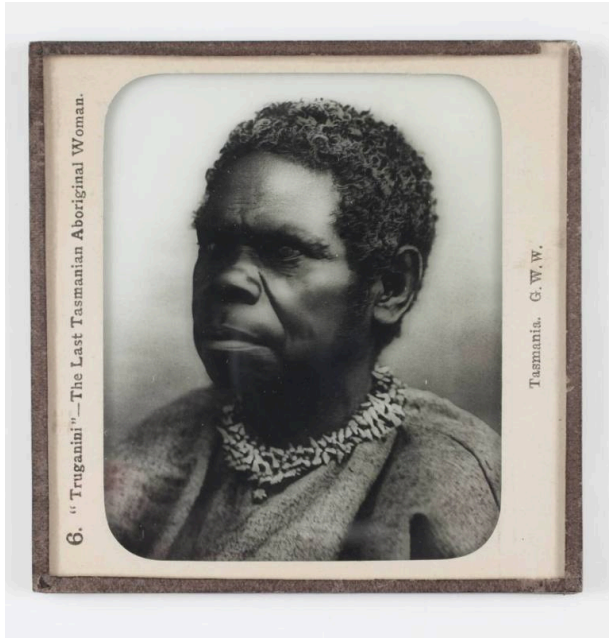


Basic Detail Report



00051330

Title

Portrait of Truganini wearing a maireener shell necklace

Date

c 1900

Primary Maker

G W Wilson & Co

Medium

Glass lantern slide - two pieces of glass taped together at edge, one holds photographic image in emulsion.

Dimensions

Overall: 82 x 82 x 4 mm

Name

Magic lantern glass slide

History

Truganini (also spelled Trugernanner, Trucanini) was born about 1812 in Van Diemen's Land on the western side of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and was a Palawa woman from the Oyster Bay area. Her father was Mangerner, one of the leaders. During this period of Tasmanian history there was significant tension and violence between the European settlers and the Indigenous population when traditional hunting grounds were taken and turned into grazing and farm land. With the advantage of guns, the Europeans killed many of the Indigenous inhabitants and relations continued to deteriorate. By 1829 it is thought that Truganini's mother had been killed by sailors, her uncle was shot by a soldier, her sister was abducted and killed by sealers, and Paraweena, a young man who was meant to have been her husband, was killed by timber-cutters. There were even suggestions that Truganini herself had been raped, though accounts of these atrocities vary. She took Wooraddy as her husband at Bruny Island mission in 1829. George Augustus Robinson was an English-born colonist who was sympathetic to the Aboriginal plight and was appointed to resettle the Indigenous population on missions in an attempt at conciliation. He developed settlements at places such as Flinders Island in order to Christianise and assimilate the Indigenous community. However, he was also interested in the ethnography of the Indigenous people and between 1830-1834 Truganini acted as guide and instructor in the language and customs of the Palawa people for Robinson. She also became an intermediary between Robinson and various Tasmanian Indigenous communities, encouraging many of the remaining Aborigines to move to the settlements and missions in an attempt to provide them with some protection whilst attempting to still hold to traditional ways as much as possible. Robinson's program was unsuccessful, inherently paternalistic in mindset

resulting in many choosing not to accept European culture, as well as a large number dying from disease in the missions. Truganini became disillusioned with Robinson and his attempt at conciliation, eventually returning to Oyster Cove in 1847 a few years after Woorraddy's death. Though she lived under the guardianship of the Dandridge family, she returned to traditional activities such as diving for shellfish and hunting in nearby bushland. Two days after she died, Truganini's body was buried at the Cascades Female Factory (penitentiary) in Hobart at midnight on 10 May 1876. In December 1878 her skeleton was exhumed with the authority of the government by the Royal Society of Tasmania to be scientifically studied, in direct opposition to wishes she expressed before her death. The skeleton was placed in the Tasmanian Museum and put on display between 1904 and 1947. It was reputed that she was the last full blood Tasmanian Aboriginal, a title used in the caption for this image. After lobbying from the Indigenous community in 1976 her remains were returned and cremated and her ashes scattered over the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. In 2002 remains of 16 Tasmanian Aborigines were returned from the British and Melbourne museums which reputedly included hair from Truganini. This portrait was originally taken by Charles Alfred Woolley, a Tasmanian-born photographer and sketcher. His most well known portraits were of the five surviving Oyster Cove Indigenous inhabitants taken in August 1866 which also included William Lanne (King Billy). The portraits were exhibited later that year at the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition and at the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition in 1875, and engravings of the portraits were published in James Bonwick's 'The Last of the Tasmanians' (1870) and Enrico Giglioli's 'I Tasmaniani' (1871). Several sets of these photographs survive as well as copies made by another Tasmanian photographer, J W Beattie, around 1900. This example was published in a lantern slide format by Scottish firm G W Wilson. A full set of the portraits is held by the State Library of NSW and the Truganini portraits are also held by the National Library of Australia. In this portrait Truganini is shown wearing a maireener shell necklace, the production of which is a traditional cultural activity specific to Indigenous Tasmanian women. Maireener and rice shells are the most commonly used and can only be collected by hand at specific times of the year at places such as Bruny and Flinders Islands (Tasmania). They are then cleaned, left to dry and carefully pierced to be strung by hand into various patterns. The original necklaces, threaded on kangaroo sinew, were valuable and used for trade, and following European settlement could be sold for money. Europeans also introduced small fine steel tools, allowing smaller shells to be pierced which are now used most frequently. The necklaces became significantly longer, from short necklets (as seen in the Truganini portrait) to long strands that could be looped around the neck and were made using cotton following the changing trends of the new European market. In the late 19th and early 20th century there was a significant commercial demand for these necklaces, but with a changing ecology and higher demand this resulted in a diminished marine population. Today this tradition has continued under the guidance of a small number of Palawa female elders. Many collecting institutions around Australia, as well as internationally, hold examples of this cultural tradition.