



Title	<i>Thicky Shell Jellyfish III</i>
Artist's dates	b. 1982 (43 y.o.)
Gallery/source	MOA Arts, Moa Island QLD
Date of purchase	20/02/2025
Buying Committee	Nancy Nossal, Sarah Kremer, Kate Worth
Shadow members	Sarah George, Fiona Hardie, Wendy Kozica
Dimensions (H X W)	40 x 28 x 15cm, tassels 80cm
Medium	Raffia & Seagrass Chord

CONTENT/SUBJECT/AESTHETIC QUALITIES

- The work is a joyful and innovative woven depiction of a jellyfish.
- An inverted open basket creates the body of the jellyfish, with a long coloured raffia tail cascading down the wall.
- Savage decorates the body with shells and seagrass chord.

TECHNIQUE

- Savage's handwoven works are strongly connected to her cultural heritage, traditional techniques, and everyday stories of home.
- While art had always been a presence in Paula's life, it wasn't until she joined Ngalmun Lagau Minaral (Moa Arts) in 2017 that she began to pursue her own professional art practice. Paula's first experience of printing was at a workshop run by Dian Darmansjah, an artist and printmaking facilitator, which kickstarted her passion for printmaking. At the art centre, Paula was also introduced to traditional drawing, dyeing, and carving but alongside printmaking, she was most drawn to weaving small bags and baskets.
- "That's where I started. It's traditional but from before-days. We saw collections of the old weavings at the Museum in Brisbane, and they were all one-twist like I do now. It dated back that far. The Papua New Guinea mob are different, and the Pacific mob are different again," says Paula. "But the one-twist would have come from Fiji, Solomon Islands. So, you can date it back there because that's where my ancestors came from on my mum's side."
- Making art is a restorative practice, a creative outlet that offers Paula a refreshing balance to life's stresses. "Every time I get stressed, I put the stress in those bags," she says. The physical process of weaving also brings Paula joy. "I think it's the colours. Colour and the feeling of the strings. Because you can feel it when it's tighter or just slack."

CONTEXT

- Creative inspiration for the work at Moa Arts comes from Mualgal ancestral stories, totemic representation and connections to sea, land, sky and family. Moa's artists don't have to look far to be inspired. The island and its surrounding waters and reefs hold a diverse set of land and marine ecosystems with niches for many rare and unique species such as dugong and sea turtle.
- The influence of home - Paula's art practice is influenced by the things that surround her and life on Moa Island. The island's culture, way of life, and natural environment shape much of Paula's

work. "It's the things around me," says Paula. "I'm on alert the whole time. Always watching, always looking."

- Paula is also inspired by fellow weavers Aunty Aya and Aunty Flora from the neighbouring village of St Pauls, and her late father. "We travelled most of the time. We'd see things. We'd pick things up. All the time," says Paula of her father.
- "The baskets are based on the reefs. They're markers for us. We use them as markers when we travel, in the daytime we use the reefs and at nighttime, we use the stars. We navigate like that. The colours and the shapes in the baskets are how the reef looks," explains Paula.

COLLECTION STATEMENT

- Since 2017, Paula's beautiful and evocative prints and weavings have gained national recognition. She's exhibited her work at the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF), and Tarnanthi Art Fair, and received the CIAF Innovation Award in 2020 and CICA Lucilla Osborne Memorial Fellowship's Emerging Artist Award in 2018.
- In May 2023, her work titled Home Reefs received the prestigious Melbourne Design Week Award presented by Mercedes-Benz as part of the FOCUS exhibition at the Melbourne Design Fair. The annual prize \$5000 prize is announced on the opening day of the Melbourne Design Week and recognises an outstanding contribution to the program.
- We identified Paula as an artist we wanted to include in our collection at the AGM, having seen her career rise we felt particular fascination with her beautiful weaving works crafted at scale. This work sheds light on the threats to the eco systems in the region, along with the traditional cultural practices which are at risk.
- We had seen her work in many places, The NGV, Darwin, Cairns and Fiona Hardie was lucky enough to visit her Art Centre Moa Arts on Moa Island way up in the Torres Strait! Some of us had even begun buying her little individual bags as gifts, for others and ourselves - they are so beautiful hung on a wall or over your shoulder.
- We entertained the idea of purchasing a big sea anemone, so hard to resist, but the feeling was they could prove difficult in the context of our movable collection. For this main reason we have settled on this jellyfish - an inverted woven vessel with tassels which Paula has custom made pegs for it to be hung on a wall. It is a nod to how much we love her work and admire her skills. Whilst not the big work we crave we are happy to at least have her represented in The Circle Collection and it was a joy to meet her in Melbourne at the Fair.