

Start at home

Tagai
Gail Mabo



About the Artist

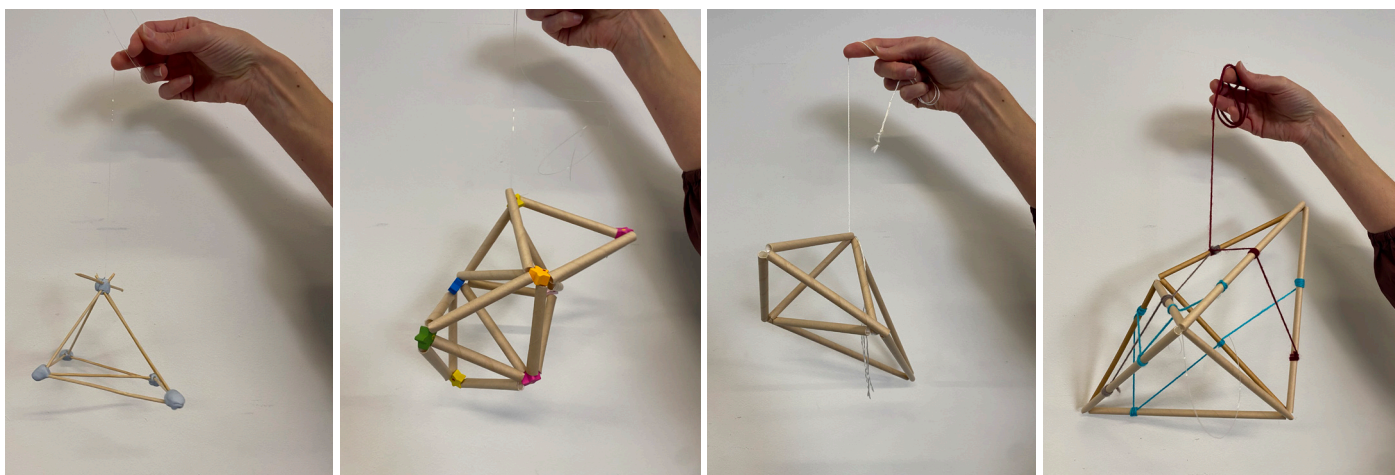
Gail Mabo is a multidisciplinary artist working across dance, performing arts and visual arts. Now residing in Gurambilbarra (Townsville), Gail is a Meriam artist, from Mer Island in the Torres Strait, her language group is Piadram. The daughter of celebrated land rights activist, Eddie Koiki Mabo, she maintains an strong commitment to cultural knowledge honouring her Country and community. Her artistic practice frequently references the celestial navigation systems of the Torres Strait Islanders highlighting the importance of observing nature and responding to Country with respect.

About the work

“This story was told to me as a child by my father, Eddie Koiki Mabo, as he was told by his father, Benny Mabo, about the stories of the Torres Straits Islands.

The story of Tagai, which is still told to the young people today, is considered an important aspect of daily life. Tagai is important for navigation, as the Southern Cross (Tagai’s left hand) points to the south. We use Tagai to navigate through the Torres Strait from island to island. Tagai also tells the islanders when to plant their gardens, when to hunt turtles and dugong, when the monsoon season arrives, when the winds change and many other important aspects of daily life.”

Gail Mabo



Materials

- Sticks, twigs, straws, or skewers,
- Air-dry clay, plasticine, or blu-tak
- Beads
- Fishing line or string

Take it further

As well as a visual artist, Gail Mabo, trained as a dancer. Observe the way your mobile moves and mimic the movement with your body. Notice how it changes depending on the weather, other activity, and sound in the space.

Tips

- Look at imagery of space to get inspired.
- Vary the length of the sticks to create a more abstract form.
- Join additional constellations together to create a larger more complex mobile.
- Add colour and texture by threading beads or wrapping coloured string around the sticks.

The Activity

Guiding Galaxies

Tagai is Gail Mabo's representation of a star map traditionally used to navigate the Torres Strait. Two of the stars in the constellation are dedicated to her parents. Who are your guiding stars? They might be family, friends, pets. Create a mobile.

- 1 Take small pieces of clay for each star and roll/form into a shape approximately 1x1x1cm.
- 2 Connect your stars to the sticks by gently pressing the ends of the sticks into the clay.
- 3 Continue joining your clay stars to the sticks until you create a prism or closed net.
- 4 Allow the clay to air-dry and strengthen.
- 5 Use fishing-line or string to hang your mobile and watch it move gently in space.

Watch a timelapse of Gail Mabo and team constructing *Tagai* in the Art Gallery of South Australia:

<http://bitly.ws/DQMh>

We would love to see your work! Ask your parent or carer to post a photo on Instagram and tag the Art Gallery of South Australia. Or you can email your photo to us at public.programs@artgallery.sa.gov.au

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