



THE ELAINE & JIM WOLFENSOHN GIFT

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# THE ELAINE & JIM WOLFENSOHN GIFT

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.

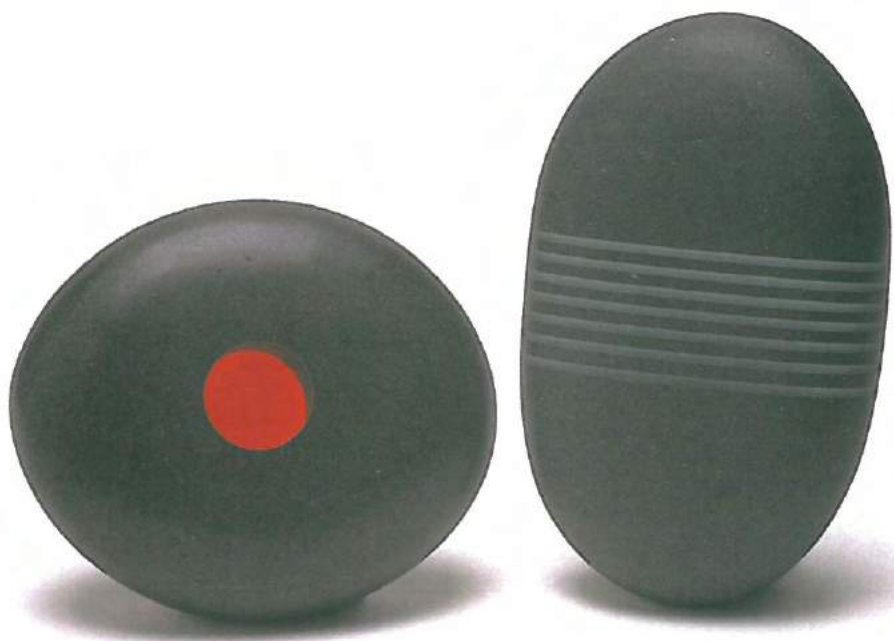
## Please ensure that:

- 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; and
- it is preferable that students are seated when handling the objects.

For bookings and further information please contact:  
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# John Edgar Red eye and Light stone 1993

greywacke stone, jasper & greywacke stone, glass National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

## Artist's statement

'I strive to be self-sufficient in my craft; to be able to effect with my hands and my tools anything that my heart and mind can conjure. To leave behind small tokens of my love for this land of stone in the hope that each object might evoke the questions who made this and why, when, how, and where? These are the timeless questions asked of any object and in asking them one enters the mystery to a point of contact with the spirit of the maker. It is my desire to imbue my work with this spirit.'

## Red eye and Light stone

*Light stone* and *Red eye* are greywacke pebbles with glass and jasper inserts. Greywacke is a base sedimentary rock that has been altered by heat and pressure during its time buried deep in the Tasman trench (between Australia and New Zealand). The material for the greywacke originated as eroded granite sediments washed off the great continent of Gondwanaland. Tectonic forces moved and deformed the Earth's crust, and lifted the rock to form the base of parts of New Zealand. These pebbles come from the Hauraki Gulf near Edgar's home. In *Light stone*, Edgar has sandwiched slices of glass between the greywacke using epoxy glue to bind the surfaces together. *Red eye* has a jasper insert. The effect of these inclusions is to create another dimension or add a sense mystery to the pebbles; they are like talismans (sacred objects used in ceremonies) of an ancient people. Powerful and precious, they ask to be held and stroked, as if through contact their mystery will be known to us.

## Activities

- Discuss how the two stones are similar and how they are different. Hold the stones up to the light. How do the inserts change what you can see?
- Have you ever collected anything from your environment? What types of stones are in your local environment? What could you make with them?
- Create your own talisman using found objects. What powers would your talisman have? How would it be used in ceremonies?
- Find out about Gondwanaland. What countries were part of it?





## Ian Howard The arms of the people 1990

bronze, unique cast National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

### Artist's statement

'My individual investigation which involved inquiring, searching, experiencing and interacting with predominantly military hardware satisfied certain curiosities, brought into light other major issues and posed further questions.'

### The arms of the people

Howard has used war and the military as a subject for his art since 1970. He has travelled to military establishments all over the world studying weapons and associated technology. The artist has a fascination with war and through his art he expresses his concern about the menace of war. Each work becomes a forceful statement on the destruction and torment caused by military technology and the arms race.

*The arms of the people* is a symbolic sculpture. The artist has used found objects in his artwork, which were then cast in bronze. The materials Howard uses are often discarded children's toys, particularly war toys. In *The arms of the people* a bullet-headed figure leans under the weight of the scarred wing of an old war plane.

### Activities

- Create a sculpture, collage or drawing based on an issue that you feel strongly about, for example, environmental issues or world peace. For this project you could use found objects or images from newspapers or magazines.
- Look at the size of the work. Why do you think the artist made the piece so small? What do you think he is saying about war?





# Mary Oliver Music sticks 1997

wood, acrylic paint National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

## About the artist

Mary Oliver's mother was relocated at a young age from Arltunga in the Northern Territory, 100 km north-east of Alice Springs, to Santa Teresa (Ltyentye Apurte), 75 km east of Alice Springs. Oliver, who belongs to the Eastern Arrernte language group, was born and grew up in Santa Teresa. After completing her formal education at Alice Springs High School, she returned to Santa Teresa to work in a bank. In 1987 she became one of the first artists to be employed at the Art Centre – Keringke Arts.

She began working with stencil painting and lino printing before moving on to silk painting, which she learnt by watching other artists at work. She has since been involved in many workshops and exhibitions throughout Australia.

## How do people use music sticks?

In Aboriginal culture, music sticks have long been used to accompany songs and dances during ceremonies. They have been made for an 'outside' or non-ceremonial audience since missionaries, anthropologists and collectors began arriving in central Australia early this century. Today music sticks are among the cultural items produced by communities for sale to the growing tourism trade and art market.

Both men and women make plain and decorated wood carvings of animals, bowls, clubs, digging sticks and music sticks. The patterns decorating these items are derived from traditional designs, but new techniques allow artists to be innovative in their interpretations. The designs on these music sticks are indicative of the Santa Teresa style, depicting distinctive patterns of dots and line work in vivid colour. Mary Oliver has used traditional Aboriginal symbols as a basis for developing her own style and patterns. The designs on the music sticks have been inspired by nature and are purely decorative, unlike traditional Aboriginal symbols, they do not tell a story.

## Activities

- Make your own musical instrument, using natural or man made materials
- Decorate your instrument with patterns and symbols. Do the symbols have any meaning? Does your decoration tell a story?







# Neil Roberts The space inside my fist 1995

bronze National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

## Artist's statement

'My actions never deny the history and former function of the stuff with which I work, no matter how damaged. This is important to me – I want that "site memory" to reach across time and distance and make itself felt, however feebly, in front of the viewer. Because my actions are often so simple, it is a challenge to go further than just presenting these reclaimed materials. I try, through juxtaposition, association, unnecessary attention to detail and so on, to invest them with some new forms of meanings and significance.'

## What is The space inside my fist?

Neil Roberts' bronze sculpture explores the space inside a tightly clenched fist and what remains when the fist is uncurled – is it simply air or a memory of the gesture? This small sculpture is unusual for this artist in that it is not a retrieved or found object; however, it does attempt to make meaning from something transient. Like the soon-to-be-buried objects he reclaimed from tips, the shapes and spaces made by his own body are fleeting moments. The artist rendered one of these moments in bronze, a very permanent and traditional material, and so gives weight and substance to what would otherwise be just air and memory.

This sculpture is made using a very simple and direct process. Roberts squeezed lumps of hot soft wax with just the right amount of pressure to capture the space inside of his hand in all its shape and detail.

## Activities

- Create your own sculpture using clay or wax, by squeezing it and applying pressure with one or two hands. Experiment with different shapes.
- Make a fist with your hand; draw all the spaces you can see inside.
- Can you think of other ways we try and remember fleeting moments?





# David Wallace Aboriginal bush toys 1997

recycled materials—wire, fabric, plastic, buttons National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

## Aboriginal bush toys

David Wallace has been making bush toys for the children of his community since he was a teenager. Like many bush toys, Wallace's items are made from salvaged materials and, generally, whatever is available at the time. The stockmen on horseback are made from recycled copper wires wound tightly together, and the figures have been dressed using a range of found and salvaged items.

The choice of the stockman invites us to look at the social history of the region in which Aboriginal people have been central to the pastoral industry for generations.

Objects used for hunting, ceremonies and everyday activities, including bush toys, have been collected and documented by field anthropologists, explorers and mission workers in remote Aboriginal communities since the early 20th century.

## Activities

- Think about what the figure is wearing, does it give any clues as to where it comes from or what it does?
- Do you know what a stockman is? What do stockmen do?
- Create an animal or person using found and natural objects in your class room, in your environment, or at home. Can you change its appearance by decorating it with different materials?

