Sébastien César
Dumont d'Urville**
Voyage 1826 - 1828





Fragments du voyage de Laperouse, 1987-1992 (Detail). John Winch. Tapestry, mixed media. La Perouse Museum Collection.