



**IACA**

INDIGENOUS ART CENTRE ALLIANCE

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**NEWS**

Volume 9 Issue 2, August, 2020



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**Cover image:**  
*Collective Weaving Project for Moa and St Pauls weavers. Image: Moa Arts*

## About IACA

IACA, the Indigenous Art Centre Alliance, is the peak body that supports and advocates for the community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and cultural centres of Far North Queensland.

IACA works under the guidance and direction of a majority Indigenous Management Committee and is a not-for-profit organisation. There are currently 13 member art centres spread across the islands of the Torres Strait, the Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York and the tropical rainforest and coastal regions of Far North Queensland.

### Indigenous Art Centre Alliance members:

- Badu Art Centre / Badhulgaw Kuthinaw Mudh - Badu Island
- Bana Yirriji Art Centre - Wujal Wujal
- Erub Arts - Darnley Island
- Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre - Cardwell
- Gab Titui Cultural Centre
- HopeVale Arts and Culture Centre
- Lockhart River Art Centre
- Mornington Island Art
- Moa Arts / Ngalmun Lagau Minaral - Mua Island
- Pormpuraaw Art and Culture Centre
- Wei'num Arts - Western Cape York
- Wik and Kugu Art Centre - Aurukun
- Yalanji Arts - Mossman Gorge
- Yarrabah Arts and Cultural Precinct



### 2019-2020 IACA Management Committee:

- Phil Rist - (President) EO Girringun Aboriginal Corporation
- Vikki Burrows - (Treasurer) Manager Bana Yirriji Art Centre
- Abe Muriata - Artist Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre
- Solomon Booth - Board Chair Ngalmun Lagau Minaral Art Centre – Moa Arts
- Harold Ludwick - Board Director Hopevale Aboriginal Art Centre
- John Armstrong - Manager Mornington Island Art
- Eric Orcher - Artist Yarrabah Arts and Cultural Precinct
- Margaret Mara - Wei'num Arts and Crafts



IACA programs and events receive financial assistance from the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland's Backing Indigenous Arts initiative, from the Federal Government's Ministry for the Arts through the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program and the Indigenous Languages and Arts program and the Australia Council for the Arts.

## A word from the IACA President



IACA Chair Phillip Rist. Image: IACA

### An interview with the IACA President Phillip Rist

#### Has the lockdown affected you personally?

It has been a blessing in disguise to be able to spend time with family. Not rushing and travelling as I have been in the past. We have had time to reflect on what is important and we realise as long as we have each other we can survive anything. In my house we have six grandchildren, my daughter and partner all in the house together, it's been busy and noisy but we've all been well and we hope to carry this togetherness and connection out of this time and keep it in our day to day lives.

#### How has the lockdown affected the IACA board? How was the first Zoom Board Meeting?

We haven't been able to meet as often as usual we've had one Zoom board meeting, but for us as an Indigenous organization the Zoom meetings don't provide the ability to engage with one another and make decisions with the proper cultural authority required. The technology doesn't allow us to be guided by eye contact, body language and facial expressions, nor the importance of what is not said as much as what is said. As the chair I can't embrace the Zoom technology, there is no Kinship and fellowship there with the computer screen; we need that cup of tea and face to face yarn. It has affected our ability to make decisions with cultural authority, but we've made the best of it and have delayed culturally important decisions until we can meet face to face again and engage in true customary decision making.

#### Your thoughts on IACA's response to COVID Travel restrictions and cancellation of members conference and move to online training?

IACA has taken a very practical approach and provided online training to its members which has worked well and enabled the art centres to learn new things and have had the time to implement their new skills in the art centre. The Advocacy work IACA has done to provide extra funds for the art centres has been amazing and so gratefully received.

#### What is your outlook for the future?

I believe the landscape has changed forever we are still not sure how that will all look when this disease is gone but we are an adaptive and resilient mob we've been adapting for 1000s of years and I think the future is bright. I hope we can learn from this time, take the good and make change, especially regarding the environment. There will be some pain, but we need to be innovative and embrace the change that needs to occur.

### Phil Rist

President,  
 IACA Management Committee

*Phil Rist is the executive officer of the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation and Deputy Chair of the North Queensland Land Council. Phil is a widely respected Nywaigi Indigenous leader whose skill and determination has played a key role in establishing the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation as one of the most successful Indigenous community-based organisations in Australia.*

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# Elliot Koonutta: Pormpuraaw Arts and Cultural centre

I was born in Aurukun in 1964 and I am a Wik Mungkan man. My grandparents brought me up. When I was 15 we returned to our ancestral country on the Kendall River for a couple of years. It truly was the best time of my life. We lived in a tin shed with 15 other members of my immediate family. There was a bush airstrip close by, so every week we had supplies delivered. We also lived on bush tucker.

We returned to Aurukun after a cyclone destroyed our shed and camp area. In both Aurukun and at the Kendall River I watched the old people make spears, woomeras and carvings. I kept it on my mind that when my turn came, I would do it too.

I worked on cattle stations for a while before I got a 3-year scholarship to study music in Adelaide. That was a great time. I love music and art. When I returned to Aurukun in 2004 I started making woomeras, spears and boomerangs. When the Pormpuraaw Art Centre opened in 2005, I developed my carving and painting skills. Then I explored lino-prints, etching and ghost-net sculptures.

It makes me feel good because I'm carrying on what the old people taught my generation. Their stories are in my artwork. Now I'm passing their knowledge to the next generation. I like working with young boys and teaching them how to make spears and woomeras. I love helping out at youth culture camps in Pormpuraaw and Woree. My ghost net work helps to educate people about the needless destruction of fish and turtles that become caught in illegally discarded nets.

I have exhibited my works at CIAF for 10 years and DAAF the last 3 years. My artwork has been exhibited in Melbourne, Sydney, Paris, Geneva and New York City. I have been one of the most successful Pormpuraaw artists in terms of sales. It is a great way to make my own way in the world. I want to become the best artist I possibly can be, and then pass my skills onto my grandchildren. I would love to travel the world with my artwork then move back to my homeland on the Kendall River. I dream of building my own house on that beautiful country, where I lived in my youth. Maybe even build a school where I could teach the kids how to make spears and woomeras.

*"I'm carrying on what the old people taught my generation. Their stories are in my artwork."*



Elliot Koonutta teaching spear making.  
Image: Pormpuraaw Arts and Cultural Centre

# Meredith Arkwookerum: Pompuraaw Arts and Cultural centre

*"I started painting in 2018 when I was 60 years old. Art brings me happiness. I just love colour."*



Meredith Arkwookerum painting. Image: Pompuraaw Arts and Cultural Centre

I was born in Aurukun in the late 1950s during the Mission times. I am a Kugu Mu'inh woman. My homelands of Thadjakulin and Konthe are situated between Aurukun and Pompuraaw on Christmas Creek, Upan Waalang. I was forced to grow up in the Aurukun dormitory. Presbyterians ran the dormitory, the church and the town. In those days the last family groups were coming out of the bush so their children could get an education. During school holidays my grandparents took my cousins and I on walkabout in our country.

I love to dance. My father taught me to dance. He was a clan leader for the Wanam clan group. He was an important man and he travelled to Fiji, the Northern Territory and other places performing traditional dance. When I am dancing I am happy, honoured and proud.

When I finished school I worked as an administrator in the Aurukun Mission office and then at the community shop. Eventually I worked as a teachers aide in Aurukun, and then Pompuraaw where I now live. I am now working for RISE Community Development as a supervisor. The women I supervise work with textiles and paint. It made me think that maybe I could do something artistic myself and the Pompuraaw Art Centre manager encouraged me to give painting a go.

I started painting in 2018 when I was 60 years old. Art brings me happiness. I just love colour. I like the process of

deciding which colours will work best on my paintings. I am inspired to paint my homeland and totems because that is my identity. I enjoy working with colours that are the same as the bird feathers, sea, clouds, grass and pretty flowers of my homeland. I like when other people look at my paintings. I think they are attracted to the bright colours I use. When I go home after painting at the art centre in the morning I use an application that allows me to colour-in images on my phone.

Painting keeps my mind occupied and I feel busy. I like the decision-making involved. It is a good stress reliever and I see how it relaxes other people as they watch me work. Artists here in Pompuraaw use their time and talents to encourage other artists who are just starting out. It is a very cooperative rather than competitive atmosphere. It is an honour to be involved with Pompuraaw Art Centre. It is a great organisation that allows us to produce artwork in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner.

I am new to the art world. I am very proud and excited to have my work chosen to be part of the CIAF 2020 online exhibition. I want to stick with painting because I can use vibrant colours, rather than pursue different art forms. I want to keep improving my skills and make beautiful paintings. It would make me incredibly happy to have my art exhibited elsewhere in Australia and other parts of the world. Hopefully I am inspiring other people in the Pompuraaw community to give painting a go, it doesn't matter what age you are.

# Michael Norman: Pormpuraaw Arts and Cultural Centre

"I am a Thaayorre culture and saltwater man. Pormpuraaw country belongs to my clan and I own important inland freshwater country. This place is where the rainbow serpent emerged from under a big rock and spat out all living animals. My country is who I am. I belong to it, and it belongs to me. We believe that an artwork made in our country belongs to it. So we often feel sad when an artwork leaves Pormpuraaw to be exhibited elsewhere. It's like a part of us is leaving.

"I started working at Pormpuraaw Art Centre in 2014. I am glad to be part of the art centre and to work with my fellow artists and countrymen. I have made paintings and prints, but now spend most of my time making 3D works from ghost net. I am happy to be sharing my culture with the outside world. My totems are the emu, black duck and spear and through my work I celebrate

these totems and the song-lines of my ancestors."

Michael Norman's work has a contemporary yet naive style. It is sincere, connected and always experimental. In 2016 he exhibited two impressive ghost net sculptures at the Musee de Oceanographie Monaco. These works incorporate the use of galvanised fence, which the artist felt reflected the pattern of netting and represented the crocodile scale.

Michael Norman's work is on show at the Pormpuraaw Art Centre, and Tali Gallery in Sydney. In the past his work has been exhibited in Paris, Geneva, NYC, Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, the IACA Kinship exhibition in Cairns, and Tarnanthi in Adelaide.

*"My country is who I am. I belong to it, and it belongs to me. We believe that an artwork made in our country belongs to it. "*



Michael Norman with Big Croc. Image: Pormpuraaw Arts and Cultural Centre

# Lila Creek: Bana Yirriji Art Centre



Lila Creek, Baral (Tracks).  
Image: Bana Yirriji Art Centre



Lila Creek.  
Image: Bana Yirriji Art Centre

Lila was born in Mossman in 1952, and has been an avid artist with Bana Yirriji for over six years. Lila has a very large family with four children, three step-children, 21 grandchildren and 29 great grandchildren. Lila says of her family, "I love going out with the family to the beach hunting for food and having a fire with damper".

Lila's mother's people come from the Kuku Nyungkul clan of the Shipton Flat/ Helenvale area. Her father belongs to the Kaanju tribe of Coen.

Lila has participated in many group exhibitions over the past few years including Cape York Art in Cooktown, the Darwin and Cairns Art Fairs, and most recently the Endeavour Voyage exhibition

at the National Museum of Australia.

Lila works across a mixture of mediums such as painting, screen-printing, and jewelry. Lila says of her work, "I have been making art for a few years now and love bright colours as they make me feel happy. I paint, print, make jewelry and love all textile art."

Speaking about her Baral (Tracks) artwork, Lila says, "The Bubu, our country is like a storybook. Baral - tracks can tell you what animal is travelling. If it is Kurriyala the snake, Walkarr the lizard or Kadar the wallaby. This is how we know what is around to hunt for food. The Waybala, whitefella has bought new tracks into our country, Mudaka - motorcar and plenty of Bulki - cattle."

# Sonya Creek: Bana Yirriji Art Centre

Sonya Creek was born in 1971 and has lived in Wujal Wujal for 16 years. Sonya is an emerging artist who has been working with the Bana Yirriji Art Centre for the past five years.

Sonya belongs to the Kuku Nyungkul language group and says of her family, "My grandfather Alec Creek is a Kaantju man from Coen and my grandmother is KuKu Nyungkul from Shipton Flat".

Sonya has participated in many group exhibitions over the years including most recently the Endeavour Voyage: The Untold Stories of Cook and the First Australians, that is exhibited and part of the National Museum of Australia collection. Sonya also regularly participates in the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair and Cairns Indigenous Art Fair each year.

Speaking about making artwork, Sonya says, "I love it because some of my family members encourage me to make artwork. I have artists from both sides of my family."

Sonya works across a variety of mediums including acrylic on canvas, silk batik, screen-printing and jewelry.

Speaking about her Magpie Geese artwork, Sonya explains, "My painting is about my Grandmother's stories hunting Geese, she told me how they used to walk for miles to go hunting for magpie geese in the wet season. They would walk all the way to Kings Plains Lagoon, you can always find them near swamps."

Explaining her Kurranji (Cassowary) artwork, "My grandfather told me they used to wear the feathers of the Kurranji for decoration when doing ceremonial dances."



Sonya Creek. Image: Bana Yirriji Art Centre

Sonya Creek, Magpie Geese  
Image: Bana Yirriji Art Centre



# Erub Arts innovates through challenging times with huge wave of support



Ladies making the ghost net kits on Erub. Photo Erub Arts

For the Erub Arts team, the COVID-19 lockdown has presented many challenges and a rethink to the way we work. Importantly, it has made us realise how much our community needs our collaborators and wider network of supporters for continued success.

In December last year, unbeknown to all of us what lay ahead, Erub artists along with their long-term collaborators, installed their first large-scale ghost net installation at QAGOMA alongside the WATER exhibition. The opening was a success and thousands of adults and children came to see the exhibition to learn about and interact with ghost nets. It was scheduled to be on display until May 2020.



Erub Artists with their works for Below the Tide Line before COVID Image: Lynnette Griffiths & Erub Arts

However, by March, as the COVID-19 crisis took hold, the plan had changed and the whole exhibition came down and was shipped back to Cairns. In fact, all of the work that we had in various exhibitions came back in the space of a week. Our Cairns storage facility was piled floor to ceiling with boxes. While there was not a huge amount we could do, in the rush to go digital, QAGOMA did thankfully put some of the activities that were developed online.

We missed everyone, our friends, our relatives and our supporters. This is how the idea for At Home Together was developed, taking cue from previous collaborative projects that Lynnette Griffiths had worked with us on. We decided

to make 100 ghost net kits and sell them through Facebook, asking people to stitch, make and mail something back to us. We had no idea that everyone was feeling as isolated as us. We released the first notice at 10am, and within two hours we had over 200 people contact us. By 4pm we had over 300 people and the orders kept coming in! As a result, we've enjoyed a huge wave of support and massive database of people who are now returning little creatures to us in the spirit of collaboration.

As Nancy Naawi says of her time working remotely from home, "It was nice to be at home but I missed being together as a group and especially missed being able to

hug people." Emma Gela says, "I found the time at home quite flexible." Everyone agrees they spent more time chatting on the phone during their time at home!

The Art Centre has since reopened with strict social distancing measures, so the ghost net kits can continue to be made. We are looking forward to making a COVID-19 response artwork from what our social media friends and collaborators send back to us. Our work will be stitched with theirs. Amongst the challenges, COVID-19 has made us reach out to collaborate in new and exciting ways.

# Melanie Gibson shines as manager, Hopevale Arts and Culture Centre



Melanie Gibson Manager Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre. Image: Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre

As Director of the Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre, I'm very proud to be one of the six directors who gave Melanie Gibson the opportunity to become our manager.

Melanie joined the Hopevale Arts and Culture Centre as an administrator seven years ago, and has now successfully transitioned to the role of manager five years later.

Melanie is a Bulgun Warra & Binthi Warra single mother from Hopevale's Guugu Yimidhirr nation who has a vested interest in the community, and its people. I believe this has prompted her tenacious progress which has been recognised by major galleries, the National Museum of Australia and many more. Last year the Hopevale Art Centre won the title of Best Art Centre at CIAF 2019, with one of our artists winning an opportunity for a residency with other great artists.

The Centre was growing quite slowly for many years until Melanie took the reins, and last year the Centre turned a small profit which it hasn't seen in at least a decade. Melanie's intuition to expand into different mediums and introduce external partnerships has been very successful. Hopevale artists primarily showcase their cultural stories and sites of significance in their pieces. However at request from the NMA to produce the Bama story of Cook's visit, light boxes became a slight contemporary deviation which artists took in their stride to produce.

The Guugu Yimidhirr people are the people who Cook met when he landed at Whalambal birri (Endeavour River) on Waymburr country (Cooktown). This year the National Trust Australia Queensland will start a refurbishment of the James Cook Museum in Cooktown and the designs from our artists will adorn the walls of the new Indigenous room alongside narratives of the Guugu Yimidhirr people.

Harold Ludwick  
Hopevale Arts and Culture Centre  
Director

*"Melanie's intuition to expand into different mediums and introduce external partnerships has been very successful."*

# Virtual conference for IACA and its members

It's been a roller coaster for IACA and our 14-member Indigenous art centres during the past 5 months under COVID 19 restrictions. Like everyone all our normal events and travel were dashed, and we had to quickly plan and deliver an altered program that met the new needs of our art centre members. Our first priority was the health of artists and staff at the art centres so we set up several ways of communicating regularly with a weekly Zoom meeting, checking in every Tuesday, and a private members face book page to post helpful information and ask questions, as we headed into unknown territory.

Upon cancelling our face-to-face April IACA conference, we introduced on-line training delivery with 14 Zoom sessions covering a variety of areas pertinent to working in lockdown. The sessions covered photography – both artwork documentation and artist portraits, online sales and marketing, statistics - how to get them and how to use them in your business, contracts, wills, and licencing. Also training was delivered in Brand development, making and editing videos, updates from CIAF and Arts QLD, SAM database training, stocktake and studio tips. Lastly we managed a NorthSite Gallery update and virtual tour of the renovated Cairns contemporary art space Bulmba-ja. Sessions ran every Wednesday afternoon for two hours, were well attended, recorded for future viewing for those who missed them, and feedback has been very positive.

*"we are very pleased and grateful to the State and Federal government for their response to our requests for funds to help our members see it through this tough time."*

The lockdown and cancellation of Art Fairs and closures of commercial galleries has meant that art sales dropped instantly, so IACA lobbied Federal and State governments to provide some emergency funds for all our members, we are very pleased and grateful to the State and Federal government for their response to our requests for funds to help our members see it through this tough time. We are equally pleased that Qld Indigenous communities have remained safe from COVID 19 with not one case reported, may this continue.



Zoom image of IACA conference with Rebecca Dagnall photography workshop. Image IACA

# Joelene Roughsey: Mornington Island Art



Joelene Roughsey and daughter Mandy with her Rainbow Serpent artwork painted during the IACA Belonging workshop at Mornington Island Art. Image: IACA

Joelene Roughsey is a proud Lardil woman and belongs to the Langananji clan. She was born in Mt Isa in 1982 and grew up on Mornington Island. Her language name is Madar meaning the stem of the water lily swaying in the breeze.

Joelene's father is Leon Roughsey, the son of Tim Roughsey, and brother of the famous artist and author Goobalathaldin Dick Roughsey (1920-1985). The Roughsey's homeland is Langananji (Sydney) Island, south-east (Larumben) of Mornington Island, which is a part of the Wellesley Islands also known as the Larumben people.

Joelene's mother Monica has a twin sister and they were born in Cloncurry Queensland. When they were young the family moved back to Mornington Island. Joelene's great grandmother was born on the mainland. Later she was sent to Mornington Island, was adopted by the Roughsey family, and grew up during the mission times - the Presbyterian Church established the mission on Mornington Island in 1914.

Joelene grew up on her father's homeland, Ganthawu. Her younger years were spent playing with her friends and siblings out bush and learning how to find food from the

land. She remembers this as a pretty great time. She also spent a lot of time with her grandmother during her early years.

As a child Joelene attended Homeland School and was taught by teacher's aide, Coralie Thompson, who is now an artist at the Art Centre. Joelene's parents were very active in the church and often travelled for religious studies and as a result she spent some time in Townsville and Cairns. Joelene attended boarding school in Darwin for a couple of her high school years.

Joelene Roughsey and her daughter Mandy with her Rainbow Serpent artwork, painted as homage to her grandfather Goobalathaldin Dick Roughsey.

Best known for his art and a series of children's picture books that retell traditional Aboriginal stories, including 'The Rainbow Serpent', Goobalathaldin Dick Roughsey was an active and prominent figure involved in reviving and preserving the cultural life of the Lardil people and protecting and recording Indigenous culture.

His work recording ancient Aboriginal sites and rock paintings was the first of its kind and brought awareness to the wider community about respect and preservation. In the 1970s, his work with the Aboriginal Arts Board involved a number of travelling exhibitions of Aboriginal artworks to overseas museums which stimulated interest in Aboriginal art. His picture books were among the first books to introduce Aboriginal culture to Australian children and they continue to do so to this day.

Joelene is an accomplished painter and is part of the next generation of Lardil artists. Many of Joelene's pieces have been inspired by the work of her famous grandfather Goobalathaldin Dick Roughsey. Her work depicts traditional stories and cultural practices. Joelene is also a dancer with the Mornington Island Dancers. She has performed at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair and a number of local community events. Joelene's daughter was born in 2012. She is raising her girl to be strong and proud. She is determined to keep culture strong, and is passionate about sharing Lardil stories and culture with her daughter and nieces.

## Amanda Gabori: Mornington Island Art



*This work is titled  
'Mud Shells on My  
Mother's Country'.*

Amanda says, "Mud shells are known as *karnjirrdi* in our Kayardild language and these are at my Mother's Country, Mirdidingki on Bentinck Island. This is a place where traditionally our People would come together and gather mud mussels. There are lots of story places around here. When the tide comes in the shells can move over the mud. We collect them and cook them on the coals and they are good eating. When babies get coughs or colds we feed them these and they are real good for upset tummies as well."

*Amanda Gabori with her painting  
Mud Shells on my Mothers Country.  
Image: MI Art*

## Lex Namponan: Wik and Kugu Art Centre

Born in 1971, Lex Namponan is one of eight children born to Angus Namponan and Chrissie Peermuggina. Lex's father country is at Warpang, just inland from Cape Keerweer. His mother is from the adjoining country of Aayk, her language being Wik-Ngathan.

Lex's father Angus, has the totem of Bush Rat, Freshwater Shark, Small Carpet Snake, Salmon, and Single-barb Hardwood Spear. Lex also shares other totems that are associated with the Wik-Akenh language and belong to the Apalech ceremonial group.

Lex's father was a prominent carver in Aurukun and his sons have followed in his footsteps. Lex is the younger brother of Garry, Leigh, Bevan and older brother Leo, and all are carvers with the Wik and Kugu Art Centre.

Lex is an Apalech man and the dog is a very significant totem belonging to his clan group. The Story Place of the Ku' (ancestral being or totem), associated with the Apalech ceremonial group is located in the south of the Wik and Kugu region at Eeremangk near the mouth of the Knox River. This story links the land and the sea and is a tale of transformation where the Ku' who had travelled from the distant Northern Territory to Cape York Peninsula, leaves the land, enters Knox River and becomes Nyiingkuchen, the Freshwater Shark. This story also tells how Ku' gave language to the region. Each Dreamtime dog has its name, its colours and its qualities of character. The Ku' song cycles and dances are still performed at house opening ceremonies today.

While often using natural ochre colours, Lex also likes to use a vibrant blue, and occasionally you will see one of his blue Camp Dogs on exhibit. Lex has been making art with the Wiki and Kugu Art Centre for over ten years, and has exhibited his work in many exhibitions including Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi in Melbourne, Sydney Contemporary at Carriageworks, and the JamFactory in Adelaide. Lex's carvings are also part of the National Gallery of Victoria and National Museum of Australia's collections.



*Lex Namponan with a Camp Dog. Image: Wik and Kugu Art Centre*

*"Lex is an Apalech man  
and the dog is a very  
significant totem belonging  
to his clan group."*

# My remote workshop experience by Nephi Denham

COVID-19 has put a stop to our artists being able to attend and create at the Girringun Art Centre. This has impacted all of us, even the workers, and has brought to light just how important it is for our artists to continue creating and painting for future exhibitions.

Two weeks prior to the first COVID-19 lockdown, Edwina Circuit was working with us on the Belonging workshops. One of the new materials Edwina showed us was plywood boards cut into a few different sizes. Our artists loved working on these, so the manager sourced more boards for our remote workshops when we had to close down for a while.

As we only have a small team and we all live in different places away from the Girringun Art Centre, we had to come up with a plan for remote working. We had meetings and talked about who lived closest to which artists in Ingham, Murray Upper, Tully, Mission Beach and Davidson Road areas. We put paints in smaller tubs and gave these out to our artists, along with a range of boards and canvases. I had the honour of looking after 11 of our artists that lived in Tully, Mission Beach and the Davidson Road area.

In the lead up to CIAF, I visited the artists every week keeping to the strict hygiene rules, remembering why these remote workshops were being held. I would give out paint and paint brushes, and boards and canvases,



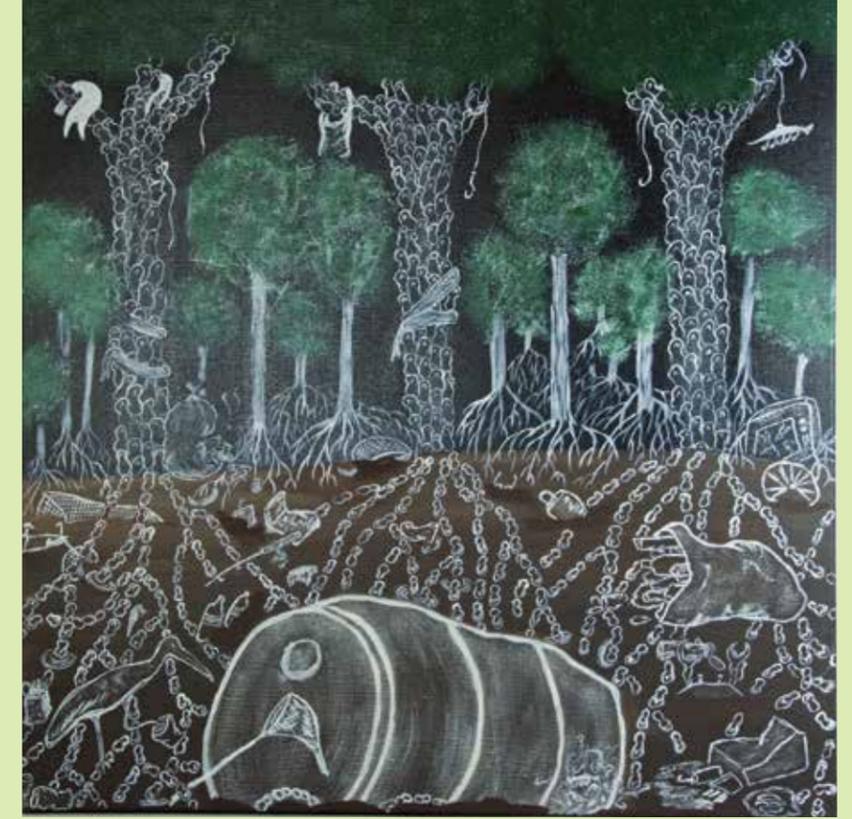
Senior Girramay artist Philip Denham,  
Image: Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre

and keep records of who had what and what sizes. It was important our artists could keep creating artworks for our upcoming exhibitions like CIAF and DAAF that were still going ahead in a digital form. These visits provided a great opportunity for me to have a yarn with our artists outside of the workshops. The best part of one of my visits to Mission Beach was having damper with jam and a coffee with Auntie Cherie Mooner, who is one of our emerging artists and continually likes to say, "I can't paint", but has created two of the most beautiful paintings for this year's CIAF theme of Climate Change. One of these paintings show the beauty of her country, and the other, human pollution and waste. It was great to be able to mentor her along with Senior Djiru Artist, Leonard Andy. Some days, not only would I facilitate art, but I'd also help with other jobs such as driving artists home from town or collecting string bark for string making with my father, Senior Girramay Artist Philip Denham. We would also look for materials to make Bagu with Jiman. It felt wonderful to see how everyone was going each week, being able to stock them with more materials, and to see and collect newly created works.

We are all finding it hard to cope with COVID-19 and how it has affected our ability to develop and create new artworks and submit them on time. Our small team met again to discuss ways to keep our artists motivated from home like they usually are in the studio. We developed a series of questions to help our artists develop concepts around the

*"These visits provided a great opportunity for me to have a yarn with our artists outside of the workshops."*

theme of Climate Change. When I went back the following week to meet our artists, we talked about the questions and I wrote down their answers for them. They told me amazing stories of the Country, the observations they have made of climate change and how unhappy they are about the changes that have happened. It has been a challenging time but looking back on what our artists have created and achieved, I am fortunate to have had this experience. I feel like the Girringun remote workshops have been a great success and I looking forward to continuing visits to our artists every week.



Cherie Mooner, Welcome to my Country, 2020. Image: Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre

Brodie Murray, Imagine how the Animals Feel, 2020. Image: Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre



# Moa artists embrace new possibilities through their weaving

At Moa Arts, momentum has been gathering in a number of creative areas this year. While weavers of Kubin and St Pauls communities continue to work to improve the quality and complexity of their bags and baskets, they are also thinking about new ideas and the ways weaving can continue to develop as a creative cultural practice.

In March, thanks to a small grant from the Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, the women of Moa Arts organised a community weaving and dyeing project as part of Queensland Women's Week 2020. Women of every generation from Kubin and St Pauls communities came together as a group to celebrate their achievements, to share stories and reflect on the important role they play in keeping families and communities strong.

From these gatherings, the women began a project which involves the collective weaving of a large basket. The women are taking turns to work on different parts of the basket as it moves progressively from house to house. In its own small way, this project is helping keep the community strong and demonstrates a new way to work creatively during these difficult times.

In other news, Paula Savage and Fiona Elisala Mosby have been developing work for an exhibition about traditional

and contemporary weaving which will be held at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane.

Paula Savage's woven works capture the forms and colours of the reefs, shorelines and seas around Mua and push against the limits of what we know about Zenadth Kes weaving. Using hand dyed raffia and sea cord, and with a strong foundation of traditional weaving techniques, Paula has stepped away from purely functional forms to give the baskets more freedom to grow and develop according to what is possible rather than what is expected. In this way her works are often more like coral and sea sponges than baskets. They seem to suggest that if cultural traditions are the beating heart of island life, then the natural world is a basket of ribs that hold everything in place.

In the same spirit, Fiona Elisala Mosby has produced two series of mono-prints that are a radical departure from traditional printmaking techniques. Inking up pandanus leaves and woven mats and running them through the press, the prints move in multiple directions at once and take the raw materials and objects of weaving and put them directly into the process of printmaking. They use a two-dimensional process (printmaking) to talk about three dimensional cultural practices (weaving). They also remind us that traditional knowledge is always strong enough to be interpreted in new and innovative ways.

There is an exciting energy and a growing self confidence among Moa's artists and weavers, and a willingness to experiment and play. Their work is a testament to the possibilities of weaving, and what can happen when you are willing to take chances.

Recent work by Fiona Elisala Mosby and Paula Savage will feature in 'longwater: fibre stories' at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane, opening December 5, 2020. Touring nationally in 2021-22.

*"There is an exciting energy and a growing self confidence among Moa's artists and weavers,"*



Paula Savage basket,  
Image: Moa Arts



*Nancy Naawi. Image: Lynette Griffiths & Erub Arts*



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