Celebrating Townsville

EDUCATION RESOURCE
ARTIST: ANNEKE SILVER
ARTWORK: The Contents of the Rainmakers Pouch

ABOUT THE ARTWORK
This mixed media work is one of a series of six the artist made that relate to her investigation of the seasons in the tropics. The artist was puzzled by people saying that there are no 'proper' seasons in North Queensland. She supposed it was because many early children’s books (often written and published in the United Kingdom and Europe) talk about seasons that are typical for north Western Europe and have no bearing on the seasonal flow in North Queensland. The artist concluded that the seasons in North Queensland were ‘proper’ but that they had no specific names and were therefore not recognised.

The artist observed that in North Queensland we have a wet season and a dry season. Each of those has a beginning, middle and an end. She then came up with a series of six distinct seasons, creating paintings that show what happens in nature during those months.

The series of paintings is called Seasons without Names. Each work in this series consists of a large panel and a smaller one; the larger panel is a watercolour landscape scene (typical for that time of year and her newly named season), while the smaller one functions as a comment panel using artefacts, and found items that characterise the quality of that time of year.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSS
What time of year do you think The Contents of the Rainmaker’s Pouch depicts?

What do you think of the title of the work means?

Do you know if indigenous people have names for the seasons in North Queensland?

What name would you give that time of year?

Anneke SILVER
b.1937 Holland

The Contents of the Rainmaker’s Pouch 1997

Mixed media and collage on paper,
96 x 169 cm

Purchased by the English Department in 1997 for the James Cook University Art Collection

Photograph: Michael Marzik
What months does this weather happen?

Why do you think people say our seasons are not 'proper'?

**Complete the table below.** What are the objects in the rainmaker's pouch in Silver's artwork? And what do they mean symbolically? What materials are the objects made of?

*Clue: The artist has given you some of the answers to get you started!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colour studies</td>
<td>Artist's own magic to find the right colours for the watercolor</td>
<td>Watercolor on paper, wrapped acid free tissue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Pan pipes</td>
<td>Pipes to play magic tunes on to make the rain come</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two shields</td>
<td>Something so magic that it had to be wrapped and only unpacked on very special occasions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Combs in ancient classical times often symbolized rain. The comb model is based on an ancient Greek comb</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>To symbolize new growth that will occur if the rain happens</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A snail</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>To symbolize raindrops</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ARTIST: ANNEKE SILVER
ARTWORK: The last of the good water

ARTIST STATEMENT
“The location of the waterhole depicted in the painting is in Bladensburg National Park near Winton. The official name is Skull Hole. This is because it is the site of a massacre of the Aboriginal people who lived there; skulls have been found at the bottom of the waterhole. I have camped near the waterhole and found it a very powerful site. While there I made sketches and took many photos of the area and have completed several paintings of it in the studio, largely from memory.

The title “The last of the good water” implies a number of meanings. It refers in one aspect to the fact that this waterhole has clean water, because the cattle can’t get to it. If they could, the edges would be trampled and the water turned into mud which eventually—during floods—will also wash into the sea and do damage there. In a deeper sense it refers to the destruction of not only the natural environment but the destruction and annihilation of Aboriginal culture and people. The last of the good water signifies the last of intact indigenous culture in that location, before it was annihilated”.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSS
From the artist statement explain how the title The last of the good water is symbolic of what has happened to Australian Aboriginal culture.

This painting fits into a grand landscape painting tradition reminiscent of works painted by early immigrant painters of the Australian landscape like Eugene von Guerard, Conrad Martens, John Glover and Louis Buvelot. Look online for these artists and then describe some of the differences between Anneke Silver’s painting and the works of these early immigrant painters.
Celebrating Townsville EDUCATION RESOURCE for secondary students

The aim of this resource is to offer insights into the works of art featured in the exhibition. It is intended as a starting point for generating ideas, for encouraging student research, and as a basis for discussion during exhibition visits. The resource provides background information on the development of particular works, and offers focus questions and suggested activities. It can be used in a variety of ways, both for student groups, and for individual study and research.

Acknowledgment: Thank-you to the artists who provided a statement about their work to assist with the development of this resource.