

Cultural Statement

The National Gallery respectfully acknowledges that we are on the Country of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people of the Kamberri/ Canberra region. We recognise their continuing connections to Country and culture, and we pay our respect to their Elders, leaders and artists, past and present.

We respectfully acknowledge all Traditional Custodians throughout Australia whose art we care for and to whose lands National Gallery exhibitions and staff travel.

Throughout these Art Cases, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are also referred to as First Nations peoples and First Peoples. These terms are interchangeable.

The National Gallery recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander place names throughout these Art Cases. The place names are current at the time of print but may change over time.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that these cases may contain images and voices of, and references to, deceased people. Where possible, permission has been sought to include their names and images.

About the Art Cases

The National Gallery's Art Cases program comprises five art-filled cases. The cases travel to schools, libraries, community centres, galleries and aged-care facilities throughout Australia, where the works can be discovered by adults and children. A key feature of the Art Cases program is that the works can be handled.

Five cases are available for touring, each with its own theme:

- Bodies (Red)**
- Country (Copper)**
- Earth (Blue)**
- Past, Present and Future (Yellow)**
- Form and Function (Orange)**

For further information or to book an Art Case, please email touringprogram@nga.gov.au
The program is free of charge. The National Gallery arranges freight and insurance.

The National Gallery's Art Cases program is generously supported by the Neilson Foundation with grateful acknowledgement of founding patrons Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn.



CONDITION REPORTING

Each venue is responsible for reporting the condition of every work in the Art Case upon arrival and dispatch. Condition reports and instructions are held in the cases. For further assistance, please email touringprogram@nga.gov.au

These works have been chosen for the stories they hold, for the way they look and feel, and for their ability to tour to many places. Please do not wipe the objects or attempt to clean or fix them if they break. If a work is damaged, please contact Touring Exhibitions as soon as possible.

Please safely return all works to the right place in the right case at the end of each session. Lock the case and store it in a secure location. At the end of each year, all the cases come back to the Gallery. Our conservation team checks the condition reports and looks at all the objects. They clean them with specialised materials, tools and expertise, ready for the next year.

BEFORE YOU START

When handling the objects, adult supervision is essential. It is helpful to have several adults present to assist, and to work in small groups. The suggested ratio is one adult to ten participants.

Please ensure that:

- hands are clean at all times
- works of art are handled with two hands
- personal jewellery is removed to prevent scratching
- all materials such as ink, textas, paint and solvents are kept well away from the objects
- ideally, all participants are seated when handling the objects.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

This resource is designed to support object-based learning, encouraging students to actively explore and interrogate works of art by looking, handling, responding and making.

Bodies

The Bodies Art Case brings together works that explore the lived experience of biology (flesh and blood), and how our bodies influence memory, space and form. Several of the artworks take the form of internal organs—heart, brain, digestive system—encouraging us to pay closer attention to what is going on inside our bodies and how these organs influence our experience of the world. Other artworks consider how bodies relate to external forces, either through their ability to manipulate space or how they are shaped in relation to larger social structures. The works in this case encourage us to think about the physical composition of our bodies and how they shape our experience of the world.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

This resource is designed to support object-based learning, encouraging students to actively explore and interrogate works of art by looking, handling, responding and making.

The Bodies Art Case provides rich scope for critical and creative thinking by investigating concepts of anatomy, adornment and resilience. This case is relevant to Visual Arts, Health and Physical Education and Science (Biology), and the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. Teachers may adapt or extend this resource for use with groups of different ages and across learning areas.

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Lionel Bawden

Brain coral 2003

coloured Staedtler pencils, araldite and Inbralac

Purchased 2003 with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Lionel Bawden

Lionel Bawden was born in 1974 and lives and works in Gadigal Nura/Sydney. For *Brain coral*, he selected hundreds of coloured pencils and cut them to the desired length. He then glued the hexagonal pencils together one at a time, forming a honeycomb structure. Bawden paid special attention to the placement of colours, subtly suggesting the adaptability of a colour-changing chameleon. The work was then sanded by hand to achieve a smooth finish and covered in lacquer to give it a moist and fleshy look.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'*Brain coral* focuses on the incredible complexity of the human brain and the idea that technology is driven by the human sense of enquiry. The form of the sculpture was inspired by a particular kind of coral structure, commonly referred to as brain coral. In our technologically advanced age, focusing on the pencil as a form of technology might seem rather backward. But the notion of the pencil and its purpose—to communicate, to work out solutions, and to create—is essential to the general drive of technology. Most of the magic of technology is in our thinking. The poetry of technology is in our minds before it is in the world. We just have to keep coming up with new ways to extend these thoughts into the physical world and keep evolving our environment.'

LOOK

How would you describe this sculpture?

What do you notice about the materials and colours used?

THINK

Why do you think Lionel Bawden titled the work *Brain coral*?

What do you know about the human brain, and what would you like to find out?

CREATE

Draw an imaginary map of your brain, using colour and pattern to reflect your personality and interests.



Matt Harding

Sacred heart 1999 purpleheart wood

Purchased 2003 with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Matt Harding

Matt Harding (1964–2018) carved the heart from purpleheart, a hardwood from South America. This wood was chosen for its colour and its name, which plays on the theme of the work. The profile was cut on a bandsaw and roughly shaped with chisels. Then the back was cut again to relieve the section of wood for the pivoting back. The piece was shaped on the outside with chisels and sandpaper, then the centre was carved and shaped for the left and right ventricles. The box has a patina finish from the oils in the hand.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'*Sacred heart* was made to cheer up my mother by appealing to her good sense of humour after she had open-heart bypass surgery. The box, which opens from the back, has left and right ventricle compartments for her blood pressure and cholesterol tablets. The title of the pillbox contemplates the sacredness of all aspects of life and seeks to remind us that the physical self is an integral part of our human spirit.'

LOOK

Close your eyes and touch Matt Harding's *Sacred heart*. How does it feel?

Compare the sculpture to a diagram of a human heart.

THINK

Sacred heart was designed to hold heart medication.

How might using this container change your feelings about medicine?

CREATE

Make your own sculptural container or vessel. Consider how the form of your container relates to the contents stored inside.



Emily O'Brien

Hair chairs 2004
anodised aluminium

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

Artist Emily O'Brien has created jewellery pieces that take the form of chairs, transforming everyday objects into beautiful adornments. Intended to be worn in the hair as combs, *Hair chairs* elevates domestic objects traditionally associated with women's spaces and labour. The work was made using old and new technologies. First hand-cut from aluminium sheets, the works are then sanded and anodised to create a protective coating and colour the surface.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'I'm interested in exploring the context in which jewellery is created, the relationships people have with jewellery and how traditional views can be recast and questioned. To create *Hair chairs*, I searched through old furniture catalogues and collected a wide range of images of ordinary and exotic household items. By working with familiar experiences and imagery, I am creating objects that people can easily connect with. By simulating everyday things and transforming them, I aim to alter people's understanding of contemporary jewellery and adornment. *Hair chairs* aims to disarm the viewer by transforming familiar images into something irregular and unexpected.'

LOOK

What do you notice about the shapes and details of Emily O'Brien's *Hair chairs*?

THINK

What does the title tell us about this work of art?

Where and how might this design object be used?

CREATE

Design a piece of jewellery inspired by an everyday object. Try starting with a silhouette cut-out and adjust the scale of the object to suit your body.



Neil Roberts

The space inside my fist 1995 bronze

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Estate of Neil Roberts

Neil Roberts's (1954–2002) bronze sculpture explores the space inside a tightly clenched fist and what remains when the fist is uncurled—is it simply air or a memory of the gesture?

The space inside my fist was made using a very simple and direct process. Roberts squeezed lumps of hot, soft wax with just the right amount of pressure to capture the space inside his hand in all its shape and detail. The wax was then cast in bronze, creating a permanent artwork.

By rendering this fleeting moment in bronze, a very permanent and traditional material, the artist gives weight and substance to what would otherwise just be air and memory.

ARTIST STATEMENT

‘My actions never deny the history and former function of the stuff with which I work, no matter how damaged. This is important to me—I want that “site memory” to reach across time and distance and make itself felt, however feebly, in front of the viewer. Because my actions are often so simple, it is a challenge to go further than just presenting these reclaimed materials. I try, through juxtaposition, association, unnecessary attention to detail and so on, to invest them with some new forms of meanings and significance.’

LOOK

How does it feel to hold Neil Roberts's sculpture?

How do you imagine it was made?

THINK

Why do you think Roberts decided to make this work of art from bronze?

What is special about bronze?

CREATE

Take a series of photographs that record the space around your body or the traces left by your body, such as footprints or shadows.



Richard Byrnes

Digestion haiku 1993

bronze

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Richard Byrnes

Richard Byrnes was born in 1959 and lives and works in Gadigal Nura/Sydney. In his artwork *Digestion haiku*, disparate shapes—including a cog, a fishbone, a fork, plumbing parts and a tap—are stacked upon each other to create a three-dimensional totemic form. Most of the shapes were sculpted in wood and used to make sand moulds into which molten bronze, a combination of copper and tin, was poured to create the final sculpture. Individual components take on new meanings when interconnected as part of a larger structure and become a metaphor for the human digestive system, our own internal plumbing.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'As its name suggests, this piece is a small poem to the chemical action of digestion and makes stylised references to teeth, orifices, the digestive tract and eating implements. It also incorporates a brass tap and plumbing corners, again to make reference to our own internal plumbing. The totemic forms are balanced to suggest vulnerability, and the piece as a whole was made within the vague recollection of laboratory equipment.'

LOOK

What do you see when you look at Richard Byrnes's *Digestion haiku*?

What might this sculpture say about digestion?

THINK

Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry in only three lines. Write a haiku in response to Byrnes's sculpture.

CREATE

Make a collage or assemblage inspired by an organ or system inside the human body. Consider how you can represent the function of your chosen organ.



Karla Dickens

Wiradjuri people

Block and tackle 2020

aluminium, vintage wood pulley with brass wheels, jute rope, steel nails, waxed linen thread and glue

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Karla Dickens/Copyright Agency 2023

Wiradjuri artist Karla Dickens is a self-confessed bowerbird who collects and recycles discarded material for her works to create a personal perspective of the effects of ongoing colonisation experienced by Aboriginal people, in particular Aboriginal women.

Dickens's use of discarded material started when she was a child. First influenced by her grandfather Tommy, a handyman and fellow recycler, her interest developed when as a poor university student she couldn't afford paint or canvases. She still fossicks through local rubbish tips, car boot sales and second-hand stores for inspiration and bits and pieces, reflecting her appreciation for objects overlooked by society that can be revived as part of a work of art.

The name of the work—*Block and tackle*—refers to a block and tackle system of two or more pulleys with a rope or cable threaded between them, used to lift heavy loads. Dickens joins the cast aluminium head of a young Aboriginal woman as the block with a wooden tackle. A thick section of rope joins the two, hinting at its original use. In combination, they reflect the heavy lifting and burden that Aboriginal women have borne since colonisation, offering a touching and powerful perspective on the strength and determination of Aboriginal women long ago, which continues today.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'As an Australian First Nations woman one develops an inner pulley to help with the constant lifting of day-to-day living. Redistribution of the weight reduces the damage and pain that relentlessly hits your back and heart. Long-term fatigue from racist attitudes and discriminations and denial that they don't exist make the inner pulley an essential everyday tool.'

LOOK

What are the different objects and materials that make up this work of art?

Where might the artist have found them?

THINK

Why do you think having an inner pulley is important for Karla Dickens?

What kind of weight is she lifting?

CREATE

Choose materials to make a work of art that symbolises your inner strength.

Where do you draw your strength from?

Country

The Country Art Case brings together First Nation works showcasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, ideas and stories about land and Country. Many of the works in this case are made from natural materials, sometimes sourced via cultural collection. Knowing how material is collected from the environment can give an insight into the relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the natural surroundings. This case also looks at shared histories of First Nations and non-First Nations peoples since colonisation, and the adaptive nature of First Nations peoples when looking after and utilising their land and Country. First Nations ideas and philosophies provide a holistic view of land and Country, connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through place, spirit, culture, practice and ceremony.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

This resource is designed to support object-based learning by encouraging students to actively explore and interrogate works of art through looking, handling, responding and making. The Country Art Case also provides rich scope for critical and creative thinking and investigates concepts of Country, culture and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge. This case is relevant to Visual Arts and Science (Biology), and the cross-curriculum priorities of Sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. Teachers may adapt or extend this resource for use with groups of different ages and across learning areas.

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Lena Yarinkura

Rembarrnga/Kune peoples

Bush mice 2002

aluminium and wood

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Lena Yarinkura/Copyright Agency 2023

Throughout Aboriginal and Torres Strait art, representations of totemic animals and ancestral figures have been used for different reasons. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, animals, plants and spiritual beings are ways of identifying different groups of people and the lands they occupy, much like plants and animals are used in state and national emblems. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have used this identification class system from time immemorial.

Imagery of animals and plants forms much of the subject matter for carvings, fibre sculptures and paintings created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples. An essential part of everyday life is the gathering of materials and resources to create these works.

On these excursions, people often see small animals such as djirrkkinj (bush mice) busily searching for food. Native mice and rats are found in many habitats across the Australian landscape, including mangrove, desert and alpine regions.

These *Bush mice* are made from aluminium by a process called sand casting. The artist has used plasticine to make a model for the cast, which is later transferred into solid aluminium. Many artists are drawn to the natural silvery colouring of aluminium and appreciate its long-lasting properties. These are the first two of only 25 sculptures made from individual casts. This is known as a limited edition—a restricted number of sculptures is produced and then the cast is destroyed.

Although she works across many different materials, Lena Yarinkura (Rembarrnga/Kune peoples) is most well known for her innovative fibre sculptures. Yarinkura will often work collaboratively with her husband, artist Bob Burruwal (Rembarrnga people), whose subject matter includes Yawk Yawk spirits, camp dogs and various animal species such as the northern quoll, bandicoot and bush mouse.

LOOK

Compare Lena Yarinkura's two bush mice. Discuss the similarities and differences.

THINK

What material do you think these sculptures are made from?

Why do you think Yarinkura chose these materials?

CREATE

Research Australian animals from your area and choose a favourite to sculpt from clay. Use a pencil or modelling tool to add marks and textures.



James Tylor

Kurna people

Kurna Wirri Katha 2020

Mallee eucalyptus timber and animal fat

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © James Tylor, courtesy the artist and Stills Gallery, Sydney

This object has dual purposes—each end is used for a different reason. On one end of the tool is a rounded, carved club while opposite is a sharpened digging stick that is also used as a handle. In the Kurna language, a club is called a wirri and a digging stick is called a katha.

Wirris are used for hunting animals and birds for food collections year-round, and are thrown and used to hit an animal for capture. The katha end of the object is used to dig up yams like the ngampa (yam daisy) and walyu (chocolate lily) in the wirltuti (springtime) and bulrush roots in the hot, dry warltati (summer).

The katha was also used as part of the animal skin cleaning process. After an animal had been killed with the wirri, Kurna people used the katha to scrape the flesh off the animal hides to make cloaks for clothing in parnati (autumn), ready for the cold, wet weather in the kudlila (winter).

LOOK

Cast your eye over James Tylor's *Kurna Wirri Katha*. What do you notice about the materials and textures?

What do you think its use might be?

THINK

The Kurna wirri katha is a cultural tool that has been made over many generations. What do you think this tool means to Tylor?

CREATE

Expand your Kurna vocabulary. In Tylor's language, a club is called a wirri. The double RR in wirri is a rolling R sound. Now say wirri and roll the R with your tongue.



Penny Evans

K/Gamilaroi people

Burnt banksia 2020

terracotta clay, black slip, underglaze, pooling glaze and wire

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Penny Evans

Penny Evans is a K/Gamilaroi artist based in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales. Her ceramic works reference her cultural heritage and celebrate Kamilaroi/Gomeroi carving traditions. She is primarily concerned with the history and aftermath of colonisation on First Nations peoples and the environment. For Evans, history is not in the distant past—it is something that lives and is present in her body and actions. The objects she makes are an important way of acknowledging the past and, at the same time, healing the traumas that affect people to this day.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'*Burnt banksia* is an ongoing and evolving series of work. It speaks to our native plants and how they respond to fire and traditional practices of firestick farming and cultural burning to maintain and sustain our precious Country. Fire is needed for some species to release their seeds from woody fruits that rely on an environmental cue—fire—to know when to drop their seeds. This includes species of hakea, banksia and eucalypts with serotinous cones or fruits that are completely sealed with resin.'

LOOK

Feel the patterns and textures in the banksia pod sculptures by Penny Evans.

What elements can you identify?

THINK

Evans makes her objects appear burnt to talk about the resilience of nature after bush fires.

What positive effects can fire, or Aboriginal cultural burning, have on Australian ecosystems?

CREATE

Identify other Australian plant species that need fire to regenerate.

Mould your own woody pods with clay.



Carol McGregor

Wathaurung people

Gather bags II 2018

possum skin, ochre, binder and waxed cotton thread

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Carol McGregor

These vessel-like forms present us with different ways of looking at the concept of gathering. Whether gathering materials or bush foods, they also show us the gathering of information, histories and stories. Before the colonisation of Australia, First Nations peoples would gather with other groups and share stories, resources, practices and ceremonies. With the arrival of colonists, First Nations practices such as skin cloak-making were discouraged or forbidden by missionaries and slowly began to disappear. Traditionally, these cloaks were marked with designs that expressed personal identity and group affiliations and were given to infants at birth. Later, these cloaks would be added to over time—growing, gathering and sharing its story with its owner.

Stitched, patterned and coloured by hand, despite their irregular nature, they fit imperfectly together inside one another. Like a nurturing family, each one is connected by the touch of the next. In defiance of colonial interruption, the artist uses possum skins and traditional techniques to show the persistence and revival of pre-colonial traditions. Collectively, the material, techniques and placement of each gather bag become significant parts of the work, evoking the power of passing on cultural knowledge, showing the importance of collective sharing and displaying the strength found in being together as a people.

LOOK

Closely observe and feel the possum skin vessels.

What do they remind you of?

THINK

Carol McGregor uses possum skins to 'show the persistence and revival of pre-colonial traditions'.

Why do you think it's important to keep traditions alive?

CREATE

Close your eyes and visualise what your own vessel would look and feel like.

What memories or stories would it hold?

Share your personal vessel story with your group.



Jimmy John Thaiday

Erub Mer people

Kebi nam 2018

ghost net, rope and twine over wire frame

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Jimmy John Thaiday

Several different varieties of turtle nest and breed along the shores of the Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait Islands and are important to the Torres Strait Islander peoples in many ways. The turtle is a traditional Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait Islander totem and has been part of their customs for generations. As part of customary lore, Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait Islander peoples can also hunt sea turtles. This primary food source has been in practice since pre-colonial times.

Found along the same coastlines that these sea creatures nest in is abandoned debris from commercial trawling. Discarded fishing nets, also known as ghost nets, are notorious for trapping marine animals such as sea turtles, dugongs and dolphins. Sea turtles make up 80 percent of the marine life that is found caught in these nets.

In an environmental effort, Erub Arts Centre and its many artists, including Jimmy John Thaiday, are using these abandoned ghost nets to help cleanse and care for the shorelines, ridding them of discarded materials. Their objective is to raise awareness of the negative impact ghost nets have on the Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait Islands and many other coastlines around Australia. Creating artworks that use these materials provides a window into how First Nations peoples have cared for their Country and continue to do so.

LOOK

What materials do you think this sculpture is made from?

THINK

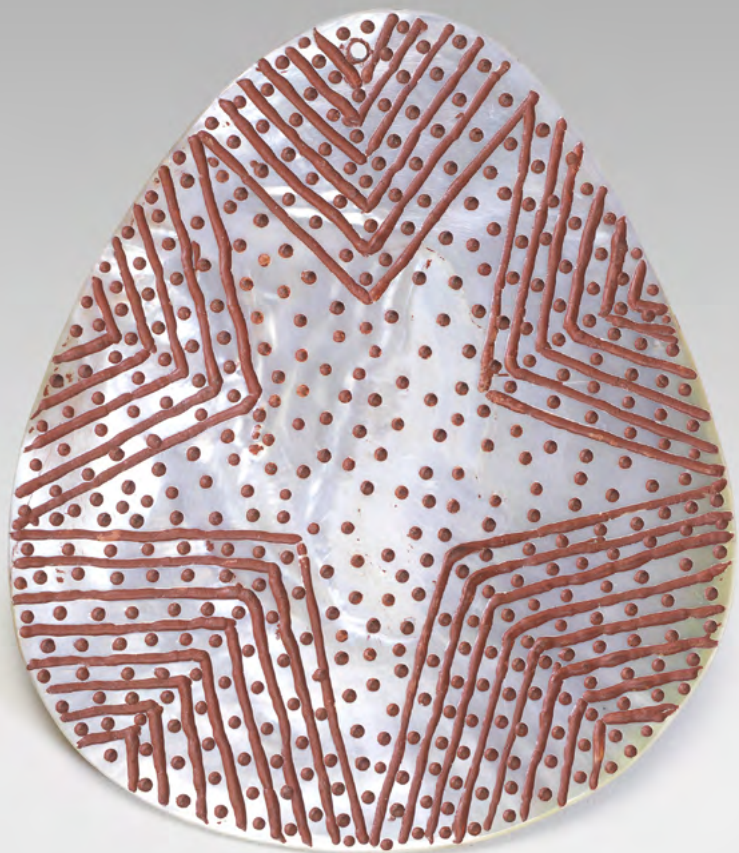
Jimmy John Thaiday uses abandoned ghost nets to raise awareness about his culture and ocean sustainability.

Why do you think artists reclaim found materials?

CREATE

What found objects could you use to make your own sculpture?

Choose a selection of discarded or found materials to create your favourite animal.



Aubrey Tigan

Bardi/Djawi peoples

Riji (pearl shell) 2009

carved pearl shell and red ochre

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Aubrey Tigan

Aboriginal people from the Kimberley region wore decorated pearl shells, known as riji or jakuli in the Bardi language, during ceremonies. Large shells were attached to hair belts worn around the waist, while smaller shells were worn around the neck.

Pearl shell comes from pearl oysters, gathered from the sea at low tide or from offshore reefs, or sourced from cultured pearl farms. After a lengthy process of cleaning, chipping and grinding the outer shell away, the shiny inner face is ready for engraving. Contemporary Aboriginal artists maintain cultural customs by engraving traditional geometric or figurative designs onto the shell. The designs are highlighted using a mixture of ochre or charcoal and resin or fat rubbed into the grooves created by the engraving.

A respected Traditional Elder and lawman from the Bardi and Djawi people, Aubrey Tigan lived on the Dampier Peninsula north of Rubibi (Broome) in Western Australia. A trained jeweller and renowned carver, pearl shell was his preferred medium. Tigan engraved on pearl shell to maintain traditional culture. He used old and new designs, which he often saw in his dreams, drawing on his deep knowledge of the coastal environment.

LOOK

Run your fingers over *Riji* (pearl shell) by Aubrey Tigan. How does it feel?

How does the surface change if you slowly tilt it back and forth?

THINK

Riji shells still play an important role in the Kimberleys in northwest Australia.

Did you know that these shells—not pearls—were highly prized?

Why do you think this might be?

CREATE

Cut a pearl shell shape out of iridescent or shiny paper and create patterns inspired by your natural environment.

Earth

The Earth Art Case brings together artists who reflect on the importance of the natural world and our place within it. From time immemorial, the natural world has been a source of inspiration for artists to articulate the different yet profound ways cultures connect and respond to the environment. The works in this case span longstanding and contemporary art practices, demonstrating a variety of spiritual, cultural and artistic connections to nature. From the biological to the geological, the microscopic to the visible, the artworks ask us to consider our responsibility to protect and preserve the intricate and extraordinary diversity of the natural world.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

This resource is designed to support object-based learning by encouraging students to actively explore and interrogate works of art through looking, handling, responding and making. The Earth Art Case provides rich scope for critical and creative thinking, investigating terrestrial and aquatic environments, and the interconnectedness of life on earth. This case is relevant to Visual Arts, Science, the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the cross-curriculum priorities of Sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. Teachers may adapt or extend this resource for use with groups of different ages and across learning areas.

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Megan Cope

Quandamooka people

Pieces from **RE FORMATION** 2017
handmade concrete shells

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation
for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

Maintaining connections to her Country on Minjerribah/ North Stradbroke Island off the coast of Queensland is central to Megan Cope's identity and practice. Recently, she has been using the oyster shell form to represent the ongoing destruction and environmental impact of colonisation on her Country. These simple, small forms are shown singularly, emphasising their shape and function as a food source, or en masse like the formerly mountainous shell middens (discard sites).

Cope sees shell middens as hand-built architectural structures, organically formed. These massively built-up piles of oyster shells took thousands of years to form and became strong evidence of an ongoing communal feasting site, often in areas with fresh water, out of the wind. Since the 19th century, with the rapid onset of colonisation, the oyster shells were quickly harvested for their lime properties and used to make concrete. In turn, this would be used to build on top of these key sites, thereby destroying, erasing and irrevocably transforming the landscape.

The encroaching built environment and urbanisation of lands on Minjerribah have had a devastating environmental and cultural impact on Cope's Country and community. The simple form of an oyster shell cast and hand-built in concrete is a powerful representation of this destruction but is also a signifier of hope. Traditional owners aim to one day reinstate the former aquaculture techniques so that 'critical foundations of salt-water Country are returned ... to begin a journey toward the pristine conditions prior to colonisation'.¹ In this way, Cope hopes cultural and economic systems and access to Country can be returned to her people.

LOOK

What does this work of art remind you of?

What aspects look natural or artificial?

THINK

What are middens? Middens are places that contain discarded shell material left by Aboriginal groups. In colonial Australia, shell middens were mined to produce cement.

Why do you think Megan Cope uses cement in her work?

CREATE

Think about the different materials and resources you use every day. Create a work of art that tells the story of a material and the environment it comes from.

1. Megan Cope, in conversation with Ellie Buttrose 2019, <https://blog.qagoma.qld.gov.au/megan-cope-reformation-takes-the-oyster-shell-as-its-subject-water-australia>.



Elisa Jane and Sonja Carmichael

Quandamooka people

Dabiyil wagari (water carrying) vessels 2020

lomandra, ghost net, fishing line and raffia

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artists

Dabiyil wagari (water carrying) vessels, is a group of small woven vessels made by manipulating lomandra and commercially bought raffia and integrating it with fine threads of fishing line and unravelled fishing nets (ghost nets). Retrieved from shorelines, beaches and the open ocean, ghost nets are debris from fishing nets used by ocean trawlers to catch large amounts of fish, which are then cut free and discarded, polluting coastal waters.

These vessels explore the ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultural practices have progressed over time yet are still linked to ancestral forms, materials and ways of making as they adapt to the ever-changing environment.

The collecting and merging of the different fibres is an expression of care for Quandamooka Country, maintaining the inherited responsibilities for the wellbeing of people, culture and place. Using a visual and tactile language, these vessels suggest the form of both traditional woven baskets and carved coolamon dishes. Echoing these forms, *Dabiyil wagari (water carrying) vessels* acts as a physical and metaphoric holder of culture, knowledge and practices while bringing the Quandamooka peoples' relationship to water to our attention.

LOOK

How would you describe the colours, patterns and textures that you can see and feel in Elisa Jane and Sonja Carmichael's work?

THINK

What do you think weaving means for Sonja and her daughter Elisa Jane?

Why do you think they use discarded fishing lines and nets alongside natural fibres?

CREATE

Make a carrying vessel, incorporating natural and recycled materials collected from your home environment.



John Prince Siddon

Walmajarri people

Purlkartu (Spider) 2020

ABS plastic resin

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

John Prince Siddon works across many interesting mediums, including carving objects out of boab nuts and wood, printmaking with found objects, and painting on various materials such as enamelled tin. Working on bull skulls has long been a key part of Siddon's artistic practice. This new technological approach of 3D printing allows for further expansion of his practice as well as delivering artwork that is free from organic matter.

Purlkartu (Spider), is a new work from the artist that sees his iconic 2D artwork informing the 3D printed surface of a bull skull. Siddon borrows his narrative from the traditional craft of boab nut carving, adding a touch more menace—his judgment is that in the law of averages, you will either be the eater or become the eaten.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'The Purlkartu is making a web out of the Australian map, all the animals are caught in its trap.'

LOOK

Which animal do you think this skull belongs to?

What do you see on the surface of the skull?

THINK

John Prince Siddon worked on cattle stations when he was young.

How do you think this experience influenced his relationship with animals and the environment?

CREATE

Make rubbings of different textures from your local environment. Cut and collage your rubbings to depict an animal that is important to you.



Unknown artist

Marka mask late 19th–early 20th century
brass and wood

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift
for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases

This mask was made by the Marka people of Mali in West Africa, a key region for Saharan trade. Masks such as this are extremely powerful—they can frighten away evil spirits, convey messages from the spirit world and cure illnesses.

This mask represents Chi wara (champion farmer), a supernatural being who gave the Marka farming skills and taught Faro, the first blacksmith, to forge copper. Faro rode an antelope down from heaven, so Chi wara is usually shown as a stylised antelope with tusks. At agricultural festivals and male initiation ceremonies, a dancer would wear the mask with a raffia headdress and a large, all-concealing costume, leaping like an antelope.

This mask is made of carved wood with an overlay of pressed brass. In Mali, some masks are made by blacksmiths who traditionally live apart from the rest of the village and are respected for their power to forge images of the supernatural beings from fire. Artists who make masks and other freestanding sculptures often describe seeing an image inside the raw wood then cutting away material to release it.

LOOK

What different materials can you see in *Marka mask*?

Where can you see animal features included?

THINK

Why do people wear masks?

List some people or characters who wear masks.

This mask represents Chi wara (champion farmer). What might this mask say about the importance of farming in Mali, Africa?

CREATE

Create a mask that reflects your identity. Incorporate human and animal features to represent your personality and special skills.



John Edgar

Red eye 1993

greywacke stone, glass and epoxy glue

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

Aotearoa/New Zealand glass artist John Edgar transforms ancient stones into otherworldly, talisman-like objects by inserting glass and semi-precious gemstones into the surface.

Red eye features greywacke stone, which is formed under heat and pressure deep within the oceanic trenches between Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia. A perfect circle of red jasper is inlaid into the centre of the pebble to create an abstract design. The density of the material gives the impression of solidity, yet the pebble can be held delicately in the palm of the hand.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'I always liked the idea, and it goes back to alchemy, where a base material is transformed into a precious material. I wanted to work with materials that weren't beautiful. They were base rocks like greywacke and argillite and basalt and granite. The things that form the basement of our country. I wanted to take them and make them beautiful.'

LOOK

Compare *Light stone* and *Red eye*. What similarities and differences do you see?

How do these sculptures change when held up to a light?

THINK

What do you think attracted the artist to working with these stones?

Research how old the stones might be.

CREATE

Create a shape or pattern using natural materials such as pebbles or fallen leaves. Take a photograph then return the environment to how you found it.



John Edgar

Light stone 1993

greywacke stone, glass and epoxy glue

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

John Edgar elevates the organic form of greywacke stone into a precious object through his artistic intervention. Greywacke is a sedimentary rock found across Aotearoa/New Zealand—this pebble came from the Hauraki Gulf near the artist's studio and home.

In *Light stone*, Edgar has inserted sheets of glass between channels of stone, using epoxy glue to bind the surfaces together. Playing with light, the dense and opaque form has been rendered semi-transparent with alternating layers of glass. The additions create another dimension and add a sense of mystery to the pebble. Powerful and precious, it asks to be held and stroked, as if through contact its mystery will be known to us.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'I strive to be self-sufficient in my craft; to be able to effect with my hands and my tools anything that my heart and mind can conjure. To leave behind small tokens of my love for this land of stone in the hope that each object might evoke the questions, who made this and why, when, how, and where? These are the timeless questions asked of any object and, in asking them, one enters a point of contact with the spirit of the maker. It is my desire to imbue my work with this spirit.'

LOOK

Compare *Light stone* and *Red eye*. What similarities and differences do you see?

How do these sculptures change when held up to a light?

THINK

What do you think attracted the artist to working with these stones?

Research how old the stones might be.

CREATE

Create a shape or pattern using natural materials such as pebbles or fallen leaves. Take a photograph then return the environment to how you found it.



Angela Valamanesh

From *Miscellaneous items G* 2006 (re-made 2020)
unglazed ceramic

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for
the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Angela Valamanesh

Angela Valamanesh was born in 1953 and lives and works in Tarntanya/Adelaide. Her ceramic works are based on organic forms, including seed pods, organs and corals. The works have a sense of being part of a larger organism, encouraging us to think about the interconnectedness of life.

Valamanesh's works also play with scale, evoking both the microscopic and the visible, asking the viewer to appreciate the extraordinary diversity of the natural world. The objects are made from unglazed ceramics, making them appear both fleshy and porous.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'These two ceramic forms are replicas of two parts of a larger, 10-part work I made in 2006. After making teapots, bowls and other domestic wares, mostly wheel-thrown, for nearly 10 years, I felt it was time to expand my practice to include non-functional work. I became interested in the similarities between us and other life forms and wanted to represent how connected we are to these life forms and the earth itself. The unglazed surface of the earthy coloured clay helps to achieve this along with the ambiguous forms that could relate to either plant or human anatomy.'

LOOK

What do these ceramic forms remind you of?

How do they feel to touch?

THINK

Have you ever looked down a microscope?

Research and compare what plants, animals and humans look like at a microscopic or cellular level. What do you notice?

CREATE

Make a clay sculpture inspired by a microscopic form found in nature. Experiment with enlarging your form or work collaboratively to form a large-scale installation.

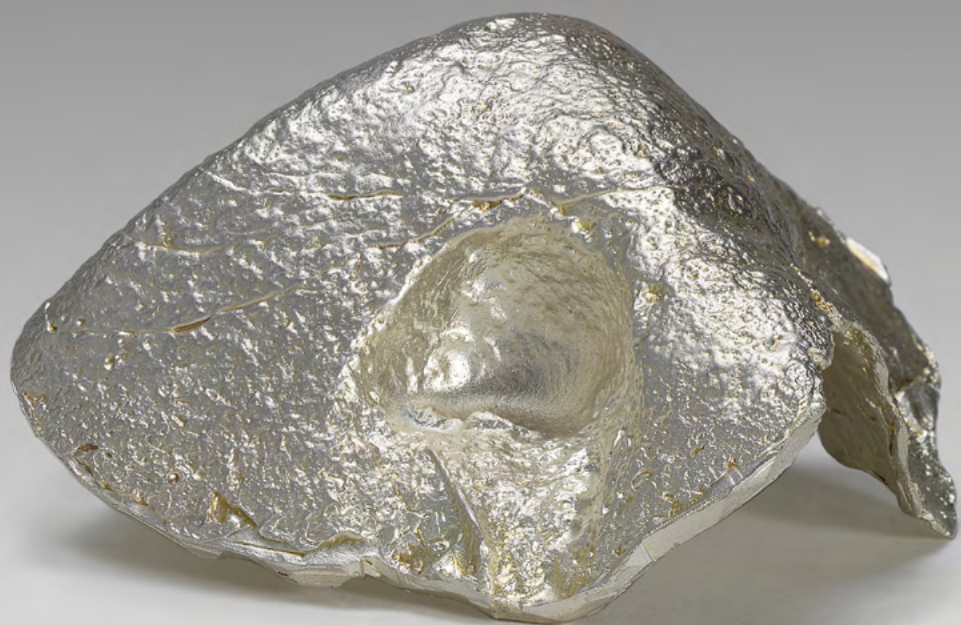
**Past,
Present
& Future**

The Past, Present and Future Art Case brings together works that reflect on or are invested with the passing of time. These forms could be time itself, the human experience of history, or the influence of events in determining the possible future. Exploring the past, present and future in insightful ways, the works in this case allow audiences to engage with specific moments in history and speculative futures. From futuristic creatures to bronze sculptures of worship, the Past, Present and Future case asks us to consider our personal relationship with history and the future we are making together.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

This resource is designed to support object-based learning by encouraging students to actively explore and interrogate works of art through looking, handling, responding and making. The Past, Present and Future Art Case provides rich scope for critical and creative thinking, investigating concepts related to heritage, religion and ethics. The Past, Present and Future Art Case is relevant to Visual Arts, Science, the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures and the general capability of Ethical Understanding. Teachers may adapt or extend this resource for use with groups of different ages and across learning areas.

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Carol McGregor

Wathaurung people

Cornerstone 2011–18

cast silver

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © Carol McGregor

Carol McGregor's *Cornerstone* generates a multitude of questions when considering the role of ownership, custodianship and access to material held by institutions. Having visited the British Museum and intending to see part of their extensive Australian First Nations collection, McGregor was unable to access the collection despite many attempts to make appointments to view the Aboriginal and Torres Strait material not on display. Through frustration, she decided to document her experience, recording the institution's boundaries to symbolise all the things these corners keep within their walls that remain invisible.

Using Silpression putty, McGregor planned to take impressions of every corner of the building, but the high-level security and stress involved prevented her from taking more than one corner mould.

The silver cast corner acts as a metaphorical space for the British Museum, indeed all ethnographic museums. The gesture may seem small—only capturing a fraction of the British Museum's edifice—but holds the cultural weightiness of these collections while mimicking the feeling of disconnection that resulted from McGregor's experience.

LOOK

What does the shape and texture of *Cornerstone* look and feel like?

THINK

How do you think Carol McGregor felt after being unable to access the Aboriginal and Torres Strait collection at the British Museum in London?

What questions does this work of art raise?

CREATE

Write a letter to one of your ancestors.

What would you like to know about them?

What would you want them to know about you?



Patricia Piccinini

The offering 2009

silicon, fibreglass, steel and possum fur

Gift of the artist 2021 for the National Gallery Art Cases, donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program © Patricia Piccinini

Patricia Piccinini was born in Sierra Leone in 1965 and moved to Australia in 1972. She works across a range of media, including painting, sculpture, video, installation and printmaking. She is most well known for her silicone sculptures of fantastical creatures, often incorporating human and animal qualities. Through her work, Piccinini questions the role of technology in shaping and re-shaping biology.

The offering takes the form of a small, furry creature with both human and animal qualities. It appears to be an infant of its species, asleep in a nest made of fur. Made from silicone and possum fur, it is highly realistic, as though it really could be some previously unknown living organism. Piccinini regards all her creations as ultimately beautiful, made greater by their difference rather than lesser for it: 'For me, they are all beautiful. I don't see their difference as anything but wonderful'.¹

ARTIST STATEMENT

'I make these works both attractive and alluring but also grotesque and disconcerting. I want to pull you in, to create a sense of empathy for these vulnerable creatures. But I also want to push you away—to make you feel like they're unattractive and so not human. That push-and-pull dynamic creates a space for the viewer to think.'²

1. Patricia Piccinini, quoted in Paul Dalgarno 'Beautiful and unsettling: The world of artist Patricia Piccinini', 31 March 2017, University of Melbourne, <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/beautiful-and-unsettling-the-world-of-artist-patricia-piccinini>.

2. Patricia Piccinini, quoted in Stephen Heyman 'The bizarre silicone world of Patricia Piccinini', *The New York Times*, 31 March 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/arts/international/the-bizarre-silicone-world-of-patricia-piccinini.html>.

LOOK

What aspects of *The offering* look familiar or unfamiliar?

How does this work of art make you feel?

THINK

Why do you think this animal is inside a bubble?

Patricia Piccinini's work raises questions about evolution and genetic engineering.

Do you think humans should change nature? If so, why?

CREATE

Draw or create a collage of your own hybrid animal. Share how its adaptations or modifications make it suited to a particular environment.



David Wallace

Eastern Arrernte people

Stockman and horse 1997

recycled materials (copper wire, fabric, plastic and buttons)

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

David Wallace is an eastern Arrernte man who lives and works in Titjikala near Mparntwe/Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. He has been making bush toys for children in his community since he was a teenager. Like many bush toys, Wallace's artworks are made from discarded items and recycled materials. The stockman on horseback is made from copper wires wound tightly together, and the figure has been dressed using a range of found and salvaged items.

The stockman mounted on his horse invites us to consider the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the pastoral industry. Displaced from their land by government and farmers, Aboriginal peoples often found—or were forced into—employment on the farms now occupying their Country. These cattle stations became the sites of protest and resistance for Aboriginal peoples, such as the Wave Hill walk-off, also known as the Gurindji strike, which began in 1966 and lasted nine years. Led by Vincent Lingiari, this protest eventually led to the return of some traditional lands to the Gurindji people in 1975.

Wallace's stockmen figures celebrate a continuing connection to Country despite the disruptions and challenges of colonisation, and reflect the changing nature of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

LOOK

What materials can you see have been used in *Stockman and horse*?

Where do you think David Wallace found these materials?

THINK

After leaving school, Wallace worked as a stockman in Central Australia.

What do you imagine his daily life was like?

Investigate the history of Aboriginal stockmen and women in Australia.

CREATE

Make your own horse and stockman using wire or pipe cleaners. Use recycled materials to add clothing.



Ian Howard

The arms of the people 1990 bronze (unique cast)

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

Australian artist Ian Howard (born 1947) graduated from art school in 1968, during the height of the Vietnam war. The political climate had a major impact on him and, since 1970, his ongoing practice has been centred around the pivotal themes of weaponry, the military and its social impact.

Howard's cast bronze sculptures are modelled from found objects and include parts of discarded children's toys. *The arms of the people* features a bullet-headed figure holding the damaged wing of a warplane on their back. The artwork questions the value and impact of warfare, and the technologies involved.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'My individual investigation—which involved inquiring, searching, experiencing and interacting with predominantly military hardware—satisfied certain curiosities, brought to light major issues and posed further questions.'

LOOK

What elements of this sculpture do you recognise?

How would you describe the body language of this figure?

THINK

What might *The arms of the people* symbolise?

This bronze sculpture was cast from found objects, including children's toys.

Do you think children should play with war toys? If so, why?

CREATE

Make a collage of an imaginary character to symbolise an issue you're passionate about, such as world peace or sustainability.



Unknown artist

Seated Ganesha 9th–10th century bronze

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases

Hinduism is the main religion and philosophy of India. It is also practised in Sri Lanka, where this sculpture was made. Ganesha is one of the most popular gods. He is the god of success and destroyer of evils and obstacles. He is also worshipped as the god of education, knowledge, wisdom and wealth. Ganesha is one of five main Hindu gods—the others are Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and the Goddess.

This sculpture of Ganesha is over 1000 years old. Made of bronze, it would have been used in Hindu festivals. If you look closely, you will see that Ganesha's stomach has been rubbed so much it has become smooth and shiny. That's because Hindus believe that rubbing Ganesha's stomach will bring good luck.

Ganesha holds symbols in his four hands: a goad (for prodding elephants and making them move forward), a noose (a coil of rope for catching all difficulties), a broken tusk held like a pen (he broke it while writing the Indian story, the Mahabharata), and a rosary. He holds a sweet in his trunk. Ganesha is known for his love of sweets, which is why he has such a large stomach.

LOOK

What stands out to you when you look at *Seated Ganesha*?

How does it feel to hold a sculpture made more than 1000 years ago?

THINK

Ganesha is one of the most popular Hindu gods.

What do you know about Ganesha or Hinduism?

What would you like to find out?

CREATE

The objects Ganesha holds communicate his identity and powers. Draw four things you would choose to represent your identity.



Emily Beckley

Meriam Mer/Kala Lagaw Ya peoples

Sabagorar susueri (bridal necklace) 2019

silver (oxidised)

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art © the artist

The wearing of adornments and jewellery is an important part of Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait Islander culture today, whether for everyday wear, performance or ceremony. It represents an ailan/island custom and identity that is distinctly different from mainland Aboriginal cultures.

Artist Emily Beckley creates works that maintain and revive her people's cultural knowledge and practice, reconnecting with old ways. Beckley's stories, history and culture were taught to her by her parents and her Ancestors before them, and she represents this ongoing connection in her works.

This work is a recreation of an older version called *Sabagorar*, which was created in 1898 by a Meriam Mir Ancestor from Mer/Murray Island in the Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait Islands and collected by the British Museum in London. Originally made from turtle shell, not many artists today can use this material, choosing instead to use more modern materials.

Made for a bride and her wedding, it features three fish tails as a decorative feature on the bottom, left and right of the outer rim. Repetitive triangular designs sit opposite them on the inner circle of the pendant. It is over 120 years since these types of pendants were created. Through her new works, Beckley is ensuring knowledge of the old works—often held in overseas museums—is not forgotten.

By using metal in her work, Beckley creates a contemporary representation of the old work while maintaining her cultural connection between the past and the future, ensuring knowledge of these cultural works is preserved.

LOOK

What shapes do you see in this necklace?

What do they remind you of?

THINK

Emily Beckley created *Sabagorar susueri* (bridal necklace) based on one in the British Museum.

Why do you think it is important to revive cultural traditions?

CREATE

Create a pendant to wear to special family events. Cut a shape out of thin aluminium and use a ballpoint pen to inscribe marks and symbols that communicate your family heritage.

Form & Function

This Form and Function Art Case brings together works that blur the line between art and design. Each object can be used for everyday tasks—serving tea, giving light or even grinding pepper—but has been created with great care and an attention to detail that goes beyond the simply functional. Combining historical objects with contemporary works, this case asks us to consider the relationship between an object’s use and its form. How does an object’s decoration, shape or method of creation change the way we engage with it or its meaning to the user? From the ceremonial to the personal, these objects illustrate the complex systems and rituals that humans have developed over centuries and suggest new ways of relating to one another.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

This resource is designed to support object-based learning by encouraging students to actively explore and interrogate works of art through looking, handling, responding and making. The Form and Function Art Case provides rich scope for critical and creative thinking, investigating geometry, functionality and tradition. The Form and Function Art Case is relevant to Visual Arts, Design and Technologies, the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the cross-curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia. Teachers may adapt or extend this resource for use with groups of different ages and across learning areas.

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Gilbert Riedelbauch

Double bowl 2000

nylon as a result of rapid prototyping from
a mathematical equation

Purchased 2003 with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift
for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

ARTIST STATEMENT

‘Since 1992, I have combined digital technologies with traditional silversmithing techniques, taking advantage of computers at the concept, making and production stages. Designing takes place in the virtual workshop of the computer, while the actual production is handed over to a machine-based process, in this case, rapid prototyping. I am drawn to the high level of symmetry and precision inherent in this combination of techniques and processes.

‘By using the computer to visualise mathematical equations, I can see these calculated surfaces. A gradual change to the equation will result in a slightly different shape. Over time, a closed, visual feedback loop allows me to *control* this shape by deliberately changing the numbers and elements of the equation.

‘A mathematical formula describes the surface and determines the form of the object. Using mathematics software, the coordinates of the surface are calculated as a wire frame in virtual 3D space. Then I shift this surface from its 2D state so it becomes a 3D object, showing a material thickness with the help of computer-aided design (CAD).

‘The *real* object is then produced using rapid prototyping technologies. In this case, nylon powder containing fine glass beads was sintered together by a laser-based process called selective laser sintering (SLS). Without digital technologies controlling the production inside very small tolerances, this work would never be possible.’

LOOK

How would you describe the shape of *Double bowl*?

What material do you think it is made from?

THINK

How does *Double bowl* compare to other bowls you have seen?

How do you think the artist went about designing it?

What tools or strategies might have helped?

CREATE

Create your own design object using grid paper, a compass and ruler. Try and achieve symmetry by reflecting or rotating your design.



Cinnamon Lee

Palmlight #2 2000

hand-sized and battery-powered light

Purchased 2003 with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

Lee was born in 1977 and lives and works in Gaidgal Nura/Sydney, New South Wales.

Although the design of *Palmlight #2* lends itself to manufacturing and production, this particular piece is a one-off model. All components have been created and fitted by hand. *Palmlight #2* took Cinnamon Lee approximately 200 hours to complete.

The outer shell of *Palmlight #2* has been hand-machined with a metal turning lathe and a milling machine before the surface was anodised. The two halves of *Palmlight #2* interlock by a clockwise twisting action that activates a micro-switch to turn on the light. It is similar to a basic flashlight—inside the object, a torch globe is powered by two batteries.

ARTIST STATEMENT

‘This work was part of a series that explored the idea of small scale, portable light objects—lights that fit in the palm of your hand. The objects were designed to be used in the hand like a torch or placed on a table, providing illumination similar to a tea light. The palmlights were meant to be fun and playful while remaining precious, and providing function through the nature of the torchlight.’

LOOK

How does *Palmlight #2* feel in your hands?

What changes when you turn the light on and off?

THINK

When and where do you imagine *Palmlight #2* could be used?

What do you think inspired the patterned shapes incorporated into the surface of this object?

CREATE

Fold a piece of black paper into quarters and cut shapes along the folds. Experiment with shining a light through your paper-cut pattern to create shadows.



Karl Lawrence Millard

Lizard grinder 2000

brass, bronze, copper, sterling silver, money metal,
Peugeot mechanism and stainless-steel screws

Purchased 2003 with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift
for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

Karl Lawrence Millard (born 1962) first formed the work in steel and then shaped it by welding and angle-grinding. The whole piece was dipped into a type of wax that can be cut up with a scalpel while still on the steel shape. The individual pieces are then placed in metal groups—copper, bronze, brass and sterling silver—in preparation for casting in metal using the lost-wax casting technique. The cast metal pieces are then brought together, and the construction of the whole piece begins.

Once all the pieces have been put back together, the work is filed and polished with emery paper to achieve a smooth finish. The piece is then fitted with the grinding mechanism and the pepper inlet.

ARTIST STATEMENT

‘The work was made after a six-month stay in India. From the vantage point of South India, I could see the most valuable parts of Australia. With the *Lizard grinder*, I tried to bring together the sense of a harsh landscape by depicting the creatures that exist with it—the colours, angles and robustness of the inland lizards. I value these aspects of Australia, plus I like a bit of good historical Australiana. There's something that entertains me about seeing everyday objects that are unusual among everyday objects.’

LOOK

Do you think *Lizard grinder* resembles a lizard?

In what ways is it similar or different to a lizard?

THINK

Karl Lawrence Millard made *Lizard grinder* after coming home to Australia after six months overseas.

What do you think he missed the most about Australia?

CREATE

Lizard grinder is a pepper grinder. Choose your favourite Australian animal and draw a design for a salt shaker to complete the pair.



Lulu Cooley

Pitjanjatjara people

Wira (collecting bowl) 2018

ininti beanwood

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

A wira is a smaller version of a piti (wooden bowl), a traditional woman's carrying vessel for food and water. It is used in many ways, including as a ladle for collecting water and as a spade for digging. Contemporary artists use walka (patterns that are burnt into the wood with a wire heated on a wood fire) to decorate the vessels. These patterns and designs relate to Lulu Cooley's family Tjukurpa—stories about the Tjukuritja or creation Ancestors and the activities that shaped the land, people and law. Many of the details of Tjukurpa are restricted to senior custodians, so it's not possible to describe the full story behind the walka.

Cooley remembers learning her carving skills from her mother and the other women in her family during the 1960s. Since the time of creation, women have been responsible for making wooden tools, most importantly the digging stick and collecting bowls. They must learn designs relating to ceremony and storytelling for Country and kinship. Long and close observation of her mother's work led to Cooley's beautiful, distinctive scallop design.

Now a consummate carver with many years of experience, Cooley specialises in piti, wira and walka boards. Like many artistic families, her husband Billy Cooley, a unique carver in his own right, assists her in carving the bowls.

LOOK

Run your eyes and fingers over the burnt patterns on *Wira* (collecting bowl).

What natural materials do you think Aboriginal women carry in small bowls?

THINK

Today, artists employ walka, a Pitjanjatjara word for burnt patterns.

What do you think these patterns might indicate?

CREATE

Model your own water and food carrier with clay or aluminium foil. Be as creative and unique as you can. Use symbols or patterns to mimic your natural environment.



Unknown artist

Ankus (elephant goad) late 19th–early 20th century
steel and brass

Purchased with support from the Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift
for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases

Elephants are intelligent animals that can be trained to do many tasks. In some countries, they are used to lift and pull heavy objects like logs or transport people.

In India, armies used elephants as part of their cavalry. They were also used to carry royalty, including princes and maharajas, who rode high on their backs. The king was the only person allowed to breed elephants in captivity and when hunting he would avoid killing them. The elephant trainer, called a mahout, often used an ankus (a goad or a prod) to guide, caress and occasionally discipline an elephant. Today, elephants are trained using food as a reward rather than discipline.

An ankus looks similar to a poker used in a fireplace. It has a pointed tip with a curved piece of metal extending a few inches outward, ending in another point. This ankus is over 100 years old and has been made from steel and brass. The brass gleams like gold when polished, making it look precious and fit for use in ceremonies. On such occasions, the elephants are covered with brightly coloured rugs, bells are placed around their feet, and charms of good fortune are painted down their trunks.

LOOK

Look closely at *Ankus* (elephant goad).

What animals are incorporated in its design?

What does its form tell us about its function?

THINK

How do you think techniques for training animals have changed over the last 100 years?

Do you think animals should be trained? If so, why?

CREATE

Write a short story from the perspective of an elephant living when this *Ankus* was made.



Shireen Taweel

Noor 2016

pierced copper

Purchased 2021 with support from the Neilson Foundation for the National Gallery of Australia Art Cases © the artist

Shireen Taweel (born 1990) is a Gadigal Nura/Sydney-based artist who draws on her experiences as a Lebanese–Australian woman to create artworks that explore cultural heritage, knowledge and identity. Taweel uses traditional coppersmithing techniques to create works that reference the Islamic decorative arts tradition. Her pierced copper forms recall the recurrent geometrical motifs of traditional Islamic art, symbolising god's transcendent, infinite and indivisible nature. Reflecting on her experience of living between cultures, Taweel's artwork reimagines these designs in objects of a domestic scale intended for handling.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'*Noor* responds to the idea of ritual being played out in the context of the less than ceremonial, everyday activity. The research that informed the theoretical side of the work was gathered from the rich resource of Islamic decorative arts from the Middle East. I was interested in the re-contextualising of an object, the initial importance of the ritualised object, and how it translates and is presented in the domestic home environment.'

LOOK

How would you describe the shapes and patterns you can see in *Noor*?

Do they remind you of anything?

THINK

Research Islamic decorative arts and architecture and discuss how Shireen Taweel's sculpture is similar or different.

CREATE

Use a sketchbook to record the patterns that you can find in the built environment of your town or city.

Choose the most interesting building and research its architecture and history.