

Basic Detail Report

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Title

Shellwork map of Australia

Date

c 2001

Primary Maker

Lola Ryan

Medium

Wood, pink fabric, black corduroy, shells, glitter, paint

Dimensions

Overall: 315 x 360 mm, 84 g

Name

Sculpture

History

Shellwork - the art of creating 3-dimensional shell covered objects - was practiced by many Koori people of New South Wales from as early as the 1880s as a way of earning income by selling souvenirs. Lola Ryan's parents of La Perouse, Sydney, sold their shellwork at the Royal Easter Show and Sydney's markets in the 1920s. Lola first began creating her own shellwork in 1940 at the age of 15. Her mother taught her to make the shellwork shoes and boxes, and her father taught her to make the bridges, boats and kookaburras. She sold her pieces to tourists visiting Sydney, particularly along the southern beaches. In 2001 Lola collaborated with Sydney art collector Peter Fay to create five shell maps of early European imaginings of Australia inspired by maps discussed in 'The Mapping of Terra Australia' (1995) by Robert Clancy, and 'Australia in Old Maps 820-1770' (1995) by E B Whitehouse. The works were exhibited at the Gitte Weise Gallery in November 2001 along with a large collection of Lola's more traditional pieces such as Sydney Harbour Bridges, boomerangs and heart-shaped boxes.