EDUCATION KIT

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OVERVIEW

WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?

*Desert Psychedelic: Jimmy Pike* is an exhibition that celebrates the creative achievements of Jimmy Pike (c1940-2002), one of Australia’s great Aboriginal artists and designer of some of the most extraordinary Australian textiles of the twentieth century.

Australian Aboriginal art is one of the world’s oldest surviving artistic traditions. Scattered across the Australian continent are rock engravings and paintings created up to 50,000 years ago. More ephemeral art forms such as sand- and body-painting also have a long history. In Aboriginal societies, art is an integral part of life, fulfilling far more than aesthetic needs. Importantly, it connects people, land and ancestral beings.

In the 1970s, these ancient practices collided with Western art materials and launched contemporary Aboriginal art, a movement that took the art world by storm. Western-trained art teachers began working with Aboriginal communities across the country and by the 1980s Aboriginal art was booming. The worldwide acclaim that followed, empowered Aboriginal people and offered non-Aboriginal audiences an insight into the complexities of Indigenous cultures. However, this intercultural communication remained largely confined to the art world until the 1980s when a unique collaboration arose between Stephen Culley, David Wroth and Jimmy Pike, resulting in the incredible success, *Desert Designs*. This collaboration saw Pike’s superbly vibrant paintings and prints, which depicted stories from his culture and revelatory insights into the desert, transformed into some of the most brilliant textiles of the twentieth century. These textiles were made into garments and accessories that became a triumph of fashion. People all over the world wore and walked in, sat or slept on Pike’s designs. As his stories travelled with them, this created an intercultural communication which was highly accessible yet also quite subtle.

*Grandfather and Grandson* (detail) 1989, Screenprint.
ABOUT JIMMY PIKE

Jimmy Pike was born in the Great Sandy Desert and grew up in a traditional hunter/gatherer community. He started working with Western art materials and techniques in the 1980s while he was in prison, and within a short time was producing brilliant drawings, paintings and prints which are now housed in the collections of national and international galleries.

Pike produced electrifying images of delicate desert flowers, seen close-up as if from ground level, and sweeping vistas of the country, as if seen from above. These viewpoints revealed the geography and sacred nature of the desert in a codified language. They mapped the travels of ancestral beings or documented places and events that were significant for Pike.

His work was so extraordinary that it inspired his prison art teachers, Stephen Culley and David Wroth, to take it beyond the prison walls. They launched Desert Designs, a company that would gain Pike worldwide recognition through the application of his art to textiles, bed linen, accessories and garments. The symbolic meaning of each of Pike’s designs was printed on labels attached to these garments and products. As these crossed the globe, from the ski fields of Europe to tropical beaches, so did his stories.

Jimmy Pike was released from prison in 1986 and within a few years he was a national celebrity. He, and his long-term partner Pat Lowe, a psychologist he had met while in prison, spent several years together in the desert. Pat collected the stories of his country and published books which Pike illustrated. He also continued to paint and exhibited internationally in the Philippines, China, Namibia, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Jimmy Pike died in 2002 but left a legacy of paintings, prints, textile designs, stories and illustrations that offer a revelatory insight into the desert.

*Japingka - Snake (detail) 1994, Screenprint.*
EXHIBITION CONTENTS

12 COLOUR SCREENPRINTS
12 BLACK AND WHITE SCREENPRINTS
31 TEXTILE LENGTHS
9 GARMENTS
3 VIDEOS - an animation about Jimmy Pike’s life, Desert Designs fashion parade and a short montage featuring Jimmy Pike in country*

*NB: Videos may not be on display at all venues

Top Left: Kurriny Piyirnkujarra 1991, Screenprint.
Bottom Left: Jila Japingka (Pink) 1986, Silk chiffon.
Bottom Right: Exhibition installation at artisan
WHO CAN INCORPORATE THIS EXHIBITION INTO THEIR LESSONS?

This education pack has been developed for use within the key learning area of Creative Arts, though it is possible for teachers of other subject areas such as English, History and Study of Society to adapt the information, activities and discussion topics to their lesson plans at their own discretion.

ENGLISH

• Interpreting texts
• Appreciating texts
• Understanding context
• Creating and evaluating meaning

HISTORY

• Looking at the concepts of time, continuity and change, Australian culture and identity, and the collection of sources.
• Looking at the concepts of Australian culture and identity, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

STUDY OF SOCIETY

• Investigating, communicating, and reflecting on Indigenous culture and cross-cultural collaboration.

WHY SHOULD YOU INCLUDE THIS EXHIBITION AS A TOPIC IN YOUR LESSONS?

Jimmy Pike: Desert Psychedelic covers a wide variety of topics. Teachers may be able to include the exhibition if focusing on subjects such as:

• Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art and Culture
• Cross Cultural Collaborations
• Fashion and Textile Design
• Story Telling and Recording
• Australia’s International Identity
HOW DOES IT FIT INTO YOUR CURRICULUM?

YEARS 6 - 10:

Knowledge and understanding of exhibition content and themes
Creating artworks based on these themes
Presenting opinions and perspectives on these themes in class discussions
Responding to information and new concepts with artworks and within class discussions
Reflecting on learning and content

YEARS 11 AND 12:

Making artworks in response to key themes presented in the exhibition
Appraising own artworks and skills as well as artworks by Jimmy Pike
Researching personal strengths and aesthetic
Developing understanding of contemporary Indigenous art and cross-cultural collaboration
Resolving personal responses to these understandings
Reflecting on themes presented in Desert Psychedelic

This education pack was developed to adhere to curriculum guidelines for Education Queensland. Teachers are encouraged to adapt syllabus links to suit the system of their school’s state or territory.

Jila Japingka (detail) 1986, Screenprint.
FOCUS TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

STORY TELLING

Story telling is a very important part of Jimmy Pike’s artworks and a very important part of Indigenous culture. Each artwork has its own story, whether it is a dreamtime story, or the story of a place or event significant to Pike.

DISCUSS STORY TELLING...

• Why is story telling important?
• What are the different ways we tell stories?
• Do your artworks have stories?
• If they do, how have you chosen to tell that story with imagery?
• Discuss the significance of the colours, lines and symbols you chose.

CHANGE

Jimmy Pike experienced many changes in his life that exposed him to new ways of living. His life began in the desert learning about land and culture. When he moved to Cherrabun Station, he learnt many new skills involved in running a cattle station, and was exposed to the Western way of life. In prison he learnt about Western art and how to read and write English. Many of Pike’s paintings were made in prison where he drew on his memories of the desert. In prison he also gained access to materials and information about art making that was new for him.

DISCUSS HOW PERSPECTIVES CAN BE CHANGED BY NEW EXPERIENCES AND LEARNING NEW INFORMATION.

• How might changes in lifestyle have influenced Pike’s art making, in particular being separated from the land he grew up in while in prison?
• How do your perspectives change as you learn new things at school and in life?

Untitled (detail) 1984, Screenprint.
COLLABORATION
The unique collaboration between Jimmy Pike and his art teachers, Steve Culley and David Wroth had amazing consequences. Through this collaboration the strengths of two very different Australian cultures came together to create something remarkable which could be shared with the world. This is the benefit of collaboration, to bring together the strengths of different people to create something that could not be done alone.

- Discuss the significance of this unique collaboration which helped to gain international recognition for Indigenous art.
- Discuss the strengths from both cultures that were drawn upon in this successful collaboration.
- When do you collaborate in life? Who with?
- When do you see others collaborate?
- What are the results of these collaborations?

MATERIAL SURFACE
Pike’s artworks were originally completed on paper with felt pens.

- Discuss the qualities of felt pens and how Jimmy Pike achieved such incredible results with this humble medium.

Pike’s drawings were turned into screenprints, which allowed the images to be printed onto many different types of materials such as denim, cotton, silk, chiffon and more.

- Discuss how the colour, line, and texture of the original artwork would have changed as it was transferred to these different surfaces.
- What new qualities might these changes have brought to the artworks?

_Japingka (detail) 1996, Screenprint._
TEACHER NOTES

In this activity students are asked to observe what their own environment looks like after rain.

Students are asked to draw a picture of how the place they live looks after the rain from a low level perspective like Partiri (Flowers) 1987, or from a birds-eye perspective.

Students will need:

- Access to the image Partiri (Flowers) 1987 (see poster after Activity)
- Access to Pike’s images that use a birds-eye perspective (See Additional Resources)
- Paper and drawing materials

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THIS ACTIVITY

- Selection and development of ideas for artworks; considering intended audiences and intended purposes; and making decisions about arts elements and languages
- Create and shape artworks by modifying arts elements to express purpose and to include influences from their own and other cultures and times
- Respond by constructing artworks in relation to social and cultural contexts, using arts elements and languages
- Observation of personal environment
- Knowledge and understanding of perspective

TEACHER SCRIPT

Text in blue is example script for teachers.

Text in green represents actions for students.

This artwork features desert flowers called Partiri in Jimmy Pike’s native language. These flowers grow after the first rain of the wet season. What are some changes you notice after it rains where you live?

If you live in the city how does it change after the rain? Do the sky or the roads and buildings look different?

If you have a garden or live in the country how does it change after rain? Does the colour of the grass or the soil change? Do you notice any new flowers or plants growing like Jimmy Pike did?

Partiri (Flowers) has a low view-point, making the flowers look tall and looming, as if you were an insect looking up. Sometimes Jimmy Pike painted from up above as well, giving a birds-eye perspective of the land.

Draw a picture of how the place where you live looks after the rain from a low level perspective or from a birds-eye perspective and write down the story of your picture.
Partiri (Flowers) 1987, Screenprint.

“Green grass time, after rain, when everything grows.”
Reflect on your visit to Desert Psychedelic

What parts of Jimmy Pike’s story did you find the most interesting?

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What is your favourite work?

Title:

Story:

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Why is this your favourite?

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Find this work, then find the garment that is made from fabric printed with this design...

Name of work:

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Story:

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This work was originally done with textas, it was then made into a screen print, then into a garment.
The original work has gone through three changes.

How does the image change when it is printed on fabric?

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When Jimmy Pike was in prison he would create his artworks from his memories of the places he grew up in the Great Sandy Desert.

To some, the Australian Desert may look bleak and colourless. But we can see from his artworks that to Jimmy Pike the desert was a very vibrant and colourful place.

Have a closer look at the picture of the desert....

What colours can you see?

What are the similarities between the picture of the desert and Jimmy Pike's artwork?

What are the differences?

Here is an artwork titled *Purnara - Body Painting*

*Purnara – Body Painting* 1985, Screenprint.

“This body painting is used in law by people from that desert country. Jilji (sandhills) in the foreground”.

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Read the story about *Purnara - Body Painting*

In the foreground, or bottom half of this artwork is an image of sandhills...

What is interesting about how Jimmy Pike has represented these sandhills?

In the background, or top half of this artwork, is body painting. Why do you think Jimmy Pike might have chosen to combine these two things on this artwork.
TEACHER NOTES

In this activity students are asked to research the flora and fauna of a sparse environment in Australia and create an artwork using an image of this environment with collaged flora and fauna that might appear after the rains.

Students will need:

- Access to the image *Country* by Jimmy Pike (see poster after Activity)
- Access to the internet or reference library
- A3 colour print of chosen image
- Drawing materials
- Collage materials

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THIS ACTIVITY

- Gain knowledge and understanding of desert flora and fauna
- Create and shape arts works by manipulating arts elements to express meaning in different contexts
- Ideas are researched to inform visual responses that consider social and cultural issues

TEACHER SCRIPT

Text in blue is example script for teachers.

Text in green represents actions for students.

Jimmy Pike made images of *Partiri* (desert flowers). These flowers grow after the first rain of the wet season. In the dry season the desert can look sparse and desolate, but after the rain new life springs up.

Find a picture of a sparse environment in Australia. Research when and how often it rains there and what types of flora and fauna appear after it does.

Find, draw or paint a picture of a sparse, desolate environment in Australia. Bring in representations of new life by collaging drawings, images or prints of plants and animals that appear after the rain.
"Desert flowers after rain. Flowers growing in the desert, in the dry weather. Wattles grow in June and July. Some grow after rain."
Reflect on your visit to Desert Psychedelic

What parts of Jimmy Pike’s story did you find the most interesting?

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What is your favourite work?

Title:

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Story:

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Why is this your favourite?

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Find this work, then find the garment that is made from fabric printed with this design...

Name of work:

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This work was originally done with textas, it was then made into a screen print, then into a garment.

The original work has gone through three changes, each time placing the work in a new context.

How does the way in which we view an artwork change the way we respond to it?

Consider where, how and who would view the artwork in your response.

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When Jimmy Pike was in prison he would create his artworks from his memories of the places he grew up in the Great Sandy Desert.

To some, the Australian Desert may look bleak and colourless. But we can see from his artworks that to Jimmy Pike the desert was a very vibrant and colourful place.

Have a closer look at the picture of the desert....

What colours can you see?

What are the similarities between the picture of the desert and Jimmy Pike's artwork?

What are the differences?

Here is an artwork titled Larripuka Main Country

Partiri Jilikarraji (Flowers on the sandhills) 1996, Screenprint.

What does birds-eye-view mean?

Read the story about Larripuka Main Country. It is about how people would travel in the dry season and the wet season. What do you think ‘Jila’ might be?

Consider how Jimmy Pike has represented the land...

How might he have represented where people travel, and the changes of dry season to wet season? Consider the use of colour and line in your answer.
TEACHER NOTES

In this activity students are asked to form a collaborative team and produce a conceptual artwork responding to the theme of *Your Natural Environment*.

Students are asked to focus on the unique collaboration between Jimmy Pike, Steve Culley and David Wroth and what it produced. They are then asked to focus on their own personal strengths to produce a collaborative work.

**Students will need:**
- Visual Diary
- Access to art making materials and resources

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THIS ACTIVITY

**Making:**
- Create and communicate meanings through the use of visual language and expression
- Select, explore and exploit materials, technologies, techniques and art processes informed by researching, developing, resolving and reflecting
- Research, develop, resolve and reflect to demonstrate a personal aesthetic (style/expression)

**Appraising:**
- Justify a viewpoint through researching, developing, reflecting and resolving

**Affective:**
- Demonstrate a critical and sensitive awareness of expressive, functional and aesthetic qualities of the visual environment
- Analyse, interpret, evaluate and synthesise information about visual language, expression and meanings in artworks, relevant to concepts, focuses, contexts and media
- Value and be confident in their individual creative ability

**Processes:**
- Resolving artworks and/or appraising in response to the theme of Your Natural Environment
- Work in a collaborative group

TEACHER SCRIPT

Text in **blue** is example script for teachers.

Text in **green** represents actions for students.

The unique collaboration between Jimmy Pike and his art teachers, Steve Culley and David Wroth had amazing consequences. Through this collaboration the strengths of two very different cultures combined together to create something remarkable that could be shared with the world. The use of the skills of many to create something that could not be done as successfully alone is the benefit of collaboration.

Consider what your skills are. You may be strong in the area of design, drawing, construction, painting, or music.

Collaborate with one or two other people and combine your strengths to create a conceptual artwork, responding to the theme; ‘Your Natural Environment’. Document your process in your visual diary.

For example, in your collaborative group you may have strengths in music and strengths in drawing. Perhaps this could yield a hand drawn animation with an accompanying musical composition played by a member of the group.

**OR**

In your collaborative group you may have strengths in writing and printmaking. Perhaps you could make an artists’ book with prints and a story written in response to the theme.
Reflect on and respond to the experience of visiting *Desert Psychedelic*...

What aspects of Jimmy Pike’s story do you find the most engaging and inspiring? Why?

What is your favourite work?

**Title:**

**Story:**

Why is this your favourite?

This work was originally done with textas, it was then made into a screen print, then into a garment.

The original work has gone through three changes, each time placing the work in a new context.

How does the way in which we view an artwork change the way we respond to it?

Consider where, how and who would view the artwork in your response.

Find this work, then find the garment that is made from fabric printed with this design...

**Name of work:**

**Story:**

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When Jimmy Pike was in prison he would create his artworks from his memories of the places he grew up in the Great Sandy Desert.

To some, the Australian Desert may look bleak and colourless. But we can see from his artworks that to Jimmy Pike the desert was a very vibrant and colourful place.

Compare and contrast the image of the desert and Partiri Jilikarraji.

In what ways has Jimmy Pike expressed his personal visual language with his work? Consider the context in which he was making his work, shut away from his land in prison.

Here is a textile titled Purnara.

“This marking is like a number, a brand. It is used by the Aboriginal people over a big area. It shows that anything with this mark comes from the bush-desert South of Kimberleys. When people see this purnara carving, they know what number that country has. ‘Ah, that coe from my country’. Many tribes use the same number, same meaning, cut a different way. arving on nullanulla (hunting stick), womera (spearthrower), coolamon (wooden dish), marralaly (shovel for cooking), wangkuli (dish for separating grain from chaff), tarta (cup)”.

This artwork is the marking of the people from the bush-desert south of the Kimberleys.

Read the story about Purnara. Jimmy Pike talks about how the marking is used as a “number” to represent his people.

Consider how significance can be very specific. For example, to someone not from the bush-desert south of the Kimberleys, this image may just be a beautiful pattern.

Provide an example of a symbol that is significant to you that others might not understand.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD

Jimmy Pike Stories
Jimmy Pike Timeline

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Queensland curriculum information:

About artisan:
http://www.artisan.org.au

REFERENCES

Essential Learnings – Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework
The Arts – By the end of Year 7
The Arts – By the end of Year 9
English – By the end of Year 7
English – By the end of Year 9
SOSE – By the end of Year 7
SOSE – By the end of Year 9

Year 10 Learning Guidelines
The Arts
English
History

Senior Syllabus
Visual Art
English
Ancient History
Modern History

Desert Psychedelic: Jimmy Pike exhibition catalogue

Japingka (detail) 1996, Screenprint.
EXHIBITION TOURING VENUES

2011

Tableland Regional Gallery, QLD 4 Jul – 31 Jul
Mundubbera Regional Art Gallery, QLD 27 Aug – 26 Oct
Horsham Regional Gallery, VIC 4 Nov – 18 Dec

2012

Arts Space Wodonga, VIC 9 Jan – 4 Feb
Fremantle Prison, WA 1 Jun – 5 Aug
Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, SA 31 Aug – 25 Nov
Cowra Regional Art Gallery, NSW 15 Dec – 3 Feb 2013

2013

Bribie Island Seaside Museum, QLD 1 Mar – 1 May
Cobb and Co Museum, QLD May – Jun
Caloundra Regional Gallery, QLD 1 Jul – 13 Aug

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Education Kit Development: Annie Robertson
Exhibition Curator: Kirsten Fitzpatrick
Exhibition Manager: Simone Jones
Graphic Design: Melanie Schafer
Photography: All images by Andrea Higgins, artisan, unless otherwise noted

Desert Psychedelic: Jimmy Pike is an artisan travelling exhibition

Artisan receives financial assistance from its major sponsors, Arts Queensland (State Government) and the Australia Council, the Commonwealth Government’s arts funding and advisory body.

This exhibition is proudly supported by:

Artisan
idea • skill • product

07 3215 0800 | info@artisan.org.au
381 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley Q 4006
Tues - Fri: 10:30am - 5:30pm | Sat: 10am - 4pm

This exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of Australian cultural material across Australia.

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Exhibition toured by: