

Welcome to *ReCoil*

Activity Sheet 1

ReCoil is about coiling and how people have used the technique to make different kinds of art and craft objects. People 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. For example, 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.

Exercise 1

ReCoil artist Nalda Searles often combines native plants and western materials in her work. Phyliss Rogers and Anne Dixon also combine bush plants and western fibres. Choose two of these artists and write a paragraph about how each artist does this. What do you think is their artistic intention?

Exercise 2

Make drawings of your favourite works. Make notes about techniques and colours used. Think about your own environment and how you might create an artwork which responds to your daily life.

Exercise 3

Some of the non-Indigenous artists in *ReCoil* have explored connections between different cultures. Choose two artists who fall into this category. How has their art been affected by different cultural influences?

Exercise 4

Having thought about *ReCoil*, 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 and
- 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 culture?

Exercise 5

Research

Look around the exhibition; spend time reading and looking and talking 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 favourite work

Exercise 6

Exhibition report

- Research the history of coiling back in the classroom
- Find examples of other art or craft works that have used the coiling method
- Write a full report on your visit

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Activity Sheet 2/1

Find the following works in the exhibition, read the story about the work/artist and discuss the ideas and concepts with the class.



Treahna Hamm
***Gulpa Ngar-Wu*, 2005**

*Deep listen not only with your ears
Deep listen with your eyes
Deep listen with all your senses
It's connected to a spiritual realm
We respect our elders
They teach us wisdom
They see when we're ready for knowledge
Sometimes images turn up in the landscape
They reinforce the stories that the old ones tell us
They reinforce our beliefs
Our culture and our identity
There's always the question:
Why do certain images come to us?
We know the spirits of the ancestors
And the spirits of the land are connected to us
We can feel them
In Indigenous culture there's
knowing on many different levels
It goes unsaid a lot of the time
But there are deep connections
They are always there
This spirit came to me in a dream
No mouth
Deep listening to the land
To my elders, to my ancestors
Connecting me to my culture.
(Treahna Hamm)*

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Activity Sheet 2/2



Mavis Ganambarr
Decorative Bag, 2001

Mavis was originally taught skills in netting and twining by her grandmother Djulka. She learnt coiling later when she attended school at Elcho Island. This work is unusual because she has combined the different techniques of coiling and string-bag netting.

I learnt how to make the string bag from my grandmother with different string. The banyan string from the root is hard, but the kurrajong one is soft. I use pandanus as well. I am very proud of what my grandmother taught me to do, but now I am making different, new styles of my own ideas ... Making the coiled baskets is easy for me. (Mavis Ganambarr)

Yvonne Koolmatricie
River Bunyip, 2003

That's Mulwan, the River Bunyip. His name was Gampi and he used to put the net right across the river. It's a story of sharing and caring too and about being aware of danger. He used to trap all the big fish and just let the little fish go through so the people down stream just got the little fish. So the old people said to him, 'You know Gampi, you're very greedy, you don't believe in sharing, so we're going to turn you into the River Bunyip.' And I tell the children, 'Be careful, don't go near the river because the Mulwan, he was put back into the river and now he's very cross. He's waiting for children to come to the river and he'll pull you in.' He's got kangaroo fur on him 'cause he's hairy looking.

So I got a kangaroo skin and cut that figure out you know and made him like he's got clothes on. It's like a collaboration with the weaving and the skin; kangaroo skin [cloak] and I put some rushes around him to represent him coming out of the rushes. But he was interesting and some of the kids would look and they'd run away screaming.

(Yvonne Koolmatricie)



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Activity Sheet 2/3



Banbiyak Mununggurr
Basket, 2006

Banbiyak was born at Yirrkala and after marrying, she moved with her husband to Elcho Island in the 1950s. It was here that Banbiyak first saw women making the coiled style of baskets.

In recent years she has started to make large baskets inspired by the western-style laundry baskets she has seen in shops.



Nalda Searles
Samplers, 2006

These small forms have been developed as explorations of materials and the ability to manipulate them. One could say they are fibre drawings or doodles. (Nalda Searles)



Phyllis Williams
Mother Dog & Puppies at the waterhole, 2006

Phyllis was inspired to make this sculpture from everyday life. She and her other relatives at Nyirrpi have many 'camp' dogs and she decided to silhouette them under a shady tree at the waterhole. The mother dog is suckling the two puppies.