This resource is designed to accompany the travelling exhibition *Art and Environment: Exhibition in a Suitcase*, which is available to secondary schools in NSW and the ACT through The Australian National University.

The artistic processes, diverse materials and significant ideas that go into making art objects are emphasised through the included discussion topics and suggested activities relating to each of the exhibition's artworks.

Classroom teachers are invited to use the discussion topics and suggested activities in any combination, and as is appropriate for different student groups and learning environments.

**Art and Environment: Exhibition in a Suitcase and The Australian Curriculum: The Arts**

The information and activities in this resource reflect the interrelated strands of *Making and Responding* in *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts*. Students will be given the opportunity to explore ideas and improvise with ways to represent ideas, manipulate and apply the elements/concepts with intent, develop and refine understanding of skills and techniques, structure and organise ideas into form, analyse and reflect upon intentions, and examine and connect artworks in context.

In addition, the general capabilities in *The Australian Curriculum* are addressed through suggested activities, specifically incorporating literacy, intercultural understanding, critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, personal and social capability, and information and communication technologies (ICT) capability.

The national cross-curriculum priorities of Sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are acknowledged. As these themes are central to this collection of artworks, the suggested tasks enable students to explore the relationships of people to their environment, and encourage deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture.

This resource was compiled by Thea Katauskas on behalf of The Australian National University, 2015.
1 *Fishman of S.E. Australia.*
Packaged for a Suitcase.

Artist: John Reid
Materials: Digitally printed documents—photographs and accompanying text.
The *Fishman* artwork has also been performed as a slideshow presentation to live audiences.

*The Fishman of S.E. Australia* project developed from John Reid’s personal explorations of wilderness areas in the Deua National Park and his concerns for its preservation as a place of precious natural and cultural heritage.

He has used photography and accompanying stories (written or spoken/performe) to create an artwork that plays with ideas of scientific discovery, human curiosity and environmental awareness.

**Discussion**
Do you believe the *Fishman* story? Are these photos evidence of a natural phenomenon? Why?
What environmental concerns are raised by the possible existence of this creature?
Suggested activities

**Year 7 & 8**
- Look at the different *Fishman* photos.
- Describe the natural environment in the image (identify as many colours/textures/patterns and shapes as you can).
- Describe what you can see of the *Fishman* figure in the photo.
- Imagine what *Fishman* would look like up close.
- Create a detailed drawing of *Fishman* including textures, patterns and colours.

**Year 9 & 10**
- Look at the different *Fishman* photos and read the accompanying text (in the *Fishman Domain* booklet; teacher to photocopy pages).
- Describe the atmosphere created by the language choice and style of writing.
- Discuss how the text helps to add meaning to the photographs.
- Create a scientific-style documentation of a student artwork already created:
  - imagine it is of incredible cultural significance
  - describe the artwork in formal language
    (Where was it found? Why is it so significant? Where will it be exhibited? How will it be preserved?)
  - discuss how your accompanying documentation changes the way an audience would appreciate the artwork.

**Year 11 & 12**
- Look at the different *Fishman* photos and read the description of the artist’s ‘*Fishman* conservation strategy’ (*teacher to photocopy text in the *Fishman Documentation* booklet).
- Discuss how the text helps to add meaning to the photographs.
- Underline the phrases which imply the invention of *Fishman* as a fiction.
- Imagine *Fishman* has been caught and scientifically proven as a living species.
- Create a cartoon strip illustrating the way he was caught, the effect of this discovery and what will happen to the Deua National Park as a result.
2 Piccaninny Paradise

Artist: Danie Mellor
Materials: Flatbed print on aluminium panel

Danie Mellor’s artwork balances symbols of culture and nature in intricate designs and is an exploration of his interest in the intersection of different cultural perspectives.

His images are influenced by traditional European blue and white porcelain designs as well as archival images of Indigenous Australians, a combination which directly reflects his personal cultural heritage.

Discussion

This image contains symbols of life and death and both Indigenous Australian and European culture and environment. Danie Mellor said, “in some ways this image speaks about the colonisation of Australia”.

What different perspectives might be represented in this image about the impacts of the colonisation of Australia?
Suggested activities

**Year 7 & 8**
- Look at all the different elements in the *Piccaninny Paradise* image.
- Identify symbols/images of native animals and introduced plants.
- Discuss which symbols are more dominant. What meaning is communicated by this?
- Tone is an important feature of this artwork, shown in the range of blues used to paint the skull and floral details. Which images/symbols are painted in blue tones? Which images are not painted in blue? What do they symbolise?
- Create an ink painting of a native or introduced plant in one colour. Use different tones to show light, shadow and detail.

**Year 9 & 10**
- Look at Danie Mellor’s composition. Are the figures young or old? Who are they?
- Think about what the figures of children represent and what their poses communicate.
- Discuss how scale is used to arrange symbols of life and death in this image.
- Which symbols are more dominant? What message is communicated?
- Create a drawing that balances symbols of life and death in its composition using botanical and anatomical illustrations.

Image sources:
- National Library of Australia TROVE website: Botanical Illustrations

**Year 11 & 12**
- Danie Mellor’s intention is to reflect on the impact of European settlement on Australian Indigenous culture and the natural environment.
- Identify the different symbols of Indigenous culture, Australia’s natural environment and European plants and culture.
- Discuss the atmosphere of this image—does it communicate a negative or positive message? How?
- Research and create an artwork that addresses the negative impacts of one introduced species to Australia (plant or animal).
3 Pigeon of Norfolk Island – (extinct)

Artist: Nicola Dickson
Materials: Acrylic and oil on wood, buttons, brass

Nicola Dickson’s painting practice is inspired by her love of nature and her appreciation of the wonder and diversity of Australia’s natural environment.
She is addressing the impacts of European colonisation on our natural environment, especially drawing attention to the extinction of animal species.
Referring to historical illustrations, she explores how our understanding and appreciation of nature has changed over time.

Discussion
The choice of presenting this portrait of an extinct bird as a ‘memento mori’ (a symbolic reminder of mortality) on a hinged panel changes the way the viewer interacts with the image.
Does handling this object engage the viewer further with the subject?
How does this artwork change your appreciation of this extinct creature?
Suggested activities

Year 7 & 8

- Look at the artwork Pigeon of Norfolk Island – (extinct)
- Consider and discuss how European settlers would have been amazed by such animal and bird species never before seen.
- Listen to hear bird noises in your school environment—are there any?
- Create a drawing of an imagined bird species in the style of historical zoological illustrations.

Year 9 & 10

- Look at the image Pigeon of Norfolk Island – (extinct).
- Identify symbols of European culture in the artwork.
- Discuss what symbols of death are used in this artwork to represent extinction.
- Create a ‘memento mori’ for a different species of Australian animal/bird that is now extinct.

Year 11 & 12

- Look at the artwork Pigeon of Norfolk Island – (extinct)
- Consider the ghostly effect of the paler, repeated image facing the Norfolk Pigeon on the inside panel. Discuss what emotion or atmosphere is communicated through the fine detail included in this animal portrait?
- Research an Australian animal/bird currently under threat of extinction.
- Create an artwork communicating the importance of this creature and its threatened existence.
4 De-Composition in M

Artist: Caroline Huf
Materials: 100 per cent post-consumer recycled paper, cartridge paper, DVD

Caroline Huf’s artwork draws our attention to a usually invisible but essential part of our lives, not only in cities—the tip/dump.

While experimenting with video processes to create the effects of images in decay, she highlights the unwanted by-products of our comfortable existence and spends time looking at the waste most people want to ignore.

The political nature of this action, and the artwork resulting from it provokes questions about our use of natural resources and the cost to the natural environment of our consumer culture.

Discussion

Landfills are part of our landscape, and landscape has remained an important subject of Western and Chinese art for over 1,000 years.

Should art reflect the truth of our changing landscapes?

Should we try to find beauty in the waste we create, or change our lifestyles to create less waste and maintain the natural beauty in our environments?
Suggested activities

Year 7 & 8
> View the paper artwork *De-Composition in M*.
> Consider the images of landfill and the artist’s opinion of landfills as beautiful and disturbing.
> Do you think she is successful in showing this landscape as beautiful? Why?
> How has your previous experience of rubbish tips influenced your response to this artwork?
> Construct a beautiful/picturesque landscape diorama out of scrap plastic bottles and cardboard.

Year 9 & 10
> View the DVD artwork *De-Composition in M*.
> Consider how Caroline Huf has created the effect of digital decay.
> Discuss the longevity of images and data on websites such as Facebook/Youtube
  - Does this data decay?
  - Will it stay accessible for years?
  - Does this impact on people’s daily lives as discarded rubbish would?
> Create a time-lapse animation showing the process of growth and decay.

Year 11 & 12
> View the artwork *De-Composition in M* in paper and DVD format.
> Discuss the different types of audience engagement prompted by the two formats.
> Create a short film following the life of an item of food packaging. Use sound and music to create emotion and atmosphere.
5 Core Samples #0.5

Artist: Charles Walker
Materials: Bullseye glass, stones from the Warrumbungle mountains.

Charles Walker’s art practice is inspired by his interest in geology and the structures in earth and rock. He wanted to communicate something of his fascination with the geological mysteries under the surface of the Australian landscape.

This artwork was heavily driven by the process and limitations of working with glass; testing its limits, experimenting and developing new techniques for incorporating stone into glass forms.

Discussion
Art and Science depend on each other. Artists push materials and processes to uncover new effects and applications. Scientists develop materials and technologies to be used, which are then furthered by creative discoveries.

How is this relationship evident in Charles Walker’s art practice?
How does his choice of materials communicate his intentions?
Suggested activities

**Year 7 & 8**

- Gently hold and observe the *Core Samples #0.5* sculptures.
- Describe the weight, textures and appearance.
- Do the objects remind you of land formations or geological processes?
- Collect rubbings from around your school environment (rocks, ground surfaces, bark)
- Imagine what layers of earth and rock exist in the ground under your building.
- Create a collage of textures showing rock layers under the earth’s surface.

**Year 9 & 10**

- Gently hold and observe the *Core Samples #0.5* sculptures.
- Do the objects remind you of land formations or geological processes?
- Discuss what you might find deep in the ground beneath your school or town.
- Experiment with the process of mold-making and casting:
  - Create a cylindrical mold out of plaster.
  - Cast rocks, stones and found objects in layers of coloured plaster to mimic geological layers in core samples.

**Years 11 & 12**

- Gently hold and observe the *Core Samples #0.5* sculptures.
- Discuss what you know about the contents and layers of the earth’s crust.
- Research the work of Indigenous Australian artist Rover Thomas, whose artwork maps the land from above and depicts stories of landscape and culture.
- Create an artwork using symbols and patterns to show the processes and structures you might find below the earth’s surface.
6 The Ephemeral Dampiera fusca: Tinderry Range

Artist: Cathy Franzi
Materials: Porcelain, engobe

Cathy Franzi’s artworks are a celebration of and tribute to the unique and precious flora of Australia. Whilst depicting wild landscapes and delicate plants, she is aware of the threats to many of these species through urbanisation, deforestation and other changes affecting the natural environment.

Discussion
What qualities of these sculptural forms reflect the environment she has chosen to depict?
What Elements of Art can you identify in these sculptures?
Suggested activities

Year 7 & 8

> Observe and gently touch the ceramic forms.
> Describe the look and feel of the objects.
> Discuss the difference between functional ceramics and these sculptural objects.
> Create a linocut image of trees or local bushland using bold lines and repeated shapes.

Year 9 & 10

> Observe and gently touch the ceramic forms.
> Describe the look and feel of the objects.
> Discuss the difference between functional ceramics and these sculptural objects.
> Create a bold, black and white native flower design for a ceramic tile. Carve the design onto the surface of a leather-hard clay tile, covered in engobe.
   Teacher to prepare clay tiles in advance of class. Use lino tools for carving the image.
   Image sources: National Gallery of Australia website / Margaret Preston.

Year 11 & 12

> Observe and gently touch the ceramic forms.
> Describe the look and feel of the objects.
> Discuss the difference between functional ceramics and these sculptural objects.
> Design a black and white landscape image, using bold lines, pattern, negative and positive space.
> Create a ceramic cylinder out of white slab clay. Apply coloured engobe to the surface then carve the landscape design around the surface.
7 canis lupus tingo

Artist: Amanda Stuart
Materials: Silica bronze, mild steel, upholstery fabric, leather, pins, stuffing

The wild dog or dingo has featured repeatedly as a powerful symbol of conflicted human-animal relations in Amanda Stuart’s sculptures. Her background in science and environmental management has informed her choice of subject and allowed her to understand and investigate the tensions between Australia’s dingo populations and regional farming communities.

The sculpture is designed to be held and remind us of the companionship of domesticated animals, whilst at the same time convey a sense of unfamiliarity and unease.

Discussion
Why might there be tensions between farming communities and dingo populations?
What qualities of this sculpture communicate different aspects of human and animal relations?
Suggested activities

Year 7 & 8

> Hold and observe the *canis lupus tingo* sculpture.
> Describe its feel and appearance.
> How is this sculpture different to the Core Samples #0.5 objects?
> Create a group artwork—each student to cut out a silhouette of a dingo and a sheep. Use repetition and rhythm to arrange these animals in a pattern on a large surface to depict tension between the animals.

Year 9 & 10

> Hold and observe the *canis lupus tingo* sculpture.
> Describe its feel and appearance.
> Discuss how the dingo is commonly portrayed in mainstream society. How is it described in the media/news stories?
> Create a poster, using Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator, in defence of the dingo as a misunderstood and protected species.

Year 11 & 12

> Hold and observe the *canis lupus tingo* sculpture.
> Describe its feel and appearance.
> Discuss whether anyone has seen dingoes in the wild—what is their experience?
> Research the habitat and behaviour of dingoes.
> Create a sculpture of a dingo out of found objects (grasses/sticks/bark/household waste). Discuss how the choice of materials brings meaning to your sculpture.