

Art as advocacy—  
sustainability and  
the arts activity

Learn

resource

Foundation to Level 4





# Art as advocacy— sustainability and the arts activity

This activity encourages students in Foundation to Level 4 to explore different forms of artmaking and to consider more sustainable artmaking practices. The learning activity also provides further opportunities to embed the cross-curriculum priority of Sustainability into learning.



John Davis  
*Koan 64* 1994  
twigs, calico, bituminous  
paint and cotton thread  
Geelong Gallery  
Gift of anonymous donors  
through the Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program, 2018  
© Courtesy of the Estate of John Davis  
and ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne

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## Curriculum links

Victorian Curriculum Foundation to Level 4—  
The Arts (Visual arts) cross-curriculum priority  
of sustainability.

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## Explore and Express Ideas:

Students explore ideas in John Davis' artwork as  
inspiration to create their own visual artwork.

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## Visual Arts Practices

Students explore and experiment with different  
sustainable materials and processes to create  
their own artwork.

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## Present and Perform

Students present their final artworks to their peers  
and consider different ways they could display  
their artwork.

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## Respond and Interpret

Students respond to John Davis' artwork and  
consider different ideas and themes represented  
in the work and explore how the artist has  
explored issues concerning the environment  
and sustainability.



### Discuss:

What is a sustainable art practice?

What artmaking materials do you use to create art?  
Are they sustainable?

How do you clean up after using these products and dispose your waste? Are the materials you are using biodegradable, for example paints, pencils, spray cans, solvents or resins?

Write a list of the different recycled materials or natural materials you could use in your art instead?

As a class, access the internet and research the term *Upcycle*.



### Explore:

Let's take a closer look at the Australian artist John Davis' artwork *Koan 64* in Geelong Gallery's permanent collection. John Davis (1936–1999) took inspiration from the Australian landscape and was concerned with the devastating impact that non-indigenous people were having on the environment. Davis would often go out into the landscape and create ephemeral artworks (lasting for only a short time) in situ (in the original place) using different found and organic materials in his practice.

Why do you believe the artist worked this way?

Why do you believe the artist would use organic materials in his practice?

What materials has the artist used to create his artwork *Koan 64*?

Does this artwork remind you of anything familiar?

### Art making activity— nature weaving

Create your own nature weaving using sustainable materials.

Materials required: yarn, scissors, recycled piece of cardboard, natural resources (leaves, twigs, flowers etc)

1. Firstly, you will need to gather your natural materials. For example, leaves, flowers, twigs, grass and feathers. You might find these in your garden, or while taking a walk-through nature. Remember to only take what you need and limit the impact you have on the environment.
2. To make your weaving loom you can use a piece of recycled cardboard cut into a rectangle. We use the cardboard of a cereal box in our video.
3. Use scissors and cut small slits in even intervals at each end of the board.
4. Use some yarn, and thread it around the board, passing through each slit.  
  
\* Choose a natural, biodegradable, and non-toxic yarn—wool, upcycled yarn or organic cotton are better options.
5. Tie each end of the yarn together at the back of the board.
6. Now you're ready to weave using your collection of natural resources! Carefully thread your pieces of nature under, over and through the string on the board.
7. And there you have it, a beautiful nature weaving using sustainably sourced and recycled materials. Think about how you could display your artwork in the classroom.

Share your work!

We invite you to share your creations with us online @GeelongGallery

This program is supported by the Department of Education and Training's Strategic Partnership Program

Above:  
Video still from  
Geelong Gallery activity  
Art as advocacy—  
Sustainability and the arts

Back Cover:  
John Davis  
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