The British Museum

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Indigenous Australia
Art and objects from Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait

Waddesdon Bequest
The great 19th-century collection of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild
The British Museum makes acquisitions to extend knowledge of different cultures and places. These works have recently joined the collection.

**Emblems of identity**

The Iranian-American artist Sara Rahbar (b.1976) began her ‘Flag’ series in 2005 and the British Museum has recently acquired two of her compelling textile pieces. Having left Iran following the aftermath of the 1979 Revolution, Rahbar explores personal themes of national belonging and in her work grapples with the tangled relationship between her adopted country, the USA, and her native Iran. In *Texas Flowers* she assembles large flower and sun motifs from brightly coloured suzani textiles on a vintage American flag. Traditionally embroidered by brides as part of their dowry, suzans bear symbols of love and fertility. In Rahbar’s work, however, these motifs resemble loaded bullet chambers surrounding an outline of the state of Texas. *Narcissist*, the last in the series of 52 flags, comprises an assemblage of textiles from Iran and Central Asia, amulets, bullet cartridges, military decorations and a crucifix. Rahbar’s flags can also be understood as emblems of identity, both in the range of symbolically potent materials she collects from across Iran and the USA and her own personal identity as the inheritor of multiple heritages.

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*Texas Flowers, 2008, and Narcissist, 2014*, by Sara Rahbar, mixed media on vintage American flags