



**IACA**

INDIGENOUS ART CENTRE ALLIANCE

**NEWS**

Volume 10 Issue 2, August, 2021



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**Cover image:**  
*Ethel Thomas' final painting, Stone Fish Traps 2021. 136.5 x60 cm, Acrylic on Belgian Linen. Image MI ART*

## 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 Minal - Mua Island
- Pompuraaw 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:

- Harold Ludwick - (President) Board Director Hopevale Arts and Culture Centre
- Vikki Burrows - (Treasurer) Manager Bana Yirriji Art Centre
- Phil Rist - EO Girringun Aboriginal Corporation
- Solomon Booth - Board Chair Ngalmun Lagau Minal Art Centre – Moa Arts
- John Armstrong - Manager Mornington Island Art
- Joann Russo - Manager Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre
- Bereline Loogatha - Gallery Manager Mornington Island Art
- Adam Boyd - Manager Moa Arts
- Florence Gutchen - Artworker Erub Arts



IACA programs and events receive financial assistance from the Queensland Government through the Arts Queensland Backing Indigenous Arts initiative, from the Federal Government's Ministry for the Arts through the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program, the Australia Council for the Arts and Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund - an Australian Government initiative. IACA supports the Indigenous Art Code.

## Word from the President



### Wandharra (Hello)

Here we are, half the year is almost gone and suddenly there's a rush, emails piled up, reports half completed, forgot who we needed to call, and even forgot where the car was parked!

On the flipside, we are now able to meet face-to-face and what joy that is. Zoom was very useful throughout our separation to keep in touch, and I think it's safe to assume IACA Art Centres are Zoom experts now! I'd also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge our Cairns based staff - Pam, Max and Geraldine, for their devoted commitment to all our Art Centres by implementing Zoom training which worked really well. Sadly we will be saying farewell to Pam later this year after a tireless ten years of managing IACA.

On 16 March, IACA board members met in Cairns for a Board Meeting. It was a sombre start to the meeting as we paid respect in remembrance of our lovable, and jovial Board Member Eric Orcher who was taken from his partner and family in a unexpected tragedy.

On 17 March, Board Members took part in governance training with the fabulous Maggie Kavanaugh which I believe was a very successful training session and also a person who I would recommend to any organisation running this type of training.

During 13-15 April, all Art Centre Managers came together for the 2021 IACA conference, just as Queensland went into compulsory mask wearing mode. However, we endured the uncomfortable mask wearing and enjoyed the company of each other for the duration of the conference.

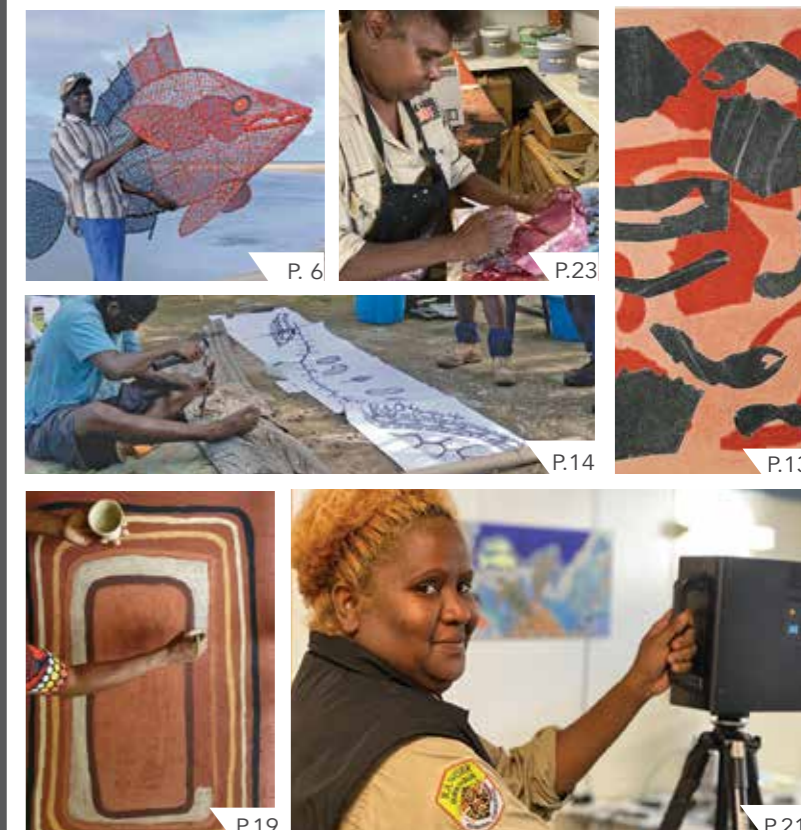
To all our Art Centre Managers and artists, please keep yourself, family and friends safe as we go forward with no certainty of where or when we'll see the end of COVID-19.

**IACA President  
Harold Ludwick**

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# In Memory of Warthardangathi Bijarrba Ethel Thomas (Loogatha)



Ethel Thomas working in the studio at MI Art. Image: MI Art

Ethel Thomas was a much loved member of MI Art Centre, and her passing in March at aged 75 has left a large hole within the tight knit group of artists.

Ethel was born at Oak Tree Point on Bentinck Island. "I was only very small when the missionaries came and took us to Mornington Island. I was asleep when it happened and when I woke up we were on Mornington Island. I missed my parents when we were in the dormitory and we would often run away to be with them. When I was older I worked in the hospital and the mission house. Not long after that I went to Karumba on the mainland and worked on a cattle station. I moved around a few stations and on one, Esmerelda, I met my husband George Thomas.

*When my husband got sick and passed away I returned to Mornington in time for our people starting an outstation on Bentinck Island at Main Base or Ninjilki."*

Ethel was always very grateful to Aunty Sally Gabori. "Aunty Sally Gabori showed me her paintings when she first visited Bentinck again after being away for such a long time. She gave me one because I am her favourite. Now I am doing the same paintings with my sisters and aunties."

MI Art Gallery Manager, Bereline Loogatha, reflects, "Mum Ethel was a wife, mother, grandmother and artist. She was passionate about family, Country and culture and these were the things that influenced her art, and her

*conversations around these things. She always acknowledged her Aunty Sally who introduced her and her sisters to art, and she went on to develop her own unique style. When she went out on exhibition trips she would return home with stories to share and have everyone laughing. She was also eager to learn new skills and once was involved with a fashion workshop where she created a dress for CIAF and wore make up and went around saying, 'I look alright aye', all the while batting her eyelids. We'll miss her presence and input into our conversations around art works in the studio. On Country, where she always wanted to be, gave her the opportunity, with the youth, to share her love and knowledge of Country. We'll always remember her for her love of vibrant colours, family and her beloved homeland Rukuthi Bentinck Island."*



*"She was passionate about family, Country and culture and these were the things that influenced her art"*

Ethel Thomas with her painted coral works. Image MI Art

# Pormpuraaw focuses on community in challenging times

Pormpuraaw Art & Culture Centre continues to navigate the challenges of COVID-19 with amazing resilience - adapting and growing future opportunities and supporting the local community. Since the beginning of the pandemic, they have focused on keeping the art centre open and engaging in several community building activities, all while adhering to strict social distancing measures.

The most enjoyable activity was painting large-scale murals on the outside walls of the art centre and local store. At least 40 community members and local school children contributed to the murals, while many other community members sat and enjoyed watching the murals come to be, sharing traditional totems and stories. One of the murals is a rendition of the Brydes

Whale. One of these whales washed up on the local beach last year, and while it was a tragic event, the community pulled together caring for it and easing its suffering. Celebrating this amazing totem in a mural was a way to help the community process their shared experience. The artists believe that while making artwork to sell is important, making artwork that stays in the community and becomes a community landmark and source of pride and identity is more valuable.

The Pormpuraaw police also asked artists whether they would consider making artwork to decorate their police car as they had seen in other communities. The artists saw this request as a privilege and a way to give back to the police for everything they do for the local community. The police suggested artwork that was

rectangular to fit on two car doors. Several artists worked together to paint a large-scale work and the result was a painting of fish and sea animals in fluorescent paint. The police loved the work and the art centre team found someone in Cairns to transfer it onto a magnetic decal. It's a real buzz for the artists to see the police driving around in a car displaying their work!

Pormpuraaw has also been working on artwork to display for CIAF, DAAF and other events planned for the year. They have focused on what they do best and have built a reputation on, including large sculptures of fish totems made from ghost net and found materials, print making and painting. The artists believe their years of practice and development are paying off and they are making their finest works yet. We can't wait to see them!

Pormpuraaw artists with their artwork displayed on police car. Image: Pormpuraaw Art & Culture Centre



Kim Norman with his Coral Trout. Image: Pormpuraaw Art and Culture Centre

Artists painting outside of art centre wall mural. Image: Pormpuraaw Art & Culture Centre



# IACA Members back together again



IACA members visit the newly renovated Northsite Galleries at Bulmba-Ja in Cairns. Image: IACA

*“A wonderful session on self-care for managers and staff hit a nerve for all”*



IACA members and presenters at the IACA conference in April. Image: IACA

In April, for the first time in 18 months, IACA Members were able to hold a face-to-face conference. It was wonderful to be together again, share our stories and reconnect after a year of COVID-19 lockdowns.

Over the three-day conference, we looked at product development for online sales and the intricacies of artwork licensing to produce merchandise. The membership met Professor David Throsby who is running a national research project surveying economic outcomes of remote artists across Australia. We are the last region to be surveyed and we look forward to seeing the outcomes of this research and how it will inform the sector. Tracey Groves from Cairns Airport consulted with our members to understand how the airport can work in a more meaningful way to commission art works for the airport. The membership appreciated this approach of listening and hope to see lots of IACA artists works at the airport over coming years.

A wonderful session on self-care for managers and staff hit a nerve for all, and more will be done around this topic in future conferences. Robyn Ayres of Arts

Law gave an update on their services and answered the many legal queries the art centres had. We then visited the newly renovated gallery spaces at the Courthouse and Northsite Galleries in Cairns.

An industry specialist panel comprising of Shona Coyne (NMA) representing institutions, Paul Johnstone representing commercial galleries, Claire Summers representing art fairs, and Tim Acker representing industry specialists, discussed the differing roles of these vital components of the Indigenous Art Industry. Shona Coyne spoke about the Belonging exhibition set to show at the NMA in September this year, and how it will roll out over 2021/22. Shilo McNamee and Claire Summers from Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair presented on Customer Service and Managing Sales and Leah Emery of Artisan in Brisbane discussed opportunities for Art Centres. The conference was wrapped up with final updates from Arts QLD and CIAF.

Our conference dinner was held at Edge Hill Lawn Bowls Club where friendly competition amongst members made for great fun and a lot of laughs on the lawn bowls field. It really was great to be together again at this power packed conference.

In other news, the IACA Management Committee have also undertaken timely governance training with Maggie Kavenaugh. A full day of training provided an essential refresh in governance skills and knowledge for our new Board Members.



Curator Shona Coyne presenting on behalf of the National Museum of Australia. Image: IACA

# Cultural Connections supports research in Brisbane



Artists look closely at traditional woven objects from the Bloomfield region at the QLD museum. Image: IACA

The Cultural Connections project is a partnership between IACA and the National Museum of Australia (NMA). Its aim is to partner with local land councils, shires, and arts and cultural organisations to support community-led projects that strengthen local cultural practices and knowledge transmission. It also focuses on enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practitioners and communities to develop and share their knowledge, histories and stories in a way that is meaningful to them.

The Cultural Connections program is supporting the development and delivery of a women's weaving cultural

maintenance camp at Hopevale. Many of IACA's member artists feel that traditional weaving skills from their region are being lost. The weaving camp will facilitate intergenerational knowledge exchange of these critical skills. It will also generate high-quality documentation that will create an important cultural archive for future generations.

In preparation for the camp, six artists and artworkers from Hopevale Arts & Culture Centre and Bana Yirriji Art Centre travelled to Brisbane for some firsthand research into fibre artworks in the museum and gallery collections. Participants included Betty Sykes, Anne Nunn, Sonya Creek, Hannah Gibson, Delankah Ross-Hart and Kian Bowen.

Special thanks are extended to Avril Quail at the Queensland Museum for the behind-the-scenes investigation of the collection; Katina Davidson and Sophia Sambono for an enthusiastic welcome and personalised tour of the exhibitions at the Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art, and all the friendly staff at the State Library of Queensland.

Everyone left Brisbane hugely inspired and enthusiastic for the upcoming weaving camp in Hopevale which will take place at the end of May. Stay tuned for the outcome!

Artists from Bana Yirriji and Hope Vale Art Centres, IACA staff and facilitators visit QAGOMA and the QLD Museum preparing for the NMA Cultural Connections womens weaving camp Project. Image IACA



# Farewell to IACA's inaugural Manager, Pam Bigelow

After a decade of working tirelessly for Far North Queensland and Torres Strait Indigenous Art Centres, it is with much sadness we announce that Pam Bigelow will end her tenure as Manager of the Indigenous Art Centre Alliance (IACA) in 2022.

Under Pam's leadership, IACA has developed into a strong, independent, and effective advocacy organisation, working together with Indigenous Art Centres based in Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait. IACA Chair Harold Ludwick reflects, "Pam has been a huge asset to IACA and she was instrumental in founding this important peak body. Having a dedicated and hardworking manager in place for the past ten years is the reason behind IACA's success. It's also important to acknowledge that managing a peak body has many challenges, emotionally and physically, and to have done this for ten years really shows Pam's dedication to the Indigenous artists in our region."

The decision to leave has been a difficult one for Pam, however she says, "IACA is now in a very secure place, with steady funding, an experienced Management Committee and amazing staff. I feel that now, while IACA is thriving, it is an appropriate time to step down and hand over the reins to a new manager." Pam has prioritised succession planning, ensuring adequate time for recruitment and a comprehensive handover.

When Pam first began as Manager, the art centres in Far North Queensland were isolated from the national industry and were navigating operational challenges

independently with no peak body to represent their interests.

Pam reflects, "The most rewarding aspect of being part of this amazing organisation is watching the Indigenous Art Centres develop and to see them come together as a whole under IACA. They are such a great bunch of people, and they all treat each other with great respect which really shows when we all get together at conferences and art fairs."

Under Pam's leadership, IACA has:

- IACA was Incorporated with a majority Indigenous Board within 12 months of operation.
- Managed over 20 IACA Professional Development Conferences.
- Published more than 20 IACA News.
- Established the IACA Arts Worker training program.
- Managed two major arts development exhibitions, Kinship and Belonging.
- Implemented Story Art Money (SAM) best practice software across the network.
- Represented IACA on national boards including DAAF and the Indigenous Art Code.
- Implemented research in economic and training needs for artists and artworkers.
- Established essential services for art centres including HR, art storage, art fair support, IT support, counseling, legal support, and a members only dedicated resource web page.

Phil Rist Committee member and former IACA Chair says, "It is with



Pam Bigelow at October 2019 IACA Conference. Image: IACA

mixed emotions I say goodbye to Pam Bigelow as our longstanding Manager of IACA. Pam arrived at a time when the type of leadership she brought to the table was needed. Her professionalism, her unwavering commitment and absolute tenacity to the cause was without question. As a previous Chair of the organisation I found our relationship was based on these fundamental principles. What I loved about Pam was her humour. Some would say what humour? Well there was this crazy little thing I felt helped us deal with issues more lightheartedly but at the same time, with an underlying seriousness. Pam has taken our organisation to another level and that will be in large part the legacy she leaves with us."

# New skills keep culture strong at Moa Arts

Workshops have always been an important part of Moa Arts' creative program. They are a time when artists sit together to learn new skills and processes, share stories, reconnect and build stronger relationships. When COVID-19 hit we had to postpone our workshop program and focus instead on rebuilding our computer, management and organisational systems. While this was enormously beneficial for the organisation, it was not so great for artists wanting to develop their skills and creative output.

This year, we are making up for lost time with back-to-back creative workshops including fabric design, sewing, screen-printing, photoshop, porchoir printing and silversmithing, all of which have opened up a range of new creative opportunities. At the print press this means big, bold studies in colour and form and new directions for

blending cultural knowledge with new media. At the jewellery bench it means higher value, higher quality adornments based on traditional mark making and plant and animal species. In the sewing room it means everyone is more confident to sew, dye and print their own clothing. We can also produce a range of fabric-based merchandise without having to send the manufacturing off the island. With skills in photoshop, we can develop our designs by manipulating the colour, scale and placement of design elements before settling on a final design.

These new skills are giving Maa's artists new ways to shape their stories and keep their culture strong. It is this readiness to take on new ways of doing things, the willingness to innovate and experiment, along with the pride the artists take in their culture, their history and their visual traditions, that makes the creative economy of Zenadth Kes so rich and unique.

*"These new skills are giving Maa's artists new ways to shape their stories and keep their culture strong"*

Jeanon Baira, Flora Taylor, Loretta Glanville and Fiona Elisala Mosby developing a pattern for a dress. Image: Moa Arts



Paula Savage Getali (Crab) 1 of 5. 2021. Ink on paper. Image: Moa Arts

# Erub Arts prepares for Coming of the Light Anniversary

Since January, Erub Arts have been working very hard towards the 150th Anniversary of Coming of the Light.

The Art Centre has been busy developing merchandise for the event, as well as producing works for four exhibitions including CIAF, Island Futures at the Queensland Museum, 150ZK at Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island, and a textile installation recreating a feasting table at the Cairns Court House, which will include Indigenous textiles from the North of Australia. All of this is on top of their own gallery exhibition to continue to share their works with the local community.

The process to create a logo and imagery for the Anniversary event has involved mono-printing workshops, fabric dyeing, watercolour painting

and charcoal drawing. Each item produced has been carefully selected and workshopped through an in-house design process facilitated by Lynnette Griffiths. Some items have been ordered specially and some printed in the studio. All work has a focus on being as "local as possible" and for locals by locals. The community is very happy with the results and items will be on sale through Erub Arts and Gab Titui.

Further afield, Erub Arts have also been working on two large projects - one that will bring together people from around Australia's coastline, and the other in Indonesia. With the second project, the Art Centre is hoping to raise awareness with fishing communities and host satellite exhibitions in regional areas of Indonesia where the impact of fishing and using nets is both a livelihood and an environmental challenge. Stay tuned for more information later this year.

*Interested Community members watch Jimmy K Thaiday carving. Image Erub Arts and Lynnette Griffiths*



*Nancy Naawi pulling her first Coming of the Light Mono Print. Image Erub Arts and Lynnette Griffiths*



# IACA Indigenous Artsworker Program hits the road

Launched in September 2020, the inaugural IACA Indigenous Artsworker Program (IIAP) is a one-year pilot program developed with the aim of extending and upskilling artsworkers through customised arts industry training.

Last month, the IIAP hit the road with the aim of examining the subject of 'Studio Management'. The coursework incorporated onsite practical experience via field trips to three different art centres - Yalanji Arts (Mossman Gorge), Hopevale

Arts & Culture (Hope Vale) and Bana Yirriji Art Centre (Wujal Wujal). The visiting artsworkers gained experience and insight into how each manage their offices, artist studios, storage and gallery spaces. Art centre staff gave behind-the-scenes tours of their art centres and demonstrated systems, giving practical tips for running a studio, ordering materials, preparing materials, stretching canvas, artwork handling, and exhibition display and storage.

Artsworkers made the most of the networking opportunity with other art centre staff and enjoyed chatting over lunch with artists. They even managed to fit in some sightseeing at Wujal Wujal Falls and Cooktown before heading back home.

The inaugural IIAP participants are Nephi Denham (Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre), Florence Gutchen (Erub Arts), Bereline Loogatha (Mornington Island Art), Junibel Doughboy (Bana Yirriji Art Centre), and Vanessa Cannon and Jess Creek (Yalanji Arts).

*"This is all about learning about other art centres"*

Reflecting on the experience, Florence Gutchen of Erub Arts said, *"This is all about learning about other art centres, for me I speak, I come out of my comfort zone so I can see what is out there, how to make new friends, build a network, come to be working with our own people... I'm very happy to be a part of this, a special time for sharing knowledge and learning more, and I believe when I go back I will share"*.

***This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.***

Nephi Denham, and Leanne Emmitt at Yalanji Arts during the IIAP field trip. Image: IACA



Arts workers at Bana Yirriji Art Centre during the IIAP field trip. Image: IACA



Arts workers at Yalanji Arts during the IIAP field trip. Image: IACA



Arts workers at Hopevale Arts and Culture during IIA field trip. Image: IACA



Arts workers at Bana Yirriji Art Centre during the IIAP field trip. Image: IACA

# Powerful new work by Bana Yirriji artists

Building on the success of the Belonging and Cultural Connections arts development workshops, Bana Yirriji Art Centre invited facilitator Edwina Circuit to return to Wujal Wujal. Edwina worked with the artists on their concepts for this year's CIAF exhibition entitled Sacred.

The group workshoped the theme by thinking about the question 'what does sacred mean to us?' The group landed on the following statement:

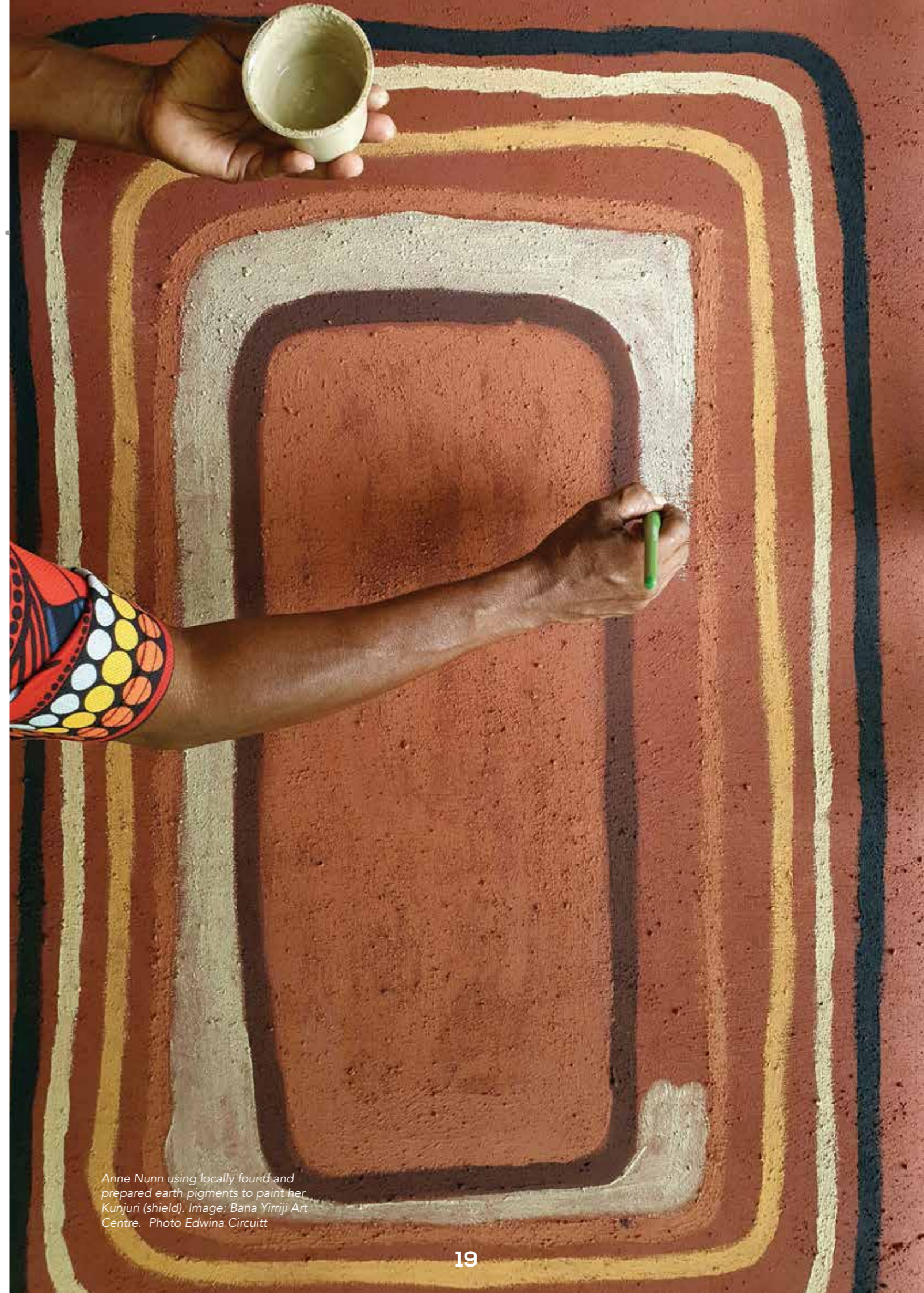
*Sacred is our culture, our knowledge, our lore. It is precious and we can not give it away. We are passing it onto the next generations. We can only share a little bit. Not everything.*

As part of the workshop, artists also learnt how to prepare locally found earth pigments to make paint. A range of techniques were used to grind the ochres into powders that were then mixed with high quality acrylic binders. Artists created an extraordinary range of beautiful colours and textures and experimented painting on Belgian linen and driftwood. Artist Sonya Creek said, "We are painting our culture and our stories using materials found on our Country, it is powerful."

Artists are excited about the artworks produced during the workshop and are looking forward to exhibiting them in Cairns at CIAF 2021.

*"Sacred is our culture,  
our knowledge,  
our lore"*

Preparing ochre for making paint. Image: Bana Yirriji Art Centre. Photo Edwina Circuit



Anne Nunn using locally found and prepared earth pigments to paint her Kunjuri (shield). Image: Bana Yirriji Art Centre. Photo Edwina Circuit

# Girringun develops a new digital platform

“Girringun wanted to be proactive and to find a way to continue to promote its work to the world while in lockdown”



Erica Muriata, Nephi Denham, Shanann Cassady with trainers Sam Cook and Brian Beebe. Image: Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre

In response to COVID-19 restrictions, participants from Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre have undertaken training in 3D infrared photography, resulting in the creation of immersive virtual experiences. The training was facilitated via Zoom with USA based trainers Brian Beebe (Southern AZ Virtual Tours) and Sam Cook (KMBA).

Ten participants from Girringun received this training including Manager Joann Russo, Arts Workers Nephi Denham and Shanann Cassady, artist Erica Muriata and various Traditional Owners from the region. The training was funded by Arts Queensland through the digital adaptation grant, which also allowed the art centre to purchase the equipment and arrange the facilitator.

With international visitor numbers in decline, Girringun wanted to be proactive and to find a way to continue to promote its work to the world while in lockdown. Since launching the new digital platform in May 2021 with a gala opening event attended by hundreds across the internet, it is now up and running 24 hours a day with great response!



Traditional Owners Whitney Rassip & Olivia Mooka. Image: Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre



Traditional Owner Kayla Henry. Image: Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre

# Ngana Exhibition

In April, the Yalanji Arts and Culture Centre held an important exhibition Ngana meaning we 'all us' including the person(s) spoken to. The exhibition was held at the Mossman Gorge Centre and brings together the talents of eight established and emerging Kuku Yalanji artists who draw inspiration from their cultural heritage, rainforest landscape and shared histories. The exhibition showcases contemporary artworks across painting, ceramic, glass and textiles by Vanessa Cannon, Karen Shuan, Lorna Shuan, Karen Gibson, Binna, Kim Missionary, Luwana Spratt, and Laurence Gibson.

Karen Gibson, who has several pieces on display, including a painting entitled 'Fenced', says, "I was trying to come to terms with what it was like knowing our people (Bama) were fenced in. They had to ask permission to go out hunting on their own country. The orange colour in this painting represents the land. The barbwire with the blood dripping refers to the blood that was shed in the past. The figures at the bottom of the painting represent the spirit of our ancestors that are still out on country."

Lorna Shuan also has a number of ceramic pieces and paintings on display in the show. Ms Shuan is a Traditional Owner at the Mossman Gorge community,

and her art tells the stories of her country and people, and is an important way for her to pass the message onto the next generation and those in the wider community. Lorna says, "This is how we were brought up, respecting each other and respecting people and stories before us. The Mountain (Gooidbid) shows the story of the rock formation above Mossman Gorge. It's a Dreamtime story about all the animals that are in the rock."

Vanessa Cannon from Yalanji Arts also has a number of paintings and ceramic pieces exhibited. Ms Cannon has been painting her entire life and says she learnt from her mother and grandmother, and that "my family and my grandparents inspire my work."

Karen Shuan, a third-generation traditional custodian of the Kuku Yalanji people has nine paintings on display, which she says "are about history, storytelling, medicine, healing, and also cultural dancing."

Andrew Gibson is another Yalanji Artist who has five pieces of clay work on show, many with traditional animals carved onto them including crocodiles and freshwater fish.

*"They had to ask permission to go out hunting on their own country."*

*Quotes and images for this article were generously supplied by Karlie Brady from Newport.*



Karen Gibson with her work Fenced. Image: Karlie Brady Newport

# In Profile: Heather Koowortha, Wik and Kugu Arts Centre

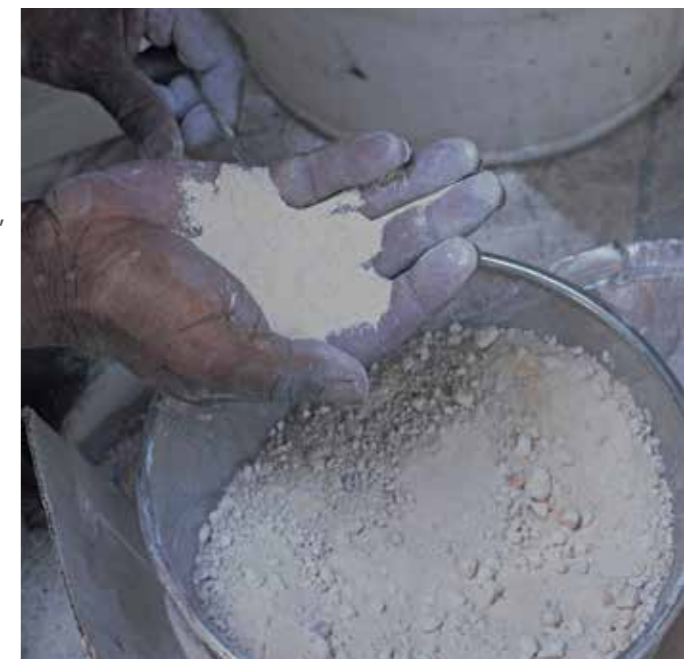


Heather Koowortha in the studio. Image: Wik and Kugu Arts Centre

Heather is a Traditional Owner for both the Cairns region (Grandfather's Country who has the spotted stingray totem), and the Southern Wik Lands/Coen region, who are Wik-Mungkan speakers. She is a highly skilled arts studio facilitator and a master painter.

Heather has spent most of her life living around Cairns and Yarrabah, as well as a significant amount of time living in Aurukun where she learnt from her old people the skills of visual arts that she carries on today. Heather is currently employed as an artworker in Aurukun where she is reconnecting with her Wik heritage, and learning more of her ancestral language Wik-Mungkan.

These images show Heather in the process of preparing ochres that were collected on country. The Wik-Mungkan language name for this white ochre is "pip morp". The ochres are crushed to produce a fine natural earth pigment. The pigments will be used for painting and sculptural works. Heather is reconnecting with these heritage practices that belong to her ancestral ties to Aurukun families.



Heather Koowortha preparing ochre. Image: Wik and Kugu Arts Centre



Sonya Creek painting her totem, Mili (Stinging Tree). Image: Bana Yirriji Art Centre. Photo Edwina Circuit

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## Donate Now

IACA is a small organisation that punches above its weight to support culturally strong best practice Indigenous art enterprises. To make a big difference to Australia's most remote Indigenous artists. **You can now donate to specific projects.** via our **DONATE NOW** button on the IACA website [www.iaca.com.au](http://www.iaca.com.au) or email the manager [manager@iaca.com.au](mailto:manager@iaca.com.au)  
Donations are tax deductible.