Talking Up Textiles
- Community Fabric and Indigenous Industry -

Big Leaf design by Marita Sambono © Merrepen Arts

Travelling Yarns
A Report from the 2012 Forum in Gunbalanya.
Talking Up Textiles

-Community Fabric and Indigenous Industry-

A Report from the 2012 Forum in Gunbalanya.
The Association of Northern Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA) is pleased to support this publication, which provides a record of the Travelling With Yarns Indigenous Textiles Forum at Injalak Arts, Gunbalanya, West Arnhem Land, in August 2012.

The forum was a timely response to the current high level of interest in the innovative fabric design and creative industry partnerships, taking place in a number of Art Centres in north Australia. It brought together artists working in fabric and other professionals who have had significant involvement in the Indigenous textile industry over forty years.

The publication provides simple transcripts of talks delivered at the forum, which are presented with minimal editing or rewriting. The intention is to share the content with a wider audience, to celebrate significant achievements to date and to help stimulate further exchange about directions for industry development. This is the second publication of records of a forum on Indigenous printmaking in North Australia produced by ANKAAA. The first Getting into Prints; A Symposium on Aboriginal Printmaking was published twenty years ago in 1993, and reported on a symposium jointly organised with the Northern Territory University, School of Fine Arts, and convened by Tim Smith and Stephen Anderson.

There is a long and rich history of textile production in north Australian Indigenous communities, going back in the Northern Territory at least to 1969, when printing on textiles started at Tiwi Design and Bima Wear on Bathurst Island. Other important fabric printing initiatives commenced in the 1980’s, including at Injalak Arts in Gunbalanya, Merrepen Arts in Daly River and Babbarra Women’s Centre in Maningrida.

It is notable that the current wave of regeneration of fabric printing in north Australia is taking place inside Art Centres. This can in part be seen as a response to the international downturn in the fine arts market – stimulating exploration of different mediums and markets. Working in fabric may also be thought of as a natural progression for artists already working in other mediums. Inherited ‘patterns and designs’ form the most primary element of the art of many contemporary Indigenous artists whose work is informed by traditional knowledge. Patterns and designs which were traditionally used in various forms – for example painted on bodies or carved on objects – do not have an intrinsic link to any one medium once they are deployed in contemporary art and design production.

Included in the publication are profiles by six individual artists working with textiles: Vivian Kerinaiua, Belinda Kuriniya, Frances Rrikili, Regina Jimarin, Samson Namundja and June Mills. Derived from personal interviews, the profiles provide important balance, to ensure that the mastery and perspectives of the people on the ground is well represented.

ANKAAA supports and works for the goal of Indigenous leadership and control of the Indigenous arts industry. The ANKAAA board in its Value Statement (2012) writes: ‘ANKAAA values walking side by side, non Aboriginal and Aboriginal people – no one in front, no one behind – that way we are both learning from each other; respecting and caring for each other. This is two way learning.’ Achieving balance between the different knowledge systems and approaches to sharing and talking about industry development will be important as the exciting potential of the fabric and fashion industry develops in coming years.

- Christina Davidson, ANKAAA CEO

Foreword by ANKAAA:
Welcome to Country: Anne Gudumul

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, thank you everyone who came over here to this Stone Country Festival. I would like to say a few words about the things we have at Gunbalanya. If you want to come and see us doing our weaving; there is also lots of dancing. We have ten bands at the oval, and we have football games playing this morning. And in the afternoon we hold the Kunboork. At the club we have got sports, at the social club. So this is another thing, if anybody wants to go for that hill tour, there will be lots of tours today. I thank you very much and welcome you to the Stone Country Festival.

Anne Gudumul is a traditional owner of the country on which the Aboriginal community of Gunbalanya (also known as Oenpelli) is situated. Gunbalanya is located in the Stone Country of West Arnhem Land, about 60kms north east of Jabiru, bordering Kakadu National Park. The Arts Centre at Gunbalanya, Injalak Arts, hosted the 2012 Travelling With Yarns conference, bringing together textile producers from six communities in the Top End. Situated in the most beautiful of sites, the Arts Centre is overshadowed by Injalak Hill - a site extensively rich in rock art paintings and the source of much inspiration for the artists. Injalak Arts is managed by an incorporated Association whose members are the artists and community.

Convenor’s Welcome: Louise Hamby

Welcome to Travelling with Yarns at Gunbalanya, in the heart of Stone Country. The location for this event is significant; the aim is to present ideas in a place where participants feel a sense of belonging. The speakers will not only present ideas and issues related to screen printing on fabric but are also seeking advice and comments from audience members. In a spirit of collaboration and creative activity, an invitation is extended to engage with the presenters today and in the future. By bringing together a range of information about printed fabrics including conservation, copyright, commercial opportunities, digital printing and collaborations, informed decision-making about future directions for printing in remote areas can be made. Thank you for coming and being part of this event. It will be a key landmark in the development of the fabric printing industry in Indigenous communities and homelands of Northern Australia.

Convenor Louise Hamby is Adjunct Fellow in the Digital Humanities Hub at ANU. She has been researching Aboriginal material culture particularly objects made from fibre since moving to Australia 30 years ago. Her PhD research focused on fibre container forms from the women of Gapuwiyak in eastern Arnhem Land. Her main research emphasis has been on material from Arnhem Land highlighting bodywear and container forms. Museum collections from the first half of the twentieth century and their relationships to people in Arnhem Land are a focus of her research. The women of Gunbalanya and its outstations worked with her to produce the travelling exhibition and book Twined Together Kunmadj Njalehnjaleken published in 2005. She has also co-edited The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections and co-authored a chapter in the recent volume Unpacking the Collections: Networks of Material and Social Agency. Her most recent book Containers of Power: Women with Clever Hands (2010) accompanies the touring exhibition Women with Clever Hands: Gapuwiyak Miyalkurrwurr Gong Djambatjmala.
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Session 1: Arts Centres in Focus

At the heart of textile production in many communities, the Arts Centre is more than just a workplace.

Injalak Arts:
Isaiah Nagurrrgurrba

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is wonderful to see people here, aunty and uncles, and people here from Darwin, it is really fantastic, and I feel comfortable because Anne gave you a warm welcome.

I would like to share a little story about printing and screen printing started here at Gunbalanyaback in 1989. Back in ‘89 we did that building, that silkscreen printing building with Ray Young, as you can see in the booklets here, you will see a photo of Ray Young and he was a teacher who came here and started working with Gabriel and another few boys, he has been working at Tiwi Islands for a long time, for 10 or 11 years, on Bathurst Island, and he came here in 1986 and opposite the Shire Council there used to be a screen printing workshop there. The Traditional Owners and Tiwi Islanders came up with a good idea for building our new screen printing here – and now it’s the Art Centre. So, in 1989 we built this Injalak Art Centre and it is really interesting for coming and looking at old people doing painting on bark and now people are doing paper.

The Art Centre has been open since 1989 and you know we have been really focused on doing our silkscreen printing. For us, like me and Gabriel, it has been a really long journey.

We have been doing other stuff, like painting and travelling overseas as well. I have been in Europe, so exciting things have been happening back in the 1980s and 1990s. It has been really a wonderful thing, because the screen printing stopped in 2003 and we only started back last year doing screen printing. We got a screen printing teacher to come here to teach our boys here. Because I forgot too, you know, it has been a long time for me – 10 years.

Tim Growcott came here and started doing work with us and it has been really good for us. We have got now a few young people working here with us at the Art Centre here, doing screen printing and the tour guiding.

It is really good for me; I had been looking at my grandfather doing painting on bark you know, I thought, it is really good for me to join these boys doing screen printing because some of the art works can stay for 20 or 40 years - you know I will be a grandfather - at the moment I am still waiting to be a grandfather. I will pass you over to Gabriel and he will take you from there and he will start telling you a bit about the art. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. It is really good to have you at this Stone Country Festival, thank you guys and everybody, people that came from communities. I really look forward to sharing stories and as Anne has been saying, there is going to be Kunboork on the other side of this building here, and welcome everybody. I would like to pass you on to Gabriel. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

Injalak Arts:
Gabriel Maralngurra

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, my name is Gabriel. I work here at the Art Centre, at Injalak. I would like to say a few words about the Art Centre. And the screen printing that’s been happening for quite a while. And new things that have been happening, the young fellas that have been learning how to screen print and learning the new techniques. Also myself and Isaiah learning from Tim, which is great, he is here teaching my boys how to screen print and learn tips from the computer and so on. I just want to say thank you.
Isaiah Nagurrgurrba

Isaiah is an artist and screen printer, and founding member of Injalak Arts and Crafts. He has been working with Injalak since its inception in 1989 - and is also the current treasurer of Injalak. Once a senior supervisor of the Injalak Printmaking Department (some twenty years ago), Isaiah continues to contribute his knowledge and guidance to a new generation of screen printers. Isaiah is involved in the ceremonial life of the community and takes his obligations to family and traditional culture very seriously.

Gabriel Maralngurra

Gabriel has been one the driving forces of Injalak Arts & Crafts since its beginnings as an Adult Education course in screen printing in 1986. Injalak became Incorporated in 1989 and Gabriel has been a committee member since then, including three-and-a-half years as President and one-a-half years as Treasurer. It was Gabriel’s suggestion that the Arts Centre be named after nearby Injalak hill which has extensive rock art paintings within and around it. Gabriel continues to practice as an artist at Injalak and his knowledge is an invaluable resource for the centre. His work features in international and national collections.

I’m happy to tell stories how screen printing first started and to share with people how screen printing works, how we all work together as a team to make good designs and for the future. Plus give our knowledge to the kids who come down to watch, how we make designs and print onto fabrics and t-shirts.

- Gabriel Maralngurra

It’s been really good, the boys see their designs on t-shirts and everyone is proud. Our fathers are artists and it’s something that reminds us of the stories, and painting on bark. This is not just for our community but for other remote people to see what’s happening in our community. This is for our stories to get out into the world and our culture to find new ways to show itself.

- Isaiah Nagurrgurrba
Margo Northey:
Wadeye Palngun Wurnangat Association

Thank you and thank you so much for the welcome. And thank you to the organisers for allowing us this opportunity to learn from everybody here and to meet people from other centres. There are a few faces from the Art Fair, but that is usually such a blur of frenetic activity, that we do not get a chance to really sit down and share stories and to think about what we are doing. To see what is happening here is so heartening. It is wonderful. Screen printing has only been on the agenda out at Wadeye for the past five years, so we know we have got a lot to learn and a long way to go, but with the support of people like Tim, who came and spent a week with us, Bobbie Reuben, who will be here shortly, people like Rose who have supported us with selling our fabrics, and helping us learn how to market a bit more smarter and better, we are on our way. And Adriana, of course, who whipped up the pattern for us last time she was out with us, just to value add. So we are looking forward to meeting people.

Very briefly, Jo put this AV presentation together for us just to have at the Art Fair. This image shows senior women sitting down on the space of the old takeaway that the women’s association actually owns, to talk about the new project. And since that first meeting we are expanding it to have a laundromat and an Op shop, that the women are going to run out there. We are really looking to economic development for the women, is probably the key theme for the women’s association out there.

Jo has started a little blog spot for us wadeyewomen.wordpress.com; it actually updates the myriad of things that do go on at the women’s centre, it is a hub, and it is a safe space, not just for the local women, but also for the non-Indigenous women from various places out there as well. You will see little beanies that people all over Australia are knitting, it is pretty cold – well, relatively cold – this last dry season. We also support the traditional weaving process out there, we often do weaving trips out there to dig the roots, collect the berries and sand palm fruits and try and support those senior women to impart those traditional skills onto the young women as well.

We retail there with a number of our women participating in Certificate II in Retail, the women’s association also owns a takeaway, we get women to work there as well, but they prefer to be at the women’s centre doing the creative things, so we have still got a way to go there, but we have set up an identical retail outlet that is the nearest I suppose to the store and the takeaway, so they can get comfortable there, learning the electronics in a safer environment and a less frenetic environment.
Then there is our screen printing and tables, very similar to this one here (at Injalak). In this photo Jo is wearing a different colour of our river design that I know Rose and Angus have sold quite a considerable amount of for us. Our prayer flags have always been pretty popular too, we have this beautiful set of prayer flags that the women do. At the centre of the Women’s Centre, there is a huge big space - it used to be an aircraft hangar, I believe – and is now the sewing area. When I first was involved with the community, ten years ago, I walked in and there were three big tables set up with sewing machines on them and Sister Lucia at the end, writing – 4”11’ she was – but she was running that place like you would not believe and that is what it was, sewing for the community.

So, now we are combining the sewing and the screen printing and also lino block printing - the women do stencils and all sorts of other things as well.

We have also auspiced the Wadeye International Garden Club, as part of the SIHIP (Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure) Program. We got 100 new houses in Wadeye, so a few of us started the Garden Club - we have gradually got more local women involved. We all took cuttings from our gardens, dug things up, split things off, in order for the women to establish their gardens in their new homes. That image is the local police sergeant’s house. We get everybody involved in Wadeye, in the International Garden Club. Sergeant George had a morning cup of tea and a lot more local women now than non-Indigenous women are involved in the Wadeye International Garden Club.

We had food, healthy food. We had a banana fun day, planted a banana circle out the side of the centre. They are the school kids making banana pancakes. The Job Find, CDEP (Community Development Employment Projects) mob made banana smoothies. We had the Indonesian cook over at the crèche making Indonesian fried banana somethings, and just promoting a nice healthy occasion.

That is us. Thank you.

© Wadeye Palngun Wurnangat Association

Lizz Bott (Manager) & Bobbie Reuben (Textile Consultant):
Merrepen Arts

Lizz: Good morning everyone. We are very thankful to be here, we did not think we were going to make it, the plane had an oil leak, so we had to turn around and go back – it was very frightening. We have come all the way from Daly River, which is south west of Darwin. Basically, we are back into screen printing, but it is early days, we are just starting back up. Merrepen was once renowned for beautiful fabrics coming out of the Art Centre, so we are very excited about what is happening, the designs that the artists have come up with in collaboration with Bobbie Reuben. Bobbie has been working with us for probably over twelve months now, since February or March last year – in and out visits – only just getting out during a flood earlier this year. It is all very early days, but what has been produced so far is just incredible. We have had a fantastic response from everywhere, basically. The designs are based on the Daly River region, what the artists do in their daily lives: hunting, collecting, the billabongs, the rivers – all those types of things.

Bobbie: For me, it is wonderful to go back to Merrepen, I first went there about eight years ago, then I temporarily relocated to Cairns, where I was doing a similar thing, but to come here where there is everything there, everything is ready to go – beautiful tables, beautiful fabrics, heat setting, a bit of a budget so you can order things.
That makes it wonderful, when everything is set up and ready to go, and to work with these guys it is just too easy. It is a pleasure for me, so hopefully there will be a lot more of it. I came to Merrepen for two weeks in March, then we had the floods, so I only stayed for a week, then I came for three weeks in May and we have come up with a whole lot of new designs. Then I came back for this week and we realise now we need more designs. I will hopefully come up again later in the year to work on some larger ones.

We would also like to work with outsourcing some of the printing to the small studios in Melbourne and Sydney, Publisher Textiles as Lucy mentioned, just so that when bigger commissions come in, it is not so hard for production. We all know what it is like in communities, with the hundreds of things going on at once and pulled in many directions. I was out at Babbarra a few weeks ago and Clare, who is the Coordinator, has a duster in one hand, because she has to manage the cleaning team as well. There are so many different things going on, it is a tough gig to get as much done as you would like to. We have four or five of the art workers with us, all walking around in similar skirts and interesting t-shirts. Have a look at the fabrics during the day, we will leave them up there.

There are not many outlets at this stage, we have Nomad Gallery who are wonderful facilitators and promoters of these products and we have Raw Cloth in Nightcliff, otherwise there are a few things in the pipeline but all these sorts of things take time to put in place. Thank you.

**Maningrida:**

**Babbarra Designs**

The Babbarra Women’s Centre is proudly owned by Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC). It began as a women’s refuge in the 1983. Now a women’s CDEP centre, it provides employment, and training opportunities through the establishment and operation of appropriate small business enterprises. The Centre runs a textiles workshop, specialising in the production of hand crafted fabric design, a cleaning crew, an Op Shop, laundromat and hairdresser. The centre also engages in a number of community development projects such as the refurbishment of five outstation women’s centres and the establishment of the Maningrida Women’s Committee.

Babbarra Designs is the major activity at the Women’s Centre and has been in operation since 1989. The Maningrida region is one of immense cultural and linguistic diversity, with over 12 distinct Aboriginal languages being spoken in this relatively small area. The work of our textile artists depicts the landscape, dreaming stories, bush foods and bush crafts from their country in central Arnhem Land. The variation in subject matter reflects the cultural identity of women from the different language groups.
Babbarra artists have trained in a number of textile mediums, however, most specialise in handcrafted lino-tile and silk-screen printed fabric. The women produce lino-tile designs and print these on fabric with up to three layers of colour. Each piece of lino-fabric is unique with varying tile and colour combinations. The textiles artists also hand paint their lino-tiled fabric further enhancing the creativity of individual pieces.

Babbarra Designs print fine silk-screened fabrics from original artwork designs, and currently display over 30 screen print designs to choose from. All Babbarra Designs products are printed on a range of fabric and heat set in a professional fabric oven. There are 13 women who work in the Maningrida workshop, including a talented sewing team.

© Babbarra Designs

**Bathurst Island:**

**TIWI Design**

Tiwi Design started from a small room underneath the Catholic Presbytery on Bathurst Island in 1968. Two young men, Bede Tungatalum and Giovanni Tipungwuti worked with the art teacher from the school, Madeline Clear, to produce wood block prints. This art form was introduced because of the natural link with traditional wood carving techniques. By 1969 the artists started to transfer their designs onto silk screens. Printing textiles quickly became a major activity for the Tiwi Design artists. In 1970, a set of six linen place mats were awarded the Industrial Design Council of Australia’s Good Design Award.

In that same year, Bede Tungatalum and Giovanni Tipungwuti formed a partnership and Madeline Clear began to work full-time as Tiwi Design Art Adviser. Madeline promoted Tiwi Design on a television program Today Tonight and enquiries started to come in from far and wide. By 1976, Tiwi Design had moved into the large new premises and started work on a wide range of art and craft. The partnership changed to an association in 1980 with the aim being to promote, preserve and enrich Tiwi culture.

Today the organisation is still operating with this aim in mind. There are approximately 100 artists working with Tiwi Design to create painting, wood sculptures, textiles, ceramics, pandanus weaving and printmaking. Tiwi Design has become an intrinsic part of the Aboriginal art and craft industry in Australia. The organisation continues to support traditional and contemporary art practice, working with highly skilled artists to express their culture.
It’s going on nine years since I started work here at Tiwi Design. Family was pushing me to work here, from my father’s side. I’ve worked other places, but here it’s like my home. First I was a bit shy, but as soon as I started it, I enjoyed it. This is my longest job and this is my favourite job.

I’ve seen a lot of photos of my father screen printing, when Madeline Clear came back to visit. She first came here in 1973 and did those woodblock screens with my Dad and Praxi’s dad. She visited and brought photos of them screen printing in that old church.

I work with Osmond Kantilla, he’s the best. He’s been here for over 20 years. I learn by watching him, how he’s doing it. We have to be precise. I watch him mix up the colours - I didn’t know anything about colours when I came to work here. We don’t just have blue - we have navy blue, light blue, other blues. When he’s not here Alan (Kerinauia) helps me a lot; sometimes Steve (Anderson). And Praxi (Tipungwuti) sometimes as well, but she’s got short arms.

I think maybe fabric runs this Arts Centre! Everytime tourists come, it’s the main thing they buy. And not just for tourists but locals too. When someone has a funeral, people come down here and they choose a design for their family. We cut them off a piece. So it’s for ceremony as well. The school ladies come too. They come down and get dresses to match with their uniform. They look great.

I think out of all the designs, the really good one is the pandanus one. It’s Osmond’s design. We do it on silk, or on light cotton. When you see it from a distance, you can really appreciate the effect. I also like the sun one. I think that’s my dad’s design. There’s a lot of screens here, but they’re the ones I like.

Osmond has been travelling with fabrics, he keeps telling me things, telling me stories. He worked for two months in Sydney on an internship with Ray Young. I get inspiration from him really. I’d like to do my own show, an exhibition of fabrics. I’d like to do up a conference room properly, with three or four of my own designs. I’d like to do an exhibition and workshop down south, because that’s where most of our customers come from.

If you’re passionate about something then you just have to follow it up.  

-Vivian Kerinaiua
I just want to start by thanking the Art Centre and the community for having me here. I have never been up this way before so it has been an amazing experience. I think the most dangerous thing in our rivers are carp so I am staying away from that billabong!

My company is called Gaawaa Miyay and it was developed really in my final year of study at university. I have got a number of different slides to show some of the products and printed textiles that form the range.

The idea was to develop a range of prints that told stories of my family and country and my experience in a contemporary way whilst sharing both old and new stories.

My people are from north New South Wales, in Yuwaalaraay / Gamilaraay country on my fathers side, and on my mothers side I am white Australian, four generations from County Clare in Ireland. After graduating from university I really enjoyed what I was doing and people seemed to be interested, it was a new experience for me in understanding the value that textiles can hold, and the importance of respecting and sharing story.

One of the four prints created as part of the first range was Gaawaa (river). My fathers family comes from the place where two rivers meet, - the Barwon and the Namoi, so that freshwater country is very important to us, it represents the connection we have to that water and to that place. Another is Dhinawan - emu feather print. This print represents my grandmother as the emu was her totem, it was created in memory of her. She has passed on and I am in Sydney now, so like many of my prints and fabrics it creates a kind of a portal to a place or time, and a connection to family we can no longer visit by jumping in the car. Its also a reminder of fond times and experiences, and a celebration of them.

For me this is also a way of connecting to older stories, reinterpreting them for others and sharing them with our next generations.
After developing the first four prints I decided to start a business, but I didn't really know how. I worked quite a bit with the Department of Industry and Investment in those early days to establish Gaawaa Miyay through their Aboriginal Business Development Program. I was a designer, fresh out of university, didn't really know what to do, but I went in and had a meeting with them to take that first step. I had ideas but didn't quite know how to act on them, and the support provided by the department was everything I needed to get things going - it was amazing. I received a couple of small grants to help me with my website and marketing material. This was a time that I feel helped me to establish and develop the foundations of owning and running my own business.

During the production of this first Gaawaa Miyay range, I was also mentored by Publisher Textiles in Sydney, which really helped me to gain a practical understanding of the printing process. While I did have experience with set up and printing from my time at university, seeing production on this large scale, at a commercial warehouse in Sydney was key to the development of the business. Publisher Textiles hand print in house on natural fibres with water-based inks, and also implement water filtration processes that consider the potential impact on the environment. I learnt a lot from this relationship, and feel that Publishers philosophy fits in well with what I was doing and what I was also striving to achieve.

As part of the Department of Industry and Investments Aboriginal Business Development Program, I was allocated a business advisor, and I would talk to her about the kinds of things I wanted to do - my vision / business plan.

A lot of the business talk was a challenge to get my head around, but through this support I was able to understand what was needed and how to really put my plans into action.

One of the first strategies my business advisor suggested was sending an email out to people in the industry that I thought would be good to work with, designers and practitioners I admired. This was a way of finding out if anyone in the industry would be interested in collaborating. I sent an email out and within five minutes I got a call from Julie Patterson. Julie is the founder and owner of Cloth Fabric who at that time had been around for 15 years, and we both drew inspiration from the Australian landscapes, were both inspired by colour and symbolism, and both used design as a kind of personal expression.

I met with Julie and brought along some swatches of the fabrics that I had printed with Publisher, and she offered a collaboration on the spot... I could not believe my ears / eyes. Together we discussed the idea of developing a limited edition range of homewares.

I had previously created a sample range of homewares at this stage, and had already decided to work in interiors particularly, as I felt there was something special in the sharing of story and language on a very personal level.

People could take the products into their homes and connect in a very practical everyday way. This was a perfect opportunity to do these things, and to share story with a respected and well-known designer / label in the mainstream Australian market.
A lot of the colours that I use in my work are taken directly from the landscape and also from the stories themselves. For instance, one of the older stories Burrul Warrambool it is our Milky Way story and it is a story that Yuwaalaraay people believe about the Milky Way. The design represents family that have passed on. The print creates a connection with that story and with those old people, and the colours really bring it all to life.

Another story, which shows the comparison between the older creation stories and the newer ones, is of fish, and its called Guduub-bidi. This print was inspired by the times spent out fishing on the riverbank with aunties. What we would do is wind the line out and cast, and just before the bait hit the water the girls would yell out, guduub-bidi... (meaning big cod), we want to catch that big cod! It is a good luck charm. For me, that is a beautiful thing to remember and to practice, but also with my background there is a common thread between both sides, black and white of my family - all the women love to fish, and this print is a beautiful way for me to remember those times and bring those two worlds together: saltwater and freshwater, city / country, non-Indigenous / Indigenous - Mum and Dad.

I will talk little bit about the process now. The first aspect I consider when developing a new print is the story. The story will always be the first thing, and it might come from experience or talking with family, or travelling to country. The beautiful thing is that my family know that I am doing these things and people come to me and say you should do a story about those Min Min lights, why not do this or why not do that. It is a beautiful way to keep sharing story, celebrating it, sharing it in the community but also sharing it with everyone else. I decide which story, do some sketching and refine my motif, play with colourways and fabrics, think about application and scale and things like that. I then scan it into the computer and spend some time working on it in Photoshop and Illustrator, get it into repeat, spend some more time on scale, and then I go into Publisher to get the screens made up and some strike-offs done. This is where I have a bit more of a play around with colourways and basecloths. The products within the range include scarves, bangles, lampshades, cushions and tea towels, and at this stage I have really only been doing it for around two years.

I am an independent designer, but I also represent my community and my family. The prints I create are not just based on my own stories, they are a shared story, so in that way there are a lot of things that I really have to understand and be aware of throughout the creation and manufacture process - respecting story and acknowledging family / community.

The first range was developed in neutrals, so you can see compared to the beautiful, amazing fabrics around here, they are quite pared back. But the idea in my mind was to create something that people could work into existing colourways along side other textiles within the home – kind of an introduction to Gaawaa Miyay. Recently I have developed some reds (of the Murrumurrugu / Ibis print) and things like that, just to bring that out and liven things up a bit.

-Thank you.

© Lucy Simpson 2013

Hand-printed silk scarf by Gaawaa Miyay
Koskela:
Sasha Titchkosky

I am from a company called Koskela. Koskela was founded in 2000 by my partner, Russel, and me. We have both come from different backgrounds but decided that we wanted to create an Australian made furniture and homewares design business. We work on large scale commercial projects as well as residential projects. Our clients include NAB, Commonwealth Bank, all the major miners, a lot of the property developers as well. This is our company ethos and motto, and the ethos that we live our lives by.

About five years ago, was the first Selling Yarns conference. About six years ago, I had not been to an Aboriginal community, I did not even know that there was weaving that was done as a traditional practice. I stumbled across it one day on the internet and started to research things.

We came up (north) and that gave me a bit more of an insight into what was really involved in producing weavings. From there we started to explore the possibility of actually combining traditional art forms with contemporary design.

We recently moved to a new 2000m² showroom space in Rosebery in Sydney. That has really given us the opportunity to showcase what we do to a much larger audience. We have really tightened the retail market there. We source as much as we can from producers from all around Australia, offering them an avenue to get exposure for their product lines. We also have a large cafe on site, we teamed up with a great chef, and that combination of design and food has worked really well.

This is the first project that came out of Selling Yarns 1 and 2 - Yuta Badayala means beautiful light. What we discovered when we were looking at what was involved in the weaving, was just how much time goes into creating one work. The collection, the stripping, the dyes, then the actual weaving process. For me, that meant that products that you would traditionally associate within the homewares and interiors market, woven products like place mats and coasters and things, we really could not develop those kind of products here using those traditional techniques because you could never really charge what the work was worth. Particularly when you are competing with products that come from South East Asia and were being sold for very little money.

We started to explore the possibilities around the development of lighting and we thought that would be a really interesting first step for this collaboration. We were very fortunate that Elcho embraced the concept. So both Dion Teasdale, the Art Centre manager, and most importantly, Mavis Ganambarr, thought it was a really interesting idea and thought it would be an interesting opportunity to develop a new market for their products.
This is a giant lampshade, it is 1.5m in diameter, and it is hanging in an exhibition at the moment at the Power House Museum. This collaboration has now produced over 120 lamp shades, involving about 50 women – 50 – 60 women – who come and go. There is a core group of women who have really embraced this project.

The feedback they have given to us is that it is really good money, we pay pretty well using a pre-agreed payment structure, which we developed with the Art Centre. We always work through the Art Centre, we never deal with the artists directly. The Art Centre receives a fee for administering the project. There is a sliding scale of payments, depending on which size and style of lamp shade the artist is weaving onto, and the price paid reflects whether or not the work is good or great. The artists themselves tell us that they are really excited when they get paid the top scale, that they have really created something that is fantastic.

We basically cannot keep up with demand. The lampshades are extremely successful, we have quite a few that are going into three new buildings that Qantas are creating for their headquarters in Sydney.

At the same time that we started talking to Elcho, we also started discussion with the Tjanpi Weavers about a possible collaboration. That was about four years ago, and we just launched their product range this year.

What that means is that when you are coming from a commercial background, you have to have very different time frames when you are looking at potentially developing some of these ideas. We learned to be patient.

We kept in contact with Tjanpi and they were having issues with the resourcing, but it has been really exciting to see those. We sold the whole of the first collection, we had one lampshade left and the word is slowly spreading around the communities that they work with.

Lastly, I thought it would be interesting to talk about the collaboration we have with Regina Wilson from Peppimenarti. We started talking to her a couple of years ago, about potentially translating some of her beautiful works into fabric designs. She was interested in talking to us, because she had heard about Yuta Badayala and she felt that we would be an organisation that would represent her well. She wanted to partner with someone that would maintain the standard of the work she was used to and that would not undermine her painting market, given that many of her large paintings sell for $30-40,000.

In the first range we did three different designs with her: syaw, dilly bag and message sticks. When we first started talking to her we had ideas to screen print the designs, but once we started to look into it there is so much detail in her work and there are so many beautiful things in there, all those individual brush strokes that we decided that digital printing would be a better technique to translate her designs. There were so many colours in a lot of them and we wanted to be able to reproduce those as that is what attracted us to her in the first place.

We felt that screen printing would be very difficult to try to reproduce that. This is message sticks and you can see a whole lot of the colours. We have printed that on linen. We also did a range of cushions on silks and then we also did these bed throws. We are working with her now on to play with the designs that we are commissioning her to do. She had an upfront commission that we paid to create the three designs, which were created specifically for this project.

Then Regina also receives a royalty on every item that is sold. We decided, in conjunction with her, and Harriet Fesq the Art Centre manager, that rather than selling the fabric as meterage we would turn it into product and sell it as a product.
Regina felt that was a better way of ensuring that the work was used in the way that she wanted it to be used and that reflected her position in the market place.

Now we are developing the range further and looking at things like combining some of the designs, piecing them together, playing with the scale of certain aspects of it. Even looking at the colours. This print we have blown up and had a look at what it is like in black and white, and I guess that is some of the things that digital printing allows you to do quite easily, which is pretty exciting.

The only other slide I have, which I just wanted to show you, this is a lino cut print that we developed with Ruthie Ganambarr up at Elcho -the other image is a Marimekko, a designer from Finland. I thought it was really interesting to see how you could translate some of these traditional things into something that is quite contemporary and that has very broad appeal. And then the other image that I thought was really interesting was this one, which is also a Marimekko, but it is so interesting to see the similarities there between some of those Tiwi patterns.

There is one more image. This is how you can create repeats and what you can do playing with colour. From our perspective, the more figurative designs are more difficult for us to sell, but we are one part of the market, whereas the pattern based designs is what we are looking for. This image is an example of traditional African beautiful textiles, but used in quite a beautiful way in quite a contemporary context.

© Koskela 2013

Bobbie Reuben

Bobbie is a practicing printmaker, screen printer and textile artist. She has recently relocated from Darwin where she has lectured and worked as Course Coordinator in the Cert IV in Visual Art & contemporary Craft in the School of Creative Arts & Humanities, Charles Darwin University. Bobbie has both instigated and been involved in the resurgence and success of many remote textile operations in the Northern Territory, and has facilitated several large and prominent commissions for indigenous artists. Bobbie is currently living in Cairns where she has been working on printmaking projects with artists from Far North Queensland, teaching in the Indigenous art program at Tropical North Queensland Institute of Tafe. She continues to travel back to to the NT to collaborate with remote area artists in the development of new textile designs. Bobbie is co-ordinating the UluuLpu National Indigenous Textiles Forum in Cairns in August 2013.

Textile Designer:

Bobbie Reuben

Hello to everyone and thank you to Gunbalanya for inviting me here to this conference at Injalak.

Apologies ahead of time if it is a bit scatty, but I was just going to run the slide show and talk about general things and worked out the slide show is a bit quick and the photographs are all so good. I will get the slides going and maybe talk about the slides a bit as well. I have chosen the title Big Business in Indigenous Textile Design which is a pretty big flashy title, but I feel that is where we are now. There are so many opportunities with where we are with this.
It is almost like a movement now in the Top End with textile design, printing and digital opportunities. I feel we have hardly infiltrated the marketplace where we can go with this; we have really only just touched the surface. As people have said, the fabrics produced in the Top End often do not go far beyond the Top End, so it is how to change this and working out how we want to change it.

We need to work out where do we want the fabrics to go, rather than waiting for people to tell us that they want the fabrics. We need to actually find a way forward for everyone working in the business here, working out where they want to go.

I first went to Babbarra Design in Maningrida about nine years ago. I was back there a few weeks ago and what I really noticed was how lovely it is to have this continuing work relationship with the artists out there and how we have grown together. Every time I go out it is a real collaboration with me getting quite intimately involved in the artwork to make it happen, as far as a screen printed product. Every time I do a workshop I come away with something new that I have learned, so it is a great learning process for everyone. I have worked in a lot of Top End communities in this sort of area. Merrepen, where I have just been, is the other centre that I have worked with a lot lately, but also eight years ago. Also Tiwi, with Bima Wear and Wadeye, however the two places that I have had the most involvement with are Merrepen Arts and Babbarra Designs, so that is where most of the photographs are from. We have had a few real successes in the past with bigger projects. With Babbarra we have had the Pandanus Project in Darwin where you will see a few photographs coming up. The artists were commissioned through an interior designer to provide the artwork for 300 rooms in a hotel in Darwin. That was a massive undertaking and a really feel good venture for everyone involved. Even the lucky tourists who get to stay in the rooms and see the artwork.

When these things happen, how do we capitalise on them and really take them that next step? I do get really excited every time I have been somewhere and there are all the new designs that come out, and how do we go forward?

The thing is, in a busy Art Centre it is very hard to take that step and find those opportunities. There are so many things that move you away from the things that you would like to do. My thought is that we need to form some type of small organisation or it could be under an umbrella organisation where the commissions can be found and it is about us finding the commissions rather than waiting for them to come to you. It is also deciding what sort of things, where would this work best for you and then targeting, rather than waiting for people to stumble across you.

We are a small place up here and there is a big world out there that has no idea about all the fabulous things that go on here.

For anything to be formed, there has to be appropriate structures. The first thing you do is the consultation process, where you go around and work out what everybody wants. Then research has to be done, especially when you are talking about Indigenous design, where do you want it to go? Textile printing is not like fine art printing on paper, where it is a limited edition. This is not a limited edition, and the sort of artwork you might like to have on something like a tea towel, is not the same as something that is going to be a great big panel on a wall. Sasha mentioned it with Marimekko, the success of Scandinavian textile design, and I have a few pictures coming up that demonstrate that.
In Scandinavia the textiles infiltrate the ethos of the culture and it is everywhere and it is really valued and it is iconic. When I look at the level of design and the standard of design that I see coming out of communities, I just know that it has got the potential to become something really much bigger than all of us. It is just working out how to do that.

That Unikko poppy (by Marimekko) is an example. It is a print that was designed 50 years ago, probably 60 years ago, and it is still as beautiful as it was then. All the designs being done now, and Maningrida must have 30 or 40 really good designs, they would be there forever with the right sort of archiving. This image is from the Mantra Pandanus Hotel in Darwin that we did the fit out for. The quality of work was amazing.

This is where Art Centres need not feel they can do it all themselves. They cannot. Whatever structures you have in place, you cannot do it all and it is about outsourcing and deciding who can do what.

You do have to be careful about getting the right people who are going to value add to what you are doing. I think it is really nice in the Art Centres where I have worked, where you have both streams. You have a lot of production in the Art Centres, so it is a place for proofing and coming up with new designs. But also, when it is something like this, where it is too hard and too big, even if you have the equipment, there are several places where you can easily go and have the designs printed – Publisher Textiles, for a start – where it is actually very economical to get beautiful large lengths of fabric printed. At Maningrida they do that as a matter of course, anyway. You lift up the phone and you have all the designs already down there and you order 20 metres of this, 50 metres of that and it is that easy for the Art Centre once it is set up.

Basically, the message I wanted to give is that we are in a really exciting place now. The work is all out there, there are so many designs we have to work with already and potentially so many more coming, it is just what we can do.

This image is the symposium at Charles Darwin University at the Convention Centre in Darwin. This is another commission for the Maningrida artists to come up with some new designs to print 10 metre panels and they were hung as banners. You walked into this otherwise very boring Convention Centre and it just felt like it was this magic place. The whole mood changed. We have all been wearing our skirts that we made last night and the night before, but the other thing is the potential. Rather than just making fabric and not knowing where it is going to end up, but finding projects, for example uniforms. There is one photograph in there of all the sea rangers from Yirrkala – Nhulunbuy, wearing Maningrida prints. Examples like this are a really great way to promote your fabrics.

The benefits would be huge, of having a small body to do your research and marketing, because Art Centres cannot take all of that on board, plus do all the production as well.

© Bobbie Reuben 2013

We make fabric at the Women’s Centre and other women make clothes out of our designs. I saw the ladies working here and I saw that I could do this work too. I could do it too and do it well and earn a living.

I started working with fabric in 1996, when I was a young woman, before I had children. I was already an artist, painting brolgas on bark and making baskets. I also make string. I am a good weaver and painter, which I do after work when I have the time. I learnt from my uncle and my mum as a child. Later I helped my husband.

I use my mum’s and my uncle’s and my husband’s designs. I make the tiles and I print them. I like to use lots of colours in my designs. White is my favourite colour, then green, then yellow, light blue and black. I use lots of colours when I do flowers and mat designs.

I like working by myself with my own designs and colours. I work by myself on my designs but with lots of other family and friends around, working hard.

In the future I would like to keep working with fabrics and printing my new designs.

-Belinda Kuriniya
Session 3: Copyright and the Money Story
Protecting the rights of Indigenous textile workers to make a living.

Viscopy:

Viscopy is a not-for-profit, member-based visual arts organisation. We are not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, we are for everybody, but over half of our members are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and that is because I think we have at least 32 Art Centres that are members of ours as well, so we represent all those artists that come with them.

We deal with visual artists when people want to reproduce their works, so we draw up licences and agreements for them, that is where we fit in.

Donna Carstens

Donna is a Mununjali women from Beaudesert in Queensland and has worked for the last 14 years in the community education and cultural sector. At the time of this forum, she was the Indigenous Outreach Co-ordinator for Copyright Agency and Viscopy and in this role travelled around Australia talking to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders artists in regards to Copyright, protecting their works and agreements/licensing in regards to their Visual Art. She is currently working the for Arts Law Centre of Australia.

I will give a basic run down on the types of prices to charge people. I do not know where it is at with the Art Centres, but I suppose what we are trying to do is not undercutting the market and not overselling the market. With everyone on the same par and everyone making sure that artists and people are getting the right sort of benefits and money in their works, being used appropriately and the consultation.

I was just going to talk a bit about fabric, but I will start talking a little about copyright. I was asked a few questions in the lunch break regarding copyright stuff. There are a couple of things I would like to say about copyright in the age of digital and the age of putting stuff on the internet and on computers. If you are uploading your images or putting stuff on the computers that you only upload low resolution images. If you put a high resolution image on the computer and pass it on to somebody else they are able to take that high resolution image and use it on whatever they want, even if they were not allowed to. It is really important that you only put low resolution images up if you are putting things on computers. I also suggest putting a watermark across things, so people cannot use your work as well.

Do people know what I mean by a watermark? Have you seen that over people’s image there is a little watermark. That is two things as far as protecting your work in this day and age, where people think that it is on the computer so we can use it for free, which of course is not true. Just be aware of those things.

The second thing with copyright is that usually the artist owns the copyright of the work. I say usually because there are a couple of reasons where they might not, and that is if they have been commissioned to do the work. I am employed by VisCopy, so anything that I create through VisCopy, VisCopy owns, even though I create it, because I am employed by them to create the work. That is a thing to look out for. Agreements and contracts are very important.
A lot of us in our Indigenous communities will talk to one another and say, you can have this work or you can use this work, or I give you permission. These days when we are working with art, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, becoming as popular as it has become, it is really important that your work is named, people know whose work it is, and agreements and licences are in place. It is really important, we work on white fella law with art and copyright and that means that everything is in writing.

**It is really important that any agreement that you make with artists and Art Centres is in writing and everyone understands what they are reading and signing.**

There are a few examples I have here. Through VisCopy, we were approached by a studio Fresh, they had chosen some artwork from Jilamara – Tiwi Island artwork. This is the original painting and as you can see they have only taken a small section of the painting as well. There is talk out there that everyone says, ‘I have only used a little bit of the painting so I do not have to worry about copyright’ – not true. If I can tell where it has come from, it is a distinguishable piece, then you have breached copyright. You will also hear people say I have not breached copyright because I have changed the colours. Not right – if I can still tell where that piece of artwork came from and what it looked like, you have breached copyright. As you can see, there is only a very small amount that has been used from that painting, but we know where it came from. They are things to be aware of as well.

There is a carpet case, I am not sure if people are aware of this, a group that came over, took (an artwork) back to India and made some beautiful carpets. The image they used... One, it was disrespectful for it to be used to be walked on – and they made carpets, so there is your first problem. Second, they did not ask permission. That community banded together and they ended up getting all those carpets back and they put them in a big fire in the middle and they burnt them. They said no go. If you do breach copyright and people find it, you will probably get a letter from a lawyer. Whether they take action on it...? Copyright is a funny thing; people think, ‘how much trouble will I get into’? Big organisations will weigh all that sort of stuff up, they will always come to us and ask how much is it to get a licence. They will respond: ‘I cannot afford that, I cannot pay that much’. Luckily we have lawyers on board, so they will pick up on that. It depends.

As far as the licensing aspect goes, it is really important: Do you have licenses and agreements with your artists in selling their works? What happens in the Art Centres when the works get sold? Do you have a specific agreement with your artists to say that when your work is sold you get this much or anything like that?

The agreement is really important. Art Centres work on a different level sometimes to what private people might work. It depends what you have set up at your Art Centres. I know that Arts Law is a good website to go to for agreements and licences if you need that drawn up between your artists.
You want your artists to understand what you are going to do with their artwork also, if you are going to reproduce it and things like that. That is why the agreements and the licences are very important.

The other thing I must say about the agreements is that it is more to protect yourself. As you know with Arts Law, they have great agreements that do protect you. Sometimes people do not understand what is happening with the work or where the work is going, so it is really important to have that agreement, so if someone comes back and says, ‘I did not give you permission to do that,’ you can pull out the agreement or pull out the licence, then they know what is going on.

Nobody wants people walking into a community and going, ‘Wow, I really love that picture there, I am going to go and see that artist and I want them to sign a piece of paper and get them to give me permission to use that.’ The artist signs it, and then that person goes away... and later the artist says, ‘I have all this work on coffee mugs and singlets and I did not sign that,’ when in fact they did. So it is really important that you have on the agreement, how long, how many, and even what area they are going to be sold in. If I came and saw an artist and said, ‘I want 200 shirts, and I am going to sell them in Darwin, and I will give you $1,000.’ They will say, ‘Yes, that is great;’ and they will sign the agreement. If I go and sell those 200 shirts, then I cannot just go and make another 200 shirts. I have to come back again and get another agreement or another licence from that artist to make another 200 shirts.

Audience question: What was the agreement with Studio Fresh?

Donna: The agreement for Studio Fresh; it was an individually negotiated agreement, with specific terms and conditions and Viscopy has agreements for small and large manufacturing agreements. We always get the artist approval for the layout first – what we were talking about before about the layout and the colour and stuff like that, so we always get that approved by the artist first. Make sure they are happy with the design, the copy and repeats, colourways and of course, the cultural issues, if you are using something that is coming from community, rather than just yourself. We had a couple of problems where we had got to this stage with people making things and the artists giving their works and then people pulling out. All this work had been done and the artists were not being paid, so it is good to have a fee for development stage in case it does not go into production. That is one thing we do now, is put that in.

Licensing is Viscopy’s main business, and I think they learnt that the hard way, because there was a few big things, where they had spent months and months negotiating and then it got to the end and these companies would just say, no, too hard basket and then of course we miss out and the artists miss out. There was an agreement with an interior fabric company that we spent a lot of time on and the artists came to meetings to approve layout and samples, etc. and the range did not end up going to market, so we were unable to get any money for the artists and their time.

We have a one-off commission fee for new work. If an artist is involved in translating work for textiles we have a flat fee, per hour. See NAVA (National Association for the Visual Arts), they have an artist scale, and fees and wages as your tariff on their website to have a look at. The scarves and the purses are the only fabric things that we have done, so far with VisCopy. The material and fabric stuff for us is very new. We are usually dealing with mugs, post cards, all that sort of stuff through the galleries. Someone asked a question about t-shirts. For the merchandise, we licence at 20%, so 20% of the retail price will go back to the artists. That is what we do then.

Coolamon design by Kieren McTaggert
Sometimes artists say, that is not enough, that is my work, but they do not take into consideration that fabric that is being used, the amount of ink being used, etc - the price is put on top of things like that.

Commission fee for new artworks is separate to VisCopy, plus the percentage of sale price. If it is coming from a painting, there is a commission fee paid first, a one-off fee for using it and then a fee for every use of that material afterwards. We charge 10% of the retail price per metre for fabric, that’s what VisCopy is charging. I do not know what the Art Centres are charging or what you want to be charging, but that is what VisCopy charges. VisCopy takes 25% of that 10%. Because we are not-for-profit, whatever fee is charged for use of the artist’s work, we take 25% of that. That is for us doing up the licence and the agreement. If it is a dress that is being made then it is 20% of the retail price that we charge for the artist. It depends what type of agreement you have with your artists, and what sort of fee you want to pay your artists, but that is what we pay.

That is why I was so impressed before, when I was talking to you guys, and how many of you are actually doing it in your Art Centres yourself. In the long run, part of my job of going out and educating, is to hopefully assist the Art Centres, so that the 25% is not coming to VisCopy anymore, that Art Centres are able to manage that process. When you join VisCopy, you do not have to be with us forever. If there came a time where your Art Centre was able to take over, all you need to do is write us a letter and say you do not want to be a member of Viscopy anymore. It costs nothing to join VisCopy, and you get charged 25% only if we do the work on your behalf.

**Audience Question: Can you still do other work without involving Viscopy?**

Absolutely, but if you are a member of ours then please ring us up and say, ‘we are doing this work and I am not charging them’, otherwise you will have our people looking through books, and we’ll say, ‘no one got a licence for that’. That is really important.

There is another thing too, about selling stuff, and always having a bio-line on photographs or on your garments. Someone said about the copyright ©, and do you need the ©? you do not need to have the © on there to have anything to be copyrighted, but it is a good idea because it is a nationally recognised symbol. If someone sees that copyright symbol, they know that it is copyrighted and they cannot copy it. It is funny how people’s brains work, if it does not have the copyright symbol on it they think they can copy it. It’s also really important to date work. Taking photographs, dating things, naming things, and keeping those things.

Another thing with the agreements - I was out at an Art Centre, I reminded them that they need to have the agreements and licences signed, and that people know what they are signing - and I had this poor artist ring up two weeks later and she said, ‘I signed an agreement, and I agreed with everything, but I have not got a copy.’ I say, make sure that you keep the copies yourself also, so that you have them in your files. This poor artist had to ring up and lucky they were a nice organisation and they gave her a copy of it. By rights, they did not have to, if she did not keep her own copy. The paperwork trail is very important.

That is why I was so impressed before, when I was talking to you guys, and how many of you are actually doing it in your Art Centres yourself. In the long run, part of my job of going out and educating, is to hopefully assist the Art Centres, so that the 25% is not coming to VisCopy anymore, that Art Centres are able to manage that process. When you join VisCopy, you do not have to be with us forever. If there came a time where your Art Centre was able to take over, all you need to do is write us a letter and say you do not want to be a member of Viscopy anymore. It costs nothing to join VisCopy, and you get charged 25% only if we do the work on your behalf.

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**That is one of the important conversations, that maybe needs to be had with all Art Centres, we do not want to be under or over selling the market, we all need to be on the same par.**
This is so that no one is selling their work really low and then people go to a community and say, ‘I bought it for $2 at this community, why are you selling it for $20?’ It is really important that we are all on that same sort of level of what we are expecting for our products. I do not know if you agree with that, but that is just something that I have found and that I have heard in communities.

I have got scarves and things too (here). These ones were made by a company in America. These are not Australian made. Most of the stuff these days is sent overseas. Scary to say it, but it is – Bali, China, all those places. Because this was an American company, we have sister-based companies overseas, this has the copyright, the artist’s rights society New York, but then they have VisCopy Australia, because we still represent that artist.

That might be something to think about. Half of the works that are in the tourist shops are done by people in China in factories that are copying works. There is follow up on that, but as you can imagine it is hard work, again, people on the ground are trying to find out. They do follow up and they do get them, but it is not an easy process by any means. A lot of that stuff that you see in the tourist shops is not legitimate.

Put it on the bottom of your t-shirts, put a tag on the bottom of your scarves - copyright © who it is - this work belongs to so-and-so and you cannot reproduce it.

We had one gentleman who came into us who wanted to do some work and he bought in a painting and he said, ‘I want to do it like this and I want to do it in all these pastel colours…’ Now that is his own property, but I was mortified. There was no consultation with community: it was ‘I just found this picture, I liked it and I want to use it’. I had another woman who rang me: ‘I am in America and I want to do something with Aboriginal stuff, I just wanted to check in, because I made my own little dot design on the brochure.’ Again, not her fault, uneducated and not thinking. I said, ‘Why would you want to do that? …when there are so many Aboriginal paintings out there? She replied, ‘I never thought of that.’ That is the way people think. Unless you are in it, and you are speaking about it all the time, that is what you are up against, those sort of things.

From our artists’ point of view you want to make sure that you have agreements in place and that they understand what the agreements are and that there is a paper trail if there is any trouble.

NOTE: Since July 2012, Viscopy’s services have been managed by Copyright Agency and the organisation is now known as Copyright Agency-Viscopy (www.copyright.com.au)

© Copyright Agency-Viscopy 2013
Rose and Angus Cameron

Nomad Art Productions and Gallery is a creative and ethical retail business dedicated to the production and marketing of limited editions and collections of fine art and craft and supporting artists and Indigenous Art Centres from remote and regional Australia. Since inception in 2005, Nomad Art Productions has become a leading gallery and outlet for quality Indigenous prints and product in Australia. Directors, Angus and Rose Cameron have earned a reputation of being innovative and ethical managers of this important art gallery. Nomad Art focuses on art that involves cross-cultural collaborations between artists and master practitioners. A large range of limited edition prints, bronze, jewellery, carpets, rugs and textiles make up the unique and beautiful selection of fine art and craft at Nomad Art.

Fabric and the Money Story:
Rose and Angus Cameron

Angus: Thank you very much for that warm welcome. I want to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and the organisers of this festival. It is a real privilege to work in the Indigenous arts industry and I acknowledge the role played by ANKAAA and the Indigenous Art Centre movement, which we support and are closely aligned.

Firstly I will run through a bit of background about Nomad Art and what we do. Rose will also talk a little about product in terms of fabrics and what we look for. We will also talk about the clients and what they are looking for, our core values, and the values of our clients. We will also talk about services we provide beyond being a retail gallery, these include projects, education kits and money story for Art Centres.

Rose and I began Nomad Art in 2005. We both have a background in the Darwin arts industry. After teaching art in secondary schools, I worked with the Association or Northern Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA) for three-years, I also worked at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) as Education Manager.

In the meantime Rose worked at Charles Darwin University at Northern Editions, Coordinated the Telstra Art Awards at MAGNT and was the Manager of Tiwi Island Art Network. Through these experiences we gathered quite a bit of experience which culminated in setting up a gallery specialising in limited editions and textiles. There was no one in Darwin working in that niche, when we created Nomad Art. That meant we could be a colleague to other galleries and Art Centres, not just a competitor. So we work closely with other like-minded galleries, who also work with Art Centres so we have a close affinity with the Art Centre movement.

The essential focus of our business is limited edition prints. We have also initiated a number of projects over the years, particularly cross-cultural projects, which explore different knowledge traditions, and ways of looking at synergies between western science, environment, culture and Indigenous knowledge.

**We have been working with fabrics and textiles since 2005. The fabric industry has really developed enormously over that time.**

Rose Cameron: It is interesting that Angus has up on the screen a photo of our first gallery, which was really tiny and you can see in the foreground there some of Bobbie Reuben’s fabrics, Bobbie was only one of our first fabric artists that we represented. The other fabrics on the shelves with Bobbie were Tiwi Design. So in 2005 we had Bobbie Reuben and Tiwi Design. Babbarra were getting underway, but it was a few years before they could manage enough supply. They were selling so well on their community and it took a while before they could supply Nomad Art, but they could be our number one seller now. Bobbie is so busy working with communities that we do not stock Bobbie’s fabric anymore.
So what we look for at Nomad is a good quality fabric, that is the primary thing. The fabric needs to be a linen or drill and to be durable. Our clients are paying $80-100 per metre for fabric, it needs to be able to be applied to many different usages. So it could be interior design and upholstery as well as being stretched and displayed on the walls or worn as apparel. I purposely decided not to go into the fashion market at all, I do get asked about clothes all the time. I am very happy to sell metres of fabric and give people ideas on how they can use it. That is a constant question. Product development is something that the industry does really need to consider and pursue.

The fabrics represent geographical regions, which is an important component. The artists all have really different and unique designs, very different because they are coming from different geographical regions with different cultural stories.

In terms of production, the market will actually decide and it will dictate what it wants. We can get 10 fabrics in and one will just walk out the door the moment it comes in and therefore that one will be reproduced, if the artist so chooses, if the artist is tired of doing that design that stops and another one comes into its place.

Some questions for the Industry and artists:
- How much of one design do you want to reproduce?
- How much experimentation and development do you want to continue with?
- Do you want to print the fabrics or just design them?
- How do you allow space for innovation?

Angus: Our clients are really important, we have certain principles, standards and an aesthetic but obviously, they dictate to us a lot of what we do. They also link with our core values and by and large it is also fair to say that our clients are also incredibly supportive of this industry and of Art Centres. They want quality fabrics, they are wanting hand printed fabrics, the fact that they are made by Indigenous artists is really important. It is almost like a political statement that if you are wearing a garment, it is associated with the values it represents. That also links in with our own core values.

The most important value is that we are supporting artists on Art Centres and their abilities to create, sell and market their work. Part of that is supporting Indigenous employment. But there are lots of questions in terms of what people want, how they want to produce, how they want their fabrics to be used, how much work is produced at the Art Centre, or if they prefer for it to be done in different ways, these are the questions for the artists and the Art Centres to think about. We work with about 50 Aboriginal Art Centres, across various mediums, including limited edition prints. Probably about six or seven Art Centres produce fabrics. As Rose said, that diversity is incredibly important. We feel really privileged to be working with those artists and that amazing diversity of work.

The cultural diversity, this is a really rich and important thing that people really value and we value as well.

Nomad Art presents people and their work. We are always explaining to people where the work is from, how it is made, what the designs are, why they are important. We see that as a critical part of what we do. We display and present exhibitions of work to new markets, new bodies of clients. Our gallery is in Parap, Darwin. Parap has a market on Saturday mornings which attracts many people. Lots and lots of people are coming through the gallery, seeing these works often for the first time and coming to Darwin or the Top End for the first time, so we are constantly introducing and presenting the work to new audiences. Bringing people together, the artist and the client.

We had an exhibition opening recently with the Injalak artists. There were lots of supporters and friends, it was a really wonderful gathering of people and it reinforces relationships, care and support and that is always a real joy.

Nomad Art can assist with marketing and promotion. We see ourselves as almost an extension of the Art Centre business, that we are working in conjunction with them, marketing their products, finding new audiences, doing a lot of the presentation. We really feel that we are part of an Art Centre team, in a sense.
Rose: Following on from the idea of exhibitions and profiling the fabrics (as Angus showed in the slides before with work hanging up on the wall) we usually buy between 4-8 metres of work for display and exhibition. That work will turn over very quickly. People can walk in the door and want that piece of fabric, then and there. We are constantly challenged by the issue of supply. If we have an exhibition up we might ask the purchaser if the work can stay on the wall for the month or at least a few weeks, so at least a few more people can get to see it. One of the questions for Nomad Art at the moment is do we take orders for a piece of work that is on exhibition or is it a unique piece? This is important for the Art Centres to think about. They have to do lino cut fabrics and we know that they are all unique and that is a really easy scenario. But when you get into the screen printing or the digital printing and can produce many more lengths. These are a few questions for the industry from a gallery point of view.

_Do you want to release a range in particular colours that people can then come back and order - or do you want to keep creating?_

One of the services Nomad Art has facilitated over the years is the money story. This is put together for the artists, and Art Centres. Each presentation is done specifically for different Art Centres. It is looking at things like the cost of running the Art Centre, the cost of production, what does the artist get back, how do the printers get paid. Other questions can be considered like do we produce product in the Art Centre so the money stays within the Art Centre, or do we outsource it?

The next slide is showing a breakdown of the money story or money cake, this is a very general map of how the costs are spread across the business, along with costs of developing products and where the money comes from. Other breakdowns can look at how much can you sell the product for and if you are going to be able to get that money back? How many pieces of that product do you need to make, so therefore it becomes a sustainable and viable return?

The money story is something that we have done in the past, particularly with Waringarri Arts in Western Australia, where we did a whole money scenario for paintings and exhibitions and also a print project. This was sponsored by ANKAAA and done in conjunction with one of the Art Centre workers who then presented the information, so everyone in the Art Centre understood exactly where the money was split up, what the costs were, and could then make informed decisions on that basis. This pie chart, is the kind of thing that we would present to an Art Centre or much better still, one of the artists or Art Centre workers would present this to the Art Centre.

The example is a wholesale price for one metre of fabric (this is a generic example only), how much might go to the printer, how much might go to the Art Centre, how much might go to the artist, how much for fabric and ink, how much goes to the Art Centre in administration and running costs.

The second scenario is what then happens in a retail environment, at the Art Centre shop or at a gallery. They need to take into consideration the extra costs of selling the work, or the work going to an art gallery. How much of the price is going back to the Art Centre? What is the breakdown of costs, like staff wages, running costs, marketing and promotion, and then how much is profit for the art gallery or the Art Centre or retail enterprise. It is quite a varied scenario, which has particular applications for every Art Centre, for every product and it is something that artists and Art Centres really need to think carefully about.

Thank you very much.

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Money Story for the Art Centre

Art Centre wholesale price = $40 metre (single colour, cotton)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop &amp; Administration</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials &amp; Equipment</td>
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<td>Power and water</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pack &amp; freight</td>
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<td>New screens</td>
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<td>Insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fabric &amp; Ink</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printer</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art Centre - 18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshops &amp; Projects</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist Fees</td>
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<td>Profits</td>
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Frances Rrikili was born at Galiwinku in 1962. She mostly spent time with her mother and father at Howard Island (Layarra) when she was 8 and 10. She started going to school at the age of 12.

She used to go hunting with her uncle Steven, her father’s brother. Rrikili was always close to Steven Bukuluway. Steven painted in a style similar to a Albert Namitjira. Frances used to watch him with his water paints, painting the view by hand.

In 1970 Rrikili and her family shifted to Milingimbi to her father’s mother’s land. Then she went to school at Milingimbi where she started to draw things and paint. In 1980 Rrikili finished her schooling. She worked in literacy and illustrated bilingual books for children. In 1985 Rrikili and her family moved to Ramingining. There she became an artist.

Frances learned painting in Balanda-style and Yolngu-style (ochres on canvas). There were art courses at the women’s centre in Ramingining and she learnt lino printing on fabric. And then she went to Nungalinya college in Casuarina and learned screen printing, marbling and batik.

Rrikili now uses her accumulated skills to print her designs on fabric. Frances’ designs feature her ancestor totems, the Djan’kawu sisters. Frances will be showing her latest designs at a fashion parade at the Ramingining festival in September.

Frances is currently seeking a suitable studio in Ramingining in which to operate her independent textile business.

-written by Frances Rrikili
Thank you everyone. It is a delight to be here. Thank you to everyone on the community who has made this week really special. It is wonderful being out the back of the Art Centre doing dyeing and looking straight out over the billabong, looking at the beautiful landscape.

To begin with, I thought it would be interesting to see how many people in the audience have some experience of digital printing on fabric. I can see that there are around six and a half people who have got some experience. That is actually quite interesting because when I first started teaching digital design and printing, 25 years ago, people were really frightened of the process. At that time not many people had actually worked on a computer, never mind tried to do something creatively in a design sense. And indeed, what came out was just large squares, with pixellated images like younger people would not believe now. The whole digital thing has changed remarkably. We have just kind of moved on so far.

The first thing is that you work with a computer. Whether you do that yourself or someone else does the digital work – a computer is involved. You need to work with the digital printing equipment/business. The kind of things that happen are changing really rapidly. I am including this image in my presentation as an example of thinking about fashion and the fashion design industry, which has just changed noticeably in the last couple of years.

I have just been in Britain and the shops are just flooded with digital printed fabric. Everywhere, photographic prints, multi-coloured prints, it is like digital print overload, at the moment.

Valerie Kirk

Valerie studied art and design at Edinburgh College of Art and was captivated by the creative process/infinite possibilities of the tapestry medium. In 1979 she came to Australia to become a weaver at the Victorian Tapestry Workshop, and then worked in all states of Australia before moving to Canberra in 1991 to be the Head of Textiles at the Australian National University, School of Art. She has held several solo exhibitions and presented her work in USA, Europe, Australia, NZ and SE Asia. As an artist, writer, teacher and public figure she has made a significant contribution, forging valuable and tangible links with the Scottish tradition and global field. She is currently working with Louise Hamby on an Indigenous fabric printing research project.
The fashion industry, the interior industry, all products are now being produced through digital printing.

And the process: here (in the slide) we have the fabric - and the digital printer requires a coated fabric. This is the kind of fabric which is especially produced for the digital printing. Twenty years ago my students were all experimenting. They wanted to print on fabric with digital printing and so they themselves would stiffen fabric and put it through their home printer, A4 sized sheets, trying to get print on fabric. Now we have all this fabric specially produced through companies ready for printing.

There are different ways of printing on fabric, either the fabrics are printed with dyes or they are printed with printing inks, but the main thing with digital printing, which is really different compared with the screen printing is that you can have as many colours as you want.

You can have a completely photographic image. If you think about printing your photographs on paper there is no restriction on the number of colours. That is exactly what happens in digital fabric printing. Pass this one around. It is a test piece from America. It demonstrates that there are no restrictions on the number of colours used in digital printing. These samples show some of the testing. Though with digital printing, the colour quality depends a lot on the operator of the machine. If you are working with someone who really knows the digital printer, also someone who has a good visual eye, they will be able to match the colours in the artwork to the colours in the print. I will pass these samples around and you can see this work by an artist and colleague, Annie Trevillian. The companies she works with would send her samples and she would look at the colours until the colours were right and then have the fabric digitally printed.

Also, this is to show you digital prints on different types of fabric. So here is cotton canvas, the next one is on velvet and the next one is on a seedy silk. The image which is on the screen is like a test blanket of colours and then some of the small swatches on velvet, just to get the colours right.

For artists and designers working at the top end this process is really vital to get good quality work. In Australia there is certainly three good companies which are producing very good digital fabric printing. They are companies that have a person who you can actually talk to, someone who will do the sampling, who will send it back to you, have the discussion and get it right. There are also people who will do the digitisation before the printing, so you do not have to do a lot of the computer work yourself, you can send the artwork off and it can then be digitised, put into repeat and printed. This process now costs a lot of money. You are talking about $100 per hour for the digitisation process and you are paying about $100 per metre for printing and on top of that you pay the price of the base fabric, that is about $25 per metre, that is on top of that. So you are paying about $150 per metre, for this high level of digital printing.

This image is the printer in operation and you can see that it is a large machine and it has a roll of fabric. The print just comes through the roll, so you can do 1 metre or you can print 500 metres. It is all at the press of a button, the fabric just keeps rolling through. This quantity of printing is really important when people think about environment and sustainability, because it means that you do not have to print 500 metres of a fabric and then find out that the design is not very popular, sitting on the shelves for a long time.
It means that, in the ideal world, people can have designs printed up on demand and you would only print the amount that is required, in that way there is no wastage.

The printed fabric has to be steamed to set the fabric and then the fabric is washed so that good quality means that then you have a fabric that is washable and that the dyes are permanent. This is really important if you are selling at that high level.

I have talked about design industries, fashion, interiors, but also this fabric is used to produce one-off art works. These are small canvas stretchers, where the fabric is stretched over the canvas. We know that lots of people go into Nomad Gallery and they buy a piece of fabric and stretch it over a stretcher and they hang it on the wall, and that is what they want to do with it.

I am going to talk a little bit about Spoon Flower, which is a company in America. It has become really popular because it is so accessible and it is relatively cheap. The business has been set up, really for hobby producers, people working at a more amateur level and for students. Students all use Spoon Flower because they can afford it. Spoon Flower prints with pigment on fabric, so there is immediately a difference in the quality. They print on a limited range of fabric types. You have to do all the preparation, all the digital work, feed it into their limited program on their website, and send it off. So all the design and digital preparation has to be done through Photoshop or through another program in advance. This is a student’s sample. She used an artwork which was made with artificial crystals and sequins, that she photographed and then put the image through a repeat system and this is the fabric.

Digital printed fabric is becoming really accessible and very popular. People can make one-off pieces, they can try things out, text and experiment, and there is a whole new thing happening. I know when we first started talking about digital printing people were worried that it would just be very commercial, like Spotlight fabric. Nobody would want to have that fabric because it would be really made by a machine, not made by hand and it would not have the kind of aesthetic qualities that people would want.

I just put this in because I thought it was a beautiful image of how digital printed fabric can be designed, produced and be a good product. Here is another example of fabric and textiles used by designers transforming our ideas of what digital print can be.

The last three slides I have are of an experiment with Babbarra Design, Maningrida. We have not had time to really discuss these samples as they are hot off the press. It has just been an experiment that we have worked on over the last few weeks - hard to get this together because all of us have been very busy with the Art Fair. What we did was: Babbarra selected lino printed images that they wanted to put into repeat and digitally printed. Here, the first image on the left, is the original lino cut, on the right is the artwork that one of my students, Jasmine Masri, prepared.

She was making a repeat, adding in the colour, ready to send off, because we literally got the images in the morning and we sent it off in the afternoon, so it was ‘we have to get this in the post or it was not going to be here for Injalak’. I had it printed on different weights of fabric, so we could just do some testing on fabrics, this is from Spoon Flower in America. This is on a light cotton, this one. You can see that colours have been added in and she is playing around with the idea that you can have lots of colours added in, you know, you can keep adding spots of colour into a design. You can put as many colours in as you want. This one is a cotton jersey fabric.
I knew I was not going to be 100% happy, because we had not had enough time to do the digital preparation. There were white lines going through the design that I would like to erase. Of course you can do that with more design preparation, but interesting to just think about what scale the image should be at, how you work with colour, how you do the opaques/transparencies. There are a whole lot of things that need to be considered.

This is the next one, with two different fabrics again, a light cotton and a heavier cotton. This last one, when I looked at this I got a bit of a shock. When Jasmine gave me the digital image, I could not even think which original lino cut this came from because it looks so different. To me, this is the kind of thing a lot of people do on Photoshop, it has that very Photoshopped look. There has got to be more of you in there and less of Mr Photoshop.

I have one last little experiment. In this one I wanted to do some printing from the photograph. This is a piece which was originally a lino cut on fabric and then hand-coloured with fabric paints, which I photographed at Maningrida. In the original the artist had to sit and colour every little section in by hand. I could see when Helen was doing this that it was taking her a day to do a little section of hand-colouring. With this photograph I put it into repeat and printed. As many colours as she wanted to work with would be printed on the fabric through this process. The downside would be with this I think, is that it is very thin fabric and you do not get great colour.

At this stage, does any one have any questions about any of this or do you need any clarification of anything? Anything you really want to say?

**Audience member: The cost terrifies me...**

Valerie: I think cost is a big consideration, because digital printing is very expensive, it is hugely expensive at that top end.

**Audience member: There is no guarantee that you are going to get that colour.**

Valerie: If you are working with a good company you would be paying a high price you would get very good results.

**Audience member: Is this a stage in the industry, will the costs come down?**

Valerie: Yes. If you have your work printed in China or India you can get things done relatively cheaply, you do not have the same guarantee as you have working with a company in Australia. It is still early days, so all of that is really going to keep rolling along. It is like a juggernaut just now.

**In India, I have been to factories where as far as the eye can see there are digital printers with ten gallon drums of dye, and they are producing for the high end of the British interior market.**

For the communities, that is a consideration. If you get something that can be done in partnership or in collaboration, so that there is a set commission, or a project that they are working towards, so that people can look at these possibilities and get the experience. Actually, some in the Indigenous textile industry are concerned that with digital printing, more people are coming on board doing printing. Is the market going to be flooded with fabric? Does digital printing mean that everyone can do it easily? So does that mean there will be too much fabric?

Talking to Mette (Bassham, fashion designer) in Darwin, she was adamant that Indigenous people should keep hand printing because it kept hands busy and kept people employed. I suppose for me I think there is room for diversity.
I think there will always be a demand for the handmade and the handcrafted, but there is also going to be new areas where we would want to use digital printing.

I expect what will happen is that things will go both ways. I actually felt last night that India is a good example. When Manchester invented roller printing, the kind of printing we have now, the block printing industry in India went right downhill, lots of people lost their jobs, and block printing almost disappeared. But we are in a time where block printing is being revived, because people understand the value of the handmade and they want these handmade fabrics. At the same time, in the factories of India they are doing a huge amount of digital printing. Possibly, these things could exist side-by-side. People can still be handprinting.

Actually, Babbarrra is interesting. When we were there, the women were talking about the block printing and the lino printing, they do like that activity, but they find the screen printing very strenuous and hard work. They would like to spend more time designing. If they could be designing and having fabric printed somewhere else, that is something that they would be interested in. We also heard from one community who have no fabric printing facilities on the community and they think they will bypass hand printing and go straight to digital printing, because they can just do the designs and have them printed in a different place.

When we talked to people from Erub (Darnley Island, Torres Straits), they have products made in Melbourne and the men love designing on computers. So they want to start to make a business designing sportswear using their designs. The men will have control of the designs and sending them out to be printed. I think there will be lots of options, it will not be the same for everybody. It will be different for different people, for different circumstances.

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Linda Jackson

Linda has played a significant part in the development of a distinctly Australian approach to fashion and the art of textile design. Working as an artist outside the conventional fashion marketplace, she devised unique forms of clothing that evolved beyond the sphere of seasonal trends. As early as 1980 Linda was travelling out to remote communities in the NT to work with artists on screen printing and painting projects, including in 2009 a digital scarf collection with Mossman Gorge artists for Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. Most recently Linda has been exploring “Colour”…looking at microscopic photos of gem opal and translating the shimmering layers of colour captured in rock, with paint and dye on canvas and cloth. Linda has also created a series of digital print scarves from these artworks.

Australian Fashion Designer:

Linda Jackson

First I want to thank everyone who enabled me to come here, it is just such a thrill. I first came here in 1994, which is a long time ago. Felicity Wright had set up a program where I would come and do screen printing and painting, beading and different things like that with the women, so we could encourage the women to come in to the Art Centre and start making and creating some different work. What is happening now is so fantastic, it is such a thrill to see, it is just jumping with creative energy this week. We have the women on their side, the sewing, weaving and the whole creativity happening like that, it is just wonderful to see.
I have been working with the women at Mossman Gorge for the last seven years and doing different screen printing and painting, sewing, whatever sort of things they wanted to do to help set up their Art Centre. The artwork that is here was a Creative project specifically for the first Cairns Indigenous Art Fair and I was working with Lorna Shaun. This is her work, it is her Cassowary, which is a gorgeous print.

But actually I am a techno dinosaur, I know nothing about the computer part of this. This was all cut and paste in the old fashioned way using paper, the lino print, and also working closely with Penny at Think Positive Prints, in Sydney. She really wanted to work with the artists in the community in a collaborative way that went with their lino prints and with their artwork on paper. Penny would send a sample print halfway through, so everyone could be involved in the actual process of sampling and adding more detail. We decided to specifically print scarfs, which are the ones that are hanging up here. The decision was not to make a square scarf. The project plan with Arts Queensland was to have this really beautiful art piece that was a limited edition work and the rectangle really suits the artists work. It is also a really fabulous scarf to wear, you also could hang it, which was part of how we displayed them all, but you could hang them as a scroll or you could have it framed so it was like a real art piece.

Back to Lorna’s work….. the original art, this is Lorna’s lino print, this little section here. It was easy when all this was done to say to Penny, ‘Can you make it black and white and change to white and black’, so I could sit there to work with Penny on the computer and then she sent the samples so that the artist could approve. We decided, this was the shape of the scarf, this was Lorna’s artwork, we printed it on paper, I made the size of the scarf, and then it was the discussion. It already had a small border, so we had to put the border all the way around. This is really working with the artist together, Now Lorna, what do you want to put in this section here, the scarf has to be this long and you need to like how the artwork is looking. That was sent to Penny as actual artwork on paper, nothing to do with the computer from our end and then Penny would send us it all back and we would look at the samples. That image is Lorna wearing her scarf and that is some of the handprinted fabrics that were displayed at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, the inaugural one. That scarf was a hit and we sold like 30 in two days, we were mobbed, it was amazing. The girls could not believe it, it was so exciting.

This image is from working with one of the tour guides, Roy Gibson, who inspired the concept for the Mossman Gorge Dreamtime Tours and Art Centre over 20 or 25 years ago. He paints shields sometimes, but he had painted a lot of artwork on paper. He is one of the Elders so he could hand down the different designs for all of the shield paintings specifically for Mossman Gorge. Through our discussion it was decided I would photograph every single one of his shield paintings, of which there was 30 of them, photograph them, print them out, copy them on lots of different pieces of paper. This image is a cut and paste with paper and scissors, working out the size of the scarf. They are such beautiful designs. Instead of doing one big shield, which as a fabric print would look fantastic, but as a scarf there would be large areas of white and it was nicer to have a collage together with all of his designs. This is the cut and paste. I would sit with Roy and together work out the positions of the shields. The border on the edge actually was cutting up a shield to represent the sword, which is so heavy, those guys must have been so strong, because it is very thin but it is really solid wood. The thin line right around the edge represents that.

Then I deliver the artwork on paper to Penny. There was a bit more work with this scarf on the computer, because she had to fix all the edges of every single cut, because they showed up too much, they were not really perfect. Then she sent us a sample. This image is Roy - and what a gorgeous place to work in! Surrounded by the rainforest...

This image shows how they are printed. The decision in the width of the fabric tells you what you are doing. You either have two great big scarves or you have three scarves across, printed this way like that. Our Shield strike-off that was sent was three scarves like that, so you could check the colours. The white was left as white silk, so the white colours were changed to a pale cream. Then we approved that and Penny would do another strike-off and send that so the artists could see it and give it the tick of approval. We printed 100 of
each one. Once you have those set-up costs you can keep printing forever. Specifically for us, we were only wanting to do the scarves as a really beautiful special object, not thinking of repeats.

This image is Pam. So you can actually see the size of her lino print on paper, she is filling in the edges. Once again we had to make it exactly the size of the scarf and her print was only that big, work out what the border was, and then also fill in the end. That is Mossman Gorge at the top, that is Mossman River, the head of the snake is actually Mossman Gorge -in the rainforest it was Pam’s decision to paint the butterflies. That is Mossman River that flows out at Cooya Beach where there are dugongs. That was Pam’s decision for filling in the space, to make a beautiful artwork, to put the dugongs at the bottom. That was sent back and we had been talking about telling the story, because the women there love telling their stories, you can see here all around the edge, on paper again, Pam wrote the story. That was another strike-off that was done and sent to Penny, then she sent it back for approval.

You can see that is my cut out paper, but because I have also done a lot of screen printing, it is a similar process in a way of layering the screens like that, so I guess I think of it in that manner. It was easy because I could stick it all together properly with Pam, together. It was easy for Penny to fix all the little edges and have the discussion about how to do it quite simply and easily. That is one of the first strike-offs that came back. The scarf is in the middle and we had to put the extra bits of paper on the ends to make sure that it did become the right size. We did not want to stretch anything or alter the size, it had to be exactly as the artwork. The top one is the next one that I am talking about, but they were sent together on the same strike-off. I thought well, we are doing the black and white, and I said to Penny, flip it, so we get the white and black, they are actually quite different looking, and lots of people would buy two scarves!! The other thing is, it was very easy to say, can’t we put that black layer on top of colour. You have a separate black image, so we decided it was up to Pam to do painting and screen printing some different colour combinations, which we then sent to Penny, then she sent the samples back with the black on top of the colour and that is when you get the one that is in the middle. In a way, it was saving costs, because we were using that artwork and doing different colour combinations. That is how the strike-offs came back the first time. Then we used these images to make beautiful little cards and the stickers that went on each of the boxes that the scarves went into and they looked really gorgeous. Actually, what we did was each one had a documentation that went into the box that was exactly that shape with the story and the signature on it, because they were a Limited Edition collection.

One of things, I have always loved using leaves and gum leaves like that in the late 1970’s with my Bush Couture hand prints. The artists at Mossman, I showed them a few techniques like that and they went for it. Because outside their amazing studio shed space is this unbelievable rainforest, with all these amazing leaves. Pam and Fiona really got into that, they even collected leaves that were for food, leaves that were for weaving, and things like that, so they really meant something, not just any leaf from a tree! Fiona printed all these t-shirts, and this image is Fiona and Pam printing a t-shirt. I photographed the t-shirts and printed them out, all these different sections of these images you see, and then with Fiona we stuck those pieces of paper together. This is really still without the computer, that is when it gets to the city from the bush. This image is one of the butterflies from the forest.

So I sent the artwork on the paper to Penny and she did the stitching, as you say, together on the computer, sent a sample of that back – which is this image – of just the rainforest, so we could say, yes, we love those colours, it looks right, it is the right size. The thing was to put the butterflies on the top, so that is the butterflies finished there. Because I cannot use the computer like that, I had to think of a way – if we stuck the butterflies on the rainforest section it was a whole separate file, so I thought if I use clear plastic and the girls painted all their butterflies, which we are mad about in the rainforest – and there is a moth, which is pretty extraordinary - onto that sheet of clear plastic, exactly the size on top of the artwork. We also had photocopies of all of their paintings. This image is Kaye and her niece, Fiona.
So then together we could cut out all the butterflies and stick them on top of the plastic and when everybody was happy that was sent to Penny. The idea with Penny is that she really wanted to collaborate with a community, so the girls would be involved each step along the way, so it would not just be sent and digitised there, it would be us having worked on it by hand together before it went down to Sydney. Then also, it was with the scarf you need to define the edges, it is not just a cut up piece of fabric. I think that is a really important issue as well that you can design with a frame around it, thinking of it as a beautiful piece, not just as a cut up piece of fabric. You can see Fiona’s beautiful butterflies there, so to make that border along the bottom and along the edges, the little dots were painted by Fiona and that is just a corner piece of the work in progress along the way. That is my story with Mossman Gorge.

I will send this around too, this is Penny’s original colour chart. I had real trouble looking at the colours and numbers, so I said, I would love bigger squares, thank you very much! So this is my special colour chart, which I think we all might like. What happens with colour choice; we send Penny the artwork, she sends a strike-off back, so then if you want to change the colours you have to go through that process, choose each colour, write the number down, and the colours can be altered in any way that you like. I think that is the part that I am so much happier about, having bigger squares like that. Does anyone have any questions? It is a very specific way of working with digital printing.

Injalak has just done some gorgeous pieces with Penny, using advanced digital techniques, meaning that you can compare a textile repeat print with a Limited Edition scarf. Instead of printing on paper you could still frame those as a really expensive beautiful piece. What is great about this is you pay the same price for however many you get printed. You can get 10 printed and you can get 50 but its the same price. Whereas with the screen printing and things like that in small quantities, well you could never get small quantities, it would just cost you a fortune, so actually over time, if you have prints that you want to keep going, and make some small limited editions, it is a much better process. I think the cost pans out over that time.

© Linda Jackson 2013
Tim Growcott: I just wanted to say on that subject of change and the change with digital: there's a concern about unemployment and the end of traditional manual screen printing work in communities, to be replaced by digital printing machines.

Training Indigenous artists in digital design is going to be a big part of the next 10 or 15 years of textile design, working with the artists and helping to familiarise them with the technology related to digital design, so that they play a central role in the evolution.

I was encouraged recently to experiment with the application of photoshop techniques to the Injalak artists’ original designs, with the artists’ approval. We had already scanned the designs in at high resolution as part of the archiving process. But once this was done, it struck me that there was suddenly an unlimited amount of things that can be done in terms of digital effects. Or your artists might want the option of selling their files to another company who might do something entirely different again.

But I will ask Samson’s help to show you mob the latest stuff we have done at Injalak. This is Isaiah’s design, you might have seen it on the quilt that we gave him earlier in the day. The original artwork was made last year in about July. The fabric it is printed on here is lycra. You will be able to see that Isaiah’s original design basically features two screens -the namarnkol, the barramundi, in one colour and the water lily is the other colour. In this sample a third layer, a colour photographic image of the billabong, is laid down digitally underneath. This piece was made with the support of Think Positive Prints in Sydney, who are fantastic to work with, a woman by the name of Penny McIntyre oversees that production.

It is expensive. The sampling is going to cost a lot, in the initial phase. I went a little bit crazy and I was not thinking budget. Gabriel’s brolga is repeated in this sample, but it is not repeated the same way as it is on the print table, because usually we have an overlap between the repeats. This is a much more blocky repeat, with an ombre effect colouring the motif.

Linda Jackson: Now keep those pieces in a cupboard. You cannot sell those ones. You would use them as an artist’s proof. You should sign them and the whole thing along that border. And date it.

Tim Growcott: This one is Allan Nadjamerrek’s design, the sugarbag woman, Wakke Wakken - she has got no legs. That is again a two-colour design, with Photoshop effects added in. This fabric is a wool jersey. That design again is traditionally screen printed here in two-colours, but here it is printed in the full spectrum. This process was not ideal because I did it alone at 2am. I would not do it again that way, I would do it with the artists input here on the Mac. But for today, this is what is happening at Injalak.

Linda Jackson: These samples show how good something can look for the artists to see, and then you can think about collaborating in a lot of different ways.

Tim Growcott: I suppose you have to take a leap sometimes into the void and that is a little what this process was like for me as a designer and textile printer. I have not designed in this way for textiles before, so it was very daunting coming to terms with possibilities because as a screen printer you know your limitations and you know the parameters of the technique and the equipment. And suddenly we are in a new world. It is choosing which way to go and choosing what are the elements that you value about each process.

Audience Member: How much dialogue is there between you and the community, the printers, as to what textile they actually want to put that design onto in anticipation of maybe how that design is going to be used in the future?

Tim Growcott: Here at Injalak that dialogue starts now. Literally today, we are entering the digital age and based on these samples there will be a discussion now on what Injalak wants to do, what the artists want to do. I would envisage that part of that is to continue exactly what happens traditionally in the print room. This is the first wave of digital sampling and I would not do anymore work in that realm now without direction from the artists. I am employed by them, by the Injalak artists to fulfil their aims. And now that they are aware of the possibilities, the discussion starts.
It was 2008 I think when Meng (Henschke) came in and started to do some printing. Meng came in and we started doing printing with lino. Waterlilies, turtles, flowers and all that. I enjoyed it. Me, Bridget, Mary... there were five of us. Then we went out and asked all the ladies to join us. We did some printing on curtains first. We sold the curtains, and with the leftovers we made cushion covers – we sew here too. The curtains were for local people. They came and looked at the prints and asked us to make curtains.

They’ve got a lot of printing of ours at the clinic, and in the council office. The community like it, most of them come in here, they like our fabrics, they always say it’s nice. All the teachers come in and take some home for the holidays. At the moment we’re doing a lot for the Art Fair in Darwin. We went to the Merrepen festival – we sold lots of fabrics.

I like it because it keeps us busy all day and I like doing it. I make cushions and pillowcases. I just do it when I feel like it. It’s good fun. I work with Margo (Northey). I also work with Elizabeth (Gumbaduk) and Bridget (Pengkinengki). Sometimes I ask them to help me out. Last week we did two long fabrics. Today we might do another one of Loreen (Argala’s) – Stephanie (Berida’s) niece.

I like the pandanus design – the one with the waterlilies, it’s a screen print. My favourite colours are light grey, orange and black. When I do my pandanus I do it on a light colour fabric. Last week I was doing that pandanus on a grey fabric, and we used light green – it looked better.

One of my daughter’s is doing some lino printing. I’ve been showing her how to do it – she also learned at the Christian College in Batchelor. So I showed her when she came in, and she went straight away into that lino printing. She does sewing and all that. She’s been asking her friends to come in, but they’re too shy.

-Regina Jimarin
Session 4: Archiving and Collections

Looking after designs, screens and fabrics is important to protect cultural heritage as well preserving commercial potential.

Museum and Art Gallery of The Northern Territory:
John Waight

Hello, Good Morning. My name is John Waight, I am the Curator of Indigenous Art and Material Culture from the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. I am just going to give you a little chat from an institutions point of view regarding fabric.

We love collecting fabric. A lot of people do not think that museums and art galleries are interested, and historically, in the past, there have been issues getting it into the collection, but there is a really good reason for that. Maintaining the significance of the works; often we only get the end product of what you are displaying and capturing the actual process from the artist, to the nuts and bolts of it, the printing work and all the things that go with it, is not included. For those who are producing works, it is all very lovely, but we do not get enough significance for our conservation and historical items. Also, conserving the works is difficult for us. We are under huge pressure and a lot of focus is put on barks, fibre works are another nightmare for our conservators, which then means it is a nightmare for curators, and then it is also a nightmare to display. But ironically, with a lot of material it is easy for us to display but we do not have enough back up behind us to put and capture the story.

Because historically, in the way that the blooming of screen printing and the material works has happened over Australia, and at the national level has been sporadic and unless you are aware of what is actually happening in Daly River and then what is happening in Maningrida, for example, we cannot sync it together. That is an issue that has to be addressed looking back from a point now.

The other thing that is really interesting for us from a curatorial point of view is in regards to it being, as Louise has pointed out, quite a democratic process. Men and women have engaged in it in the past and hopefully will continue to engage in the future and the present, but again, we sort of missed that moment, from when people in communities started engaging with print workshops until it is sort of out there.

John Waight

John is the former curator of Indigenous Art and Material Culture at The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. He was born in Darwin and has spent most of his adult life directly involved in the arts, more recently as Darwin City Council’s curator of the Bombing of Darwin exhibition at the Chan Contemporary Art Space in Darwin. His past experience includes three years as manager at Maningrida Arts and Culture and at the Australian National Maritime Museum, where he worked for seven years as the institution’s Indigenous Curator and Liaison Officer.

Photo: Louise Hamby
Some of the best examples I believe are from women artists from Maningrida, as well, where people have started off with fabric and then have gone to print workshops, then have gone to fibre – dilly bags and mats, then back to material, and then start doing 3D fibre sculptural works. I would encourage people in the industry to try to capture that. When we do come to look at it, we can say, artist so and so, really started their journey here. Often it is through women’s centres and things like that as well, which is also a bit tricky if you do not have your hand on the pulse. Nomad Gallery for example, does a really good job of that from the Northern Territory perspective.

For us, some of our earlier works which we have in our collection, we actually cannot catalogue that artist right back. You might not realise, but that would be interesting for us as a museum or gallery, to actually see a whole transition of work and the work life of the artist. How would we look it up? Is this all making sense to people, or are there any questions?

Valerie Kirk: So you want to collect screens and background material, do you want to collect paint brushes and easels?

John Waight: That is appropriate for some collections. The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory it also a social history museum, so it is in our mandate to capture the process of artists.

Louise Hamby: Thank you John. It is great to hear that it is not just the fabric that you are collecting, but also what goes with it. I think from the academic side of things, as a researcher, it is really important that all the processes of how people get from A to B, as you were discussing, are recorded. I think what would be really integral for a lot of people, particularly those of you who are just starting out in fabric painting, is to keep really good records, if it were at all possible, because they become the history for people later. If you look on the back of the program for example, we have just quickly put together some historic snap shots in there of fabric printing here. I would just encourage you to keep your own history at your Art Centres because they will become really important later. You may not think they are significant now.

John Waight: Exactly. Also, in relation to the practical nuts and bolts, and again conservation, keeping an idea and a record of your dyes. Some Art Centres produce their own colours for their ordinary print workshops and how you have used different technologies to start your designs and things is what we are also interested in. Old lino cuts for example are gold for us, because we can put together a complete story of that artists work from beginning to end. We would, eventually, if there was a significant female artist or male artist, whose work has transcended over long period of time, would love to be able to show how, from A to Z, that whole process in between and what has been happening in that Art Centre.

The whole journey, I want to keep reinforcing, is what I am keen for us to collect and then I think you would see, a marked improvement in the status of fabric in institutions. It is not uncommon for institutions to collect oriental fabrics or carpets or things like that, so do not feel put off by what is happening in Australia and what it does to Indigenous print and fabric production. On that note, I will hand over to Karen Coote. If there are any other questions, please let me know, or I am happy to talk to you afterwards. By the way, Art Centres, can you give me your cards, because if you need outlets, the museum and gallery network of shops would love your products.
Archiving & Collections: Karen Coote

I was a conservator with the Australian Museum for 20 years. My first trip up here was in 1982 and Flick Wright was there then, and she really needs extraordinary acknowledgement for where Injalak is today. If it had not been for her, and her enthusiasm and her ongoing involvement in the Indigenous arts industry in the Northern Territory, I believe a lot of what has been achieved today just would not be around.

I also want to thank enormously the Injalak mob, the Gunbalanya people, for inviting me here today. What happened was, about two months ago, I came up here. I had not been up for long time - and I caught up with Lorna and I went into the screen printing room, which I have known for years, and I said, ‘Where are the old screens?’ They were there, and it was like gold, for me, as a heritage worker to discover that the original screens were still here. What is not maybe still here are the original prints and the product that came from these. I am anxious to see if there are any at Bima Wear on Bathurst Island and at a number of the different places, some of original screens, that go way back to the 1970’s and early 1980’s, because if we can even get to nurture these screens it would be wonderful to do even one print. We have talked about it, to actually get some of the original prints and to actually be able to tell that past story, but keep those original prints here in the community, here in Oenpelli. You have a situation at Maningrida and Yirrkala, where you have a wonderful textile story, and you have busloads of people coming in, but you do not have the story for people to see. They can see the textiles they can buy, but they do not know where that story has come from. That story has come from these original screens, which I am extremely emotional about, because they are just so fantastic.

When you are beginning on your road and your journey to begin your textile story in your communities, this is the sort of thing that you would be going back to, except that you will be looking at digital images and all the rest of it. But it is that story of going in and telling the story from where you were then to come to now. If you put it in a white man’s terminology, one thing that you see is you go to history societies and museums and you visit them and you see everything up to World War II, but you do not see anything in the history societies after World War II. So there is this great gap of information, it is a complete loss unless you go to the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney or the National Museum in Canberra. It is not just an Indigenous story that we are keeping, it is the whole story of our Australian heritage as well. With reference to the textiles, John said it all – he was terrific - it is the whole story of the development of the textiles.

I just want to finish really quickly on a textile collection that I discovered at Bangarang in Shepparton, which was collected by the Australia Council. That is the other organisation that really needs to be recognised. The Australia Council was the organisation that actually started the funding for these organisations, they made a massive collection in anticipation of selling everything.
Not everything sold, but the consequences were that there is a collection of Aboriginal material from all up this way, down in an Aboriginal keeping place in Bangarang, which is at Shepparton. I am going to show you some of the textiles that were made in the 1970’s. Linda, you will be interested in some of these.

These are very early Tiwi pieces from Tiwi Designs and they are place mats. They were all made on the Tiwis, you can see the designs and the stories and these are still Tiwi and I suspect that there is nothing of this at Tiwi today. In other words there are no original screens, there might be some textiles there, but there certainly would not be made up into this use, this tableware or dress fabrics or something like that, but these are just gorgeous designs that really are discovered in community in Shepparton in Victoria, and certainly the museums may not have this! This is a poncho, it is on a very light weight wool, and it is definitely 1970’s and it is definitely divine, it is as soft as anything, it is just that – it is a history that is there, it is how people used to make up their fabrics and the designs that just are not there anymore.

There is a huge variety, they made loads of them. There was an enthusiasm there, and the men did the screening and women did the sewing. I think that this particular collection I recognised as part of the significance assessment I was undertaking at the time. I do a lot of significance assessments; I will be doing one while I am here on Wednesday. I am going to be looking at the significance of Bangarang because I do not know of any other unique collection like this in Australia, let alone anywhere else in the world, so this is a unique textile collection in a very small keeping place in Shepparton in Victoria. It was collected because one of the directors of the Aboriginal Art Board in those days was Uncle Sandy Atkinson, who comes from that area. It is as simple as that, you get these unique stories.

This is silk, this is from Ernabella, this is very early again, it is silk batik and they have not made silk batik for a long time and the reason is that the women just found it too hot too complicated and so they do not do it. They occasionally do batik workshops today but it is not in the same circumstance as the original production. But there is one of Kitty Kantilla’s – she started with silk batik and there is some of her work here. These are about 4-5 metres in length, just miles of beautiful textiles. This is a wall hanging, again very 1970’s, wall hangings. You would stretch it on a stretcher. This is just their little label that they had at the time. This is sort of what John was saying, where keeping the information, keeping the label in the particular case here, they are actually writing the artist’s name within the print, which is just fantastic, but it also useful to keep the information and the stories that go with it from a keeping point of view.

What I am suggesting, when a community is making prints is that they just keep a bit aside and keep the paperwork with it. That is it. It is honestly as simple as that.

It is all very good to keep it as digital, but the original can be put in an exhibition. It is important, rather than just having it as digital in their collection. I was also trying to find, but I do not have it on here, there were just the most divine t-shirts, children’s t-shirts which were just adorable as well, but I missed them out on my images. But I am just sort of saying, just keep it in mind, you are creating and the communities are creating particular significant material and it can well be recognised as significant in the future if you do not recognise it as significant now. Thank you.

© Karen Coote 2013

Gabriel Maralngurra and an assistant printing at Injalak Arts in the early 1990s. These screens still remain at the Injalak Arts Centre, in a state of disrepair.
Nice to meet you - I am Tim and I have been helping to resurrect the screen printing practice here at Injalak. I have visited other communities in the capacity of helping those who are getting into the process of textile printing and who might just need a bit of technical assistance or advice. Even starting up or introducing techniques. I have a t-shirt carousel, which is more or less portable, which I can take on a single engine aircraft to virtually anywhere, as well as transporting stuff on the barge around Arnhem Land, screens, etc.

Lucky me, I have worked with some absolutely incredible artists in the last three years since I have been doing this, so I am really privileged. I want to talk about the very basic stuff, related to what Karen was saying about conservation and preservation and recognising and salvaging the incredible textile heritage of the Northern Territory. It is something that struck me, when visiting communities, that there are screens that are neglected, there are fabrics gathering dust that nobody might know about, and nobody might ever get to know about. Karen has generally summed up the gist of what my message is as well, which is that this creative thing is an incredible phenomenon and how to go about preserving artwork. Our working process generally, is that the artists will often paint their designs on a transparent base material, drafting film, acetate, etc. which is then converted onto screen. Years down the track, we may not necessarily have this master copy, the original artwork that the screen was made with.

Back in those days, and I am talking about Ray Young’s days - his photo is on the back of the catalogue because he did play a such a huge role in introducing a lot of this technology to communities back in the early-mid 1980’s. They would cut the artwork out of film called rubylith so they were all hand carved. Most of the early Injalak designs were hand carved from a piece of acetate that had an adhesive layer which you carved into and then peeled off very painstakingly. These early designs were all basically hand carved. Similar to how a lot of the Tiwi screens were made as well - hence the very sharp graphic quality. The carving process fed into the Tiwi culture – great carvers out there, amongst other things. That is how they were created. The rubylith has a limited life span, so the original artwork, in a lot of cases, has perished - that’s what makes these original screens so valuable yet problematic because they are blocked with ink, mostly.

That is the life time of a screen because at some point it is going to tear, it is going to get blocked and that is what has happened. We have about ten of these old screens here, stashed, waiting for us to be able to recover the original design. From my point of view the only way to do that now is from the original screen, because in most cases the original artwork does not exist. Or possibly from the original fabric; we just might be able to obtain a piece of original fabric featuring this design. We have digital processes that can help us resurrect the design, but I would see a process where the artists themselves are involved in restoring the artwork by various means, possibly by hand, maybe hand cut. Again, going back to the digital thing, artists learning digital skills, whereby we can take samples of part of the screen, replicate, multiply and fix it up digitally.
But also to re-hand paint some of the original artwork... It is really a big project but it is something that we need to look at as a community in the NT, as being in the national interest.

To communities: look after your original artwork! The paint on drafting film is fairly resilient if stored safely, and respected carefully. And it is not always easy but it is important. With the materials you use, use the good stuff. Just look after your original artwork as well as your screens. Screens have a life span, so that is the thing, they will get a hole or get a tear or get blocked and will need to be re-done and that is when you need the original artwork. What I have been doing is scanning them all in digitally the original full width repeat artworks, which you can do really cheaply at Officeworks in Darwin for about $2.00 per design, high resolution, good quality. Most of, if not all, of the new designs at Injalak are on a USB stick which means that we have hopefully got them forever. The same may not hold true for some of the original designs from Injalak in the past... perhaps those designs are gone. We can try to stop it happening again.

**Audience Question: Whose design is this one?**

Tim Growcott: We think Gabriel is responsible for the original design, but Ray Young would have overseen the design process - the technician always plays a role. Ray would have been overseeing the repeat arrangement and I think that motif replicates several times...

Angus Cameron: I brought out some shirts that Rose made, I think probably from those old Injalak screens. It might be a design of that old man... it is an example of one of those original screens.

Tim Growcott: ...which is out the back under the table and looks very similar to that other one over there, it has a few tears, it has a few blockages. How to resurrect that screen or how to resurrect that design to that original quality is the process that we have to undertake, statewide. Tiwi Design, a lot of their screens are still in use out there 30 years later. It is a testament to the artists and how well they look after those screens, they wash them out so carefully and use and re-use. Nevertheless, when I was out there I was being a little bit more boisterous and destroyed a screen that should probably be in a museum.

How do we get those original designs off those screens and into a permanent, re-usable form for communities to use to contribute to their income stream? Those designs should be in production today; artists' families should be able to use those designs for the welfare of themselves and their communities today and everyday; those designs should be in the permanent collection of that Art Centre. It's a cultural asset and the importance of it is also financial, having a strong collection that artists can reproduce and that Art Centres can produce into the future for the betterment of everybody.'

**Audience member: For the Arts Centres, it may not be cost-effective to keep every design on-screen.**

Karen Coote: If you cannot keep the original screens, then that is a fact of life, you cannot keep them. But the fact that these exist, to me, is an absolute miracle, I am over the moon. Obviously, if you keep your original designs, your original paper designs in whatever medium you want, if that is what happens in that community, that is what happens – not every community is the same. The main thing is to record, but also keeping in mind what someone like John is going to want to create an exhibition, so what types of things will make an exhibition, that can be kept for exhibition purposes or for people to go into the future. Do not think that you have to keep every screen by any stretch, it is not cost effective. But the fact that the Tiwis still have original screens is just fantastic. I am hoping that Jilamara does as well.

Linda Jackson: So you could keep the first strike-off, as an artist's proof.

Karen Coote: Absolutely, keep that and keep the original artwork and write on that particular fabric, do not attach a piece of paper, because a piece of paper will fall off, so actually write onto the fabric the date, as much information as you can, even if you write it on fabric and stitch it on to the original screen that is a good idea. Just as editioning printmakers keep the first paper print, there should not be too much problem. I am seriously trying to raise the profile of – I am hoping to get a grant from Canberra to make... but it is really a case of getting support from the communities to make sure that we can get what they have got.
I used to come around and watch those boys printing a long time ago - 1989 I think they started here. I was only young, maybe 22 or 23. I was starting to paint, at first helping Isaiah (Nagurrurrba) and Gabriel (Maralngurra), and my old man. I came around and I was helping them. And then I started getting paper myself to paint, and looking at those boys printing. They got me to wash their squeegees.

Those two boys asked me too, that maybe instead of painting all the time, maybe I do some screen printing. Isaiah asked me to become a board member too, so I’m a board member now. I do a bit of Art Centre tours too. I do painting, Arts Centre tours and I do screen printing. People can see, tourists, that instead of just our paintings going overseas, we got fabrics as well.

We’ve got different artists here to make the designs and to print on fabric. Making screens is alright; exposing screens, that’s ok; printing’s alright; making colours is alright - but marking the centimetres, that’s the hard bit. It’s what I do for working and living. I work for a living and I paint for a living, I do screen print for a living. It can be hard working all day, I get tired. But I make money and get food for baccy, for power card. We gotta keep that fridge going, keep that food inside the fridge.

We’ll teach the young fellas, and they’ll get used to it, and then they’ll probably be printing it. And then I might go back to painting it. I’m getting old - I’m almost 44. That’s why it was good when the kids from the school used to come around. We used to take them to get spears, to get bark. We used to teach them to paint. And those girls made screens and they came around here and they were playing around with fabric, making flags and stuff. We had fun with the kids. Who knows, maybe the Arts Centre will be bigger in the future.

Mimi is my favourite design, mimi spirit, because it’s famous. I like to do Rock Art style - like an xray. I’ve been painting duklorrlorren design. When I first saw that design on that old man’s painting, I asked. He used to take paper back home, I used to see him. I asked Isaiah about it - he told me about duklorrlorren: he’s hairy, he lives in a hollow tree. He’s different from Mimi.

We still got our culture, which is our painting. That’s what they say to us, our ancestors’ paintings up on the rock. They left it here for us to look at up there on our rock. Those paintings have been up there for who knows how long. And it’s still up there.

-Samson Namundja
Milliner:

Waltraud Reiner

You are probably thinking, what the heck? Hats, Melbourne Cup hats, kind of weird looking things in Injalak. Well, I was thinking the same thing. I came up here in 2011, having been invited by Lorna Martin (manager of Injalak) – she works very much from opportunity, possibility, dreams. She does not have an objective, where you have to walk away with an outcome.

She just invited me to come, and I had no idea what I was supposed to do. She said, ‘just be’. As I am doing mindfulness training and yoga every day, I thought, maybe that is what I am supposed to do – sit and meditate all day. So I sat with the women on the ground and observed what they were doing with their baskets, and I started fiddling with broken baskets which would have been thrown out. There were baskets in bags, mouldy baskets, ones that had started unravelling, ones with handles broken off – and I just started to play with them. There was great laughter on the third day as I started putting the baskets on my head. They thought it was pretty hilarious, but there was a connection starting to be made.

I will show you the photos we took down at the water in 2011. They were baskets, just as they are, and I started changing them and using little coasters and making little racewear hats. Then the dancers came into town on the night before festival day, and they wanted to be part of it, which blew me away. We were fiddling with the camera, and they asked if they could also be photographed using the hats. Well yeah, you can wear the hats! And one fellow, he found us again the next year and he was willing to take his shirt off, which got us even more excited.

Next year I came back to Injalak in the Hatmobile. I run workshops with people to make race hats or hats around town, or I work with communities, and I live and work in the Hatmobile. This time, when I arrived, I worked with the high school kids during the week and I introduced them to felting. Then I had a great time with working with the printers, because I had brought with me some materials which are natural fabrics, like sinamay straw and industrial felt.

We tried printing on this industrial felt, which many of you may know - it has been around. People use this in interior design a lot for furnishing. I wonder what that would be about. I rounded Tim Growcott up, and Tim being open to experimentation, we tried to see how much ink it would take and how it would come out.
We printed this design and then I brought out some hat making straws, called sinamay and jinsin. These are specifically used for millinery (hats made to measure), and they are woven from the fibres of the banana plant in the Philippines, for slave labour. There are no advocates for them to do this weaving, but it has incredible possibilities. I have not even started playing with this stuff yet because there has been no time. We worked so long. But what is possible with this – I know what is possible with this and it is really exciting.

This one is called sinamay. It also printed up gorgeously. I put it on my Facebook page and asked people, ‘what do you think about this?’ I had so many people from the millinery industry saying that they loved it, this is great, where can we buy it, how much? It will not be Filippino slave labour price, I can tell you that much, but I will come back to you with a price. Another lady said that she wants a particular fabric that I showed, and she does not want it for hats but for cushions and curtains, can I have it? Yes, you can have it for $95 per metre. Social media is an incredible tool.

So we worked for a couple of days and we chose which screens to use and we looked at what would work. I am not a printer, so I am in total awe of the Injalak printers. It was so wonderful to work with them and to see them get so excited because we started to use the prints not just as hat fabric – I thought I might as well play and start trying to make them up into something. I brought along some silk – the silk chiffon over there – the Injalak printers had never printed a fine see-through silk. I thought the silks would be amazing in 1.5 metre lengths, just as a wrap, because so many women love these. In the felting industry, if you have a scarf you can felt little bits and pieces into it and it crumbles up, a technique that has been around for a long time, but it makes the felt into very tropical felt and people in Darwin and Cairns and everywhere can wear it because it is so light and see-through.

Then, after I made up a prototype of a bag and a pattern, we got the very beautiful hands of Eva (Nganjmirra) onto the sewing machine to have a go and learn it. The print on that one is actually her own work, and the print on this one was designed by her sister, Selina (Nadjowh). Then the boys came and said, ‘hey can you make a holder for a lighter?’

So we stitched that up, and then we tried to have a go at an Ipad cover, to see what they would be like. We designed a pattern for that, this is not resolved. These are the beginnings of things. They look clumsy, they have not been road tested. There was this idea to sell the pieces, to put them in the shop. To me, it devalues the work because it is not quite there yet, but a beginning has been made.

**How long does the print stay on? How is it to actually wear? Can we finally make it close properly?**

This was the very first bag that I just threw together, thinking, maybe we could do this. Then Eva made this one – this was her first go at the sewing machine, she wanted to know how to use that. Then she got excited about the hat making and she started doing the hat bands for rice straw hats. Nothing has to be done with them, they make great sun hats just as they are, but she has done the most beautiful weaving into those hats. You can see the three of them standing there. She started making quite elaborate little designs on those hats and stitching them on. As you can see with the stitching on there, it took her a long time! Several hours she spent making that little hat. She tells me, and I hope she does not lie to me – she is really enjoying it and she has got a great touch – her hands have got it.
Roslyn is always up for every hat I make. She says ‘I want to try it too!’ and she just loves it, just to put it on and have some fun, because it is a bit weird to put a basket on your head.

Then we took them down yesterday afternoon. Unfortunately the sun was not that fantastic, and neither was my stamina. I did not feel that crash hot anymore and my eyesight has got much worse lately – so it is what it is. I put the PowerPoint slides together today with a lot of help, between sitting here, going to the office, going to the Hatmobile, so it is not the best. Excuses, excuses, Waltraud!

This is a hat I made from our printed sinamay, which really excited the printers, because it seemed like it was the first time here they actually saw something three dimensional after printing metres and metres of the stuff, so it was great to see what is possible to make with it. Every day they brought in people from the community who came to say hello, and to see what we had done. They showed them the bag and the hat. And this is the spunky dancer – you can see him perform tonight I believe. And here is Eva with her bag. This is an integration, a little bit of sinamay woven into the basket.

From an outcomes point of view, well, I did not plan what has happened. All that I wanted was to make connections between people and skills and ideas. Moments like being excited because Isaiah was happy in the morning, or we were making a joke, or we were teasing each other and things would come out of it. I had no idea that I was going to do any of the printing, because it just happened and it was a possibility. They were just bits and pieces of fabric lying around ready to use for whatever, offcuts, and I randomly stitched them up and put them together. I thought I would make a cushion cover or a doona cover, just try those things out and see how it might be done.

I feel that working with Eva and with the printers was so gratifying for me and without them I would not have these different materials now to work with. I also sell materials. I am a supplier to the millinery industry, and as far as I am concerned, I am going to make available limited editions of these printed sinamays, in eight metre lengths. Isaiah is writing up the dreaming for his prints, They will be sold with each of the prints. And they will become racewear hats, and they will become hats which, well, I do not know where they are going to go! – but they will go places. For me, hats are not just a way to keep the sun off. Metaphorically, we all use hats and we have a choice to remove them.

Here today we are talkers and speakers, and we are milliners, mothers and friends, and we all wear many different hats in a day, but we are not the hat – we can change the hat.

The hat to me can tell such an amazing story. I can line inside of the hat with materials and stories of the dreaming. The dreaming could go written on the linings; there could be linings in clothes that read the story – we all need linings – stories can be printed and expressed on lining fabrics. I might not, necessarily, willing to show it – it is a private part – but it is expressed and it is out there and it is a choice for me to say, look! that’s the inside, and I am sharing it with you today and it is not kept inside under this lid, which we might hold a belief we cannot take off or change. We CAN!!

Thank you very much for listening to me and thank you for having me here.
Fashion Designer: Adriana Dent

Thank you. I am actually very honoured to be here. I will talk to you about my background first so you know where I am coming from and then I will talk about what I am able to do to help communities, hopefully, and my own project.

I have about 13 years of experience in the fashion industry in Sydney, that is where I am from. I worked, by choice, in many areas, menswear, lingerie, women’s wear, companies that had their own boutiques, companies that sold to boutiques. I’ve done mass volume for companies where we produced for Sportsgirl and Sussan and I do not know how to use the digital printing computer but I do know the program that we use for pattern making, I am a whizz at that, but that is not needed here. When I say by choice, I dealt with a lot of areas, because I was always curious, I wanted to move on. Along the way I have always done wedding dresses, made to measure, with a large Italian family that I am part of, and then it just grew. So from word of mouth I have always been doing made to measure garments throughout my career. I have been in Darwin for 11 years now and when I first moved up here, I thought well, what do I do? I went and studied and I became a lecturer at the university. I have taught fashion courses at the university and for the last couple of years I was asked to come out and deliver the courses in Indigenous communities. Other lecturers have been out to communities before, but I jumped at the chance. I have been at a couple of communities already and hopefully will start a program here at Injalak. What the university wants to promote is, or what I can offer, is whatever your needs are. If you do not have any sewing machines then I can advise which ones best suit you, whether it is budget, or something that is more durable. If you do have your machines I can help service them. If the girls do not know how to use the machines, I can teach you how to thread and maintain sewing machines. Then we can start from sewing a straight line and hopefully, within a day or two, you will be making items up.

You are making such beautiful printed fabric, and there are a lot of places out there that are willing to buy your fabric, but there are also a lot of people out there who want to buy pre-made garments out of your fabric.

That is where I want to help the communities to be able to produce it themselves, rather than selling it out. I notice a lot of the people here today are wearing items that have obviously been printed out at the communities. By talking to some of you, you have all mentioned that you have made the garment yourself or someone has made it for you, but wouldn’t it be great if, for example, Bridget from Wadeye (who designed this print I’m wearing), were able to make up her own garments up for sale. Cut and sew in one and a half hours. It is achievable.
There are no zips in this case, and the women were extremely proud of producing their own work. It is the same rewarding feeling that they had after printing their own fabric. There is interest out there for the women to make up their own garments. As well as teaching how to sew and produce the garments, I can also assist with pattern making. Pattern making is my strength, it is my background. If they choose to produce shorts with pockets for example, I can make some patterns up in different sizes and they can keep them to produce the shorts. If they want to make A-line skirts, we can make that too. Wrap around skirts, tops too, I have left behind all these at Wadeye. Pretty much, it is endless what can be done, it is entirely up to yourselves, how far you'd like to go with this.

The other thing I can help you with if you are going to go into producing your own garments. I can help the managers with resourcing, threads, zippers, and elastics and all those kind of notions needed from wholesalers. Most of them can be sourced on-line. I do not want to keep hearing that people are stopping in to Spotlight on the way in to Darwin to stock up on zips, you do not need to do that, you can do everything you need on-line.

Plus there is also the legalities side - when you produce garments to sell - washing instructions and care instructions are necessary on your garments.

What we are offering at the moment at Charles Darwin University is Certificate I and II in clothing production. Unfortunately, they have decided to close down their base in Darwin, but they will fully support the women on the communities. I would jump at it really right now, because you may never know down the track, if there is no interest then they might close it all together. We do have machines that I can bring out, if you do not have any to start with, I can definitely bring out enough portable sewing machines. If you like the make and model, you may choose the same to purchase.

Another area to look into is, consumption of length of fabric. I will demonstrate how to position pieces to get the maximum visual of the print, you do not want to cut someone's head off or the design off the side, unless it is intentional. In this situation, we have an A-line skirt which is one directional, it has to be cut in a certain way, which I can demonstrate. Then you will have a lot of wasted edges, which should not go in the scrap bin, they are like gold. You do not want to discard them. This is an example, you might recognise this print from the skirt I'm wearing. This is one I have made for my little model, my five year old daughter, it is a very simple little skirt, which you can produce out of off-cuts. We also have a very small bag which you can produce out of off-cuts. We have some larger bags hanging up there with Jayne's pattern, we made some bags up yesterday, we made up some little zip bags.

Out of your length of fabric you are not just producing one garment, you have the potential to produce three items for sale. That is very cost effective for your company.

I have been informed of the prices of fabrics, if you want to cut that up and sew only one skirt then it can be very expensive. You can instead make a few items up and someone will be willing to buy them all and increase your profits. There is a market avenue out there, if any communities do go down that path and produce their own garments and sell them in their own stores, there is probably an avenue there for major cities to tap into and sell your items in their own stores.

If you do want to take on board some training having it all certified, it can be done through away from base funding through Centrelink, some of the girls would even get funding for training.

Eva Nganjmirra - Injalak Arts
My own project that I am also juggling, trying to get off the ground, is my designs with Aboriginal art on silk couture garments. They are one-off garments, unique, and it is going from one extreme to the other. What I am trying to offer is an elaborate evening wear that no one else has. It would be like someone sees an artwork hanging on the wall and they are determined to pay for it, to have in their house. Women have the same attitude with what they wear. If they see something they like and no one else has it, then they are quite determined to purchase that item to wear.

What I do is purchase my own silks which I send off to the Art Centre. This garment here in the photo is fabric I have purchased from Babbarra Designs. I purchased it over a year ago and Bobbie Murphy is in the current Mrs Australasia Pageant and she wore the gown to the Mrs Globe Pageant in America, just this month. Unfortunately she did not win, but she wore this garment in the national costume segment.

The fabric there has been produced and sold, obviously, in a variety of colours and fabrics, I have one at home myself. But the format that I am creating here being each garment is produced as a unique design. I will never reproduce that same design and print again, I might change a print detail or I will use the same print with another garment. That garment there will not be reproduced as it is. What I would like to do is send several metres of fabric off to the arts centre to be printed, and returned to me. I do not dictate what print they must do, I probably advise what colour scheme I’d like, and they are free to choose whatever design they want. If they do want me to choose for them, then I am happy to. When I get the fabric back, that is when my inspiration kicks in.

I have a beautiful crocodile print, a gold crocodile print from Injalak, on black silk which it is very large that I could probably use it as an elaborate gown with a train. It will be something that should be seen on the red carpet or an event like that.

This is an area which I hope to expand on and I am going to kick start, probably just after coming back from here. It is also an area where digital printing on silks may probably work. In this situation here because I am trying to market the one-off and unique garments, I will not go into digital printing just yet, but it might be something we could tap into later. If digital printing is something the communities do enjoy doing, we can then look into doing a range of evening wear, that is not one-off, perhaps a dozen of this or a dozen of that. The one off garments actually have swing tags that will tell your story. Again, people like to tell stories. They will have the artists name, the community name, and all of your details of your website - it is a collaboration between the Art Centre and myself.

So in conclusion, sewing wise with your own textiles, hopefully I can show you that we can make some very simple items that can be created by beginners. And hopefully with an elaborate fabric form we could probably see a printed gown at an exclusive event.

Thank you for your time.

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Fashion Designer:
Linda Jackson

Where I am starting is about 1974, when I first started my business in Sydney with Jenny Kee and this is about 600 of my photographs. I studied photography, I took photographs all the time, so that is why I have this amazing collection of frocks in the landscape and documentation of artworks. Whenever I worked in any communities, I took so many photographs of details of painting and printing and things like that, always giving copies back... and I have just given some extra copies from 1994 to Injalak. This involves going back to the 70's and there are some Indigenous collaborations in it. It is a story of how Jenny and I started this whole art clothes concept...

Because we were passionate about Australia and we were passionate about art and the landscape, we got together. We were young – nearly four decades ago. This image is from 1974. I came back to Sydney – after living in Papua New Guinea in 1969 and travelling through Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia ...to Europe and back. I think that world view was a huge influence in my interest in textiles and the way people dressed in Indigenous communities – also Japan, Africa and India were great inspiration...

Hand painting collaborations began the Art Clothes concept and I started hand printing the fabrics in about 1979. Also, I was friends with some of the Aboriginal and Islander Dance students in Sydney. For me it was always wanting to meet Aboriginal people and be out there in communities. I liked to get to the source and meet the people that I was working with. In late 1979 there was a Crafts Council exhibition in Sydney and that is where I met the women from Utopia. They were creating their exquisite batik. They wanted to make clothes. They were hand painting and doing batik t-shirts and jeans and things like that.

They approached me and said we know you make gorgeous things, so come out and visit us and let us see what we can do together.

I went out to Utopia in 1981 and 1982. I had bought some of their textiles from the exhibition and I made all my outfits to wear out to the community. That is what I like to do. The fabrics were so exquisite that I could not cut them up so I started sending out made up white cotton or silk clothes and the women creatively covered them with batik... I was lucky to meet Emily and all the other artists at that time of visiting Utopia.

That is one of the interesting things that happened with painted and printed textiles for me, they were more like art works... or a furnishing fabric or wall hanging, I didn't want to cut them up!! When you are thinking of clothing... and I worked with a lot of artists with hand painting work like that, we would always think of the body, which is like a body painting or I called them poems on cloth. You distinctly think of the shape of the body and design your art work for that purpose.

You design it so you are not cutting into precious marks and symbols... that is the way that the principle of art clothing would work.

In my Kings Cross studio I had a stage and we presented shows every year. The first Bush Couture fashion show included the Utopia fabrics. I would bring back the red dirt and the corrugated tin as a backdrop... I was the facilitator of the designs but the women's names as the artists were acknowledged on everything that went out of the studio.

This is one of the Red Lily Lagoon prints from 1994, with Merrill Girrabul and Betty Maralngurra.
What is wonderful for me now is to see that it is all happening in Darwin now... collaborations with Indigenous artists and resorts. In the late seventies and eighties we thought this would happen then. But this is 30 years later.

I think every hotel up here should be having the furnishings and the artworks in them. This image is my Flamingo follies fashion parade with Jenny, in 1981, that was inspired by the Red Centre, but we involved Aboriginal artists. We had a didjeridoo player and we donated the proceeds from that show to the Aboriginal Medical Centre in Redfern. There was always that collaborating and that connection.

Also, I just remembered from just arriving again in Darwin, I was coming up for NAIDOC week, for the first NAIDOC weeks that were held in Darwin in the late eighties. I would be invited up because everyone in the NT got to know that if they wanted frocks and fashion and art things that I would jump out of Sydney in a second and be in the bush, because I just loved the collaboration so much. I brought all my frocks, all my special art pieces and I would be part of the shows that they did in those days.

This image is from living in Broome, where I also conducted workshops and got to know the people – the Indigenous people in Broome. Here is my swag, I had to have my own hand painted swag. I could not go to Utopia or the bush without my painted swag.

I studied photography and I love the images, that is why I was always putting the person back in to the landscape and taking the photograph. It was not just a photograph for me, it was part of my art form. Here are all the Utopia pieces. This year a Utopia batik creation is in the exhibition hall at the National Gallery of Victoria. There is also a Tiwi batik costume. In the early 80's there were several Indigenous artists in Sydney who wanted to come and gain some work experience in my studio.

That image is one of Jenny’s first prints from the mid-1970s. It was really hard to get small quantities printed, so that is how I actually started trying to print our own fabrics. That costume is in the Power House Museum. Lots of the work I have done over the years, including most of the Indigenous collaborations of mine have already gone into the Power House Museum or the National Gallery of Victoria.

This image is the result of a special trip that friends, Fran Moore photographer and Nell Schofield, writer, did during a travel story journey to the Antarctic. They could not go to the Antarctic unless they took the Glacier Gown and the special Penguin coat that were created especially for that actual trip. We got these amazing photographs. With all these wonderful things that are happening, you can take amazing photographs in all these beautiful places... Just like the photos that Waltraud (Reiner) has been taking here this week. Which I think is really important – how you present it. If you are making clothes or if you are taking photographs of those amazing landscapes... how are you putting it out there and how do you want people to think of the creations?

Is it a mass production, when you make and print lots of them? Or is it something exquisitely beautiful, like an art piece?

Once again I would make sure that everything is photographed, documented. Dress someone up, take photographs! It does not matter if they are bad photos, blurry photos, good photos - just take it, be creative and have fun. When Jenny moved up to the Blue Mountains, we would always go for walks in the bush. She would always have to be dressed in an outfit, so we could take photos together. Now I have this amazing archive. For the younger ones here, if you are interested in taking photographs, just keep doing it.
This image is part of my African experience, of actually working with beautiful textiles and beads. These collections were all individual and handmade. Sometimes there were eight pieces as part of the same theme, when we presented them during a fashion parade. These cloths have been dyed with Black Wattle bark and printed with leaves. That is one of the scarf artworks that I have here. The Sturt’s Desert Pea dress is in the Power House Museum Linda Jackson archive. I think here you really need to make sure that the important and early experimental painted and printed cloths, artworks with their documentation all go to John (Waight, curator of ATSIA at Museum and Art Gallery of NT) – all your original pieces. Sometimes when I made some of these works, they were like paintings and sculptures to me. To create the image I wanted I made the dresses way too long and way too wide so I could photograph them in the landscape. If someone wanted to buy it, I would chop it up and re-make it.

That image is from one of visits to Africa, where I worked with the women a lot with their beads, and this is in Kenya. The Maasai women were not producing textiles, that was much more a part of West African tradition...

I think it is really important as well, that we do see the unique landscape in the images where all this artwork comes from... because it is so varied and amazing and it really gives it the connotation of where the art comes from, along with being clear about the people and the artists.

These photographs were taken during a stroll in the burnt out bush after a major bush fire in the Blue Mountains. That is Jenny wearing one of my bush fire metallic prints, that would have been printed especially for her. In my studio we only had a table as long as those in Injalak. But we had a special system of poles where we could keep printing, take a couple of metres off the table, put it on the poles to dry. This way we could change colours constantly, then you would never have two pieces of cloth that were exactly the same.

This image is going back out to Lightning Ridge, to show all the miners the different Opal inspired fabrics that I was working on, travelling back into the landscape again to take the photographs. This is about 1980, 81. You can see the colours of the Lightning Ridge landscape. Eventually we had screens with the artwork on it, but in the beginning, for all those years, it was mostly paper cut out stencils because I was passionate about working with colour and the layers of colour.

This (series) is all batik techniques. I collaborated with an artist named Deborah Leser who was an amazing textile artist. That image is Jenny with some of her jumpers, there are some beautiful pieces of boulder opal, which for me were very inspiring. This (series) is the whole rug collection, and hopefully there are people here who are collaborating with rug manufacturers, because Designer Rugs do amazing collections of rugs. There must be some artwork, it is a really great thing to do because if you are collaborating in the right way you can have really beautiful work produced.

That is a bit of my lengthy history now. It is so exciting to see what everybody is doing and what has been happening since the early 1970’s when everyone was thinking it was so obvious, to have textiles made in Australia by Indigenous peoples. Hooray to all of you. Thank you.
I started screen printing in the mid-late 70s, and the reason why I did was because I really wanted to make some imagery that represented my cultural spiritual identity. There was no imagery. If you’re Christian you’ve got your cross, your Jesus, your Mary - to represent the belief and to give them a context. I needed to have my crocodiles, my sea eagle - and they weren’t any there to be found. These things had to be made from scratch. I just had to wear my king brown snakes, my eagles. I really wanted to have it around me. Then I saw screen printing as a beautiful way to repeat our beautiful images and I fell in love with it.

I was really fascinated with screen printing, and then one day I had an accident and dropped a pot of paint on the shirt and thought – ‘That looks ok! Why am I restricting myself?’ So I started throwing paint around and ended up with an all-over painted shirt. And from then I started screen printing over the top and I got pretty good at that.

These days I find myself doing more freehand painting. I’ve been making cut-out stencils, a different and beautiful effect. And it’s got a lot of freedom to it. You can’t manipulate a screen image - you can change the colours and the fabrics – but when you’re painting with a brush there’s lots of freedom to that. I’m exploring and I want to explore more. I haven’t got enough time in the day. I’m really enjoying exploring my own artistry and it’s a matter of what I find important to paint… I’m a grandmother now and I can choose to paint what I want.

What I am finding is that I really like fabric. When I get a canvas now it doesn’t stimulate me too much, but when I get a fabric, I’m like… bang! I like fabric because, as opposed to a canvas that hangs on a wall, you can wear it or lie on it. I make baby quilts and my grandchildren also love their little pillowcases and that’s their thing. You can get really close to it. People get precious with my fabrics, they lock them up and that, but I want them to use them. I’m glad that they value it. But I like my stuff to be used.

Above all I like to make really beautiful things to wear. I’d love to create an outfit to take to Fashion Week in Melbourne. That would be a hand-painted outfit. I’ve been thinking about it because I’ve been getting a good reaction for my work. I’m looking at Fashion Week both here and in Melbourne. I’d really like someone to pick up my designs, but I’m not interested in doing the mass production myself anymore. I’d like to see my designs on curtains, cushions… and aeroplanes!

-June Mills
Links and Resources:

ARTS CENTRES:
Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists  www.ankaaa.org.au
Babbarra Designs (Maningrida)  www.babbarradesigns.com.au
Bima Wear (Bathurst Is.)  www.bimawear.com
Elcho Island Arts (Galiwin’ku)  www.marthakal.org/elcho-island-arts
Injalak Arts (Galiwin’ku)  www.injalak.com
Jilimara Arts (Melville Is.)  site.jilamara.com
Larrakia Nation (Darwin)  www.larrakia.com
Merrepen Arts (Daly River)  www.merrepenarts.com.au
Mossman Gorge (Queensland)  www.yalanji.com.au
Tiwi Art Network  www.tiwiart.com
Tiwi Designs (Bathurst Is.)  www.tiwidesigns.com
Tjanpi Weavers (Alice Springs)  www.tjanpi.com.au
Wadeye Palngun Wurnangat Assoc.  wadeyewomen.wordpress.com

ORGANISATIONS:
Aboriginal Business Development Program  www.aboriginalbiz.nsw.gov.au
Arts Law Centre of Australia  www.artslaw.com.au
Bangarrang Shepparton  www.bangerang.org.au
Copyright Agency -Viscopy  www.copyright.com.au
Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair  www.darwinaboriginalartfair.com.au
Marimekko  www.marimekko.com
NAVA  www.visualarts.net.au

SMALL BUSINESS:
Cloth Fabric  www.clothfabric.com
Gaawaa Miyay  www.gaawaamiyay.com
Koskela  www.koskela.com.au
Mette Online  www.mette.net.au
Nomad Gallery  www.nomadart.com.au
Northern Editions  www.northerneditions.com.au
Publisher Textiles  www.publishertextiles.com.au
Raw Cloth  Shop 3, Aralia St Arcade; Nightcliff, Darwin. Ph 08 8985 2305
Spoonflower  www.spoonflower.com
Studio Fresh  www.studiofreshaustralia.com.au
Think Positive Prints  www.thinkdesignerprints.com.au

INDEPENDENTS:
Adriana Dent  www.albertini.com
June Mills  www.facebook.com/gunluckiinimul
The Hatmobile  www.torbandreiner.com/Hatmobile/
Valerie Kirk: That is the end of our formal presentations for today. We have had all of our speakers. It has been a great range of topics. I love the way that when people were talking they were interacting and things have bounced off each other. There have been cross-overs, crossing points of view, there have been parts which have informed us, inspired us, and I think that people will go away today with a really different picture of what fabric printing can be about.

Tim Growcott: On behalf of Injalak Arts I would like to thank you all for coming to Gunbalanya. It is a long way from a lot of places. Thank you very much, because it is great to have people with the expertise and a passion to come all this way to support this amazing industry. Particular thanks to artists and staff from other Art Centres, again it is a big journey. We thank you and we hope we can support you in turn.

There are a lot of things that could come out of today. We have recorded everything that has happened and that may act as a starting point for deciding what is needed and wanted by the textile community. The textile community here in the Northern Territory is a family and that is the beauty of it - working on communities means you are working as part of the family. An extended family, stretching across the Top End, working together.

A lot of us are connected already, but we might try to develop a fraternity or something specific - perhaps that will happen organically following on from today. There are all sorts of opportunities. There has been talk about perhaps exhibiting as a group. Maybe if Arts Centres got together on a larger scale? It’s something to talk about, to promote ourselves in a wider context. Bobbie Reuben spoke about a representative body to facilitate this process. Marketing is the magic word, and perhaps the area in which most work needs to be done.

These are among the underlying themes of what has been presented today, but the most important thing is again community and working with the artists to achieve what they want to achieve with their designs and their work. It is a privilege to work with remote designers to help achieve outcomes. Also to help counteract the distance factor which can exclude people from opportunities or from wider markets that can provide a good living. The very source of the beauty and strength of the work is in communities and it is important to stay connected to those roots and be grounded in that passion.

Louise Hamby: Travelling with Yarns at Gunbalanya has been a key marker in the history of Indigenous fabric printing in Australia. Aboriginal communities have had involvement with printing for 40 years. This symposium has provided discussion on many topics but an important one is the preservation of past practices and archiving of material for the future. This future is a bright one that incorporates new processes like digital printing with the hand made.

Artists and collaborators are working to develop a diverse range of practices that places the work in the design and art world, but also secures a place for printed materials inside communities.
Acknowledgments:

ANKAAA and the Editors would like to acknowledge the Larrakia people, on whose land this publication was planned and printed. Thankyou to the traditional owners of the Gunbalanya community who hosted the Travelling With Yarns event in August 2012. Injalak Arts organised the Forum, guided by former Manager, Lorna Martin. Jayne Nankivell arranged accommodation and meals for Forum attendees, and the corresponding workshop series.

The Forum was convened by Louise Hamby, Research Fellow in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University (ANU), whose long-term commitment to the Indigenous textile community is legendary. Her work facilitating the Forum was extensive. Louise was assisted by textile technician Tim Growcott. Valerie Kirk from the School of Art / Textiles at ANU contributed enormously in the week leading up to the Forum, and on the day.

Artists and Art Centres attending included Merrepen Arts (Daly River), Wadeye Palngun Wurnangat Association (Port Keats), Babbarra Designs (Maningrida), Bula'bula Arts (Ramingining) and Larrakia Nation (Darwin). All came to share their stories and learn from one another. ANKAAA is acknowledged for contributing funding for artists and Art Centres to travel to attend.

The presenters travelled huge distances to attend the Forum of their own volition, to reflect upon the past, present and future of printed textile production in the Northern Territory. Waltraud Reiner, Bobbie Reuben, John Waight, Donna Carstens, Linda Jackson, Adriana Dent, Sasha Titchkosky, Karen Coote, Tim Growcott, Lucy Simpson, and Angus & Rose Cameron, demonstrated considerable commitment and shared inspirational words.


The Editors would like to express their personal thanks to the presenters, Arts Centres and artists/designers who contributed their considerable time and energy to assist with this publication.

-August 2013.
Travelling With Yarns Indigenous Textile Forum occurred in Gunbalanya, Arnhemland in August 2012. Designers and textile printers from Indigenous Arts Centres in communities across the Northern Territory, travelled to the Forum to share stories and discuss common issues and directions for the industry.

Despite significant obstacles including distance from mainstream markets and limited access to training and resources, Indigenous textile manufacturers consistently achieve stunning results. These benefits flow back into communities, as well as enhancing the Australian design landscape.

The Forum featured speakers with significant involvement in the Indigenous textile industry over 40 years, offering their viewpoints to support the industry and others planning to enter it. With the support of ANKAAA, these sessions have been transcribed and now published, to offer a snapshot of a most remarkable creative industry - with a potential still to be fully realised.