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JENNY CROMPTON

**CREATURE PROJECTS
YEARS 5-6 EDUCATION RESOURCE**

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(cover and background)

Jenny CROMPTON

Lorne Sculpture Biennale

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE



ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource has been created to provide teachers with ideas to support students responding to and creating visual artworks. Students will engage with the work of local Indigenous artist, Jenny Crompton and consider the ways that her visual arts practice communicates different ideas, values and beliefs. The activities in this resource are designed to compliment the NGV Arts Access *Creatures Workshop* as well as to stand-alone, as an independent unit to be completed in the school classroom.

The activities are designed to offer students engaging and practical arts experience with strong links to the Victorian Curriculum.

CURRICULUM LINKS: VICTORIAN CURRICULUM

Visual Arts Level Description

In Levels 5 and 6, students explore how and why artists, craftspeople and designers realise their ideas through different visual forms, practices and processes. They develop conceptual and expressive skills.

As they make and respond to visual artworks, students explore a diversity of ideas, concepts and viewpoints. They draw ideas from other artists, artworks, symbolic systems, beliefs and visual arts practices in other cultures, societies and times.

Students extend their understanding of safe visual arts

practices and choose to use sustainable materials, techniques and technologies.

Visual Arts Content Descriptions

Explore and Express Ideas:

Explore visual arts practices as inspiration to create artworks that express different ideas and beliefs.

Visual Arts Practices:

Select and apply visual conventions, materials, techniques, technologies and processes specific to different art forms when making artworks.

Present and Perform:

Create and display art work considering how ideas can be expressed to an audience.

Respond and interpret:

Identify and describe how ideas expressed in artworks by comparing artworks from different contemporary, historical and cultural contexts.

Visual Arts Achievement Standard

By the end of Level 6, students explain how ideas are expressed in artworks they make view. They demonstrate the use of different techniques and processes in planning and making artworks. They use visual conventions and visual arts practices to express ideas, themes and concepts in their artworks.

Students describe the influences of artworks and practices on their art making. They describe how artworks that they make and view can be displayed to express and enhance meaning.

Students describe and identify how ideas are expressed in artworks from different contemporary, historical and cultural contexts.

Jenny CROMPTON

Coolamon with Beaked Mussel and Barnacles, 2015, (supplied by the artist)



ABOUT JENNY CROMPTON

Jenny Crompton is an Australian Indigenous artist. She lives in Bellbrae on Victoria's Surf Coast on the land of her Wathaurong ancestors. Her work is inspired by her environment and the Indigenous culture of her Country. Jenny's artistic process involves walking the land and respectfully collecting natural materials for her art. This practice allows her to connect with Country and her ancestors and explore Aboriginal spirituality. Jenny hopes to provide her audience with an awareness and respect for cultural knowledge and spirituality.

Jenny CROMPTON
Lorne Sculpture Biennale, 2016
(supplied by the artist)



EXPLORE JENNY CROMPTON'S WORK

Jenny's installation *Sea Country Spirits* consists of 32 sculptures relating to land, sea and sky. It is made from found objects such as tree grass, driftwood, kangaroo bones, feathers, wood, seaweed and grass roots. Using copper wire, synthetic polymer paint and resin, she creates shapes of birds and their nests, crustaceans, shellfish, fish, shells and macropods. The 'spirit creatures' that Jenny creates are directly inspired by her environment. The creatures hang and twirl, suspended on fishing line, almost as if they are gathered together to tell a story. They express the rich culture of the Wathaurong people and celebrate the resilience of Aboriginal peoples who have been in Australia for over 65,000 years.

Jenny's *Sea Country Spirits* won the 2016 Lorne Sculpture Biennale, Sculpture Trail Award and the People's Choice Award. *Sea Country Spirits* when it

was displayed underneath a large cypress tree. It was acquired by NGV in 2016 and exhibited amongst works by other Indigenous women artists in the major exhibition *Who's Afraid of Colour?*

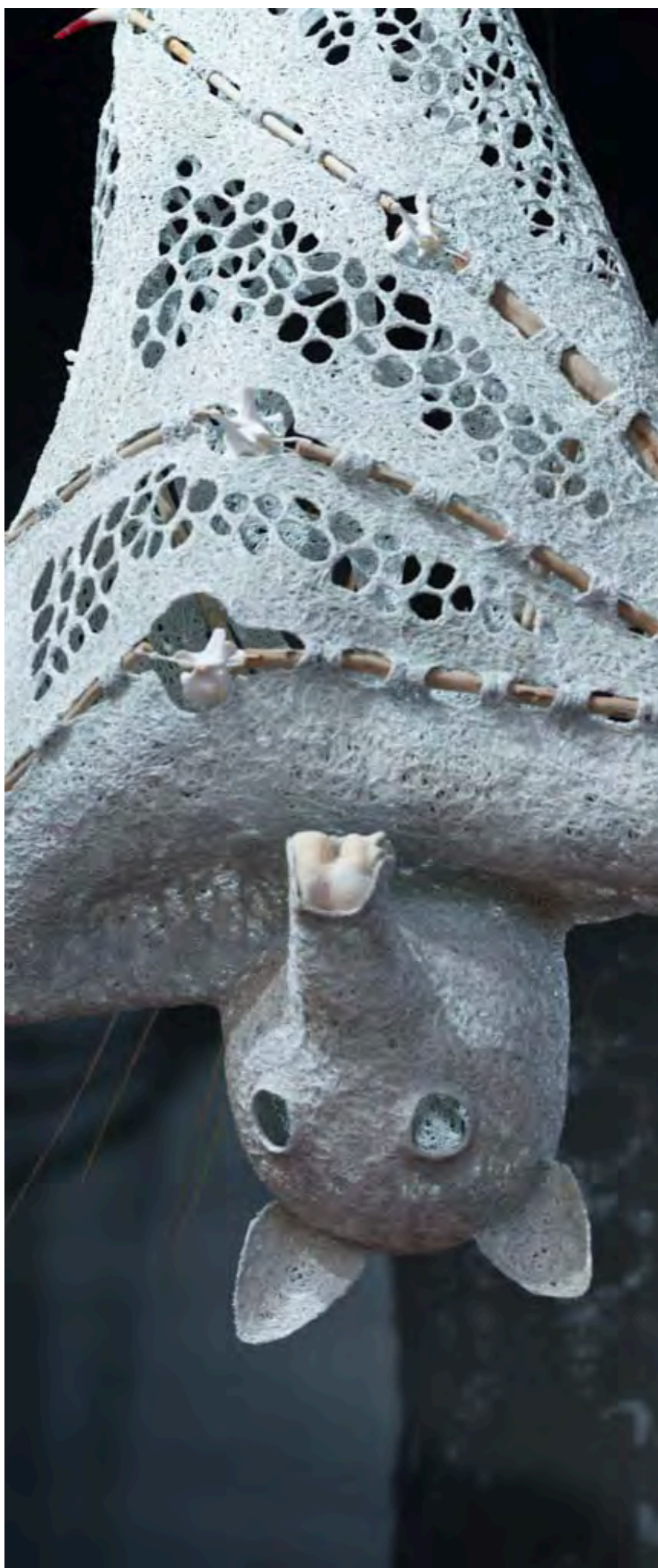
DISPLAY

Look at the photos below and compare the different ways that Jenny's work has been displayed and presented. Consider some of the factors that would have been taken into account in her initial presentation of her work at the Lorne Biennale and the rehangings of the work in a gallery space at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia.

Jenny CROMPTON
Lorne Sculpture Biennale, 2016
(supplied by the artist)



Jenny CROMPTON
Lorne Sculpture Biennale, 2016
(supplied by the artist)



Jenny CROMPTON
Who's afraid of colour?
installation view, NGV 2017



Jenny CROMPTON
Who's afraid of colour?
installation view, 2017

Explore
 How might the two different ways of displaying *Sea Country Spirits* change the ways the audience experiences and interacts with the work?
 Consider location, space between objects, external factors (weather/climate/light), display height, indoor/outdoor surrounding colours, shadows, etc.
 Make a list of some of these differences in the table below.

Discuss
 Which display do you find most interesting and why?



Lorne Sculpture Biennale	National Gallery of Victoria

Jenny CROMPTON
 Lorne Sculpture Biennale, 2016
 (supplied by the artist)



Have you always used 'found materials' for your artwork?

I haven't always used found materials in my work. It just depends on what I am up to at the time. Exploring different materials in all forms, takes me on different excursions of making. From woodcarving, soldering and metal work, silicon rubber moulding and resin work, teaching myself new skills and exploring different techniques is part of my practice. But generally speaking, found materials are my main way of connecting with Country and are integral to my creative process, whether from plant or animal life. I always collect in a respectful manner. I repurpose the found materials into my sculpture and sometimes because of durability, I will use an essence of them as a way of creating images in painting.

Where did you first get the idea to make *Sea Country Spirits*?

Sea Country Spirits was made for the Lorne Sculpture Biennale, when I was allocated a site to exhibit outdoors. The first part of the process was viewing the space chosen for me, which was underneath the

cypress trees just back from the foreshore. I stood for a period of time in this space and allowed the environment to guide me. Standing on land, I looked out to sea and up at the sky and thought about all that exists within that space. The land, sea and sky became my starting point. Three large totems representing these elements were made first: flying fox for land, fiddler ray for sea and bird for sky. Then, I let the creative process of shape making take over, thinking of animal and plant life including fish, caterpillars, owls, yam daisies, sea pods, molluscs, insects, plankton, etc.

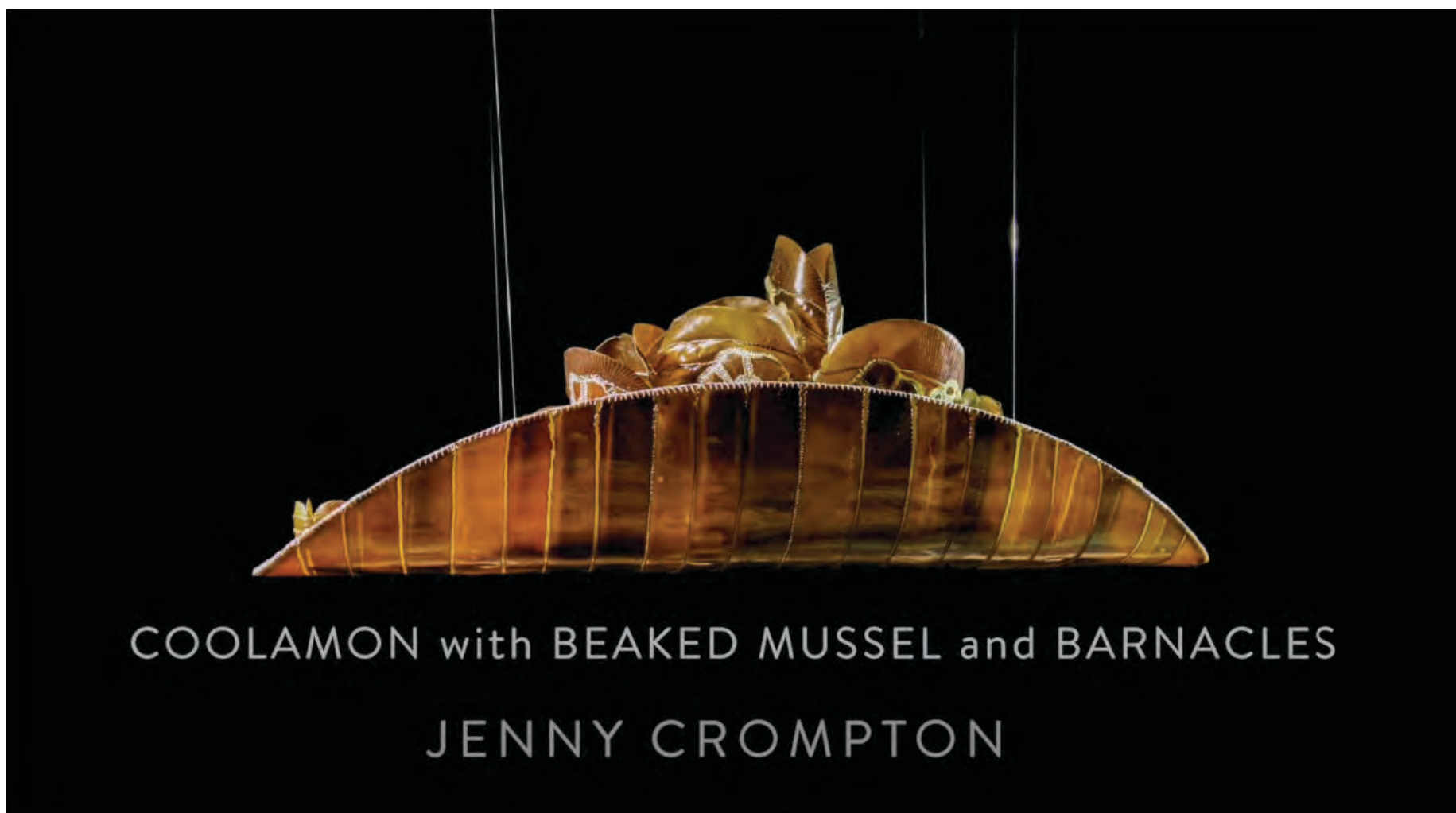
How did you choose your materials? Why did you choose those particular materials?

The found materials selected for *Sea Country Spirits* were gathered over a long period of time. Being outdoors, I had to have sturdy material to support these found materials that would also stand up to the gale force winds that occur in this area. I had worked out a technique of hand sewing fine copper wire with the right tension, giving the work a woven texture, and then spraying with certain paints to make them strong but light shapes. As the pieces had to hang from the cypress tree branches, the light weight and weave were very important, so the wind could pass through them, but also to make them move and dance. As the light under the trees was quite dark and in shadow, I knew the shapes would work if they were coloured white.

How long did it take you to make it?

The work took nine months to make; working right up to the last minute. The large totems took the longest to make, for example, the flying fox took 6 weeks to sew the copper wire into shape. I would be aware of what found materials I wanted to use in this shape, so I would allow a pattern to appear in the shape of these

Student workshop with Jenny Crompton
Who's Afraid of Colour? 2017



found objects to be sewn back in after the piece had been sprayed. Sometimes, with the smaller shapes I wouldn't know exactly what I was making, but I would be thinking about an animal or insect and would let it evolve and grow from these thoughts.

What challenges did you experience?

Having time constraints in making can be quite stressful, especially when the work is very labour intensive. At the start of making *Sea Country Spirits*, I couldn't find the particular copper wire that I needed. As it is a recycled material found from metal scrap yards, it was just luck when the right type came in. I also ran out of certain types of found materials that I wanted to use, so I had to look at how other found materials that were available could be used. Another challenge became the repetitive action of sewing the copper wire, and damaging my arm in the process.

What are you working on now?

I am currently working on a large sculptural installation, which is representing the rivers, watercourses and lakes of my Country. This work will focus on the plant and animal life of the area, made from discovering new techniques and found materials, and will be influenced by Wathaurong language names for places in this Country.

To view the video above on non iOS devices, please go to: <https://youtu.be/M-C69ZOpph4>



Jenny spends a lot of time walking around her Country and collecting materials for her art. She then uses the things that she finds to create art.

Explore

Watch the video above about how Jenny creates her artwork, *Coolamon with Beaked Mussel and Barnacles*.

Respond

After watching the video of Jenny making *Coolamon with Beaked Mussel and Barnacles*, respond to the questions below. This can be completed as an individual/group writing task or can be the basis of a whole-class discussion.

1. What do you notice about the way Jenny selects her materials?
2. How does she show a respect for the land?
3. What do you notice about the amount of material she takes?

4. How does she work with her materials?

5. What are some of the techniques she uses to make her art?

6. What is a coolamon?

7. How does Jenny draw on Aboriginal history and culture to produce her art?

8. What are two 'ideas' important in Jenny's work?

ACTIVITY 1: CREATIVE CREATURE WORKSHOP



CREATIVE CREATURE WORKSHOP

Rational for teachers

Jenny began *Sea Country Spirits* by making three large totems: flying fox for land, fiddler ray for sea and bird for sky. The rest of the creatures evolved as she made them through the shapes and forms they took.

Students will use their imaginations to create a creative creature inspired by natural environments. They might choose to combine two or three different animals to create a composite creature, for example, a bird's head, elephant ears and a fish body.

Materials:

- Paper clay (approximately one 40g portion per student)
- Aluminium Foil
- Feathers
- Pipe cleaners
- Permanent markers
- Masking tape
- Skewers
- Googly eyes
- Thin wire

Make the parts

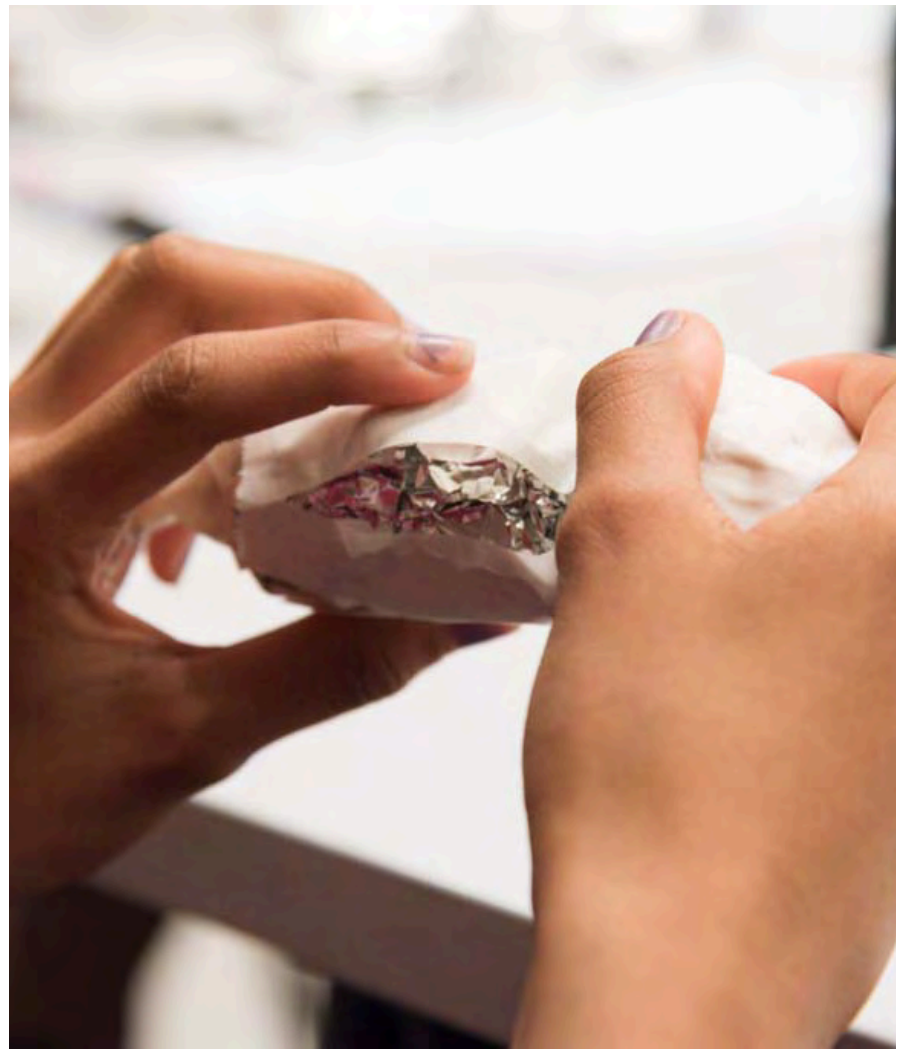
What does your creature look like? Think about what body parts you will need to make. Body? Head? Wings? Legs? Arms? Ears? Antennae?

Use the foil to make the body parts. Fold/scrunch/roll/pinch the foil into shape. You are just going to make the large body parts out of foil the details can be added later with the paper clay. Think about how you will join the pieces together and how the creature will balance. Will it stand/sit/recline/fly?



**Join it all together**

Join your pieces together by using masking tape. Make sure the pieces are securely fastened. Remember, it does not matter what it looks like at this stage, as it will be covered in paper clay.



Cover your creature with paper clay

Use the paper clay to create a 'skin' to cover your creature. You might like to roll your paper clay out into a flat piece and then wrap around the foil. Once you have covered your creature, use your finger to smooth the surface or use a tool such as a skewer to give your creature textures and patterns.



Decorate

What decorations will you use to detail your creature?
Be mindful that whatever material you choose will need to be light-weight and properly secured (paper clay is very light and spongy and will not support heavy materials). Feather, pipe-cleaners and wire are great to use for the final touches. You might like to use a permanent marker to draw the finer details and patterns on your creature.:

Label

Name your creature. Consider what magical powers/
special qualities your creature will have.

Display

Present and display your creature. Consider creating a
backdrop that reflects what your creature's home or
environment may look like.



NATURE CREATURE WORKSHOP

Rational for teachers

Students will create a *Nature Creature*; a creature inspired by the natural landscapes. This activity is designed to immerse students in their local environment and inspire awareness of their natural surroundings. Like Jenny Crompton, students will collect natural materials that they come across and use these objects as a trigger for their creativity. Students should practice sustainable techniques whilst choosing the objects for their work and show a respect for the environment and all living plants and creatures.

Materials:

- Found natural object
- Pencils
- Paper
- Erasers
- Scratch paper
- Skewers
- Plastic cutlery
- Wooden styluses
- Etching needles
- Paper clips

Start a collection of materials.

As we saw in the video clip, Jenny is inspired by the materials that she finds while walking on Country. For Jenny, the materials that she finds trigger the ideas behind her works.

What kind of materials inspire you? What kind of materials are around your school or home?

Go for a walk around your home or school. You might choose to explore the school grounds, your own backyard or a nearby park, garden or beach. Take notice of the materials that you come across as you



walk. Find some interesting objects to inspire your *Nature Creature*. Remember to only take what you need and try to show a respect for your environment by only taking items on the ground. You might find objects like leaves, feathers, gum nuts, flowers, shells or pinecones. Choose one object that you find interesting and bring it to school to share with the class.

Collaborative discussion and cataloguing.

In small groups of 3-4 people, share materials that you have found. Have a discussion about your process of finding the objects.

- Where did you find it?
- Why did you choose this particular object?
- What makes this found object interesting?
- What connection does it have to your home/school environment?

Consider shape, colours, textures and lines. Use the table below to describe and catalogue your found materials.

Thinking

Brainstorm what kind of creatures you can create inspired by the objects you found.

- How can the objects be transformed into a *Nature Creature*?
- Use your imagination, what will your creature look like?
- Can you add wings, horns, tail, beak or teeth?

Object	Shapes/lines	Colours	Textures
Object 1			
Object 2			
Object 3			
Object 4			



Sketch and experiment.

Complete an observation drawing of your object using pencil and paper. Experiment with different ideas forms, shapes and textures. Once you have drawn your found object create a sketch of your *Nature Creature* incorporating this object.

Create a Nature Creature.

Now that you have decided what your *Nature Creature* looks like, you can draw your creature using scratchpaper. Scratchpaper allows you to draw intricate and fine details in your work. You might like to experiment with different tools. The final product will be monochromatic and have interesting textures and details like the *Sea Country Spirits* by Jenny Crompton.



Present and display your work.

Once you have finished your final pieces, think creatively about how you might like to present and display your work. Consider a variety of options and locations around school or the local community. You might consider several different locations before you choose a particular space. Remember to think about the following factors: weather, climate (light/temperature), display height, arrangement, distance between each piece of work. Contemplate how your audience will engage and interact with your artworks.

Possibilities:

Mount final pieces on thicker paper or cardboard and suspend them on fishing line as a sculptural mobile.

Use a corridor or a classroom space to display works on the wall. Consider the height, distance between each work and the design when hanging the works.