Main Topic: Arts
Sub Topic: Visual Arts

Today, Dot Art has become synonymous with Aboriginal Art and is recognised as such all over the world. However, this unique style of painting originated in just one area of Australia, the Central Desert. Although it has been adopted by Aboriginal artists all over the country, there are many other styles of Aboriginal art to be included when integrating an Aboriginal perspective into the Arts Learning Area. A study of Aboriginal art is a perfect way to reinforce the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Australia.

- Look for the CD-ROM *Moorditj: Australian Indigenous Cultural Expressions* in your school’s teacher resource collection. It is an interactive resource which includes 300 artworks from 110 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists with teaching activities for each. Visual Arts is one of the arts areas it explores.

- Brainstorm the various reasons why art is embraced within all societies, including:
  - cultural
  - communication
  - celebration
  - religious
  - enjoyment

- Read *Art History Place* and *Art Land Story* from the Scholastic Reconciliation kit to find out about the importance of art in Aboriginal society. There are teaching activities for both these books in the Middle Primary and Upper Primary Teachers Books in the series.

- In *Keeping Strong Through Art* and *Our Stories Through Art*, from the *First Australians: Plenty Stories* series, the reader learns about the importance of keeping traditions alive by learning beliefs, identity and history through art.

- *Aboriginal Artists of Western Australia* is a resource folder containing Aboriginal Art Posters. Each features a work of art on one side, with information about the artwork on the reverse.

- *Focus On Indigenous Art Across the Curriculum* has 3 sets of wall charts for Ages 5-8, 8-10, 10+. These charts feature a different style of Aboriginal art on each poster. On the reverse of each is information about the artist and the artwork, as well as questions to stimulate discussion.

- The *Australian Indigenous Art Pack* contains 12 posters, each with an Aboriginal artwork on one side and on the other, background information and activities.

- The MacMillan series *Arts and Crafts of Indigenous Australia* includes four colourful, informative books:
  - Painting
  - Sculpture
  - Weaving
  - Ceremonial Art
• Another excellent publication is the *Aboriginal Art* series which has 8 titles on all aspects of Aboriginal art
  - *A First Look at Aboriginal Art*
  - *Art of the Desert*
  - *Art of Arnhem Land*
  - *Rock Art*
  - *The Many Forms of Aboriginal Art*
  - *A Closer Look at Aboriginal Art*
  - *Artists and their Work*
  - *Passing on the Traditions of Aboriginal Art*

• *Focus On Indigenous Art Across the Curriculum* has 3 books (for Ages 5-8, 8-10, 10+) of lesson plans with practical art activities to integrate with Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum.

• Sand Painting is the most common art form in the Geraldton Region as described in *Yamaji Lifestyle and Culture*.

• *Mr Patterns* is an engaging DVD which provides good education for teachers about the origins of Dot Art.

• Visit the WA Art Gallery in Perth or an art gallery in the place where you are, to observe the features of a variety of Aboriginal art styles.

• Invite a local artist to work with your class. Use the GECKOS Program if you need assistance with funding.

• Listen to Paul Kelly’s song *Ballad of Queenie and Rover* about the Warmun artists Queenie McKenzie and Rover Thomas. It is on the *Stolen Apples* CD and there is a clip on *YouTube*. Look at examples of their art and identify the unique features.

• The *Exploring Woodlands with Nyoongars* resource file contains an activity ‘Not Art for Art’s sake’ which is perfect for reinforcing the concept of Aboriginal Art as a map.

• The *Saltwater and Redearth Dreaming Activity Pack* contains artwork with a coastal theme, from the Dampier Peninsular, north of Broome. Students can colour blackline masters of the artwork and at the same time learn a bit about the lifestyle of the Bardi people including some language.

• Many school libraries have the *Story Makers* videos in their teacher resource collections. Part Two is *Percy Trezise & Dick Roughsey : A Journey to Quinkin Country*. It describes the way their incredibly popular picture books came to be. It is not the usual situation of one being the author and the other the illustrator. The stories were told to Percy and Dick after they discovered them in cave paintings in Quinkin Country in Cape York. Both men were involved in the illustration, with Percy painting the landscapes and Dick adding the figures.
  - After watching the video and looking at the picture books, students pair up to create a painting - one painting the landscape and one adding the figures.

• Use the *NNBNN* Kit to learn about Noongar artists Shane Pickett and Sandra
Hill.

- *Pinjarra Massacre Art Exhibition* is a permanent memorial to the Massacre that happened at Pinjarra in 1834. Renowned Aboriginal artists, mostly Noongar, responded to the request to each create an artwork for the memorial. The exhibition of beautiful and moving artworks is now on display at Mandurah Performing Arts Centre but you can look at the artwork on the website if you can’t get there: [http://www.pinjarramaassacre.com](http://www.pinjarramaassacre.com)

- Bronwyn Bancroft is a world renowned artist and designer. She has illustrated many picture books. You should be able to find some in your school library. Students can identify her “style” in terms of the colours and designs she uses. You will find artworks form the books she has illustrated on her website: [www.bronwynbancroft.com/illustrations](http://www.bronwynbancroft.com/illustrations)

- Find out about the Carrolup Child Artists.
  - Noel Kyar Morrison’s picture book, *Carrolup Inspired*, illustrated with his paintings, will make life at Carrolup come alive to young readers
  - DVD *Show Us a Light : The Child Artists of Carrolup*
  - *Koorah Coolingah (Children Long Ago)*

- Research the history of Australia’s first $1 note (1966). It features a painting by an Aboriginal artist which was reproduced without consultation or attribution. Find out the artist’s name and how the copyright violations were resolved.

- *It’s More Than Art* from the ‘First Australians : plenty Stories’ series explores the concept of Aboriginal art being entwined with culture and identity. It also explains the fight for gaining better laws to protect Aboriginal artists and their artworks from exploitation.

- Bronwyn Bancroft’s painting and photomontage *You Don’t Even Look Aboriginal*, stress her Aboriginal identity with photographs of herself in circular motifs, linked to photographs of Aboriginal family members, who line the top of the painting above her. Bancroft is shown at different stages in her life, connected to her Aboriginal family. This painting relates to an incident in Bronwyn’s career when, after giving a lecture at an art college, a student questioned Bronwyn’s right to speak as an Aboriginal person when she did not “look Aboriginal”.

- *Who Paintin’ dis Wandjina?* is an episode of Message Stick which illustrates that Aboriginal art is part of culture. It examines the impact of hundreds of spray-painted images of Wandjinjas in Perth. Aboriginal elders don't approve of the use of their symbol outside its designated area, the Kimberley. They express their concerns that the Wandjinjas are taken to Perth. They are 'hurt' by the thoughtless use of a symbol which has to have a story and a meaning behind it in order to be replicated. "It's more than a painting, it's a lifestyle," they say.

**Resources**


• Bruce, L. & Hilvert-Bruce, J. *Arts and crafts of Indigenous Australia* (4 books). Macmillan Education, Sth Yarra, VIC. 2004


• *Aboriginal Artists of Western Australia*. (kit) Aboriginal Education Resources Unit, Leederville, 199?-.


• *Mr Patterns* (DVD). Film Australia, Sydney, 2004. 54min.


• Kelly, P. *Stolen Apples* (Audio CD). ‘Ballad of Queenie and Rover.’


• Bancroft, B. *An Australian 1,2,3 of animals*. Little Hare Books, Surry Hills, NSW, 2007


- Jones, N. *Show us a light: the art of Carrolup* (DVD). Blue Moon Film & Video, Mt Lawley, WA. 2007. 28min.