

Australia's Birds



In Miniature Marquetry

The Gek Contemporary

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Cover

The Apostles, Great Ocean Road.

Foreword

Four years ago, I bought a packet of wood veneer offcuts at a dollhouse fair in Arnhem, not really knowing then what they would be used for. Well, now I do – miniature marquetry pictures. The Arnhem purchase has been supplemented with a collection of dyed veneers allowing much more flexibility in the images you can create. But what to make with them? Well, applique patterns in wood and copies of photographs using the double-bevel technique was the answer.

This exhibition was inspired by one of Gek's books, 'Australian Patchwork' by Margaret Rolfe. Add to this some photographs taken on our visits down under to add a little background context and, bingo, the show was born.



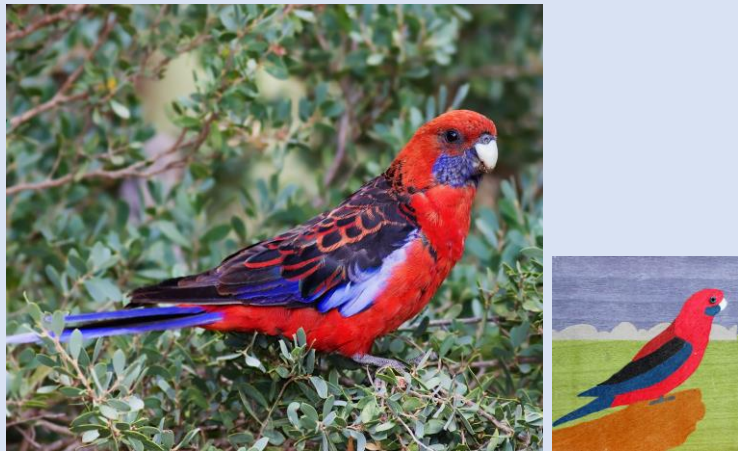
Black Swan

It is possible that these birds could become well-established in the UK as they did when they were introduced to New Zealand. The birds are more aggressive than the mute swans towards other birds and face little predation and so quickly began to do well in the antipodes.

Superb Fairywren

This fairy-wren can be found across south-east Australia and enjoys a shrubby understorey where they move about in small groups. New research has revealed that male fairy-wrens sing to their eggs and their chicks come out recognising their parent's unique song.





Crimson Rosella

Crimson rosella do not talk like African grey parrots or macaws, but they can mimic whistles and songs. Outside the breeding season, they gather in pairs or small groups chattering in loud noises. The largest group gathering of young birds can be up to 20 individuals.

Eastern Rosella

These rosellas made their way to New Zealand around 1910 when a small shipment had been refused entry by the customs department. However, they were subsequently released off Otago Head from the ship that brought them, as she returned to Sydney.





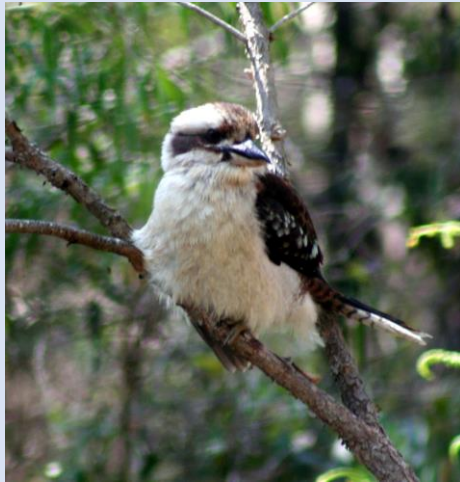
Emu

Even though flightless, the emu still has wings. The emu uses them to cool themselves down. They stretch them out and allow air to move around the body. They also use them when they're running at top speed to steer themselves in the right direction.

Galah

The name Galah means "fool" or "clown" in the Australian Yuwaalaray language. In English slang it means "loud mouthed Idiot". On the contrary, they are extremely intelligent and are fond of humans. They can readily learn to say many words and do complicated tricks with training.





Kookaburra

If you've ever watched a movie with a jungle scene, you are probably familiar with the distinct sound that many people believe is a monkey. But if you are from Australia, you certainly know this cackle. It is not a monkey at all but a Kookaburra, used as a stock sound effect, particularly in old films.

Pelican

The Pelican uses its beak like a landing net or dipper to catch fish. It just opens its mouth a little bit and floods the pouch with water. It then opens the beak again to let the water flow out. The delicious fish stay in the pouch and can then be swallowed.





Sulphur Crested Cockatoo

A cockatoo in Australia reportedly reached 120 years in age, making it the oldest bird of all time. This cockatoo was called Cocky Bennet and had lost all his feathers by the time he passed away.

Cooktown Orchid

A native of Queensland's northern tropical region and named after Cooktown there, it grows on trees and on well-watered rocks on the Cape York Peninsular. The flowers became the states floral emblem in 1959 during its centenary celebrations.





Kangaroo Paw

An emblem of Western Australia, it is incorporated into its Coat of Arms with the aim of raising interest in the States wildflowers. Honeyeaters or wattlebirds are often seen clinging precariously to the stem to get at the nectar.

Bacon and Egg Pea

So called because of the yellow and orange hue of the pea like flowers, it is also found in UK gardens as well as in the wild in coastal areas.





The Apostles

Until the 1960s the rock stacks went by the name the Sow and Piglets, the Sow being Mutton Bird Island and the Piglets the stacks dotted along the coast, including the Twelve Apostles.

Despite the name, there never were 12 rock stacks at today's viewing point, only 9 original rock formations. When they were renamed only 8 were standing. In July 2005, a 50-meter tall one collapsed, leaving only 7 today. But with constant battering by the waves from the Southern Ocean, more stacks will be formed as the coastline retreats.



Kata Tjuta

Meaning 'many heads', Kata Tjuta is 35 km west of Uluru and is sacred to the Aboriginal Anangu people, who have inhabited the area for more than 22,000 years. It forms an important focus of their spiritual life.

At one point in time it is thought the structure was all joined together - just like Uluru – that had been weathered and worn down over millions of years.



The Three Sisters

The Three Sisters play an important part in Aboriginal history and according to legend, were once beautiful sisters called Meehni, Wimlah and Gunnedoo. The sisters fell in love with three brothers from a neighbouring tribe, something that was forbidden under tribal law. To rebel, the brothers set out to capture the women and make them their brides.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thanks must go to Margaret Rolfe for her book, 'Australian Patchwork', from which I used the applique patterns to make the birds and flowers in wood veneer as opposed to fabrics. In fact, all I effectively did was to replace Margret's scissors with a fretsaw!

For the bird calls, thanks go to DiBirds.com which has an extensive library of recordings from all around the planet.

Then there is ever useful Google to find some interesting facts associated with each piece. The searches were interesting in their own right, things unknown uncovered.

And thanks to you too, for visiting the Gek Contemporary. Hope to see you again soon.