



Catherine Stringer - Sea Stories

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Sea Stories is inspired by two stories – the story of the *Neva* shipwreck on King Island and the Icelandic tale of the Seal Skin.

All the artworks have been made predominantly from marine macroalgae (seaweeds). I first started experimenting with making paper using kelp during a residency at the King Island Cultural Centre in 2011. The current exhibition includes examples of some of the various approaches and techniques that I have developed for working with marine macroalgae since that time.

The *Neva* was wrecked off Cape Wickham, King Island, in 1835, whilst en route from Ireland to Sydney. On board were 150 Irish women convicts, 9 free women and their 55 children. There were only 6 women survivors. I have used seaweeds and shore plants gathered from the Cape Wickham area to create symbolic garments as tributes to the shipwreck victims.

The Seal Woman series developed from a residency in Iceland in 2017. In the Seal Skin story, the woman could slip easily from seal to human form by removing her sealskin. One day her sealskin was stolen by a fisherman and she was trapped ashore. She ended up marrying the fisherman and they had 7 children, but she always yearned for the sea. After many years the woman found her sealskin and returned to the sea, where she also had 7 children. She was thereafter torn between two families, two worlds.

The *Neva* story and the Seal Skin story are linked by similar themes - mothers and their children, separation, loss, grief and transformation, and of course their connection with the sea. I am thus delighted to have the opportunity to exhibit works from the two series together for the first time.