

# RITUALS

Explore the customs, values and beliefs of communities and cultures through a variety of artistic practices, objects and icons.

VIEW ONLINE

QAGOMA  
LEARNING

# GROOTE EYLANDT COMMUNITY

*MAMARIGA, THE SOUTH-  
EAST WIND 1948*



Groote Eylandt Community / Anindilyakwa people / Australia / *Mamariga, the south-east wind* 1948 / Natural pigments on bark / 76.5 x 39.5cm (irreg.) / Gift of the 1948 American–Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land 1956 / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art

Rituals and customs are very often interconnected with a culture's intimate knowledge of seasonal changes and the patterns of nature that they bring. In this instance, the wet season and a south-east wind are the basis upon which a ritual sees boulders clash against a totemic rock with the aim of releasing a life-bringing wind known as Mamariga. The pattern on this bark painting is a design for a body-painting to be applied to the bodies of those with the totem of Mamariga before the performance of a ritual.

## WATCH

Watch Wally Caruana from the National Museum of Australia explain the global and historical significance of bark painting from Arnhem Land.

You can also check out this video called 'Drawing Words: A story by John Pule' which was created in collaboration with the Children's Art Centre. In the video, the artist narrates a reading from his novel *The shark that ate the sun*. Much like *Mamariga, the south-east wind* 1948, John Pule embeds stories about his life and culture in his artworks.

## THINK

1. The practice of sourcing and preparing bark and ochre to make this work would itself involve customs and rituals. Reflect on the steps that you take to prepare what you need before making a painting.
2. Wally Caruana explains that the elder artists were responsible for innovations in art. What role do elders play in your creativity?
3. Think of rituals that you have experienced or been involved in. Find out whether they are connected to a season or pattern in nature.

## CREATE

The body-painting design originates from an ancestral belief system distinct the Anindilyakwa people. Whether it be for a spiritual ritual or an occasion that holds significance to you for another reason, think of an outfit, a piece of jewellery or something that you would put on your body for a special family or community event.

Paint an image of the item as a reminder of its importance to you and write a description of your painting that explains its meaning to accompany the work.

# JAKI-ED PROJECT

## JAKI-ED MATS 2017



L: *Jaki-ed* weaving workshop, Majuro, Marshall Islands, September 2017 / Image courtesy: The artist and University of South Pacific, Majuro / Photograph: Christine Germano

R: Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner at the *Jaki-ed* weaving workshop, Majuro, Marshall Islands, September 2017 / Image courtesy: Chewy Lin and University of the South Pacific Majuro Campus / Photograph: Chewy Lin

The Marshall Islands *Jaki-ed* weaving project represents the outcome of a collaborative 21-day workshop involving 13 expert weavers in conjunction with performance artist and weaver Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner. In the act of reviving a cultural practice that was almost lost due to global influences on the Marshall Islands, the project provoked discussion about twenty-first-century issues and concerns. The women's weaving workshop occurred in a safe space for shared and healing at a time of struggle brought about by poverty and climate change. The ritual of weaving is a process of resilience that builds strength in community and culture.

### WATCH

Watch the video below to gain an insight into the full scope of the *Jaki-ed* project, which along with weavers, involved curators and spoken word poet Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner.

View documentation of Jetñil-Kijiner's performance at QAGOMA and her address before the United Nations in New York City.

### THINK

How does the process of making the mats in a shared workshop environment help the weavers to communicate stories about their life and experiences?

### CREATE

The *Jaki-ed* designs begin from the centre and tell a story that moves outward through symbols and patterns include a border decoration. Generate ideas from your own experiences, imagination or memories to patch or weave a design using symbols and patterns.

Like the *Jaki-ed* mats, artists Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh and Hesam Rahmanian explore the idea of self-expression but through colour, clothing and objects. Have a go at their Children's Art Centre activity which asks you to wear a different colour each day for a week, and draw a picture of all the objects that match with your daily colour.

# GUNANTUNA (TOLAI PEOPLE)

*TIKANA ARIP (FATHOM)*

2018



Gunantuna (Tolai people) / *Tikana Arip (fathom)* 2018 / Diwarra (Nassa callosa and Nassa camelus snail), shells, cane, string / 40cm (length of cane) / The Taylor Family Collection. Purchased 2018 with funds from Paul, Sue and Kate Taylor through the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © The artists

This work, *Tikana Arip*, is a form of *Diwarra* (shell money). Comprising shells strung onto lengths of cane known as fathoms, *Diwarra* is legal tender throughout East New Britain. It is also used for ceremonial transactions, such as bride price, wealth payments in death rites, and society initiation fees. Gideon Kakabin (1956–2018), the senior artist and elder who collected *Diwarra* through his cultural connections explains the importance of the shell money to the rituals of life in East New Britain:

‘They are not just shells. There is an intimate link between the physical shells themselves and the spirit of the Gunantuna people. That link exists on a day-to-day basis. When someone dies, shell money comes into play, when someone gets married, the shell money comes into play, when someone gets initiated, shell money comes into play. All sorts of things on a day-to-day basis are intimately related to shell money. It is not just an art object or a currency. It is a spiritual object as well for us.’

These pieces of cane are also formed into wheels, which are sealed with leaves to keep them dry and to declare their role as a bank. Known as *Loloi* and *Tutana*, they are displayed as symbols of wealth and status. *Diwarra* embodies an important indigenous relationship-based economic system — the accumulation of wealth is both based on and reflects social connections and merit.

## EXPLORE

A ceremony was held during the opening weekend of APT9 to commemorate the passing of Gideon Kakabin. Explore the image gallery recording this event. Part of the ceremony involved the *Diwarra* being broken down and shared with people who were close to the artist, others who knew him to varying degrees, as well as many more who had never met him.

## THINK

1. Ruth McDougall, Curator of Pacific Art, QAGOMA, knew Gideon Kakabin well. She wrote that, ‘The *Loloi* broken and distributed to commemorate his passing adds to his standing.’ What does this reveal about the relationship between shell money and social status?
2. Currency is a system of trade and as such, this single strand of shell money can be used for exchange and trade. Outside of the East New Britain financial system, can the *Diwarra* still be used for exchange and trade?

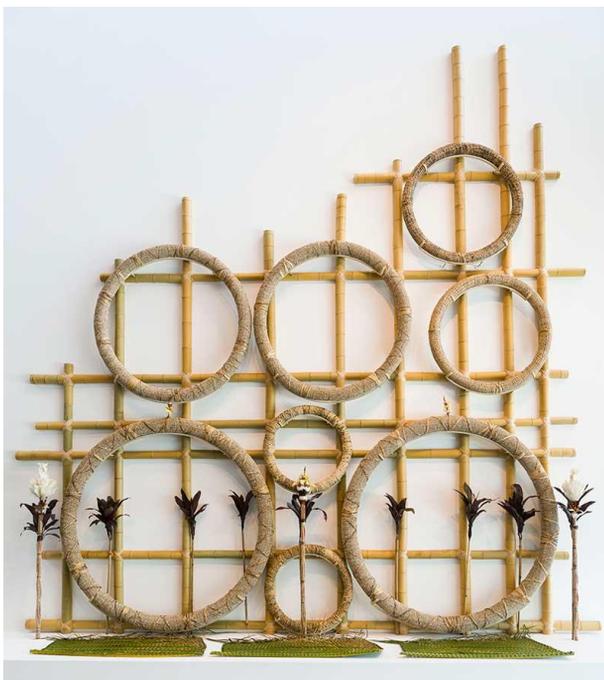
## CREATE

The value of *Diwarra* is derived from the ways it articulates, creates and sustains relationships between people.

Develop a system of trade for yourself and at least three other people. Before you contact your network, brainstorm each person's creative skills and come up with three ideas for something that each person would be able to make in multiples. Then contact your network and workshop your ideas through to an agreement (you may need to find a replacement if someone does not wish to participate). See how long your currency and network can last if you trade with your friends once a month. Think outside the box on what you could trade your currency for (i.e. a like on social media, a letter of support, a joke, priceless advice or a portrait).

## GUNANTUNA (TOLAI PEOPLE)

### LOLOI AND TUTANA 2018



Gunantuna (Tolai people) / *Tutana and Loloi (shell money rings)* 2018 / *Diwarra* (Nassa callosa and Nassa camelus snail), shells, cane, string, wire, feathers / Eight rings, installed dimensions variable / The Taylor Family Collection. Purchased 2018 with funds from Paul, Sue and Kate Taylor through the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © The artists

*Loloi* (ring of shell money) are constructed from bound canes of *Diwarra* (shell money) used by the Gunantuna as legal tender.

These *Loloi* and *Tutana* are completely wrapped in pandanus leaves to seal it as bank. The men who created the ring carefully count all of the *Diwarra* that enters the *Loloi* and *Tutana* and like treasurers, must be present when it is opened during ceremony to confirm that the correct amount remains. These *Loloi* and *Tutana* received cane bindings over the pandanus, twisted in the shape of an eye. Like the circular shape of the objects themselves these eyes suggest a form of security.

## WATCH

Watch the Amidal Tribes String Band performing a song especially written about the *Tutana*.

## THINK

1. Why do so many people have a love-hate relationship with banks?
2. Why is the sealing of the *Loloi* fundamental to its function as a bank?
3. Look up definitions for the word 'ritual'. Does making a deposit at the bank, or withdrawing money from an ATM fit any of the definitions?

## CREATE

Consider what wealth means to you. Write a list of what you believe to be fundamental to your understanding of your own wealth, including the wealth you currently have and the wealth you hope to have in the future. Seal your list in an envelope and find a banker (your best friend or a close family member). Ask them to keep your list in a safe and secure place. Discuss the terms and duration with which your list needs to remain with your banker before you can open the envelope and reflect on your thinking.

# HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

## HALL OF THE THIRTY-THREE BAYS (NOS 1-24) 1995



Hiroshi Sugimoto / Japan/United States b.1948 / *Hall of Thirty-Three Bays (nos 1–24)* 1995 / Gelatin silver photograph, ed. 8/25 / 24 sheets: 42 x 54cm (each) / The Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art. Purchased 1999 with funds from The Myer Foundation, a project of the Sidney Myer Centenary Celebration 1899–1999, through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Hiroshi Sugimoto

This photograph shows a small number of the 1000 sculptures of the goddess Kannon, a bodhisattva (a being on the path to awakening) housed in the Sanjūsangen dō Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan. At dawn, the sun strikes the Kannon and the sculptures are lit by natural light. Hiroshi Sugimoto's series of photographs show the variations in the appearance of these figures — all 1000 figures are slightly different. *Hall of Thirty-Three Bays (nos 1–24)* allows the viewer to contemplate the concepts of infinity and intricacy. The figures in the temple are all slightly different as the Bodhisattva embody the idea of unlimited compassion and thus take on many forms.

### LOOK

Look closely at the photograph. Can you identify some of the differences between the sculptures?

### THINK

1. Consider the different ways repetition can be used to convey infinity.
2. How can an artwork express the idea of 'unlimited compassion'?

### CREATE

Experiment with pattern-making by using reflective objects, such as mirrors and cutlery, and textures (e.g. aluminium foil). After your period of experimentation, work on producing an installation in a space that can get dark enough for you to manipulate light. Take at least 20 photographs of the installation, altering lighting and camera angles.

# JOE NGALLAMETTA

THAP YONGK (LAW POLES) 2002-03



Joe Ngallametta / Kugu Muminh/Kugu Uwanh people / Australia 1945–2005 / *Thap yongk (Law poles)* 2002–03 / Carved milkwood (*Alstonia muellerana*) with synthetic polymer paint and natural pigments / 15 components: 182 x 250 x 250cm (installed, approx.) / Commissioned 2002 with funds from the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Joe Ngallametta

The practice of law is loaded with symbolism, rules and rituals. A ritual in western courts of law sees people testify before God by holding their right hand on a Bible. The Koran sets religious laws for the nation of Islam. Joe Ngallametta's description of the law of his people is one that stems from spirituality. Laws are developed to defend rights and uphold the greater good. At best, they are made for the people and by the people and enable all members of a community to prosper. At worst, they enable the powerful to oppress the powerless.

## WATCH

Watch this video of Tony Albert as he travels to a small town of Warakurna in remote Western Australia. Tony Albert collaborated with children and artists in the community to create artworks as part of 'We Can be Heroes'. The exhibition explored how we can all be empowered by overcoming our fears and this similar to Ngallametta's ideas about law and power.

## THINK

1. Consider the concept of law in society. Think about the ways in which laws govern society.
2. How does the media make us aware of the consequences of disobeying laws? List some examples.
3. How has the artist used colour and design, as well as physical arrangement, to demonstrate the significance of the law poles for his community?

## CREATE

Investigate other cultures and the way communities commemorate and share concepts of spirituality. What makes these communities unique? Create an artwork that reflects the meaning found in your own community.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land upon which the Gallery stands in Brisbane. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past and present and, in the spirit of reconciliation, acknowledge the immense creative contribution Indigenous people make to the art and culture of this country.

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