

Australian Aboriginal Cultures Gallery - Level 1

Middle Years - Aboriginal Art and Innovation



Principal Gallery Sponsor

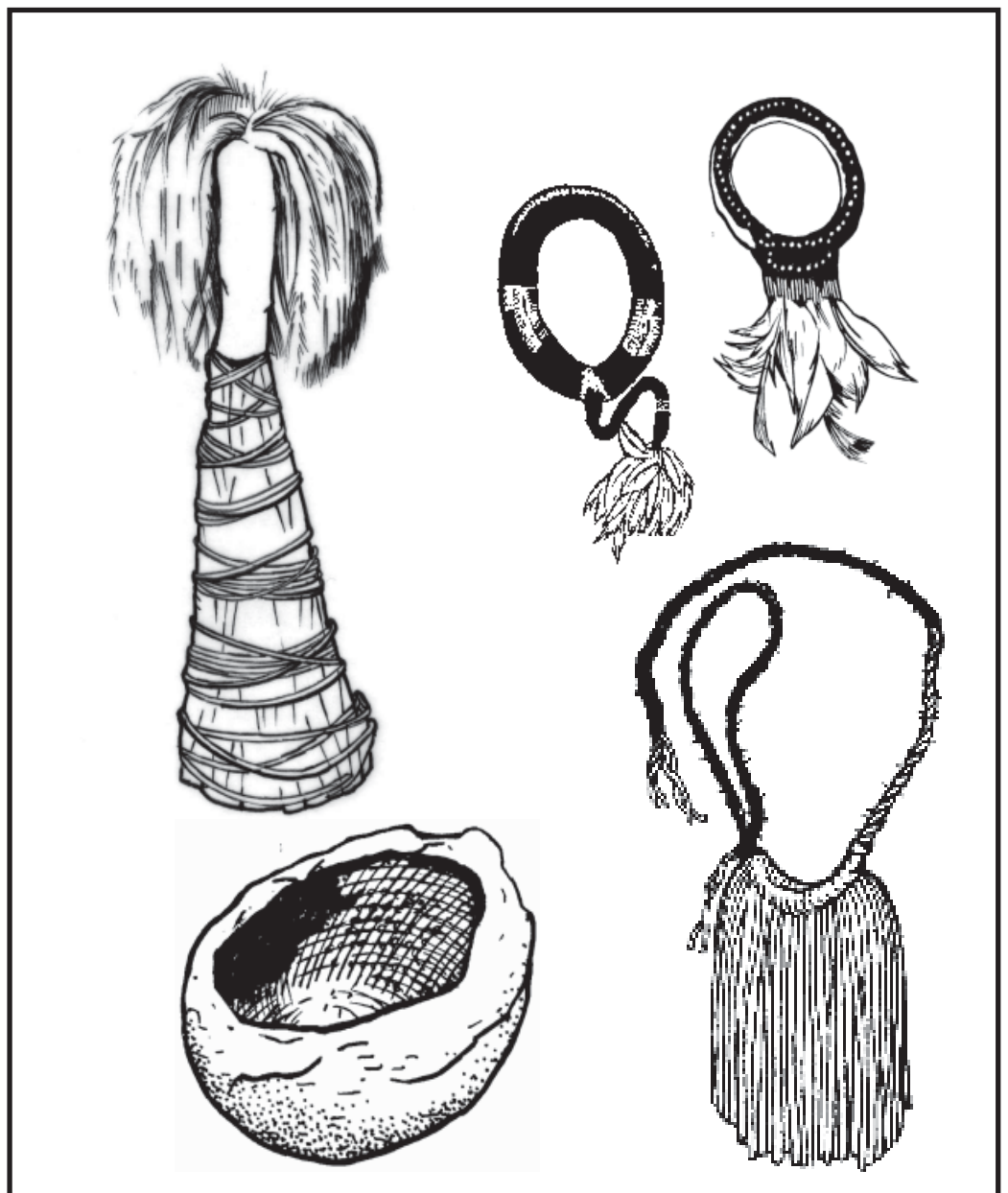


This Outreach Education Program for schools is made possible by the partnership between the South Australian Museum and the Department for Education and Child Development. Outreach Education is a team of seconded teachers who are based in public institutions.

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Authors: Chris Nobbs and Simon Langsford



South Australian Museum Education Program

Phone: (08) 8207 7429 • Fax (08) 8207 7430 • Email: Education@samuseum.sa.gov.au • Web: www.samuseum.sa.gov.au

Visiting the museum

Student expectations

We would like you, and all our visitors, to enjoy visiting the museum.

- Please stay with your group.
- Walk safely around the exhibitions.
- Share the space with other visitors.
- Talking is an important part of learning. Please remember to use a quiet voice.
- The museum glass cases can get dirty or scratched. Please enjoy looking without touching.
- Please use the stairs and avoid the lifts. (They are slow and are needed by people who can't use the stairs.)
- Help keep the museum clean. Please eat and drink outside on the lawns.



Visiting the museum

Teacher expectations

Bookings are essential for all school visits to the museum.

Please supervise your groups of learners at all times. If your visit involves visiting more than one gallery, divide your class into small supervised groups. Respect the needs of other classes that have booked particular galleries. **Parents must specifically consent to students under 18 participating in activities involving indirect supervision.**

When you arrive please let the staff at the front desk know. If the weather is fine, your students can enjoy the outside lawn area while they wait.

Do not use clipboards with metal backings and clips. For your convenience and for the safety of our exhibits, cardboard backings are available at the front desk.

The coffee shop and the museum shop do not cater for large groups. Small groups can visit, with adult supervision. Bags must not be taken into either shop.

Only students with special needs should use the lifts. (Many students visit the museum and using the lifts would cause excessive delays for people who really need them.)

Unfortunately the museum has limited capacity to store bags. A large crate or two for lunches is easier to keep secure.

Supervisors' bags must be left at the security desk, or be inspected and tagged by the security officers.

Australian Aboriginal Cultures Gallery First Floor - Inquiry Cards

Baskets



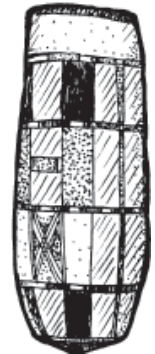
Baskets, bags, mats and other containers woven from grasses, reeds, bark and animal fibres are an essential part of Aboriginal culture.

In the past, Aboriginal people often travelled in search of food and water. Sometimes they used baskets to carry food, tools and utensils from one camp to another. Today Aboriginal people carry on the tradition of making basketry for daily use or exhibition and sale.

Select three very different examples of baskets on display including one old and one new. **Compare and contrast their features:**

Where were they made? What were they used for? Describe the type of weave - open, close/tight, and the style of decoration used, e.g. painted with ochres, patterns, i.e. stripes, dots.

Do simple drawings of the baskets you have chosen to write about.



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Bark Paintings



For thousands of years Aboriginal people living in northern Australia have painted their Dreaming Ancestors and designs in rock shelters, or on the inside of bark shelters. Today their bark paintings are made for exhibition and sale and continue this tradition of recording their beliefs, culture and everyday life.

Select two areas for your focus:

Are there **particular styles** which help you recognise which region they are from? ie compare the types of shapes, patterns, colours and images used.

Please do not touch the paintings

Choose one bark painting and describe the subject matter in your own words. What does it tell you about the beliefs and daily life of Aboriginal people from that region?

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Play



In the past many games prepared Aboriginal children for their roles in adult life. Some of these games are still played today. Explore the Play exhibition and watch the films of Aboriginal children playing.

Choose one of the following displays and answer the questions:

Spinning and Throwing Games, Watercraft, Playing House, Stories in String, Hunting and Fighting Games, Roller Toys, the Kukuru game, Stories in Sand.

Identify the main **types of toys** on display and the materials they are made of. How were these toys made and used?

What skills do you think Aboriginal children learn by playing with toys for hunting, gathering, and telling Dreaming stories?



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Tin Masks



These tin masks were made by Aboriginal people from the desert and inland region of the Pilbara in north Western Australia. They were found in 1953 at Port Hedland where they had been abandoned after a public ceremony.

What features do you think make them unique? (Think about the material they are made of and the shapes they represent.) Compare the tin masks with other Aboriginal artefacts displayed in the gallery, e.g. the shields, bark paintings and Tiwi bark containers. What are the similarities and the differences?

Who collected the masks? Why might his work be important to Aboriginal people today and our knowledge of Aboriginal culture?

If you have time, select another collector or type of artefact to investigate.

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Shields



Wooden shields provide a canvas for Aboriginal artists to carve or paint designs related to their own Dreamings. By looking at the collection of shields on display, it is possible to identify design and styles that are typical for different regions across Australia.

Choose four shields with different designs and draw an illustration for each one. Label them with information about,

- the size of the shield;
- how the design was made (e.g. carved or painted);
- what colours were used;
- the type of patterns used in the design (shapes and lines);
- and what you think the design represents.



Please do not touch the shields.

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Punu - Wood Carvings



Western Desert and Arrernte people often traded their wooden carvings (Punu) for European goods. Since the 1920s, women have begun carving wooden figures and burning designs on them using hot wire.

Find the carvings set in the case on the western wall, near the toys. (They are not easy to find. You have to look down on them from above.)

Explain how **European technology** has influenced their wood carvings.

Suggest some reasons why this style of art has become popular. How do you think the popularity of this art changed the life of Aboriginal communities where it has been made? If this style of art work was only invented in the 1920s, after metal became available (for the poker work), is it really Aboriginal art?

Look at nearby display cases. What other examples of skilled woodworking can you find?

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Relatedness



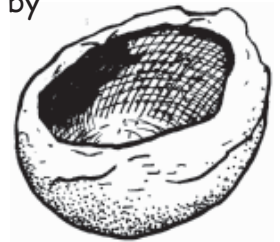
The Web of Relatedness display is about Aboriginal society - what ties Aboriginal people together and in some cases, pulls them apart.

Watch the films about the Web of Relatedness. Record **three important points** you learnt about Aboriginal communities.

Look at the artefacts on display in the cases and **select one** that you find interesting. Record any information you can find which tells you more about the artefact. How does it link with the topic of relatedness or Aboriginal communities?

Aboriginal people often celebrate or commemorate their life stages by having ceremonies. See if you can find information about two different **types of ceremonies** by looking at the films and studying the artefacts on display. Record the information you find.

What are the main **stages in life** that Aboriginal people consider important? Are they the same in other cultures?



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Tiwi Islands



Tiwi people live on Melville and Bathurst Islands. Tiwi culture has become different in many ways from mainland Aboriginal culture. Find the Tiwi Islands on the map near the film screen.

Listen to Tiwi people talk about their history and culture on the film screen.

Use the artefacts and labels on display in each section to answer the following questions:

What is the **Pukumani Ceremony**? How do Tiwi people practise the ceremony and what artefacts do they make which are widely recognised as symbols of Tiwi culture?

Describe the **Purrukaparli Dreaming** and try drawing the carvings of the three main figures. Who collected the artefacts?



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Kakadu

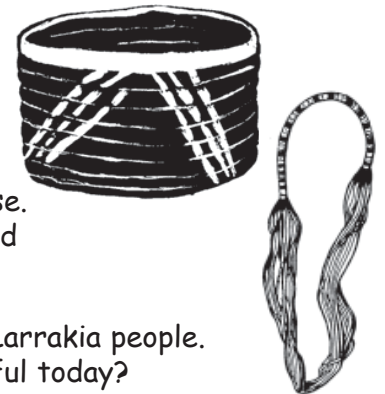


Jessie Anderson

The people of the Kakadu region live in coastal monsoon country. They have very hot and wet summers and hot and dry winters. From the rich coastal areas to the high sandstone plateaus, they have developed a range of tools and skills suited to their land.

Look at their **artwork and decorations** that are exhibited in this display. What are the most common materials used in their art? How does this reflect the environment that the artist lived in?

What do you think was the purpose of the artworks you see here? (Can you find any clues in the exhibition?)



Look for the **hunting and gathering tools** at the back of the big case. Use this display to describe the environment their makers lived in and what foods were available to them.

Find the small flat screen showing black and white photographs of Larrakia people. Try to guess why these pictures were taken. How could they be useful today?

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Western Cape York



The people of Western Cape York have traditional beliefs which show some influences of Melanesian culture. One of the largest groups is the Wik people, who became a focus of national and international attention in the 1990s Native Title Movement.

The displays about **Conflict, Early Contact** and **Ancestral Heroes** all have information suggesting that the people living here have been influenced by people from outside their region. Record some of this information.

Look at the section on **Hunting and Gathering**, behind the big case. There are no artefacts made of stone. What materials were used instead? Speculate about why stone was not used in this area.



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The Kimberley



The Kimberley is a rugged area located between a sea rich in resources and the Great Sandy Desert. The Aboriginal people who lived along the coast and inland were very different, but they traded with each other. Today Aboriginal artists of the Kimberley region make a distinctive style of art work.

List at least three features of their art that you feel are distinctive. What connection is there between the Kimberley art and the spirit world?

Look at the photographs. What sort of environments are shown?

Look at the raft and other artefacts. Record any clues they give about the kind of environments in this region?

What information is given in this display about the **contact period** when Europeans first visited this region?



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Shell ornaments

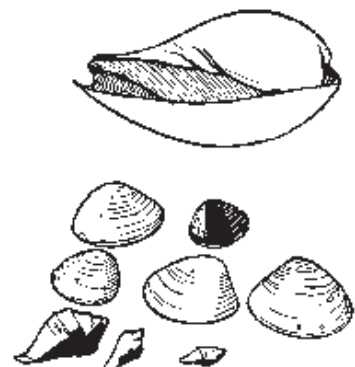


Find the display of shell ornaments. Shells have been considered to possess great spiritual power and natural beauty. Shell ornaments were highly prized status symbols within Aboriginal societies and were important trade items.

What **types of shell** have been used to make these ornaments. Have any land animals been used? What might be some of the reasons for making these shell items?

Shell was not only used for decoration, but it was made into many items for every-day use. Look around at other, nearby display cases.

Make a list of the uses you can find for shells. Record any evidence that people who lived far from the sea used any objects made of shell.



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Boomerangs



For thousands of years, Aboriginal people across Australia have used boomerangs. They vary in shape, use and meaning, depending on where they are made and used.

What are the five main types of boomerangs, their origins and their uses?

Use the pull-out draws at the left of the display to see more examples.

Select two examples you have seen. Identify what type they are, and describe how they were decorated.



How it flies

Watch the black & white film on the corner screen about boomerangs. What uses are there for a boomerang? How does a boomerang fly? Record any information about the oldest boomerang.

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String and Rope



Ceremonial
headdress

Aboriginal people made different types of two ply string and rope to suit particular purposes. Before European people arrived in Australia, fibres from plants, animal fur and human hair were commonly used for making string and rope. In some areas today, string made from sheep's wool has replaced human and animal fur string.

Use the displays to collect information about the different ways string and rope were used.

Find all the evidence you can in the display about the different kinds of natural fibres used. How did Aboriginal people make the fibre into string? Look at other, nearby exhibits for more information.

Explain how string has been used in the artefacts you can see on display. Can you guess what kind of string has been used in each artefact?



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