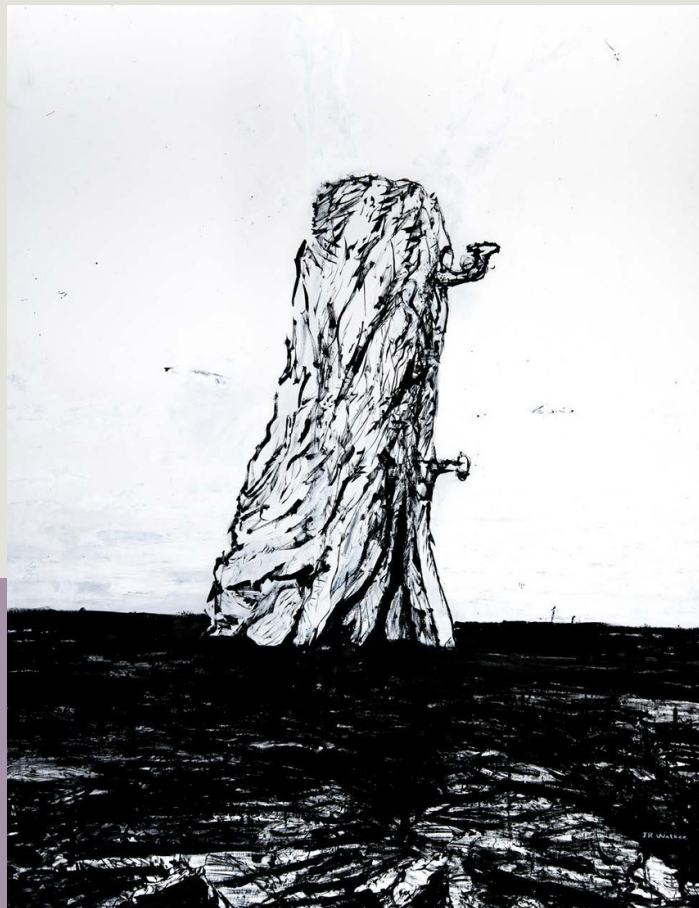


Goulburn Regional Art Gallery presents:

21 nov. 2025— 31 jan. 2026

# John R Walker *Forest Song*



Education Kit



## About the Education Kit and *Forest Song*

*Forest Song* is a meditation on trees as enduring lifeforms that hold memory and mark the passage of time.

Braidwood-based artist John R Walker's work has developed through decades dedicated to walking, drawing, recording and exploring nature. He reads the land as complex and fragmentary, where experience is shaped by who we are and how we encounter places.

Walker's practice is informed by diverse disciplines such as mapping, geological history, environmental history, mathematical theory, and poetry, all of which shape his understanding of how landscapes are formed, encountered, and remembered. Walker captures the resilient presence of trees, evoking stories held deep beneath the surface. In Walker's practice, space is time, and landscape is something to be felt as much as seen.

This resource has been created by Education Officer, Samantha Ayliffe, and includes practical and theoretical activities for all ages. It can be used before and after visiting the Gallery.

## *Forest Song* Word Scramble

For any age or stage

Unscramble the letters to make some key words relating to *Forest Song*

GINRENUD	-----
TIMTANDIEO	-----
PONYHYMS	-----
COSTEMSEY	-----
TORSEF	-----
REWDAN	-----



Image: Portrait of John R Walker. Photo by Sammy Hawker.

# Forest Song Find-a-Word

For any age or stage

WALKER

FOREST

TREES

MEMORY

ENDURING

MEDITATION

JOURNEY

EXPLORE

PATTERN

MARK

ENVIRONMENT

LANDSCAPE

HABITAT

ECOSYSTEM

TIME

PRINT

MONOTYPE

SONG

A	L	J	H	A	B	I	T	A	T	G	T	M	H	K	P
S	Y	M	B	I	O	T	I	C	N	P	S	E	Q	S	O
E	R	U	T	A	N	P	R	I	N	T	E	M	T	E	L
S	I	V	M	H	R	X	R	C	V	G	N	O	S	P	Y
T	W	B	K	E	G	U	T	E	X	T	U	R	E	Y	M
N	X	E	Q	Z	D	J	O	U	R	N	E	Y	J	T	E
E	R	P	S	N	Z	I	W	Z	P	O	L	W	J	O	R
M	E	A	E	E	M	I	T	G	Z	M	Y	I	Z	N	K
N	H	C	F	X	W	H	L	A	R	V	U	X	Y	O	N
O	C	S	Z	J	P	O	D	Z	T	O	D	T	Z	M	R
R	A	D	N	H	R	L	U	M	Q	I	W	H	S	L	E
I	U	N	S	E	Z	L	O	A	K	F	O	R	E	S	T
V	O	A	K	X	T	O	L	R	G	R	T	N	E	Q	T
N	G	L	E	A	F	W	C	K	E	E	A	U	R	V	A
E	A	S	Y	M	P	H	O	N	Y	I	J	B	T	J	P
W	K	Q	I	T	P	V	M	E	T	S	Y	S	O	C	E

Can you find any other words which might be related to *Forest Song* in the crossword above?

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## For the Littlest Ones

Preschool and early stage 1, 4-6 years olds (support required)

### Texture Treasure Hunt

John R Walker uses many patterns inspired by nature in his artworks.

Go on a nature walk with an adult. How many different textures can you spot on the forest floor?

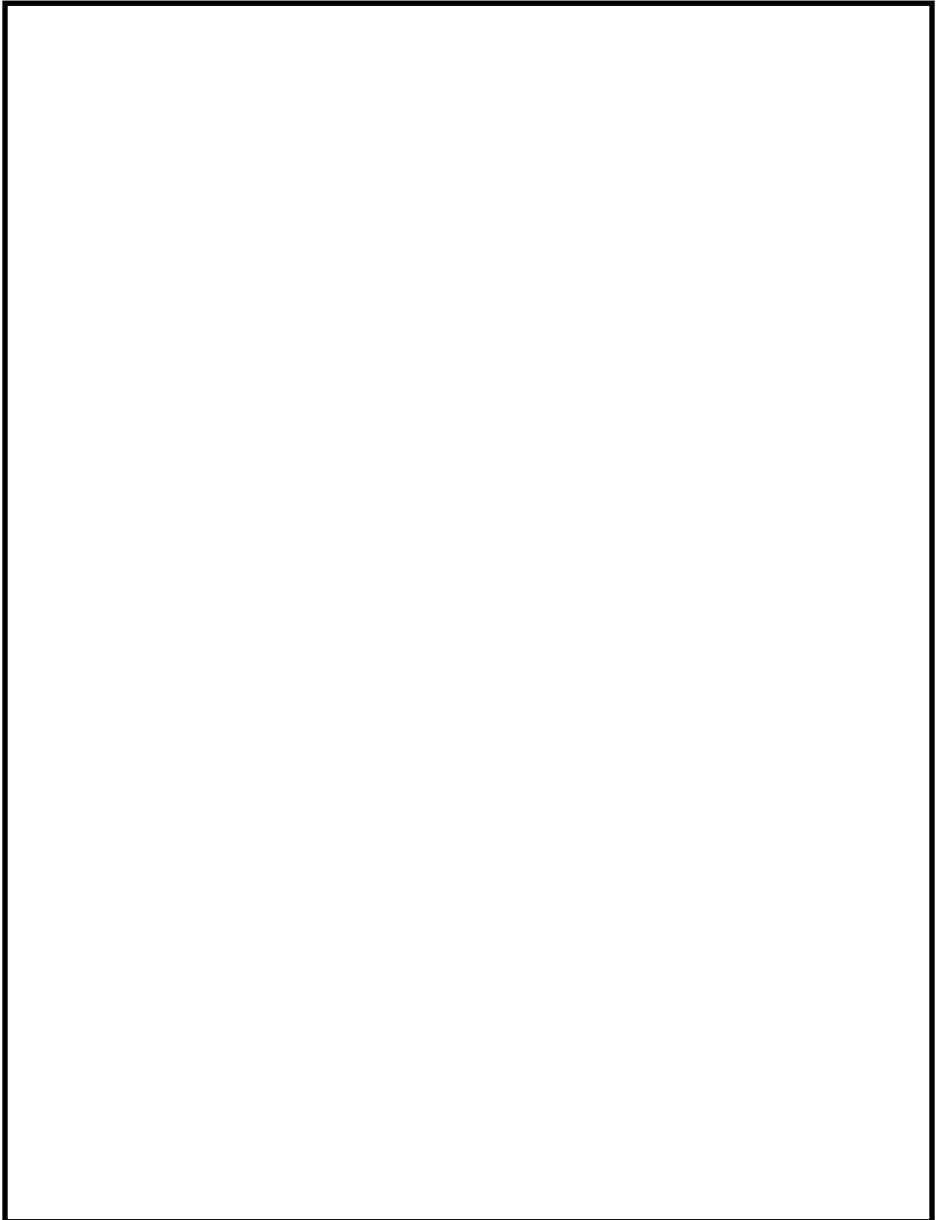
Collect at least three natural textures such as leaves, twigs and bark. Place them underneath this page, behind the box below. Hold your page still and colour the box with a crayon or pencil to reveal your patterns.

Image: John R Walker in the studio. Photo by Sammy Hawker.



## **Find and Stick Forest**

Cover the box below in any glue of your choice and build a forest using dead leaves and small twigs that you can find on the ground:



## For the Young Ones

Stage 1– stage 2, 6-9 years old (support may be required)

### Family Tree Scavenger Hunt



John R Walker, *Cloud Forest Song*, 2024, synthetic polymer on polyester, 183 x 122cm. Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney. Collection of the artist.

Trees change as they grow up, just like we do. We can tell that a forest has been there for a very long time if there are lots of big, strong and old trees. Explore a local park or nature reserve with an adult and see if you can find every member of the tree family. Check the boxes when you find them:

- ☐ A seed or seed pod.
- ☐ A seedling (a baby tree).
- ☐ A sapling (a child tree).
- ☐ A juvenile tree (a teenager tree).
- ☐ An emergent tree (a very tall adult tree that reaches for the sun).
- ☐ An elderly tree.

### Bonus Activity: Plant Parent

Raise a baby plant! Pick out some seeds with an adult and gently tuck them into some soil in your garden or a pot. Water your seed well and make sure it gets plenty of sun. Now watch it grow!

Take photographs of your plant each day to document the growth.

## Your Family Forest



Image: John R Walker in the studio. Photo by Sammy Hawker.

Now that you have completed your scavenger hunt, and planted a seed of your very own, its time to draw your own family forest. In an ecosystem different plants and animals live together and support one another just like a family. This is called a symbiotic relationship, or symbiosis. Think about your family members, how old are they? How tall are they?

Draw each member of your family as a tree in the box below:

# For Those in Between

Stage 3, 10-12 years old

## Patterns Tell the Story



John R Walker, *Dry Bank*, 2025, synthetic polymer on polyester, 122 x 91 cm. Courtesy the artist and Utopia Art Sydney. Private collection NSW.

When we look at a tree there are hints that tell us about the experience and life of that tree. These include scars and textures left on the bark, trails made by insects and animals, growth rings on the inside of the tree, and areas of rot or damage where branches have been torn away or hollowed out.

Walker describes his work as “taking his perception and transforming it into a pattern of marks”. Our perception is the unique way that we see the world.

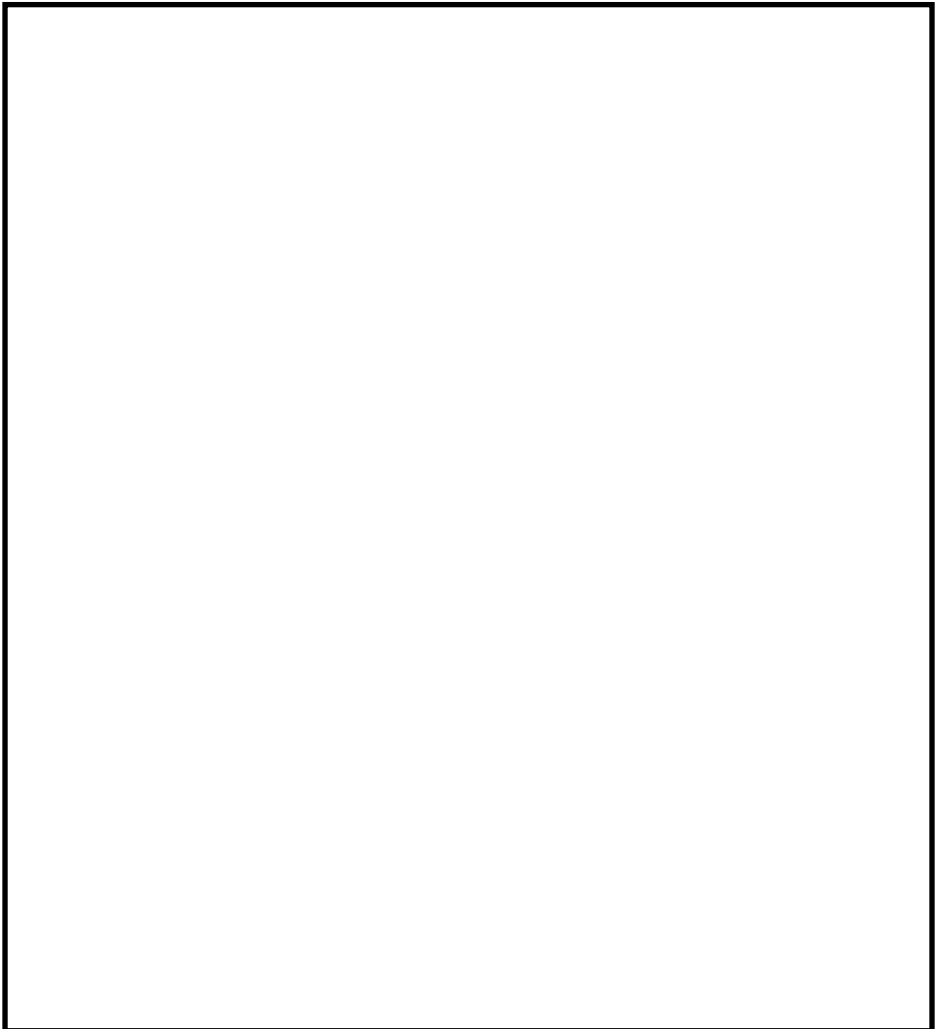
Find some interesting marks on a tree and turn them into your own pattern in the box below:



Find an interesting subject in nature that is not a tree to investigate.  
Below are some examples:

- Rocks
- Water
- Birds

Create patterns that are inspired by your subject and use them to create an artwork in the box below:



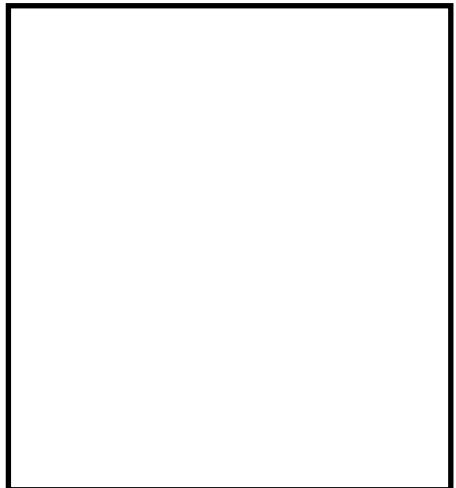
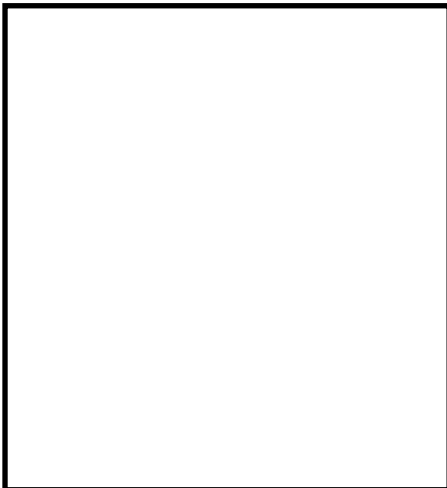
## Portraiture Lab

We can think of John R Walker's works as 'portraits' of trees. Walker captures their character and life experience. We can view each line on his tree trunks as if they were wrinkles on a person's face.

Welcome to the Portraiture Lab! Below is a machine with two chambers (boxes). This machine will show us what a plant would look like if it were a person. In the chamber on the left, draw a picture of a plant. In the chamber on the right, draw what you think that plant's face would look like if it were a person.



John R Walker, printed by Marianne Courtenay, *Forest Canticle*, 2025, monotype, ink on paper, 60 x 40cm. Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney. Private collection.



## For the Teens

Stages 4 and up. 12+ years old

### The Power of Place



Image: John R Walker working in studio. Photo by Sammy Hawker.

What do you think it means to feel a place rather than just to see it?

John R Walker not only captures studied and seen facts, but also deeply personal feelings and thoughts that he develops whilst spending time in the presence of these landscapes.

Encounter a new landscape and meditate with it. Spend time feeling present using all your senses, and taking in the detail and emotion of the space. Speculate about what changes and events this landscape may have witnessed over time. Brainstorm any key words, phrases or images that come to mind in the box on the next page.



Image: Portrait of John R Walker. Photo by Sammy Hawker.

Complete your brainstorm here:



### **Bonus Activity: Create a *Forest Song***

What sounds can you hear in this landscape?

Using a digital device such as a phone, record as many sound samples as you can from the environment.

Can you use free to download editing software to create your own *Forest Song*?

Play with sound layering and repetition to create interesting results.

John R Walker, printed by Marianne Courtenay, *Forest Canticle*, 2025, monotype, ink on paper, 60 x 40cm. Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney. Private Collection.

## Monoprint Magic

Several of John R Walker's works on display are monotype prints created with printer Marianne Courtenay. To create a monotype an artist will use a fluid material like ink, paint or watercolour on a smooth surface (plate) such as glass or metal. They will then transfer the image onto paper using pressure (often from a printing press). Their image will be unique depending on the materials, method, and amount of pressure applied.

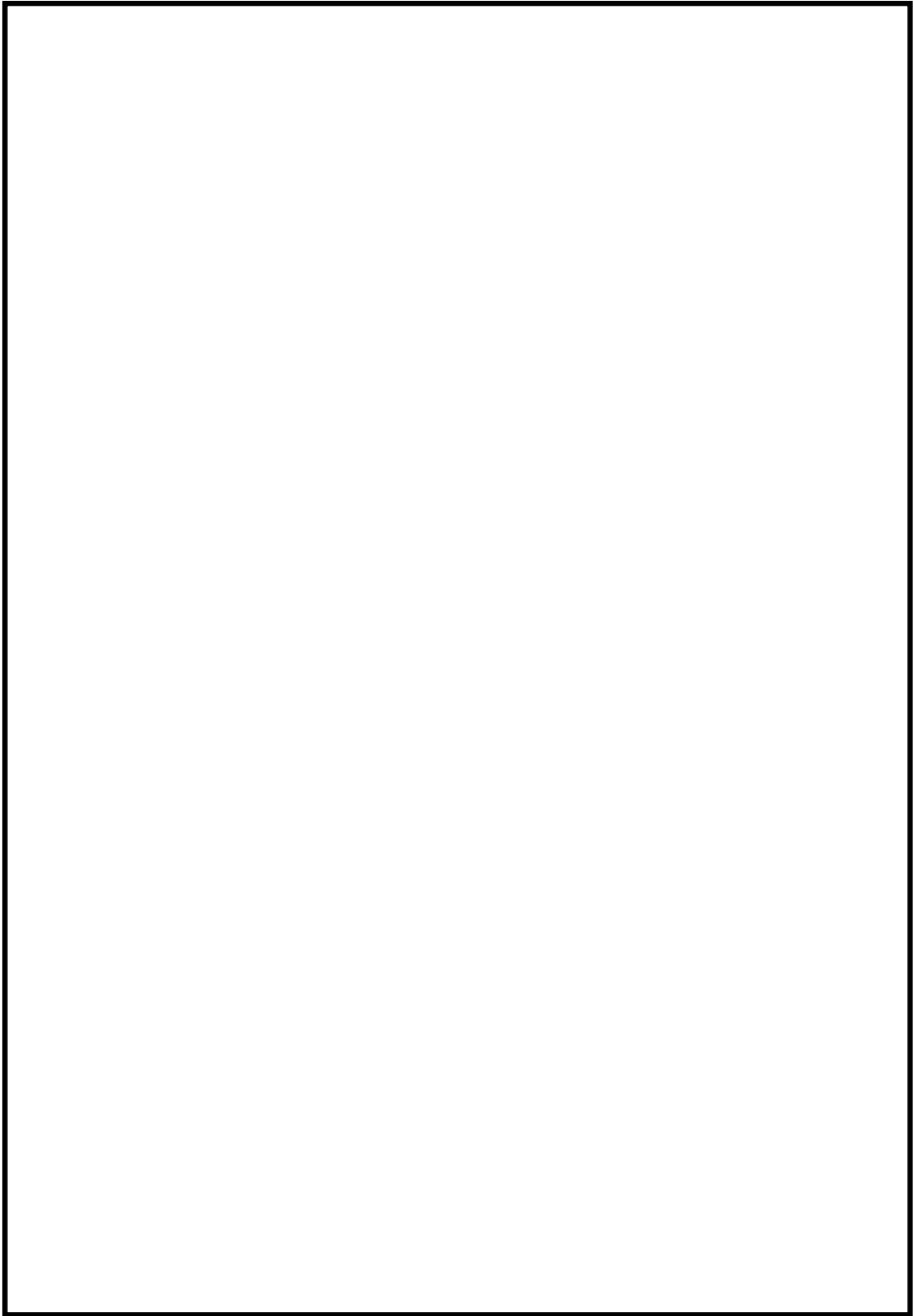


Image: John R Walker and Marianne Courtenay in the studio. Photo by Sammy Hawker.

Create your own monotype print at home by spreading a thin layer of paint on the glass insert from a small picture frame. Wipe back some of your paint using your fingers, a rag, or a cotton tip swab to create your design. Always use glass with an adult present for safety.

Now place a piece of paper carefully on top of your image whilst it is still wet, be careful to drop it on top without smearing the design underneath. Apply pressure to the page by rubbing the back of a metal spoon over all parts of the image right up into the corners. Now, peel off your page to reveal the design. Experiment until you are happy with your results.

Print your design below, or cut out and glue down your design below:



## You're a Poet and you Know it!

John R Walker is inspired by Australian poet Les Murray.

Murray describes trees as “stood scrolls best read unopened”.

If a tree could write down everything it has seen during its lifetime on a scroll, what do you think it might write?

Create your own rhyming poem that tells a story about a tree's life.

It must follow an **AABB** rhyme scheme. This means that every two sentences should be a pair with last words that rhyme. See an example below:



John R Walker, *Tree of Nests*, 2024, synthetic polymer on polyester, 183 x 122 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney. Private collection.

**Line A:** A seed grew into a very tall **tree**.

**Line A:** It grew up further than the eye could **see**.

**Line B:** I climbed and climbed to try and find the **top**.

**Line B:** It was getting pretty dark so I decided I should **stop**.

Write your poem into your monotype print on the previous page so that the poem now accompanies your image. Your poem can be as long as you like but must continue the scheme of paired rhyming lines.

Goulburn Regional Art Gallery acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where Goulburn Regional Art Gallery operates today and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Cover Image: John R Walker, *Stump*, 2025, synthetic polymer on polyester, 263 x 202cm.  
Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney. Collection of the artist.



Goulburn Regional Art Gallery is supported by the NSW government through Create NSW