

Exploring the world of

DYING ART FORMS

Oceania



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Research Scope



Identification of global art forms that are considered dying or near extinction



Historical origins and cultural significance of these dying art forms



Evolution of the dying art forms



Factors that contribute to the decline of these art forms

Focus Geography

Oceania

ART FORM Bark Paintings

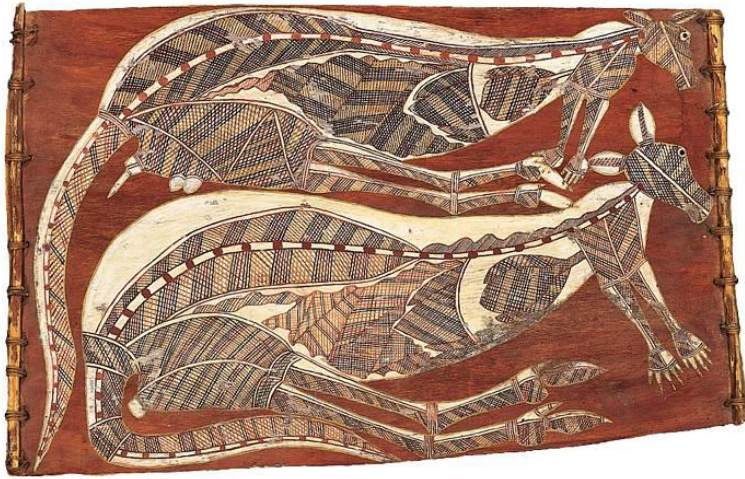


Image Source: <https://www.ayersrockresort.com.au/stories/experience-indigenous-culture-in-uluru>



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Image Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/A-bark-painting-by-Yolngu-artist-Dhuwarriny-Yunupingu-All-elements-of-it-refer-to_fig1_305119337



Image Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/A-Yolngu-view-of-the-Milky-Way-a-traditional-bark-painting-by-Yarawu-The-crocodile_fig9_305119337

ART FORM

Bark Paintings

Bark painting is a traditional Aboriginal art form practiced primarily in Arnhem Land in Northern Australia. It involves painting on the interior bark of eucalyptus trees, typically using natural ochres (earth pigments) in a palette of red, yellow, black, and white.

These paintings are deeply spiritual, depicting totems, animals, ancestral spirits, and often Dreamtime stories, which explain the origins and beliefs of the Aboriginal people. The art form has been passed down through generations, serving both as a medium for storytelling and as a way to connect with the land and the spiritual world.

The production process starts with harvesting a section of bark from a eucalyptus tree, and flattening and drying it over a fire to make it pliable for painting. The artist then applies natural pigments made from ground ochre, charcoal, and clay mixed with water or plant resins, and meticulously paints traditional Aboriginal designs using human hair or plant fibers on the bark.

How has this art form evolved over time?

Bark painting has evolved from being a purely ceremonial and cultural practice to gaining recognition in the wider art world. Traditionally, these paintings were created for specific rituals and community events. However, since the mid-20th century, bark paintings have become highly sought-after in both national and international art markets, with galleries and museums showcasing the works of prominent Aboriginal artists, providing financial support to these communities, while leading to concerns about maintaining the cultural integrity of the art form. Contemporary Aboriginal artists have blended traditional techniques with modern themes, ensuring that the art form remains relevant and vibrant.

Image Source: <https://www.ayersrockresort.com.au/stories/experience-indigenous-culture-in-ulu>

ART FORM

Bark Paintings



What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- The loss of elder artists, who are the primary custodians of traditional knowledge, has led to a reduction in the number of skilled artisans.
- The labor-intensive nature of bark painting, combined with the limited financial return for most artists, makes it difficult to sustain the artform as a livelihood.
- Environmental changes and deforestation have made it harder to source high-quality bark for painting.
- The influx of commercialized and imitative Aboriginal art, sometimes produced by non-Indigenous people, has diluted the market for authentic bark paintings, reducing demand for traditional works.

Image Source: <https://www.aboriginal-bark-paintings.com/yirrkala/>

ART FORM

Boomerang Making



Image Source:
<https://www.kissthekangaroo.com.au/Traditional-animal-design-returning-boomerang>



Image Source: <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/earliest-evidence-of-the-boomerang-in-australia>

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ART FORM

Boomerang Making

Making of Boomerangs is one of the oldest Aboriginal art forms. Aboriginal Australians have used boomerangs for hunting, warfare, and various cultural ceremonies for over 10,000 years.

The curved design of the boomerang allowed it to return to the thrower, making it an ingenious hunting tool. Traditional boomerangs are handcrafted from specific hardwoods, and the designs often feature intricate carvings or paintings that reflect the beliefs, stories, and landscapes of Aboriginal communities.

The traditional process of making a boomerang begins with selecting a piece of hardwood, such as *mulga* or *gidgee*. The wood is carefully cut and shaped, following the natural curve of the tree's branch or root to enhance the aerodynamic properties of the boomerang. The surface is then smoothed and sometimes adorned with carvings or paintings, incorporating traditional symbols and motifs, making each boomerang unique.

Some boomerangs are designed specifically for ceremonial use and are decorated with intricate patterns that hold cultural and spiritual significance.

How has this art form evolved over time?

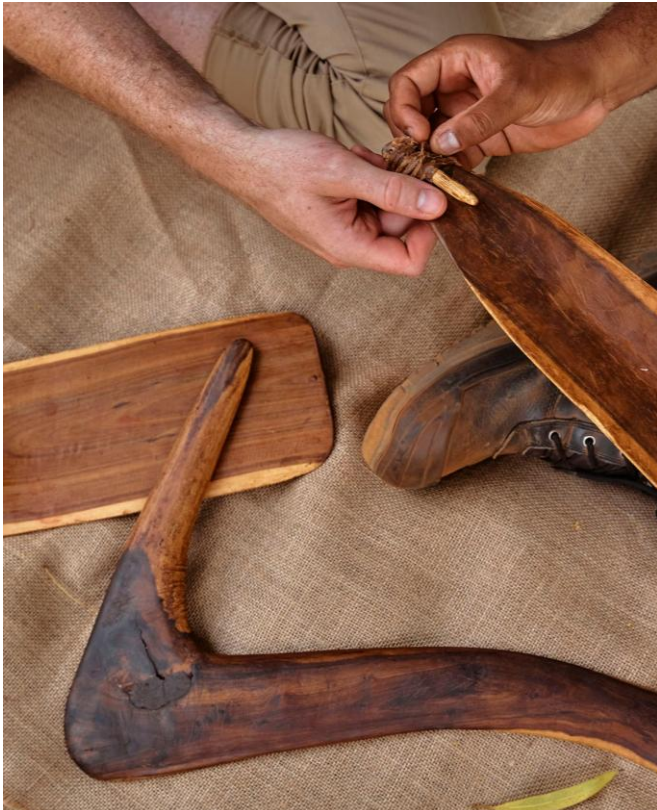
Boomerangs have evolved from being a functional tool to a significant cultural and artistic expression. While primarily used for hunting, today, boomerangs are mainly created as cultural artifacts or artistic items for sale to tourists and collectors.

Contemporary Aboriginal artists have embraced new materials and tools to craft boomerangs, although many still adhere to traditional techniques and designs. While the rise of mass-produced, decorative boomerangs has impacted the market for authentic, handmade pieces, the continued demand for culturally significant and artistically intricate boomerangs still allows some Aboriginal artisans to maintain the tradition, adapting the craft for modern audiences while preserving its historical and cultural roots.

Image Source: <https://www.makeheritagefun.com/aboriginal-boomerang-craft-perfect-example-art-craft/>

ART FORM

Boomerang Making



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What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- Tourism has led to the commercialization of boomerangs as trip souvenirs, causing an oversaturation of low-quality, mass-produced boomerangs. This has reduced the perceived value of authentic, handcrafted pieces, since the higher price of authentic items compared to mass-produced boomerangs discourages potential buyers.
- The rise of mass-produced boomerangs made from synthetic materials, which are cheaper and faster to produce, has reduced demand for handcrafted wooden boomerangs.
- The shift in hunting practices and the reduced need for boomerangs in daily life have led to fewer Aboriginal communities passing down boomerang-making skills to younger generations.
- It has become difficult to source high-quality raw materials since deforestation and environmental changes have affected the availability of hardwood trees traditionally used for boomerang making.

Image Source: <https://www.ayersrockresort.com.au/stories/experience-indigenous-culture-in-ulumu>

ART FORM

Mulga Carvings



Image Source: <https://www.antiquesreporter.com.au/>



Image Source: <https://www.carters.com.au/index.cfm/index/2124-mulga-wood/>



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ART FORM

Mulga Carvings

Mulga wood carving is a traditional Aboriginal craft practiced in central Australia. Mulga trees, which are native to the arid regions of Australia, provide a dense and durable wood that has been used for centuries to carve ceremonial objects, weapons, and totems.

Aboriginal carvers often use Mulga wood to create sculptures that depict animals, spirits, and other significant figures from their Dreamtime stories. This art form is deeply tied to Aboriginal cultural practices and is used as a medium to pass down stories and knowledge from one generation to the next.

Mulga wood is carved and shaped using hand tools and knives incorporating traditional designs of cultural significance. Once carved, it is polished with natural materials and might be adorned with ochre or other natural pigments.

The process requires physical strength and artistic skill, as Mulga wood is extremely hard and can be difficult to work with. The carvings are often used in cultural ceremonies or sold as artworks that showcase Aboriginal heritage.

How has this art form evolved over time?

Mulga carvings have evolved from being purely functional objects used in Aboriginal ceremonies to being appreciated as collectible artworks. While traditionally used for weapons and ceremonial tools, these carvings are now often created for sale to tourists and collectors, helping in preservation of the craft.

In recent decades, artists have begun experimenting with new forms and designs, while still maintaining the traditional techniques and cultural significance of the craft. The commercialization of Mulga carvings has provided Aboriginal communities with economic opportunities, though there is concern about maintaining the authenticity of the craft in the face of mass-produced imitations.

Image Source: <https://www.carters.com.au/index.cfm/index/2124-mulga-wood/>

ART FORM

Mulga Carvings

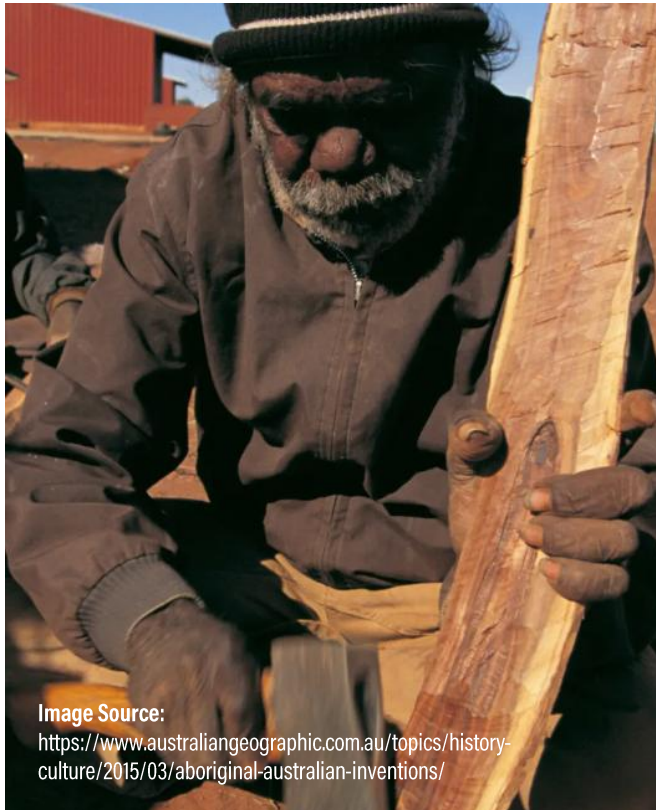


Image Source:

<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2015/03/aboriginal-australian-inventions/>

What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- Scarcity of Mulga trees due to environmental changes and deforestation has made it difficult for carvers to find suitable wood. This is one of the biggest factors for decline in the artform.
- The rise of mass-produced souvenirs in parallel, mimicking Aboriginal designs has hurt the market for authentic, handmade Mulga carvings.
- The labor-intensive nature of the craft, combined with the relatively low prices that many artisans receive for their work, has led to a decline in the number of people practicing the craft.
- The loss of traditional knowledge with the passing of old generation carvers, due to reduction in skill succession, has also contributed to the decline.

ART FORM

Pandanus Basketry



Image Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Nineteenth-century-CHamoru-basket-plaited-with-pandanus-leaves-diagonal-pattern-and_fig4_354192873

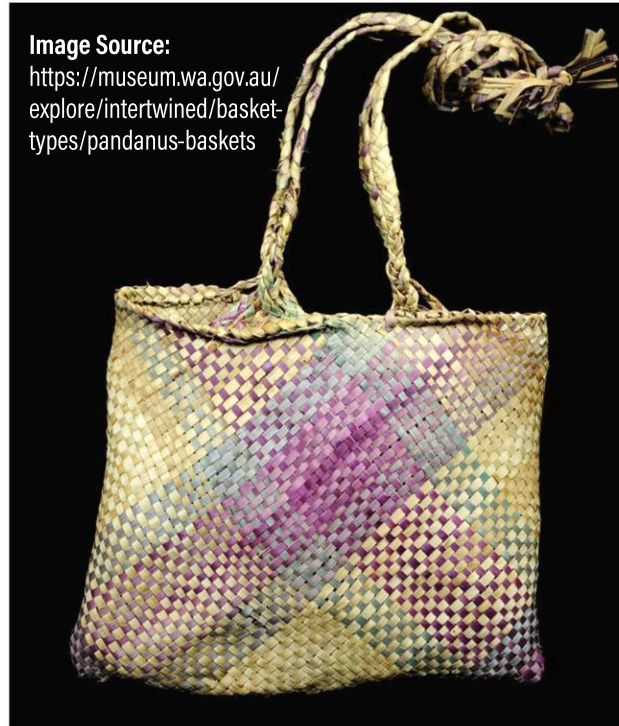


Image Source:
<https://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/intertwined/basket-types/pandanus-baskets>



Image Source:
<https://marrawuddi.com.au/product/405-24-pandanus-basket/>

ART FORM

Pandanus Basketry

Pandanus basketry is a traditional Aboriginal craft that involves weaving baskets from the leaves of the pandanus tree. This craft is particularly prevalent in northern Australia, where the pandanus tree is abundant.

The baskets were originally used for a variety of purposes, including carrying food, storing items, and in some cases, as ceremonial objects. The weaving techniques used in pandanus basketry have been passed down through generations and are deeply connected to the cultural practices of Aboriginal communities.

The pandanus leaves are boiled, dried, and stripped into thin fibers which are then dyed using natural plant-based pigments and woven using traditional techniques.

These intricately patterned and designed baskets, often featuring geometric patterns, require high precision and patience during the weaving process.

How has this art form evolved over time?

Pandanus basketry has evolved from a purely utilitarian craft to an art form that is highly valued for its cultural significance and craftsmanship. While traditionally used for practical purposes such as food gathering and storage, pandanus baskets are now often created for sale to tourists and collectors.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in traditional Aboriginal crafts, including pandanus basketry, as part of a broader movement to preserve and promote indigenous culture. Contemporary weavers have begun incorporating new designs and techniques into their work, while still maintaining the traditional methods and cultural significance of the craft.

Image Source:
<https://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/intertwined/basket-types/pandanus-baskets>

ART FORM

Pandanus Basketry



What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- The time-consuming nature of the weaving process, combined with the relatively low prices that many artisans receive for their work, has made it difficult for weavers to sustain their craft.
- Environmental changes, including the depletion of pandanus trees in some areas, have made it harder for artisans to source the raw materials they need.
- The loss of traditional knowledge with the passing of old generation weavers, due to reduction in skill succession, has also contributed to the decline.
- The rise of mass-produced, synthetic baskets has further reduced the demand for handmade pandanus baskets, making it harder for artisans to compete in the market.

Image Source: Pinterest

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ART FORM

Kete Basketry



Image Source:
<https://felt.co.nz/listing/339696/market-kete>



Image Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Kete-basket-woven-from-harakeke-flax-On-display-in-Te-Puia-Maori-Arts-Crafts_fig1_380057692

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Image Source:
<https://collection.pukeariki.com/objects/107028/kete-basket>

ART FORM

Kete Basketry

Kete basketry, a traditional craft practiced by the Māori people of New Zealand, involve producing baskets woven from *harakeke* (New Zealand flax), a plant that holds cultural and practical significance for the Māori.

Kete basketry is deeply rooted in Māori traditions, and each basket is often imbued with symbolic meaning, reflecting the weaver's skill, identity, and connection to their ancestors.

Kete basketry begins with harvesting the *harakeke*, which is carefully cut, stripped, and prepared for weaving by softening them through a process called *muka* extraction, which involves scraping away the outer green layer to expose the inner fibers.

Once prepared, the fibers are woven using traditional Māori techniques, such as plaiting and looping, to create baskets of varying sizes and shapes. The weaving process is highly intricate, requiring precision and skill to create the tight, durable weave that is characteristic of kete baskets, and the art form has been passed down through generations. The baskets are often decorated with geometric patterns, and natural dyes may be used to color the fibers.

How has this art form evolved over time?

Kete basketry has evolved from a purely functional craft into an important symbol of Māori cultural identity. While traditionally used for practical purposes, such as gathering food and storing personal items, and as gifts during important cultural ceremonies, kete are now valued as works of art. The craft has experienced a resurgence in recent years, with Māori artists and weavers revitalizing traditional techniques and incorporating contemporary designs. Kete baskets are now often displayed in art galleries and sold as cultural artifacts. The weaving of kete is also seen as a way to reconnect with Māori heritage and pass on cultural knowledge to future generations.

Image Source: <https://www.allflax.nz/contemporary-flax-weaving/mini-kete>

ART FORM

Kete Basketry



What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- The introduction of synthetic materials and mass-produced baskets has reduced the demand for handmade kete, making it harder for artisans to sustain their craft. The cheap commodification of Māori crafts for cultural tourism has led to the production of cheap items of lower-quality that undermine the value of authentic, handmade kete which represent Maori communities.
- Environmental changes and the overharvesting of harakeke have made it more difficult to source the raw materials needed for kete weaving.
- The loss of traditional knowledge and skills, particularly as fewer young people learn the art of harakeke preparation and weaving, has contributed to the decline.
- The labor-intensive nature of weaving, combined with the limited financial return for artisans, has made it challenging to sustain the craft on a large scale.

Image Source: Wikipedia



Thank You

www.savedyingarts.com