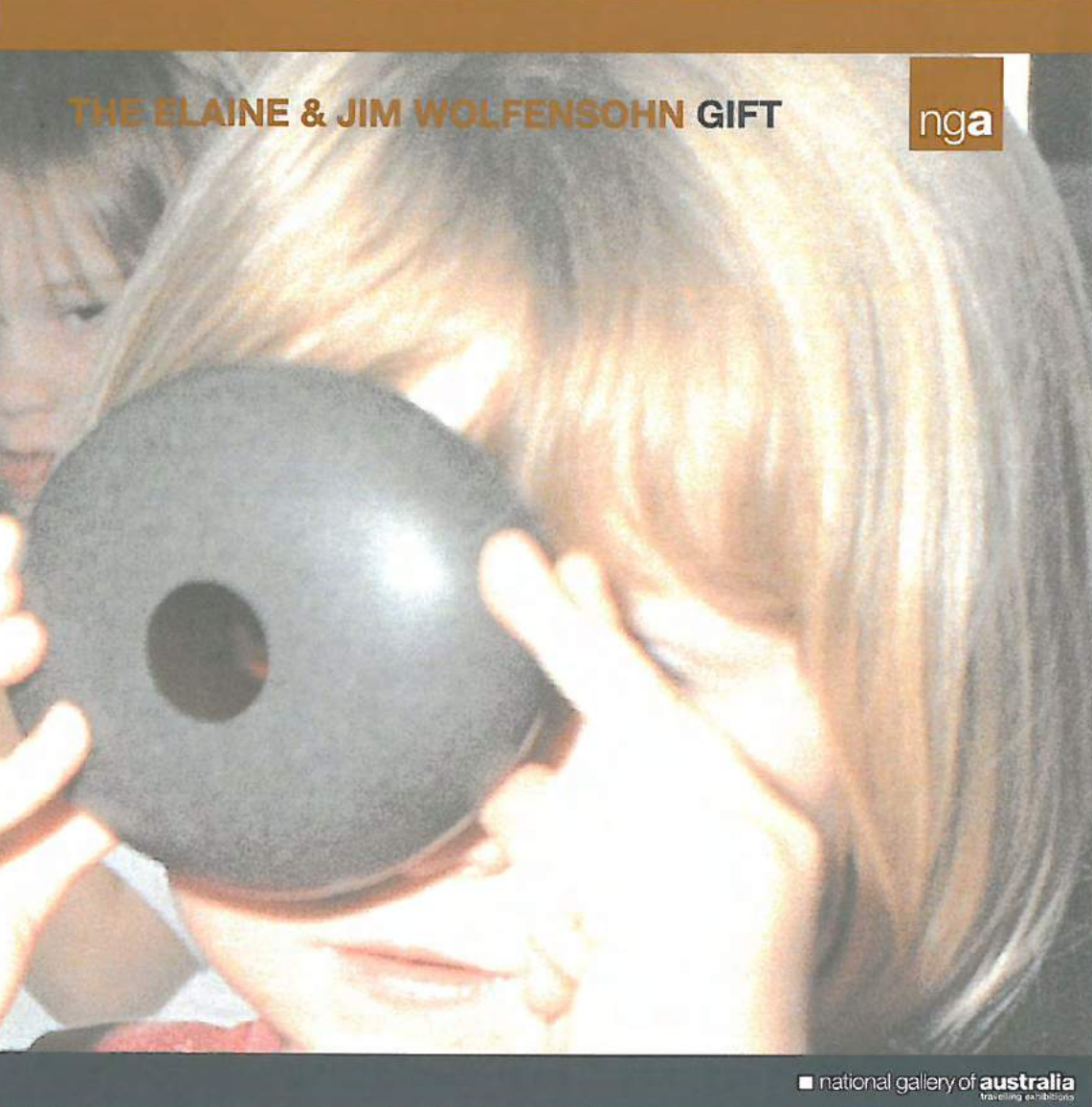


THE ELAINE & JIM WOLFENSOHN GIFT

nga



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The Elaine and Jim Wolfensohn Gift travelling exhibitions comprise the *1888 Melbourne Cup* and three suitcases that thematically present a selection of art and design objects for the enjoyment of children and adults in regional, remote and metropolitan centres.

The Wolfensohn Gift consists of: *The 1888 Melbourne Cup*, Red Case: *Myths and Rituals*; Yellow Case: *Form, Space and Design* and Blue Case: *Technology*.

A key feature of the Wolfensohn Gift Suitcase Kits is that the works can be handled. The shapes, surfaces and tactile qualities of each work can be explored, examined and enjoyed.

Before You Start:

It is helpful to have several adults on hand to assist with the handling of the objects, or to work with small groups (suggested ratio of 1 to 10). Adult supervision is essential.

Condition Reporting:

Each venue is responsible for condition reporting each work in the Suitcase Kits upon arrival and dispatch. Condition reports are located within each suitcase.

Please ensure that:

- hands are clean at all times;
- works of art are handled with two hands;
- personal jewellery is removed to prevent scratching;
- indelible materials, such as inks, textas and paint are kept well away;
- it is preferable that students are seated when handling the objects.

For bookings and further information please contact:
National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibitions
GPO Box 1150 Canberra ACT 2601 Tel: (02) 6240 6411
Fax: (02) 6240 6560 Email: travex@nga.gov.au

nga.gov.au





Seated Ganesha 9th–10th century

bronze, unknown artist, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Ganesha – the elephant-headed Hindu god

Hinduism is the main religion and philosophy of India and Ganesha is one of its 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 Durga.

A number of stories explain how Ganesha came to have an elephant's head. One version tells of how, one afternoon, the goddess Parvati wanted to take a bath. She created a young boy, Ganesha, to protect her privacy while she bathed. Her husband, Shiva, came home and found this strange child who would not let him visit his wife. Outraged at Ganesha's disrespect, Shiva cut off his head. Parvati was so upset at the loss of her new son that Shiva agreed to bring him back to life. He did so by attaching the head of the first animal to be found asleep and facing northward: an elephant.

This sculpture of Ganesha is over 1000 years old and is made of bronze, and would have been used in Hindu festivals. If you look closely, you will see that Ganesha's stomach has been rubbed so much that it is 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 (perhaps that's why he has such a large stomach).

Activities

- Imagine you have special powers, like Ganesha.
Draw some objects that could help you with your special powers.
- What other characters can you think of that have special powers?
- What do they use to help them produce their special powers?
- Ganesha is holding an object in one of his hands that you can also find in the suitcase. Which object is it?





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

unknown artist steel, brass National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

What is an ankus used for and who uses it?

Elephants are very 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 to transport people. Indian armies used elephants as part of their cavalry. In India elephants 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 rewards rather than discipline.

Ankus

An ankus looks similar to a poker that would be used in a fireplace. It has a pointed tip with a curved piece of metal extending a few inches outward, ending in another point. The handle may be made of wood, fibreglass, or occasionally metal. This ankus is over 100 years old and has been made from steel and brass. When polished, the brass gleams like gold 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.

Activities

- Look closely at the ankus, how many animals are used in its decoration?
- Why would the artist decorate the ankus in this way?
- Collect objects from nature and make your own ankus.
- In what countries are elephants found and in what ways are the elephants different?



Marka mask late 19th – early 20th century

unknown artist brass, wood National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Who are the Marka, and why do they make masks?

This mask was made by the Marka people who live in Mali, a landlocked country in Africa. Long ago masks such as this one were thought to be extremely powerful and that they could frighten away evil spirits, convey messages from the spirit world and cure illnesses. This mask represents Tji Wara, meaning 'champion farmer', who is a supernatural being. He is said to have given the Marka people the skills of farming and to have taught Faro, the first blacksmith, to forge copper. Because Faro is believed to have ridden an antelope down from Heaven, Tji Wara is usually shown as a stylised antelope, including tusks. A dancer would wear the mask at agricultural festivals and male initiation ceremonies, adding a big raffia costume and headdress and imitating the leaps of the antelope.

How was the mask made?

This mask is made of carved wood and has brass decorations. In Mali some masks are made by blacksmiths who are feared for their power to use fire to forge images of the supernatural beings and live apart from the rest of the village. The maskmaker would probably say that he saw the image inside the raw wood and cut material away to free it. Masks are not very common today and there are very few people who can make them.

Activities

- Find Mali on a map of Africa. How close is it to the sea? Why do people wear masks?
- List all the characters you know who wear masks. Make a mask and decorate it with your favourite design (it could be an animal). How do you feel when you wear it?
- Do people treat you differently when you are wearing a mask?



Ceremonial kettle 17th–19th century

unknown artist brass National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Where did this ceremonial kettle come from, and what is it used for?

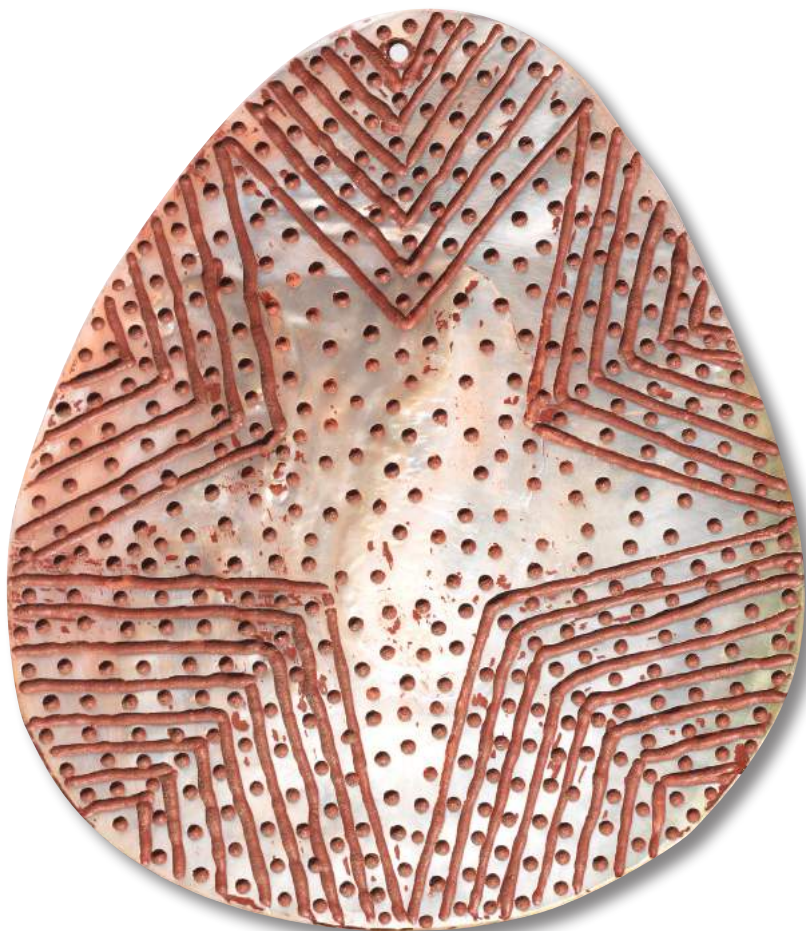
This brass kettle was made in Brunei, in Indonesia, but it has many motifs that reflect its Chinese origins. It is decorated with symbols that are said to bring luck, good fortune and fertility. The dragon motif on the spout and handle is a symbol of the Emperors in China – an Emperor is a very powerful person. The goldfish around the kettle symbolise wealth and are a charm to ward off evil. On the lid is a creature that resembles a phoenix. The mythical phoenix is the emperor of all birds. It is also a symbol of marriage. This kettle would have been highly treasured as an heirloom (a special object handed down through generations) or perhaps in a dowry (a wedding gift from a bride's family to the groom's family), and formed part of the traditional symbols of wealth and status of the owner. It would have been used to serve drinking water during a wedding or a major festival.

Activities

- Do you have any good luck charms? What are they?
Think of stories or cartoons where you may have heard of these animals: dragon, phoenix, and goldfish.
- What special powers do they have in these stories?
- Does your family have special things that are 'kept for best'? On what occasions are they used?
- We know this kettle was made in Indonesia. Why do you think it has so many Chinese motifs?







Aubrey Tigan Riji 2009

carved pearl shell and red ochre National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Aboriginal people associate the iridescent lustre of pearl shells with the shimmering qualities of water, rain and lightning. Highly prized as ornaments and ceremonial objects, pearl shells were exchanged along a vast system of inland trade routes that stretched from the Kimberley region in north Western Australia to central and southern Australia.

Aboriginal men 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 at low tides or from off-shore reefs or sourced from cultured pearl farms. After a lengthy process of cleaning, chipping and grinding the outer shell, the shiny inner face is ready for engraving. Contemporary Aboriginal artists continue to maintain cultural customs by engraving traditional geometric or figurative designs. The designs are highlighted with a mixture of ochre or charcoal and resin or fat, which is rubbed into the grooves.

Aubrey Tigan lives on the Dampier Peninsula north of Broome, Western Australia, and is a respected traditional elder and lawman from the Bardi and Djawi people. He is a trained jeweller and a renowned carver, pearl shell being his preferred medium. He engraves on pearl shell to maintain traditional culture. He uses old and new designs, which he often sees in his dreams and which draw on his deep knowledge of the coastal environment.

Activities

- Close your eyes and turn the riji over in your hands. What does it feel like? Hold it up to the light and see how the surface changes and shimmers. Describe what you see.
- Draw an outline of a pearl shell on shiny paper. Design a pattern that relates to water in your environment and draw it on your pearl-shell shape.
- Can you think of an object used during a special event in your life? Perhaps it is kept in a particular place and only brought out for important occasions. Does it have any special qualities?





Lena Yarinkura Bush mice 2002

aluminium and wood National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Aboriginal art is well known for painted and carved representations of totemic animals and ancestral figures that are created for particular ceremonies. However, images of animals, including birds and fish, and everyday domestic objects form much of the subject matter for carvings and fibre sculptures created by Aboriginal artists working across Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

An essential part of everyday life in places like Maningrida, Northern Territory, is the gathering of bush tucker. On these excursions, people often see small animals such as djirrkinj (bush mice) busily searching for food. Native mice and rats are found in many habitats across Australia, including mangroves, deserts and alpine regions.

Bush mice is made from aluminium by a sand-casting process. The artist used plasticine to make a model for the cast. Many artists are attracted to the natural silvery white colour of aluminium and appreciate its long-lasting properties. These are the first of only 25 sculptures made from their particular casts. This is known as a limited edition—a restricted number of sculptures is produced and then the cast is destroyed.

Lena Yarinkura (Rembarrnga/Kune people) is one of the most innovative Aboriginal fibre artists in the country and often works collaboratively with her husband, the artist Bob Burruwal. Her subject matter includes Yawkyawk spirits, camp dogs and various animal species, including northern quoll, bandicoot and bush mouse. She now also creates contemporary metal sculpture, working with a foundry in Brisbane.

Activities

- Compare the two bush mice. What do you think the marks on the bodies of the mice represent? Discuss how the artist has created slightly different personalities for each mouse.
- Research native animals in your area. Choose a favourite and draw it in its natural environment. Think about the marks you could use to show the texture of the fur or skin.
- Turn the mice over in your hand. Do you feel the rough texture created by the sand-casting process? Research and discuss sand-casting and how it is used.

