



THE NEWCASTLE CHEST LEARNING RESOURCE

NEWCASTLE REGION ART GALLERY

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A contemporary work of art, *The Newcastle Chest* 2010, has been inspired by the *Macquarie Collectors' Chest* c1818, and has been commissioned by Newcastle Region Art Gallery, with the support of private benefactors.

Made by cabinetmaker Scott Mitchell from the same native timber species found in the Macquarie chest and crafted to the same dimensions, this contemporary *Wunderkammer* conceals and reveals the work of five of Australia's leading artists.

These artists were selected because they work with subjects and media that relates to the Macquarie chest. For example Philip Wolfhagen is a celebrated landscape painter who also has a fascination for convict painters like Joseph Lycett and William Buelow Gould; Maria Fernanda Cardoso has for decades worked with insects in her art making; birds are a recurring subject for Louise Weaver; for Esme Timbery, shellwork has been an important cultural expression and Lionel Bawden's interest in Wunderkammern objects led to his inclusion in the commission.

WUNDERKAMMER CULTURE

Wunderkammer:

*A collection combining both man-made works of art
(artificialia) and objects from nature (naturalia).*

Samuël Quicchelberg 1565



Small Collectors Cabinet c1615
Germany
Painting: attributed to Anton Mozart
several woods, veneer: ebony, oil on wood, red silk, brass
32.5 x 29.5 x 25 cm
Originally contained small collection objects: jewellery, natural curiosities, and possibly coins.
Image courtesy Georg Laue

Wunderkammern, also known as wonder rooms or cabinets, were popular amongst the elite in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. These were exclusively private collections that included objects from the natural world (naturalia), objects that were made by hand (artificialia), scientific instruments (scientifica) and objects of marvel or wonder (mirabilia). In these spaces it was not uncommon to encounter alligators hung from ceilings, elaborately mounted ostrich eggs and even mermaids trawled from the seven seas. This encyclopedic world view was surpassed by the rationalism of the Enlightenment period in which the measurement and organisation of knowledge was privileged.

LINKS:

Explore the history:

http://www.kunstkammer.com/e_seiten/frameeinfuehrung.html

Shop for modern collectables online:

<http://www.wunderkammer.com.au/index.html>

THE INSPIRATION
MACQUARIE COLLECTORS' CHEST

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I dream of a new age of curiosity.
Michel Foucault



Visit and explore the *Macquarie Collectors' Chest* c1818, at the New South Wales State Library

website: http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/macquarie/chest/index.html

General History of Lachlan Macquarie's Governorship of New South Wales:

<http://lrrpublic.cli.det.nsw.edu.au/lrrSecure/Sites/Web/macquarie2010/index.htm>

<http://www.macquarie2010.nsw.gov.au/>



Artist Maria Fernanda Cardoso (left) and cabinetmaker Scott Mitchell (far right) with Newcastle Region Art Gallery Director Ron Ramsey (middle) exploring *The Macquarie Collectors' Chest* at New South Wales State Library to gain inspiration for their commissions.

PHILIP WOLFHAGEN

Colonial endemic 2010
Waiting for trade winds 2010
Homage to JL 2010

oil on Australian red cedar (*Toona ciliata*),
42.5 x 32.0 x 1.2 cm

courtesy the artist and Dominik Mersch Gallery,
Sydney

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Tasmanian painter Philip Wolfhagen has made three oil paintings on red cedar panels in response to convict painter Joseph Lycett's panels on the Macquarie chest. Sustained study of Lycett's work has endeared Wolfhagen to the convict artist's many idiosyncrasies, including his dramatic cloudscares and his detailed treatment of the landscape. The coastal landscapes depicted by Wolfhagen, including the distinctive sedimentary rock configurations, are at once a tribute to Lycett and the artist's direct response to the Newcastle coastline.

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PHILIP WOLFHAGEN

LOOKING

Look at Philip Wolfhagen's work in *The Newcastle Chest*, then at Joseph Lycett's work in the Macquarie chest. List what is the same and what is different about the two artists' work. Identify the aspects of Lycett's work that have inspired Wolfhagen?

EXPLORING

Philip Wolfhagen is a modern day landscape painter who has visited Newcastle. Joseph Lycett was a convict artist working 200 years ago who also visited Newcastle. Despite living in different times both artists have been commissioned to create works that showcase the Newcastle landscape. What do you think the biggest differences would be for each artist in planning and making their work?



ARTMAKING

Wolfhagen uses a palette knife to paint his works instead of a paintbrush. He is very interested in finding the perfect cloud to portray in his work. Set up outside with a palette knife (or paddle pop stick), paint and board/canvas/paper. Then search the sky for the perfect cloud for your painting. When you paint your work you could include a small amount of the horizon line but make sure you keep the sky as the focus of the work.

EXTENSION

Compare Wolfhagen's interpretation of the Newcastle coastline with Lycett's depiction. How are their works representative of the time in which they are painted?



The Macquarie Collectors' Chest c1818



LINKS:

<http://www.bettgallery.com.au/artists/wolfhagen/vapourtrails/index.htm>

<http://www.gabimocatta.com/design-arts/docs/WolfhagenProfile.pdf>

LOUISE WEAVER

Arena 2010

hand-crocheted lambswool over taxidermied zebra finch (*Poephila guttata*), budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), rainbow lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*), hand-blown glass, wooden beads, cotton embroidery thread, gold leaf and mono-filament, 8.2 x 47.0 x 36.0 cm
Photography by Mark Ashkanasy
courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

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Melbourne-based artist Louise Weaver has responded to the Macquarie chest's drawers and trays of taxidermied birds. Weaver's drawer installation includes a native budgerigar, a zebra finch and a rainbow lorikeet, united by a wreath of wattle made from crocheted handblown-glass orbs. Weaver's birds are 'taxidermied from the outside'. Mummified in brightly coloured crotchet, they call into question our historical treatment of nature and our frenzied collecting and museumising.



LOUISE WEAVER

LOOKING

Louise Weaver gives new life to old museum specimens, clothing her birds in yellow crochet. Why do you think she has done this? How do Weaver's coverings change the way we look at the specimens?

EXPLORING

The orbs in between each bird are made from hand-blown glass. Do the coverings crocheted by Weaver over their orbs change how this fragile material looks, why or why not?

ARTMAKING

Weaver changes the birds and objects by hiding them in woolen yarn. Choose an object that has a special meaning to you (one that you are willing to turn into a work of art). Then wrap that object with coloured yarn. Like Weaver, select your colour carefully, She has chosen yellow yarn to reflect the wattle bloom in the Australian landscape. What colour would you choose to hide your object and why?

Simply and neatly wrap your object using glue to fix the wrapping in place as you go. When you have finished your sculptures you could display them as a class. Invite your audience to see if they can guess your original object.

EXTENSION

Discuss the use of humour and irony in Louise Weaver's work of art in *The Newcastle Chest*.

As an artmaking extension you could also draw a bird, hole punch around the edge and weave yellow wool through your drawing.



The Macquarie Collectors' Chest c1818



LINKS:
Darren Knight Gallery:
<http://www.darrenknightgallery.com/artists/weaver/otherwork/05.htm>

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MARIA FERNANDA CARDOSO

Dead and green leaves 2010

Dead leaf butterflies (Kallima inachus inachus),
Leaf insects (Phyllium giganteum), branch, metal
pins, foam, and glass, 33.5 x 64.0 x 9.5 cm
courtesy the artist and Grantpirrie, Sydney

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Colombian-born, Sydney-based artist Maria Fernanda Cardoso engages with the entomological world in her work, inspired by the spiders, beetles and butterflies displayed in the Macquarie chest. Cardoso has focused on specimens that are NOT seen in the original chest, that is, those creatures from the insect world that use mimic camouflage as a survival strategy. These insects offer a metaphor of the pressures placed on the individual, to blend in – pressures felt by Cardoso herself as a migrant in Australia.



MARIA FERNANDA CARDOSO



LOOKING

Cardoso has used insect specimens to create her work of art. Look closely at her drawer. The insects she has collected look like leaves. By placing them around the sticks she hides these insects in plain sight. Why do you think the artist has chosen insects that use camouflage?

EXPLORING

Cardoso has used camouflaged insect specimens in her work. How does this compare to the Macquarie chest insect specimen drawer?

Cardoso was commissioned by Newcastle Region Art Gallery to produce these works of art in response to the Macquarie chest. Explain how Cardoso's work both responds to the Macquarie chest, but is also a unique contemporary work of art in its own right.

ARTMAKING

Research Cardoso's art practice using the LINKS and explore her works created using butterfly wings. Collect leaves and arrange in a circular composition, securing the leaf specimens in place. Consider how to best exhibit your work.

The Macquarie Collectors' Chest c1818

LINKS:

Collect and classify insects to inspire your artmaking with *Bugcatcher*:
<http://museumvictoria.com.au/bugs/game/content/content.html>

Explore this artist art practice: <http://www.mariafernandacardoso.com/category/animal-art/butterflies>
<http://www.grantpirrie.com/artist.php?g=gallery1&a=4&e=29&s=3&i=1>

Explore how people are still researching and collecting insects today for The Australian National Insect Collection a resource maintained by CSIRO.
<http://www.csiro.au/places/ANIC.html>

See where you can collect the specimen- *Phyllium pulchrifolium* (left):
<http://www.global-insects.com/>





Artist Maria Fernanda Cardoso (right) with Newcastle Region Art Gallery Director Ron Ramsey (left) exploring the *Macquarie Collectors' Chest* at New South Wales State Library being inspired for her commission.

ESME TIMBERY

Macquarie slippers and boomerangs (detail) 2010
Macquarie tartan, cardboard, shells and glitter,
dimensions variable

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Aboriginal artist Esme Timbery belongs to a long line of shell workers from La Perouse. With the assistance of her daughter Marilyn Russell, Timbery has made new work inspired by the shell, algae and seaweed drawers of *The Macquarie Collectors' Chest*. For Timbery and her family, shells are protective. They possess healing properties and help link the present and past. Timbery has used Macquarie tartan to cover the tiny slippers and boomerangs encrusted with white shells collected from Newcastle, Sydney and beyond. The shells colonise the tartan surfaces, returning them to nature and 'country'.

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ESME TIMBERY

LOOKING

Esme Timbery is an Indigenous artist who creates small works using traditional shellwork and Victorian era souvenir-making techniques. Investigate the potential meanings that this combination suggests. It is probable that Indigenous people helped to collect the specimens for the Macquarie chest. How does the inclusion of a commissioned work of art by an Indigenous artist in the Newcastle chest differ from the way the natural and Indigenous objects were collected and displayed in *The Macquarie Collectors' Chest*?

EXPLORING

Consider how the meaning and context would change if Timbery's works were displayed as individual objects or installed on the wall in a grid of 200 pairs of shell encrusted slippers similar to the display at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney (see LINK for image). List the different interpretations each setting provides for the audience.

ARTMAKING

Bring in an old shoe from home or buy a fun high heel from an op-shop. Esme Timbery has used Macquarie tartan to show us how her work of art relates to Governor Macquarie, think of a background colour or design to paint your shoe that relates to you. Once your background is dry, use shells or macaroni to create the surface decoration, sticking them in place with PVA glue.

ARTMAKING EXTENSION

Create a photomontage of an Australian contemporary souvenir item, such as a Big Banana eraser or a stuffed toy kangaroo. Find the image on the Internet and using Photoshop repeat the image. Alternatively use photocopies of the souvenir image and cut and paste your montage on paper.

LINKS
Find out more about Esme Timbery:

http://www.nma.gov.au/shared/libraries/attachments/atsip_newsletter/april_2008/atsi_news_april_2008/files/25378/PP21_ATSI_News_April_08_Esme_Timbery_shellwork.pdf

Discover Timbery's collaboration with a fashion designer:
<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/blog/index.php/2010/06/romance-in-the-museum/>

http://www.mycatwalk.com.au/designer/romance-was-born-shoes/shoes/shells-with-silver-glitter+rbw*shoes.6.html



The Macquarie Collectors' Chest c1818



LIONEL BAWDEN

Bower (detail) 2010

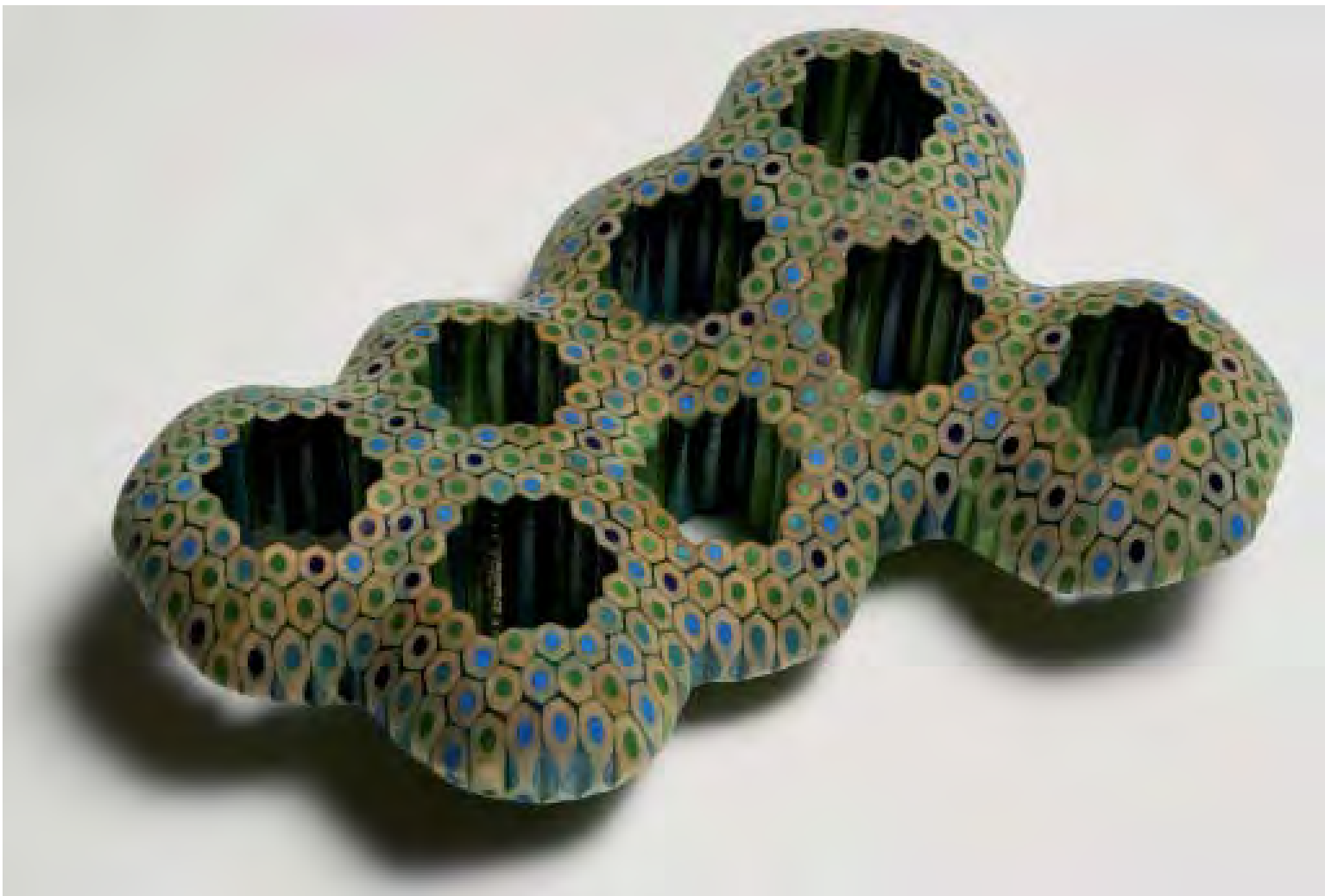
coloured Staedtler pencils, epoxy, incralac
and linseed oil, 11 forms, dimensions variable
courtesy the artist and Grantpirrie, Sydney



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Sydney-based artist Lionel Bawden has been inspired by the booty in the bottom drawer of the Macquarie chest, which includes toucan bills, seed pods and a shark egg. Bawden has handcrafted a bower for the bottom drawer made entirely from coloured pencils. The form of these contemporary sculptures echoes the puzzling originals and provides a lure into a new imagined world.

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LIONEL BAWDEN



Curator of the exhibition Lisa Slade with contemporary artist Lionel Bawden exploring the bottom drawer of Macquarie chest at New South Wales State Library.

ARTMAKING

Can you imagine what Lionel Bawden's carved pencil shapes feel like? Imagine using it as a drawing instrument?

Collect a hand full of coloured pencils, making sure all the coloured tips are level against the table and tie them tightly together with a rubber band. On a large sheet of paper use your bundle to draw one of the shapes carved by Bawden.

To finish your work of art take your drawing and cut out the detailed outline of the shape.

Was it difficult to create a clear, exact shape? This is what it must be like when Bawden glues his pencils together. He has to then carve the detailed shape he needs from this larger block.

ARTMAKING EXTENSION

Construct a sculptural object by repeating the use of a material, such as coloured straws, crayons or matchsticks. Consider how your choice of construction material effects the interpretation of your finished sculpture.

LINKS

Find out more about Lionel Bawden:
<http://www.lionelbawden.com/Work-projects1.html>

LOOKING

Lionel Bawden has created his work of art by looking and being inspired by the Macquarie Chest. Can you discover what objects he has carved from the bottom booty drawer?

EXPLORING

In the bird specimen drawer of the Macquarie chest are taxdermied Regent bowerbirds. Why do you think Bawden has named his work *Bower*?

EXTENSION

Bawden is a contemporary sculptor using ready-made objects in his work. Evaluate how his practice is informed by and differs from the work of Marcel Duchamp.

The Macquarie Collectors' Chest c1818





Artists Maria Fernanda Cardoso (far left), Lionel Bawden (left), Newcastle Region Art Gallery Director Ron Ramsey (middle) and cabinetmaker Scott Mitchell (far right) examining how the Macquarie chest was constructed.

SCOTT MITCHELL

Australian red cedar (*Toona ciliata*),
NSW rosewood (*Dysoxylum fraserianum*),
River red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*),
tartan, glass and brass fittings
closed: 53.0 x 71.0 x 46.0 cm

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<http://www.scottmitchelldesign.com.au/index.htm>



EXPLORING

Newcastle was well known for its plentiful supply of large red cedar trees. This timber has been used in both chests. Red cedar take a long time to grow to a size that is usable for furniture.

Write a creative story about the life of the cedar tree used to construct the Macquarie Chest. You could start your story with the cedar seed falling to the forest floor and end with the chests return to Australia.

LOOKING

Scott Mitchell has designed and made the Newcastle chest to the same outside dimensions as the Macquarie chest, yet it has a few modern differences. Which differences stand out the most and why do you think he has made these changes?

ARTMAKING

Design a chest or cabinet to store and display collected specimens.

Draw your *Wunderkammer* and list what you would collect and display in each drawer.



The Macquarie Collectors' Chest c1818



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Newcastle Region Art Gallery collection

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Authors: Lisa Slade - *Curatorial Consultant* and Anna Scobie - *Gallery Assistant*

Editors: Tristan Sharp - *Program Manager* and Penny Finnigan - *Public Program Officer*

Resource design: Anna Scobie - *Gallery Assistant*

Web design: Susan Cairns - *Gallery Assistant*

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*The cure for boredom is curiosity.
There is no cure for curiosity.*

Dorothy Parker

<http://nag.org.au/learning>

NEWCASTLE REGION ART GALLERY



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