

Immediate Release – Thursday 14 October 2021

HAMILTON GALLERY LOOKS TO BUILD PARTNERSHIP WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE



Denise Lovett, Hamilton Gallery's Aboriginal Digitisation Support Officer, with a Gunditjmara digging stick and coolamon.

Hamilton Gallery has embarked on a culturally significant collection project; auditing and digitising its Australian Aboriginal objects; the largest and oldest collection on Gunditjmara country.

The project has been led by Denise Lovett, a Gunditjmara woman with a strong background in Aboriginal heritage management and protection.

Ms Lovett has worked with the Hamilton Gallery team for the past three months as their Aboriginal Digitisation Support Officer to analyse almost 100 works within the gallery collection, with a specific focus on Gunditjmara objects.

The project involved digitising many hand-crafted instruments by Gunditjmara peoples onto collection management software, capturing images and details of each item, managing records and ensuring key information is captured in relation to their background and cultural significance.

The objects in the collection include such tools as boomerangs, shields and digging sticks, plus woven baskets. All have been carved from wood, including redgum and blackwood, some coloured with red ochre, and many have intricate details.

Denise said it was a privilege to work with the largest, oldest collection of Aboriginal crafted objects on Gunditjmarra country.

“There’s a small collection at the Dunkeld Museum, the Glenelg Shire Council office in Casterton, and other small collections in Warrnambool and Portland, but to have a collection of Aboriginal objects of this size and age is quite rare,” said Denise.

“It’s been a wonderful opportunity as a Gunditjmarra woman to handle these objects, especially the Western District collection, which I found particularly interesting. Uncle Johnny Lovett, our local Gunditjmarra-Boandik Elder, mentored me through the project, and it’s also been great to have seen behind the scenes of the Gallery’s 60th Anniversary exhibition” said Ms Lovett.

Hamilton Gallery is the only gallery in Victoria to have had an identified officer as part of the state’s Regional Gallery Digitisation Project, and the process has laid strong foundations for future partnerships between the gallery and Gunditjmarra First Nations.

The Regional Gallery Digitisation Project was funded through the Victoria Government’s Working for Victoria initiative, born from the COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with Creative Victoria and AMaGA (Australian Museums and Galleries Association Victoria), regional galleries were able to benefit from human resources dedicated to digitising their assets, including the 9000+ collection at Hamilton Gallery.

Hamilton Gallery Artistic Director, Joshua White, said; “This is just the first step in developing a strong connection to the First Nations people of this region. Denise has been wonderful to work with and has not only taught our staff and myself about these objects, but about Gunditjmarra people and country.”

The gallery will also provide advice to Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation on the care and maintenance of the Aboriginal objects in the Keeping Place recently built at Lake Condah Mission.

For more information on Hamilton Gallery and the Regional Gallery Digitisation Project, contact Hamilton Gallery directly.

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IMAGE LIBRARY: Please [CLICK HERE](#) for captioned images.

ADDITIONAL QUOTE:

Joshua White, Hamilton Gallery Director:

“This project is crucial as a starting point. As stewards of the Hamilton Gallery collection, our team has a responsibility to work with the community to help us determine what is culturally appropriate in relation to these important objects.”



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