

Women with Clever Hands

Gapuwiyak Miyalkurruwurr Gong Djambatjmala

Education Kit



Women with Clever Hands

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Gapuwiyak Miyalkurruwurr Gong Djambatjmala Resource Kit

This resource kit has been prepared by Michelle Fracaro and Alexandra Johnston with Louise Hamby for the exhibition *Women with Clever Hands: Gapuwiyak Miyalkurruwurr Gong Djambatjmala*. Editing and input has been provided by Cath Bowdler, Melanie Evans and Linda Elliott from Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. This kit provides broad learning opportunities and links to the curriculum.

Broad Learning Opportunities

- Investigates Aboriginal culture and traditions
- Investigates materials and techniques
- Provides inspiration for students' own creative works
- Looks at how art reflects values, beliefs and traditions
- Looks at the role of artists in different societies
- Explores relationships to the land as expressed by Indigenous culture
- Explores the social dimensions of art
- Critical analysis of visual objects
- Design and aesthetic elements

Curriculum Links

The Arts:

Women with Clever Hands offers students opportunities to:

- Experience, express, interpret and critique the cultural, geographic and social landscapes of our society
- Experience excellence in the arts, experiment with ideas, learn about cultural traditions and exhibit and perform alongside respected artists

History:

Specific to the curriculum focus for years 3-6 is life in past times and places that are explored through a range of perspectives and themes. The development of knowledge and understanding about pre and post Indigenous contact, colonisation and the ability to recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander influences on our present day society¹.

Focus questions for the history curriculum across Years 3–6 include:

- What do we know about the past?
- How did Australians live in the past?
- How did people live in other places?
- How has the past influenced the present?

Students from years 7-10 are required to understand Australian history within a comparative framework that embraces the Indigenous and settler components, and they should be aware of its regional and global dimensions².



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Specific focus areas for students in these years include:

- Human transformation of the environment
- Characteristics of civilisations – early forms of government, religion, society and culture
- Heritage
- Social structure
- Health and disease
- Scientific and technological change
- Impact of beliefs and values
- Cultural contact and conflict
- Exploration and imperialism
- Forced and voluntary movement of people
- Indigenous-settler relations
- Early impact of industrialisation
- Social, economic, political and cultural development
- Rights and freedoms

Importantly, the learning acquired by students in history contributes to learning in other areas. This exhibition provides many opportunities for learning across other curriculum areas including English, Science, Languages, the Arts and Geography.

SOSE/HISE:

The exhibition also encourages students to explore the broad areas found within Studies of Society and Environment – for example:

Media, materials and technologies
Continuity and change
Society and culture

1 ACARA: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting authority, Publications [The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History](#) (May 2009:8)

2 ACARA: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting authority, Publications [The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History](#) (May 2009:9)

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BACKGROUND

Exhibition Aims

Women with Clever Hands aims to establish the characteristics of Gapuwiyak fibre workers' style as a group and to highlight the skill and innovation of individual makers past and present. The exhibition examines and promotes the use of materials coming from country. It also looks at generational change in the transmission of knowledge in fibre practice. It demonstrates the continuing practice of fibre work from mission times and encourages younger women to become involved in fibre practice as a means of economic and cultural benefit.



Installation of Women with Clever Hands. Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. 2010. Photo: L. Hamby

Background to the Exhibition

This exhibition is the first time the women of Gapuwiyak, past and present, have presented an array of their creative work in fibre. *Women with Clever Hands* developed from the relationship of the women with Louise Hamby which began in 1995 when she commenced her PhD studies investigating the complex set of issues surrounding the making, meaning and use of fibre objects in the community. *Women with Clever Hands* is fortunate in being able to capture fifteen years of women's lives through their work nurtured by this exchange. This exhibition has been developed by Louise Hamby and the Gapuwiyak Community in partnership with Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. Lucy Malirrimurruwuy Wanapuyngu assisted Louise with the curation of this exhibition. She and many others are to be thanked and congratulated for their support.



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Community Information

Gapuwiyak is a small inland community in eastern Arnhem Land 16 kilometres from the coast. The community is on the edge of a small 1.5 kilometre long body of water, Lake Evella, located 230kms west of Nhulunbuy, in the Northern Territory.

The Aboriginal name for the community, Gapuwiyak, means brackish or bitter water. There are many clan groups living in Gapuwiyak today; the landowners are Gupapuyngu who are one of the smaller groups of the population. The main clans within the community are Dhalwangu, Djambarrpuyngu, Marrangu, Wagilag and Ritharrngu. The majority of the artists live in the township and others reside in the outstations surrounding Gapuwiyak.

OBJECTS

Five basic types of fibre objects are featured in the exhibition: bodywear, string bags, baskets, mats and fibre sculptures.

Bodywear for Gapuwiyak consists of necklaces, armbands, hats and pubic covers. A key identifier for the necklaces from Gapuwiyak is the use of seeds and natural materials, particularly those of the tiny *Crotalaria goreensis* which are threaded individually onto nylon fishing line due to their small size. Classic style necklaces of grass stems are threaded on hand-spun string and looped to form chokers.

Necklace *Girringgirring*

1997

Dorothy Njmanydjurru

Madarrpa 1935-1999

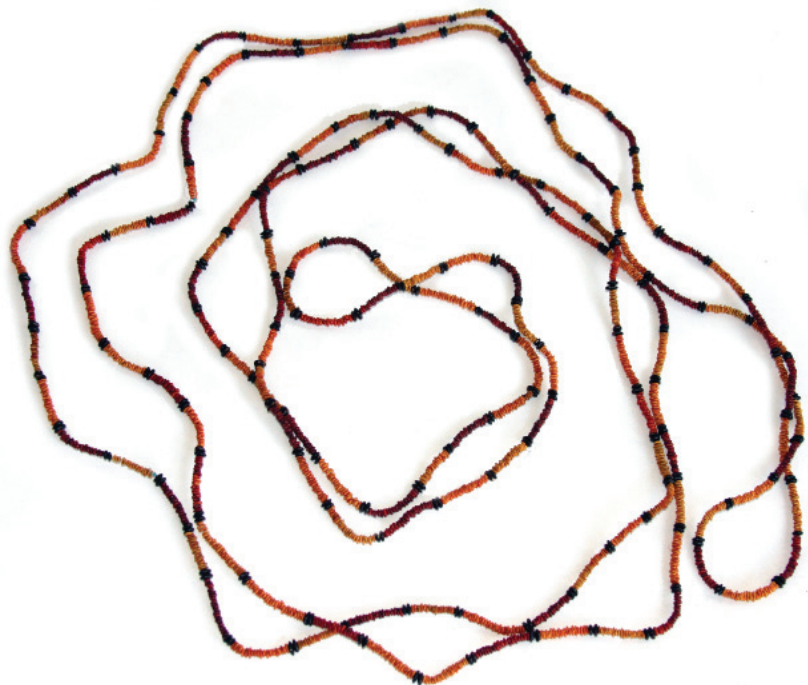
Threaded *crotalaria goreensis* and acacia seeds

Long lengths of *crotalaria* are threaded and then wrapped several times around the neck.

Necklace story

Girringgirringbuy dhäwu'

Photo: L. Knowles



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String bags are a mainstay of everyday life for carrying a range of items from food stuffs to today's supply of personal items. The major technique for their production is simple looping of hand-spun string made from *Brachychiton megaphyllus*.



String bag *Gay'wu* 2007
Joyce Milpuna Bidingal
b. 1975
Ritharrngu
Looped string

This smaller bag is for carrying personal items rather than food.

Milpuna's work
Milpunwung djämapuy

Photo: L. Knowles

The majority of the fibre works produced are **baskets** of various types. Generally speaking those constructed with the twining technique are the classic *bathi* or conical baskets with string handles and rounded bottoms. Baskets produced by the main technique of coiling are varied from conical forms to European shopping style baskets. The coiling technique was introduced into Arnhem Land by missionaries and travelled from west to east.



Patterned tubular basket
Miny'tjimirr mindirr 2008
Mary Banbalmiya Bidingal
b. 1950
Ritharrngu
Twined pandanus

Banbalmiya uses yellow, white, red and black vertical stripes in horizontal bands.

Patterned basket and mat story
Miny'tjimirr bathi ga mätpuy dhäwu'

Photo: L. Knowles

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Patterned mat *Miny'tjimirr māt* 2009

Joyce Milpuna Bidingal

b. 1975

Ritharrngu

Twined, open and closed, floor mat

Patterns within horizontal bands can be made of single twist vertical rows of colour.



Patterned basket and mat story

Miny'tjimirr bathi ga mätpuuy dhäwu'

Photo: L.Knowles

Mats are made in a similar manner to baskets. Classic mats from Arnhem Land are twined with the oldest style being mats that are conical in form called *nganmarra*. This style was modified by missionary influence to make twined flat mats which are the main type produced by artists today. Coiled mats are also made usually with openwork designs reflective of earlier patterning.

Fibre sculptures from Gapuwiyak are mainly from one artist Penny Milingu Wanapuyngu and her mother. Sculptures of this type from Maningrida have been in popular demand for some time. This link to Gapuwiyak is made through Milingu's husband's family who live in Maningrida. The sculptures are mainly animals with a couple of human figures.



Diver duck *Matjika* 2009

Penny Milingu Wanapuyngu

b. 1961

Wagilag

Twined painted pandanus figure stuffed with paperbark, painted wooden legs

This animal is associated with the creation of Lake Evella in Gapuwiyak.

Animal Story *Warrakanbuy mala dhäwu'*

Photo: L.Knowles

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EXHIBITION THEMES



Pandanus spiralis. Photo: L.Hamby



Roots of *Pogonolobus reticulatus*, djundum. Photo: L. Hamby

MATERIALS Girri'mala

Plants are the main source of materials for work in the exhibition. The bodies of baskets and string bags are from pandanus (*gunga*) and kurrajong (*balgur*). *Pandanus spiralis* is the pandanus palm used in Arnhem Land. The spiraling growth pattern of the leaves makes it easy to distinguish from other pandanus palms. Only the V- shaped leaves in the centre are acceptable for fibre production.

Brachychiton megaphyllus (*B. paradoxus* s. lat) is the kurrajong whose bark is taken to make string. During the dry season the tree loses most of its leaves and produces its distinctive red bell shaped flowers. Young trees with a trunk diameter of approximately 4 centimetres that are straight and have few branches close to the ground are used.

Plants are the source of dyes whose colours are known by the name of the particular plant from which they are derived. Colour can be obtained directly from boiling plant material but many colours come from the addition of ash from specific trees to the main dye bath.

Djundum, 'yellow one', as women in Gapuwiyak call it, is unquestionably the most important dye plant. Various shades of yellow and orange are produced from this plant and it is the base ingredient to make most reds. *Pogonolobus reticulatus* is a small tree or large shrub. The root of the tree is the source of the colour. The inner thick bark is a bright yellow-orange hue.

KEY FOCUS OF THIS THEME

As part of their cultural identity Gapuwiyak women are committed to using natural materials that come from their own country rather than manufactured materials. In this theme students may explore the following concepts:

- Cultural identity linked with use of materials
- Use of local materials
- Materials specific to forms

KEY QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS TO EXPLORE IN THIS THEME

- What materials are used?
- Where do the materials come from?
- Whose role is it to source the materials?

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- How are they sourced?
- Are alternative materials sourced during times of scarcity?
If so what are they?
- Are alternative materials used as a result of western influences?
If so what are they?

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ACTIVITY FOR THIS THEME - see [Attachments](#)

TECHNIQUES *Djeli gonggadaman*



Looping. Photo: L. Hamby



Adding in pandanus lengths. Photo: L. Hamby

'Ngarra ga buma bathi' (I am making/creating a basket).

The main techniques employed by people of this area in fibre production are twining, coiling and looping. These terms refer to the process or technique not the finished product.

The technique of twining in its simplest form is the twisting together of elements, referred to by the women as 'hand one'. The active or working elements completely enclose the passive ones and twist before enclosing the next element.

Coiling is often considered to be a sewn process, referred to as 'needle one'. In coiling there are also two sets of elements involved in the construction process. One set is usually a bundle of fibre which becomes the foundation core over which the other element usually a single strand is stitched.

Looping is the interworking of a single continuous element with itself. Women spin the string and add more on to the length as needed. The structure is based on a stitch similar to the buttonhole stitch used in coiling. Each row of stitches is worked into the previous row.

KEY FOCUS OF THIS THEME

A variety of techniques are used to create these objects. In this theme students can focus on the different techniques used using the notes provided and looking at objects in the exhibition.

KEY ACTIVITIES IN THIS THEME

Make your own baskets – [see Attachments](#)

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KEY FOCUS OF THIS THEME

Today's artists continue to make some classic forms whether they are commercially beneficial or not. In this theme students may explore the following concepts:

- Value and integrity vs. commercial viability
- Form and tradition
- Aesthetic value
- Modern influences vs. traditional influences
- Functionality

KEY QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS TO EXPLORE IN THIS THEME

- What are the factors that determine commercial value in this community?
- What are the factors that determine aesthetic value in this community?
- What drives the sensibility to value aesthetics over economic gain? (Eg are there political, social, gender, and societal underpinnings?)

PAST TIMES *Bämanpuy dhäwu'*



Pubic cover burrkuburrku 2008
Lucy Malirrimurruwuy
Wanapuyngu b, 1955

Skirt Batjparra 1998
Ruby Gubiyarrawuy Guyula
1937-2005



Past practices and people who have passed away are honoured in Gapuwiyak. In this exhibition a quarter of the artists represented are deceased. Their styles and knowledge and those of their mothers and grandmothers are referred to by the artists who are still practicing.

Older women remember the methods used and the objects made in the past. Many lived and worked at the mission at Elcho Island when Harold Shepherdson and his wife Ella were there. Some styles of work developed from that time, including flat mats and baskets with flat bottoms. The technique of coiling originated from mission times.

The work of the anthropologist Donald Thomson who worked in the area in the late 1930s has been a big influence. His photographs and the objects he collected have been inspirational for the artists. Relatives were found in the photographs and objects have been reproduced from those times. Some are seen in the exhibition like the pubic cover made by Malirrimurruwuy Wanapuyngu and the sedge grass baskets by Walinyinawuy Guyula.

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KEY FOCUS OF THIS THEME

Past practice, history and tradition: the Gapuwiyak artists are concerned with the continuation of fibre traditions and forms and wish to acknowledge the contribution of deceased makers. In this theme students may explore the following concepts:

- Cultural identity
- Cultural traditions
- Cultural mores
- Cultural beliefs

KEY QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS TO EXPLORE IN THIS THEME

- What does it mean to be part of this culture?
- What is the impetus driving the concern to continue this cultural tradition?
- Who drives the concern to continue this cultural tradition?

WORKING TOGETHER *Djäma rrambangi*



Djupuduwy and Ngangiwuy Guyula carrying pandanus. 1997. Photo: L. Hamby

In Gapuwiyak fibre practice involves women working together. They gain pleasure from working together around a fire, under a tree or on a veranda. This is often a close extended family group involving different generations. Children join in the activity. Social, artistic, educational and economic activities derive from this process, with cooperation occurring at all stages in the production of a basket.

Much work is necessary before women can actually make a basket. Collecting and preparing material provides the opportunity to go out in the bush and other activities can occur like fishing. Some women watch the children or look for honey and others collect pandanus or dig for dye roots. Material may be given to the women who were not collecting but caring for children. On returning to town, pandanus may also be given to relatives who are older or unable to go collecting.



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Generally women construct their own baskets, but often experienced makers work on baskets belonging to other women as part of collaboration. It is an accepted part of the process of working. The 'authorship' belongs to the senior person or the woman who actually starts the basket. This is a method of teaching younger people as well as others wishing to learn a particular skill such as the braiding of a handle. Mothers and daughters work together. One may be teaching or helping because of disabilities.

KEY FOCUS OF THIS THEME

The artists hope this exhibition will encourage younger women to become involved in fibre practice as a means of artistic, economic and cultural growth.

In this theme students may explore the following concepts:

- The importance of the transmission of cultural knowledge through generations
- Young people involved in culture
- Social relationships, collaboration, working together
- The development in work over the past fifteen years
- The role of women in this culture
- The role of women in this community
- The value of economic growth vs. artistic integrity
- The value of economic growth vs. cultural growth

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LIFE OF A MAKER *Dhuwarr djämamirriw*



Ngangiyawuy Guyula. 2008.
Photo: L. Hamby



Basket Batjik 2007
Ngangiyawuy Guyula (detail).
Photo: L. Hamby



Basket Batjik 2007
Ngangiyawuy Guyula.
Photo: L. Hamby

Girls may not start making objects until they are adolescents but their education as a maker begins as children, as they accompany their family groups on trips to collect, prepare and make objects. They become familiar with the plants and make toys from pandanus. As Malirrimurruwuy Wanapuyngu says 'you learn through your eyes.' String bags are a basic item of women's work kits and in the past they would learn to make them first.

'First, their mother teach them for weaving, for gay'wu (string bags), ga bul'pu (and baskets) and after that when their hands were very clever they start to make baskets ga mats.' Malirrimurruwuy, May 2009

With age and experience women gain skill and establish their own style. Such a maker was Margaret Ngangiyawuy Guyula, 1939-2009. She comes from an artistic family. Her father Minyi'pirri'wuy was an expert maker of special ceremonial spears and her mother Gurrdjurratli was a ceremonial *bathi* maker. Ngangiyawuy made a range of fibre objects with different techniques.

Health issues intervened in the making of work by Ngangiyawuy. She developed cataracts and slowly lost her sight. This did not stop her from making work. The character of her coiling changed to more random stitches as she was unable to see the previous space for the needle. Her looping stayed the same as she was able to feel the spaces between loops.

KEY FOCUS OF THIS THEME

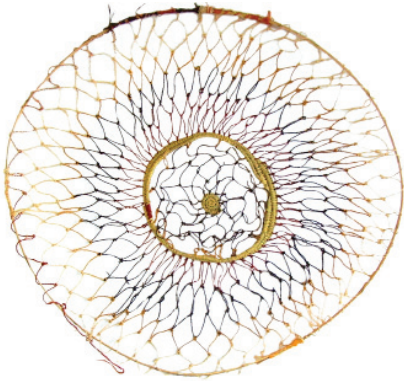
There are social conditions that can affect the making of objects.

CASE STUDY FOCUS FOR THIS THEME

Explore work by Ngangiyawuy. How has her work changed over time, with the gradual loss of her sight?

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STYLE *Dhuwar Bathiw Mala*



Hat Djonggu 1998
Gubiyarrawuy Guyula.
Photo: L. Knowles



Basket Batjik 2007
Batumbil Ngurruwutthun.
Photo: L. Knowles



Spirit Figure Wayarra 2009
Milingu Wanapuyngu.
Photo: L. Knowles

Gapuwiyak style has developed from a combination of social, cultural and environmental factors. The community was established in 1969 and brought together people from the northern and southwestern areas of Arnhem Land. The majority of the fibre works produced are baskets of various types known as *bathi*.

Tubular baskets, (*mindirr*), with rounded bottoms and string handles primarily made by twining represent the classic form. Baskets produced by the main technique of coiling are varied from tubular forms to European shopping style baskets.

Mats, (*mät*), are made in a similar manner to baskets. Classic mats from Arnhem Land are twined. Mats were conical in form in the past but this style was modified by missionary influence. Flat mats are the main type produced by artists today.

String bags, (*gay'wu*), are made with the looping technique from a single length of string. Bark from the kurrajong tree is used to make the hand spun two-ply string. Some bags are knotted.

Bodywear, (*girringgirring*), consists mainly of necklaces and some headbands. A key feature for the necklaces from Gapuwiyak is the use of seeds and natural materials. Sometimes these may be painted. Classic style necklaces of grass stems are threaded on hand-spun string and looped to form chokers.

Since 2006 more figurative works of animals, (*warrakan*), have been made primarily by Penny Milingu Wanapuyngu. They are constructed from twined pandanus stuffed with paperbark with wood for legs and other body parts.

KEY FOCUS OF THIS THEME

Diversity of style

This theme can be explored through an analysis of different styles through looking at individual artists. Look at the work of the following artists. Compare and contrast their work. What are the differences in their styles?

- Nancy Walinyinawuy Guyula
- Lucy Malirrimurruwuy Wanapuyngu
- Linda Minawala Bidingal
- Penny Milingu Wanapuyngu

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PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

- Use an atlas to find maps of Australia, Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory
- Locate Gapuwiyak on a map of the Top End of the Northern Territory
- Search the web for images and information on this geographical area
- Look at the glossary below and try to learn some language names

Glossary

Consonants which are underlined are retroflexed. They are pronounced with the tongue pointing backwards.

- Balanda Non-Aboriginal person
- Balgurr Kurrajong
- Barka Three-strand twining, upper arm, branch, thin thing
- Bathi Djambarrpuyngu term for the general classification of basket/container

- Bir'yun Shimmering
- Dal Physical strength
- Dha Mouth
- Dhangj Cocky-apple tree *Planchonia careya*
- Dharpa Tree
- Dhäwu History or stories
- Dhumumu Quinine tree *Petalostigma pubescens*
- Dhuway Husband or sister-in-law
- Dimbuka Closely twined basket often for honey
- Djang'kawu Creator ancestors for the Dhuwa moiety, two sisters and in some versions a brother

- Djundum Yellow dye plant *Pogonolobus reticulatus*
- Gäthu Niece or child
- Gay'wu String bag
- Giningarr Navel, umbilical cord
- Gunga Pandanus
- Gurrutu Kinship system
- Kunmadj Kunwinjku term for **bathi**
- Lirra Spines or teeth of pandanus
- Lindirritj Red-collared lorikeet
- Luku Foot, footprint, trace
- Madayin All things connected to **wangarr** including objects, designs, songs and dances, generally considered to be sacred

- Mala Group
- Märr Spiritual or ancestral power
- Mel Eye or waterhole
- Mewana Sedge grass *Cyperus javanicus*
- Mindirr Closely twined basket
- Mindjalpi Sacred basket
- Mintji Painting, design, colour

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- Mungurr Paperbark container
- Mutika Truck, motor vehicle
- Nganmarra Conical mat
- Ngapipi Uncle
- Rangga Sacred objects
- Rangan Paperbark
- Rarrk Cross-hatching
- Rom Religious practice or the appropriate way of doing things, established by the ancestors
- Tjukurr Fat richness
- Wangarr Ancestral beings
- Wana Armband, pendant, arm, wing, branch
- Wulangana Basket containing an umbilical cord
- Yapa Sister
- Yolngu Literally means person, but commonly refers to Aboriginal people from northeast Arnhem Land

ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

Read the exhibition text panels and labels. View the artworks. Talk about the artworks.

Make notes and drawings on the following:

- The title of the exhibition
- The coiling technique
- Where the artists come from
- What the artists have in common
- How the coiling technique spread from one community to another
- The materials used in the works
- Your favorite work

Artists

Reflect on and discuss the ways in which the artists work. What is different from what you know of how other artists work?

Search for the works by one artist in the exhibition

- Make drawings of your favorite works
- Note the style, pattern and construction of the work
- Make notes about techniques and colours used
- What is distinctive about this work – what makes it different from the work of other artists?
- What do you think is their artistic intention?
- If you could ask this artist one question, what would it be?



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Land

- What can you determine about the environment from looking at the photos in the exhibition?
- What types of resources might be available for basket production?
- How are the resources collected and prepared for making baskets and mats?
- How are the plant materials collected for dyes and how they are prepared?

Objects, Pattern, Design and Technique

Compare objects by two artists in the exhibition. Note differences in technique, form, pattern and use of colour.

Distinct designs and patterns are associated with particular artists. Locate an artist whose work shows the use of a particular design, for example, bands or rows, blocks of colour, diamonds and triangles, flowers, openwork.

- Sketch the way the design is used in two or more objects.
- Locate several objects that use similar designs or patterns.
- Use the biographies to see if you can trace family links between the artists.
- There are several techniques for working with fibre displayed in this exhibition. Find and sketch an example of each of the techniques.

Make careful observations of the variety of handles and how they are constructed. Ask students to draw or explain the ways in which they differ, including the method of attachment to the baskets or bags.

What evidence is there in the exhibition about how skills and techniques are passed on from one generation to the next?

List the types of baskets and bags represented and how their use is portrayed in the exhibition. How does this illustrate changes in the creation and use of these items over a long period of time?

The story told in the exhibition is about the role of Gapuwiyak women in the development of coiling techniques in this part of Australia. Discuss the significance of the role of women in this Indigenous community.

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POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

1. MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

One of the ways in which Australian Indigenous people express their cultural identities is through the things they make. Many traditional objects are handmade from plant materials gathered from the bush. String is also made from animal and human hair. Traditionally Aboriginal men and women made a range of domestic, as well as ceremonial, items using a variety of classic techniques. These include: looping and knotting to make soft mesh items like net bags and fish and animal nets; twining to make stiffer baskets and mats and traps; and coiling to make rigid traps, baskets and so on.

Many traditional items are no longer made because they have been replaced by store-bought items, or the skills have become obsolete due to sustained European contact. However, traditional skills in many parts of Australia have been maintained by artists making items for the art and craft industry. Their skills have even expanded and diversified through the introduction of new ideas and techniques. In some areas traditional skills have also been revived and revitalised by artists who want to reconnect with their heritage and confirm their cultural identities

The women of Gapuwiyak like to sit and talk as they make things. This kind of sharing includes cross-cultural influences as Indigenous and non-Indigenous weavers come together to share information through workshops and meetings. This is how new ideas spread across the remote regions of Australia. Many of the natural bush materials the weavers use and the items they make have cultural associations.

Indigenous people believe that most fibre objects were introduced long ago by powerful ancestral beings. Weavers reconfirm these religious associations when they make their traditional items. While many traditional objects are still made, the arts and crafts of remote Aboriginal people have expanded to include new techniques and materials.

Think about your own environment. Create an artwork which responds to your daily life using native grasses and natural materials similar to the materials used by Gapuwiyak women. Use the following resources to help you gather the information you will need.

Gapuwiyak Culture and Arts is featured on *right way*: <http://carightway.ning.com/> View the slide show to see Gapuwiyak artists working together with other indigenous and non-Indigenous artists.

Linda Elliott, Lucy Wanapuyngu, Melanie Evans, Penny Wanapuyngu sorting pandanus
<http://carightway.ning.com/photo/mg2864-1/next?context=album&albumId=3403876%3AAlbum%3A1455>

Penny, Linda and Melanie prepare dye

<http://carightway.ning.com/photo/mg2891-1/next?context=album&albumId=3403876%3AAlbum%3A1455>

Hands after pounding 'yellow dye' roots

<http://carightway.ning.com/photo/mg2900-1/next?context=album&albumId=3403876%3AAlbum%3A1455>

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Linda and Melanie shaking and dancing off bark debris from dyed pandanus

http://api.ning.com:80/files/Lktrp2kDzwYeg5sLhvTkyUtafST*1zOc8YXykF5wOrc_/MG_2911.jpg

Linda, Lucy, Melanie and Penny with their dyed pandanus

<http://carightway.ning.com/photo/mg2911-1/next?context=album&albumId=3403876%3AAlbum%3A1455>

Penny Wanapuyngu and Melanie Evans coiling together

<http://carightway.ning.com/photo/mg2919-1/next?context=album&albumId=3403876%3AAlbum%3A1455>

This is the address for the Gapuwiyak web-site which will be completed in the near future.

<http://www.gapuwiyak.com/>

2. DISCUSSION

Discuss Indigenous and non-Indigenous notions of art and the artist. In European society, artists are often seen as being outsiders and social critics, individuals who critique or work outside prevailing social attitudes.

Does this exhibition support such a view of the role of the artist?

What is the evidence for a different conception of the role of the artist in Gapuwiyak?

A simple but powerful way to think about exhibitions and messages is to discuss:

- How does the exhibition fit with what you already know?
- What new information or ideas are there in the exhibition for you?

3. RESEARCH

Research historical baskets from other museum collections. How are they different from or similar to the Gapuwiyak objects on display?

Research fibre objects by Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world.

For example:

<http://www.collectorsguide.com/fa/fa004.shtml>

<http://www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/baskets/index.html>

<http://www.nativetech.org/basketry/coilindex.html>

<http://www.ohs.org/exhibits/basketry.cfm>

Research plants from your environment: - you might visit your local Botanic Gardens or nature reserve

- What materials can you find that might be used to create objects?

Research the culture of Aboriginal people from your area

- What kinds of objects did they make and use?

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- What materials did they use?

4. WRITE

Having experienced the *Women with Clever Hands: Gapuwiyak Miyalkurruwurr Gong Djambatjmala* exhibition, what roles do you think each of the following have played in the presentation and interpretation of this exhibition?

- The gallery
- The curator
- The artist
- Yourself, as viewer

Write two or three sentences about the parts played by each of these exhibition participants.

What do you think is the role of art galleries in showing contemporary Indigenous culture?

Write a review of the *Women with Clever Hands: Gapuwiyak Miyalkurruwurr Gong Djamaitjmala* exhibition.

Have a look at some exhibition reviews that art critics have written. Take note of how they have described the space, exhibition layout and design, lighting, and the mood or feel of the space. Use the same techniques in your exhibition review. Remember to describe the themes in the exhibition. What are the images about? Is there an overall message of the exhibition?

Choose two objects from the exhibition to write about in detail – they may be an image you really liked and one you disliked on your visit. Students could publish their reviews in the school newsletter.

Look at *right way*, Craft Australia's Indigenous craft and design hub, where you can find out about Indigenous craft and design across the country: <http://carightway.ning.com/> Begin your own gallery of objects created by the students, inspired by the Gapuwiyak fibre artists. Use *right way* to post a reply to a forum or blog, or upload photos, by following the prompts.

Start your own group, blog or album where you can talk about your particular Gapuwiyak fibre artist project

Introduce yourself to other *right way* members! Louise Hamby is a *right way* member. Louise is currently a Research Fellow at the Australian National University in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts. She works in the Museums and Collections area where she teaches the course Indigenous Collections and Exhibitions. Most of Louise's field research is in Arnhem Land. Her research is in material culture from Arnhem Land both past and contemporary. Fibre objects are her area of expertise

Once you have joined up just edit your profile, add a photo (save one on your computer 250x300dpi) and write about your Gapuwiyak fibre artist project.



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Other writing activities

- Pick an object from the exhibition. Write a fictional story that goes with it. What is the history of the object? Where did it come from? What adventures has it had? How did it get to be in the exhibition?
- Create a students' exhibition of drawings inspired by your experience at *Women with Clever Hands: Gapuwiyak Miyalkurruwurr Gong Djambatjimala*.

5. MAKE

Find examples of fibre objects that are common in our everyday lives and, using this as a stimulus point, make your own basket as part of a broader unit of work.

For detailed instructions on basket making - [See Attachments](#)

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TEACHING RESOURCES ON-LINE

Aboriginal Art Centres

<http://www.aboriginalart.org>

A portal listing of Aboriginal owned and operated Art Centre websites in the Top End of the Northern Territory, Central Australia and northern Western Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia

<http://www.nga.gov.au/ATSIArt/Index.cfm>

Australian Museum and Galleries Online

<http://www.amol.org.au/guide/>

Bula'bula Arts Aboriginal Corporation

http://www.bulabula-arts.com/ourart_fibre.html

Caritas Australia - Making Tjanpi Aboriginal Baskets

http://www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion/interactive_photoAlbum_tjanpi.htm

Coiling around the world

<http://www.basketmakers.org/topics/artbasketry/artistaindex.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/pineneedlegroup2002/nativecoiledforms.html>

Craft Australia

<http://www.craftaustralia.com.au/research/20070225.php>

Fibre art

<http://www.allfiberarts.com/>

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/Sue-baskets.htm>

Injalak Arts & Crafts Association

<http://www.injalak.com>

Maningrida Arts and Culture

http://www.maningrida.com/artistic_prac.php

Powerhouse Museum Collection

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=152421>

Tactility: two centuries of Indigenous objects, textiles and fibre, National Gallery of Australia Exhibition

<http://www.nga.gov.au/Exhibition/Tactility/>

Tjampí - Aboriginal Women's Baskets and Crafts

<http://www.tjanpiaboriginalbaskets.com/>

Twined Together: The Origins of Coiling

<http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/twinedtogether/coiling.as>

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ADDITIONAL READING

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