

**Edward P. Taylor Research Library – Pathfinders for Collections Research  
Aboriginal Australian Art Resource Guide**

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# Edward P. Taylor Research Library

## Aboriginal Australian Art Resource Guide

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### Introduction

This is a guide to the Edward P. Taylor Reference Library's resources in Aboriginal Australian art. The library has an extensive collection of books related to Aboriginal Australian art, culture, religion, mythology and archaeology. Resources pertinent to works in the A.G.O.'s collection have been given preference here; for that reason, this is by no means an exhaustive list of all of the library's resources relating to the field. Many additional resources can be found by searching the library's online catalogue, using the 'Subject Headings' section below as your guide.

Most of the pieces in the Aboriginal Australian collection defy classification in traditional art historical terms. The collection includes boomerangs, spear throwers, and other ceremonial and utilitarian objects. For this reason, books which address contextual topics, such as culture and sociology, have been included here. It should also be noted that an effort has been made in this resource guide to highlight basic texts in related fields (such as archaeology and prehistory), which are in the library's collection.

If you are just beginning your research in Aboriginal Australian art, start with some of the 'General books' (especially Caruana 2003, and Morphy 1998), as well as the Grove Dictionary of Art's entry, s.v. 'Aboriginal Australia'.

## Subject Headings

As few Aboriginal Australian works in the A.G.O.'s collection are catalogued by artist name, the best way to search for information the library's online catalogue is by subject heading. Examples of various types of Aboriginal Australian Art subject headings are listed below:

### General subject headings

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Art, Aboriginal Australian

Art, Oceania

Art, Australian

Art, Maori

Art – Australia – Torres Strait Islands

Art, Colonial

Art, Australian – Bibliography

*For art from a specific century, search in the following format:*

Art, Aboriginal Australian – 20<sup>th</sup> century

*For exhibitions from a specific century, search in the following format:*

Art, Aboriginal Australian – 20<sup>th</sup> century – Exhibitions

*And for a specific decade in that century:*

Art, Aboriginal Australian – 20<sup>th</sup> century (1990s) – Exhibitions

### Regions

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*Many of the subject headings can be made more specific by adding a geographical area as a qualifier. For example:*

Art, Aboriginal Australian – Australia – Arnhem Land (N.T.)

Art, Aboriginal Australian – Australia – Oenepelli (N.T.)

Art, Aboriginal Australian – Australia – Western Desert (W.A.)

*Etc.*

*Or for more general information regarding peoples from a specific region:*

Aboriginal Australians – Australia – Adelaide Region

Aboriginal Australians – Australia – Queensland

Aboriginal Australians – Australia – Western Australia

*Etc.*

### Peoples

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*Search for resources related to a specific Aboriginal Australian people using subject headings such as:*

Kurnai (Australian people)

Tiwi (Australian people)

Warrlpiri (Australian people)

Worora (Australian people)

Torres Strait Islanders

*Etc.*

*Media/type*

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To search by specific media look under subject headings such as:

Rock paintings – Australia  
 Petroglyphs – Australia  
 Painting, Aboriginal Australian  
 Picture writing – Australia  
 Prints, Aboriginal Australian

Boomerangs  
 Shields – Australia  
 Masks – Australia

Dissident Art – Australia  
 Mounds – Australia

*For works in a specific media, from a specific region, search in the following format:*

Rock Paintings – Australia – New South Wales

*Contextual topics*

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Art, Aboriginal Australian – Foreign influences  
 Art, Aboriginal Australian – Moral and ethical aspects  
 Art, Aboriginal Australian – Social aspects  
 Art, Aboriginal Australian – Symbolic aspects  
 Art, Aboriginal Australian – Western influences

Aboriginal Australians – Ethnic Identity  
 Aboriginal Australians – Costume and adornment  
 Aboriginal Australians – First contact with Europeans  
 Aboriginal Australians – Government policy  
 Aboriginal Australians – Government relations  
 Aboriginal Australians – History  
 Aboriginal Australians – Rites and ceremonies  
 Aboriginal Australians – Social life and customs  
 Aboriginal Australians – Weapons

Australia – Colonization  
 Australia – Discovery and exploration  
 Australia – Historical geography  
 Australia – History – 1788-1851  
 Australia – Race relations

Mythology, Aboriginal Australian  
 Mythology, Aboriginal Australian, in art

Maori (New Zealand people) – Ethnic identity

Women, Aboriginal Australian  
 Women artisans – Australia

*If you would like to see a more exhaustive list of Aboriginal Australian subject headings search 'Art, Aboriginal Australian' or 'Aboriginal Australians' in the 'Subject Headings Alphabetical' field of the library's online catalogue.*

Items in the Library's Collection

(Listed by relevance)

*General books*

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**Morphy, Howard, *Aboriginal Art* (London: Phaidon, 1998)**

709.94 M82 MAIN

An excellent concise introduction to Aboriginal Australian art. Examines the colonial 'discovery' of Aboriginal art, rock art, art and religion, ritual and aesthetics, as well as contemporary practice. Includes brief artist biographies, glossary, key dates, maps, an extensive and current annotated bibliography, and index.

**Caruana, Wally, *Aboriginal Art* (New York, N.Y.: Thames & Hudson, 2003)**

709.940904 C25 MAIN

A selective, and very current, survey of Aboriginal Australian art. Organised geographically, it contains discussions of regions such as Arnhem Land, the desert, the Kimberley, North Queensland and the Torres Strait islands, as well as contemporary Aboriginal art. Includes a map, select bibliography, glossary and index.

**Kleinert, Sylvia, ed., et al., *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* (Melbourne: O.U.P., 2000)**

709.94 Ox2 RS

A thorough introduction to Aboriginal Australian art. Part one contains chapters organized geographically and sub-divided into topics such as 'Gender, Aesthetics, Performance' and 'From Conquest to Resistance'. Part two is organized as an encyclopedia, with biographical entries on individuals and groups of artists, as well as subject entries on central Aboriginal Australian social and cultural issues and modes of artistic production. Includes bibliographic references and maps throughout.

**Berndt, Ronald M., *Aboriginal Australian Art: A Visual Perspective* (Sydney: Methuen Australia, 1989)**

709.011 B45 MAIN

A survey of Aboriginal Australian art in various media (including rock art, painting, drawing, sculpture, sacred figures, and domestic art), which attempts to place these works within their ritual, social, and cultural contexts. Includes a preliminary discussion of ritual and mythology. Contains a bibliography of mostly pre-1970s works, and index.

**Sutton, Peter, ed., *Dreamings: the Art of Aboriginal Australia* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books Australia, 1988)**

709.94 Ad3 1988 MAIN

A collection of essays which address various issues in Aboriginal art, most notably 'dreaming' – the 'foundation of traditional aboriginal thought'. As a result, the book provides an account of Aboriginal religious beliefs, as well as a more general discussion of style, Aboriginal aesthetics, and colonialism. Includes a catalogue of works from the South Australian Museum, maps, biographies of artists, an extensive bibliography, and index.

**Sayers, Andrew, *Australian Art* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2001)**

709.94 Sa9 MAIN

A basic introduction to Australian art as a whole (with Aboriginal art consisting of roughly half). Concerned mostly with twentieth-century traditions in art. Includes a timeline, guide to further reading, websites, and index.

**Berndt, Ronald M., ed., *Aboriginal Art* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964)**

709.94 B45 1964 RB

An important early work on Aboriginal Australian art. A good example of the methodology of early Aboriginal Australian art history.

**Germaine, Max, *Artists and Galleries of Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: Landsdowne Editions, 1979)**

709.9 G31 RS

A biographical dictionary of living artists, as well as a list of galleries and other art-related information.

**Choate, Ray, *A Guide to Sources of Information on the Arts in Australia* (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1983)**

709.94016 C45 RS

See Chapter 5, 'Aboriginal Art', for a brief annotated bibliography. Most useful as a guide for non-Aboriginal Australian sources. For a more current (and extensive) bibliography see Caruana 2003.

*Collection/exhibition catalogues***Cooper, Carol, ed., *Aboriginal Australia* (Sydney: Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1981)**

709.011 Au7 1981 MAIN

Three introductory essays preface the exhibition catalogue: Art of Temperate Southeast Australia, Art of the Desert, and Art of Northern Australia. Providing basic introductions to each geographical region. The exhibition catalogue presents exemplary works in a variety of media from a number of peoples and regions. Includes a brief bibliography.

**Hayward Gallery, *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians* (London: South Bank Centre, 1993)**

759.994 D86.6

Exhibition catalogue featuring contemporary and traditional Aboriginal Australian art; mainly twentieth-century. Contains a series of prefatory essays on topics as diverse as racism and conflict, encounters with aesthetic products of other cultures, and the status of women. Also contains a series of essays on specific regions. Includes an extensive bibliography, and glossary.

**Caruana, Wally and N. Lendon, eds., *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story 1937-1997* (Canberra, ACT: The National Gallery of Australia, 1997)**

759.994 C16 1997 MAIN

Exhibition catalogue of the 'Wagilag Sisters Story', cataloguing works done by various artists between 1937 and 1997 in Central and Eastern Arnhem Land depicting the creation myth of the same name.

*Media*

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**Taylor, Luke, *Seeing the Inside: Bark Paintings in Western Arnhem Land* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: O.U.P., 1996)**  
759.994 T21 MAIN

A detailed and extensive study of bark painting in Western Arnhem Land. Mostly examines contemporary practice, however there is a great deal of information on themes in painting and ceremonial use, metaphors employed, formal components, iconic representation, and an examination of x-ray paintings among much else. Contains a bibliography and index.

**Caruana, Wally, ed., *Windows on the Dreaming: Aboriginal Paintings in the Australian National Gallery* (Chippendale, Australia: Ellsyd Press, 1989)**  
708.994 C16 1989 MAIN

Catalogue of selected painted works from the Australian National Gallery in Canberra. Mostly from the latter-half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Contains suggestions for further reading.

**Godden, Elaine, and J. Malnic, *Rock Paintings of Aboriginal Australia* (Sydney: Reed, 1997)**  
759.994 G54 MAIN

Straightforward introduction to Aboriginal Australian rock paintings. Includes a catalogue of works, as well as essays on prehistory, 'dreaming', technique, peoples, and case studies. Includes bibliography.

**Sayers, Andrew, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century* (Melbourne: O.U.P. in association with National Gallery of Australia, 1994)**  
741.0899915 Sa9 MAIN

Examines the work of nineteenth-century Aboriginal Australian artists, mostly working in pencil and ink on paper. Discusses how Aboriginal drawings on paper serve as documents of colonial contact. Concentrates on Barak, Tommy McRae, and Mickey of Ulladulla. Contains a catalogue of drawings from various collections, bibliography and index.

For drawings of Aboriginal Australians by European colonizers, see Chapter 1 of:

**Smtih, Bernard, and A. Wheeler, eds., *The Art of the First Fleet and Other Early Australian Drawings* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1988)**  
994 Sm5 1988 MAIN

*Art by region/peoples*

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**Elkin, A.P., *Art in Arnhem Land* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1950)**  
709.94 EL5 Rare Book

A early survey of art in Arnhem Land. Contains a detailed map (ca. 1950) of the 'Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve and Vicinity', and various indices.

**Jones, Philip and P. Sutton, *Art and Land: Aboriginal Sculptures of the Lake Eyre Region* (Adelaide: South Australian Museum in association with Wakefield Press, 1986)**  
730.994239 Ad3 MAIN

A detailed study of the iconography of 'toas' (small, generally wooden, sculptures) of the Lake Eyre region.



**D., Walbiri Iconography: Graphic Representation and Cultural Symbolism in a Central Australian Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986)**  
994.0049915 N92 MAIN

An insightful study of Walbiri iconography. It provides an in-depth study of symbols within a particular Aboriginal semiotic system, and explains the potential for these individual symbols to be combined to create totemic designs.

*Aboriginal societies*

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**Berndt, Ronald M., *The World of the First Australians* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1977)**  
305.89915 B45 MAIN

An extensive study of traditional Aboriginal Australian life, including discussions of social organization and structure, economics, life cycles, religious belief and practice, magic and sorcery, law and politics, art and aesthetic expression, death and the afterlife, and contemporary society. Extensive bibliography.

The following are among the earliest studies of Aboriginal Australian peoples:

**Spencer, Baldwin, Sir, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1914)**  
305.89915 Sp3 1914 RB

**Spencer, Baldwin, Sir, *Wanderings in Wild Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1928)**  
919.18 Sp3 RB

**Howitt, A.W., *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1904)**  
305.89915 H84 RB

**Spencer, Baldwin, Sir, *The Arunta: a Study of a Stone Age People* (London: Macmillan, 1927)**  
994.0019915 Sp3 RB

**Spencer, Baldwin, Sir, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1904)**  
305.89915 Sp3 RB

*Aboriginal mythology*

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**Isaacs, Jennifer, ed., *Australian Dreaming: 40,000 years of Aboriginal History*,**  
398.20994 Au7 MAIN

An extensive selection of Aboriginal Australian myths (many with related illustrations). Includes bibliography and index.

**Mountford, Charles P., *Legends of the dreamtime: Australian myths in paintings by Ainslie Roberts* (Adelaide: International Limited Editions, 1975)**  
398.20994/M86 MAIN

Aboriginal myths as 're-told' by a non-Aboriginal anthropologist, and accompanied by paintings by a non-Aboriginal Australian artist.

**Bozic, Sreten, *Aboriginal Myths* (Melbourne: Gold Star Publications, 1972)**

398.20994/B71 MAIN

A compilation of selected Aboriginal Australian myths; some illustrations.

*Aboriginal prehistory/archaeology*

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**Flood, Josephine, *Archaeology of the Dreamtime* (Sydney: Collins, 1983)**

994.01 F65 MAIN

An extensive and foundational survey of the archaeology of prehistoric Australia. Contains discussions of trade, religion, and art, as well as chapters on the examination of material evidence, migration patterns, case studies, art and technology, and the development of agriculture. Includes an extensive bibliography, glossary, and index.

**Flood, Josephine, *The Riches of Ancient Australia: A Journal into Prehistory* (St. Lucia, Queensland, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1990)**

919.4 F65 MAIN

Organised geographically, this guide to prehistoric Australian sites throughout the continent provides a general introduction to the prehistory of each region, as well as more detailed case studies of specific sites. Includes a list of contacts, glossary, guide to further reading, and notes.

**Mulvaney, D.J., *The Prehistory of Australia* (New York: Praeger, 1969)**

919.4031 M91 MAIN

A highly-specialised survey of the Australian prehistory. Includes illustrations and an extensive bibliography.

Online Resources

There are a few good online resources related to Oceanic and Aboriginal Australian Art.

## Website

<b>Art History Resources on the Web – Oceanic Art</b>	<a href="http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTAmericasoceania.html#oceania">http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTAmericasoceania.html#oceania</a>
<b>National Gallery of Australia</b>	<a href="http://www.nga.gov.au/">http://www.nga.gov.au/</a>
<b>Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney</b>	<a href="http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/">http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/</a>
<b>Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane</b>	<a href="http://www.qag.qld.gov.au/">http://www.qag.qld.gov.au/</a>
<b>State Library of Tasmania, Image Database</b>	<a href="http://images.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/">http://images.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/</a>
<b>National Library of Australia</b>	<a href="http://www.nla.gov.au/">http://www.nla.gov.au/</a>
<b>Berndt Museum of Anthropology</b>	<a href="http://www.berndt.uwa.edu.au">http://www.berndt.uwa.edu.au</a>

Appendices

*Appendix A – Excerpts from ‘Note on Aboriginal Names’ from Caruana 2003, op. cit., 228.*

“The recording and writing of Aboriginal languages has only occurred since European colonization and there is no standardized orthography in use throughout Australia. Orthographies have changed over time, and vary not only from region to region, but often within a region and even within one language. [...]

In addition, as it is customary not to utter the names of the recently deceased, a number of artists have been recorded by researchers with mourning names that differ from their usual working names. [...]

Aboriginal languages contain many synonyms, including those of the names of creator ancestors, supernatural beings, cosmological phenomena, natural species and material objects. The use of many names is restricted to specific contextual situations, or to those people of relevant status.”