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 / Badulugaw Kathiwah Mudh - Badu Island
Bana Yirrriji Art and Cultural Centre - Wujal Wujal
Erub Arts - Darnley Island
Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre - Cardwell
Gab Titui Cultural Centre
HopeValle 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 Kugur Ali Art Centre - Aurukun
Yalanji Arts - Mossman Gorge
Yarrabah Arts and Cultural Precinct

2018-19 IACA Management Committee:

Phil Rist - (President) EO Girringun Aboriginal Corporation
Vikki Burrows - (Treasurer) Manager Bana Yirrriji Art and Cultural Centre
Darrell Harris - Manager Yarrabah Arts and Cultural Precinct
Abe Muriata - Manager Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre
Solomon Booth - Board Chair Ngalmun Lagau Minaral Art Centre – Moa Arts
Harold Ludeick - Board Director Hopevale Aboriginal Art Centre
John Armstrong - Manager Mornington Island Art
Enoch Perazim - Manager Lockhart River Art Centre
Eric Orcher - Artist Yarrabah Arts and Cultural Precinct

Word from the President

Phil Rist - Image: Michael Marzik

The second half 2018 saw IACA support and promote the work of FNQ Art Centres, with a record number of our members participating at art fairs such as the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF), the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF) and Tarnanthi, as well as exhibitions far and wide.

Since the last IACA News, the IACA Belonging project has been in full swing. Facilitator Edwina Circuit has been out to Yarrabah, Wujal Wujal, Hopevale and Lockhart River, and has visits scheduled for the remaining nine Art Centres by the end of July 2019. The IACA Members Conference held in Cairns in October was a great event with members having the opportunity to hear about industry news, to learn and network. Rebecca Dagnell and Curtis Taylor’s presentation was exciting, and the Art Centres are keen to use their expertise in new media via the Northern Disclosure project.

With so many exciting projects in the pipeline, I’m pleased to report that the IACA team has appointed two new highly experienced, full-time staff members. Maxine See Kee has commenced work as the new Finance and Operations Coordinator and Geraldine Henri has commenced her role as Project Coordinator. Pam is very happy to now have a full team, which will see increased support for our members.

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.
The Yarrabah Arts and Cultural Precinct (YACP) along with Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council are developing a new souvenir publication, aimed at strengthening the local and national profile of Yarrabah Arts and artists.

The publication will showcase Yarrabah’s vibrant art, cultural identity and history and will be made available to visitors within YACP and various art fairs around Australia. The publication will also support the YACP touring exhibition, Jabu Birriny (Land + Sea), which will tour throughout regional Queensland in 2019, alongside visual arts partners Flying Arts from Brisbane.

Along with art and artefacts, the publication will feature the designs of local artists brought to life as stunning wearable art such as clothing, jewellery, bags and accessories. The YACP fashion collection has previously featured at both the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair and the Darwin Aboriginal Arts fashion parades. The beautiful and highly successful YACP fashion collection is modelled by local young women. The young women, aged 13 to 15, have teamed with Yarrabah based photographer Leanne Hardy as part of the “Ngudju Girrany” (No Shame) project. The project sets out to prove to the young women they can achieve anything they set their minds to. Professional hair and makeup services for the art inspired photo-shoot were provided by Birrimbah Beauty owner Shehana Friday.

The souvenir publication will also include a 2019 calendar of events curated to showcase the Yarrabah Creative Arts, Cultural History and Artefacts collection held at the Menmuny Museum.
Girringun’s Joann Russo participates in NGA Indigenous Arts Leadership Program

Joann Russo from the Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre recently completed the Indigenous Arts Leadership and Fellowship Program at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. As one of ten Indigenous arts-workers selected from across Australia, Joann enjoyed the opportunity of discovery and learning through this immersive, professional development experience.

The annual two week program sponsored by Wesfarmers Arts, gives participants access to the inner workings of Australia’s premier art gallery and collection including a series of experiential activities. Public speaking, artwork research, cultural discussion opportunities, networking and relationship building are key components of the program which provides safe cultural spaces in which to interact.

Joann and the other participants were mentored by the National Gallery of Australia Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art (NGA) Franchesca Cubillo, Program Producer Shane Nelson and Curators Tina Baum and Kelli Cole.

Joann returned to Girringun with a better understanding of the value that Indigenous culture holds within the visual and creative arts sector. This program is available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who work within the visual arts sector. More information can be found at www.nga.gov.au/indigenousleaders.

Intensive skills development for Bana Yirriji Art and Cultural Centre

Artists from the Bana Yirriji Art and Cultural Centre have created a new silk collection inspired by workshops with Lynelle Flinders and Shannon Brett. The work is characterized by bright motives and fabric pieces using batikng style methods and hand painting. These new creations were featured at the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Fashion Show and through this event, four silk kaftans were chosen to exhibit at the Jakarta Fashion Show in Indonesia.

The Bana Yirriji artists have also enjoyed intensive painting and concept development workshops with Edwina Circuit. These workshops are part of the Belonging exhibition organised by IACA. The artists developed new skills and produced some amazing works using quality art materials. Edwina also helped organise the art studio by ordering new materials and shared her secrets to preparing and working on canvas. Artists also enjoyed a fun day out on country.

2019 is shaping up to be another great year for Bana Yirriji as we look forward to further developing our works for the Belonging exhibition and our involvement with Endeavour 250 exhibition at the National Museum of Australia.
Belonging continues to produce inspiring results

IACA’s 13 member art centres along with their artists, requested IACA procure a grant for a major regional arts development and exhibition project. Funding was secured from the Department of Communications and Arts, Indigenous Languages and Arts Program. The theme - Belonging - was developed by the art centres and artists via a series of intensive workshops with Curator Glenn Iseger-Pilkington.

Now well underway, throughout August to December the arts development workshops are being facilitated by Edwina Circuit. They are producing fantastic results. Hopevale Art Centre, Bana Yirriji Arts, Yanabah Arts and Lockhart River have already participated in the workshops.

The workshops support artists in exploring their conceptual and artistic practice and encourage them to experiment with new media and ideas. Younger and emerging artists are actively participating, fostering a new generation of art makers across the region.

Bush trips are an important aspect of the workshops. Materials such as earth pigments and found objects are collected for making artworks. Connecting to country and important cultural sites underpins the importance of the Belonging theme to the artists and their communities.

The workshops involve training arts workers and staff in best practice studio management, including sourcing the highest quality materials, stretching canvas, mixing paints and organising studio workflow. Where required and requested, staff and arts workers also learn how to photograph artworks and take artist portraits, use the SAM database to update artist biographies, catalogue artwork stories and consign works for the exhibition.
2018 saw Erub Arts enjoy its greatest economic growth to date, supported by a number of international projects, award wins, exhibitions and cross-cultural collaborations.

The art centre was invited to expand and develop their Sea Journeys project, with the support and partnership of Tjibaou Cultural Centre Noumea and QAGOMA for the Asia Pacific Triennial 9. Manager Diann Lui, artistic director Lynnette Griffiths, lead artist Jimmy K Thaiday, artist Racy Oui-Pitt, and community representatives Lorna McEwan and Joshua Thaiday made up the team. They travelled to New Caledonia to re-establish family connections and contact as part of the historic story of missionary contact, The Coming of the Light 1871. The resulting work, a 15 metre long charcoal work on paper, extends onto the walls of QAGOMA. The successful opening in November saw an in-conversation talk with curator Diane Moon along with a traditional hymn sung by Erub artists.

The unique ghost net works by Erub artists continue to draw enormous interest and demand. A commission by the Cairns Regional Council for Cairns Performing Art Centre – a 4.5m x 5.6m ghost net work representing Gazir Lagoon on Erub’s northeast side and is the first major work to be on permanent display in a Queensland public venue for Erub Arts.

In September, the centre also facilitated the world’s largest collection of ghost nets hung as a permanent collection at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney. This collaborative exhibition including Lynnette Griffiths’ Sardines and Marion Gaemers’ Coral, was previously shown in the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore and Tarnanthi, Adelaide, and now also includes a traditional canoe with the stars of Tagai as a guiding constellation on its sails.

Erub Arts and collaborating ghost net artists Marion Gaemers and Lynnette Griffiths returned to Martin Browne Contemporary in Sydney with an immersive group exhibition with over 100 works titled A Picture in Ghost Net. This spectacular show, running until 3 February 2019, explores the sea country and its inhabitants between the coastline and the deep water, and features three large coconut trees, and a ‘Wag Wag’ or model racing canoe.

2019 is shaping up as another outstanding year for Erub. Planning is already underway for a commercial show and some exciting cultural research opportunities in England at Cambridge and the British Museum. This project was made possible with combined funding from Arts Queensland, Backing Indigenous Arts program, Australia Council for the Arts, the Department for Communication and the Arts and the Torres Strait Regional Authority. This is another ambitious project that brings ghost net and our ongoing research around culture and the ‘Coming of the Light’ together.
Girringun and Erub come together for ceramic exchange workshops

Ceramic artists from both Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre and Erub Arts came together for an artistic exchange recently at Muulga near Cardwell. Recognising the importance of cultural exchange amongst Queensland Indigenous artists, the workshop entailed a week of activities, cultural and professional development.

Respected artist Janet Fieldhouse a Queensland based ceramicist was the facilitator for the workshop and Len Cook a master ceramicist from Townsville also shared his skills and knowledge with the artists from both centres. The project recognizes the affinity both these Indigenous art centres have with ceramics and clay, and was made possible by Ernabella Arts and funded through the Indigenous Language and Arts Program.

Girringun Aboriginal Arts Centre hosted the ceramics workshop and were joined by Ellarose Savage, Racy Pitt and Jimmy Thaiday along with Lynnette Griffiths from Erub Arts. The week follows on from the Clay Stories exhibition organised by Sabbia Gallery and artist exchange at the JamFactory in Adelaide.

Girringun and Erub came together for ceramic exchange workshops

Ingenious ceramic work secures the 2018 Gab Titui Award

Jimmy K. Thaiday from Erub Arts was named winner of the 2018 Gab Titui Indigenous Art Award.

Mr Thaiday’s ceramic work Ares Lu was selected from a field of 52 works by artists from communities in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula area by guest judge, Tina Baum, Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia.

Torres Strait Regional Authority Acting-Chairperson and Member for Ugar, Mr Jerry Stephen, congratulated Mr Thaiday on taking home the Award’s major prize for the first time.

“Mr Thaiday and his colleagues at Erub Arts have been a consistent presence in the Indigenous Art Award since its inception in 2008. We are honoured to be able to share these awe-inspiring works through the exhibition, and we congratulate them on their success in this year’s Award.”

Commenting on the work, Ms Baum described Mr Thaiday’s use of ceramic and resin as ‘ingenious’ and acknowledged his ongoing experimentation and development in the medium. Providing an alternative perspective of traditional weaponry, the detailed work was described as a contained but segmented story, providing different elements of a bygone tradition.

Renowned Meriam artist Segar Passi was awarded second prize in the Award for his painting Symbol of Peace, described by Ms Baum as a ‘perfectly executed and memorable portraiture’. 
Wei’Num Arts and Crafts design new merchandise

It was a busy end of 2018 for Wei’Num. Some highlights included artists Masha Hall, Daphne De Jersey and Margaret Mara conducting painting and weaving workshops and demonstrations at the re-established Ruchook festival in Naprunam. This festival was the first in twenty years, and the artists enjoyed the support of Black Square Arts for this event. Wei’Num Arts and Crafts also conducted painting and weaving demonstrations at Paanja Festival in Mapoon in September.

Wei’Num are now turning their focus to this year’s CIAF. The centre has been working with printmaker Dian Darmansjah on new intaglio prints while in residence at Black Square Arts in Cairns. They have also commenced work on a range of designs for new merchandise product testing for the Weipa Cultural Centre and look forward to the unveiling them at CIAF.

The Pormpuraaw Art & Culture Centre continues to build its long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with Brighton Grammar School in Melbourne, driving positive change and a stronger future for its community.

Brighton Grammar enjoys school camps and other community and environmental initiatives in Pormpuraaw with the Pormpuraaw State School. Pormpuraaw Art Centre runs a number of culture and art activities which encourage students from both schools to collaborate and engage together.

In October, seven senior students from Pormpuraaw spent a week at Brighton Grammar, hosted by families of Brighton school children. Two key artists, Syd Bruce Shortjoe and Christine Holroyd, along with their manager Paul Jakubowski, went to Brighton Grammar and ran an art and culture workshop. The shared goal is to create opportunities for local Pormpuraaw school children including potential scholarships to Brighton Grammar. For many Brighton Grammar students, contact with the local people of Pormpuraaw may be their first real contact with Aboriginal people. A recently published book “Pormpuraaw, Stories, Art, Language”, is a text book used by both schools aimed at bridging culture in a meaningful and valuable way.

Following their work in Melbourne, Syd Bruce Shortjoe, Christine Holroyd and Paul Jakubowski traveled to Adelaide and participated in the Tarnanthi Art Fair hosted by the Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute and the Art Gallery of South Australia. They then attended the IACA conference in Cairns, an important forum for art centres to share stories, experiences and insights into their challenges and goals.

In other news, three years ago Pormpuraaw Art built what is claimed to be the largest ghost net sculpture in the world measuring 7.6 metres long. The work has previously been shown at CIAF and displayed at Tjapukai cultural Park in Cairns, and now the giant crocodile sculpture has found a new home at TAFE in Cairns.
Moa Arts showcases its innovative, contemporary art

In October last year, Moa Arts held the Malu Mabaigal – Seafaring People exhibition at Woolloomooloo Art Gallery in Brisbane. Malu Mabaigal – Seafaring People highlighted the talent of artists from Moa Island to produce innovative contemporary artworks whilst also maintaining traditional art making practices and preserving their cultural heritage. The exhibition included a collection of limited-edition prints, showcasing colour reduction prints, large format works, and works on paper featuring ‘Kaidaral’, a Moa Island adaptation of the French printmaking technique À la poupeé. Also included in the exhibition were artworks made by the Moa weavers - hand woven baskets and bags made from hand dyed raffia, seagrass, ghost net and twine, decorated with seashells and seeds collected from the island.

To top off a great 2018 for Moa Arts, Fiona Elisala won second prize in the Fremantle Art Awards, for her artwork Uman (Weaving), lino print on paper, 2018. Fiona, along with Paula Savage, were also joint winners of the IAGA Lucille Osborne Emerging Artist award in June 2018. Both artists will travel to Canberra in early 2019 to undertake an exchange workshop at the Australian National University School of Art.
Nine Girringun artists have completed an extraordinary outdoor installation of five sculptural Bagu, as part of a commission from the Cairns Performing Arts Centre. Artists Clarence Kinjun, Emily and Debra Murray, Nephi and Philip Denham, Sally and John Murray and Eileen Tep and Melanie Muriata worked over a number of months to complete the works. Working with local fabricator and master form maker Leon Ruedin during this process the Bagu are the ‘match sticks’ of the rainforest, the traditional fire-making tools of the Girringun region, these enormous Bagu have designs which reference traditional patterns and colours. Patterns such as these, were a form of signature, a way to identify the maker and their cultural connections. Very strict protocols were and still are relevant to who can use the traditional patterns and the associated storylines.

Fire was a very important part of daily life for the old people and these objects, the Bagu, were imbued with other significances beyond the use value of the tool to make fire. Fire, in the wettest place of Australia, was key to survival, central to social interaction, belief systems, hunting, food preparation, tool making, warmth, safety and for ceremony. By taking these figures back from the anthropological gaze and placing them into a contemporary and public space, the artists are re-claiming what has always been theirs, investing new stories and meaning to objects which have a continuum of tens of thousands of years.

In other news, Sabbia Gallery presented a major installation of over 50 Bagu artworks in September as part of the installation program at Sydney Contemporary. This installation was curated by Nina Miall and held prime position in the entry foyer of Carriageworks.
Netta Loogatha

Netta Loogatha, Birmuyingathi Maali was born in 1942 on Bentick Island and is a leading artist at Mornington Island Art.

“It’s good to make artworks, learn from each other. We learned all about our country and story places from our old people. Now we are painting and drawing them so our grandchildren will learn all about them. Our Aunty Sally Gabori showed us the way, to learn from her and follow in her footsteps.”

We have our own paintings and drawings now of our homelands and sacred places, where we were born, oyster reefs and waterholes or camping spots. I am happy to show other people my country and culture through my art. It brings a smile to my face when I finish an artwork and see a part of me on it.

“I was born on Bentick Island at a place on the Northern side called Bilmee. We lived in humpies then - no clothes nothing at all. I learnt to hunt from an early age, how to fish and collect shellfish, how to gather foods from the bush. I was young when the Europeans came in 1946 to take us away from our home and forced us to live on Mornington Island in the dormitory in the mission there.

“My father was King Alfred, he had six wives. When he died, his brother Percy took over the family and took care of us. When I grew up I went to the mainland and worked as a housemaid like a lot of the young girls from the Island. I enjoyed this time being young and having fun. I returned to Mornington and became strongly involved in Land Rights and my people’s wish to return to our homeland. I was a grandmother by the time we returned to our homeland and I use to live there most of the year, only returning to Mornington for the wet season. Now I am getting too old to live there. I cry for an opportunity to set my foot on my homeland again. My artworks have become even more important to me to keep my memories of my home and culture ever strong.”
IACA conference wrap-up

The second biannual IACA conference for 2018 was held in Cairns in late October. As always, members valued the chance to network with other Art Centre representatives, managers and industry partners. The conference agenda was filled with practical and engaging presentations and included updates from Arts QLD and CIAF, along with an informative session on product and merchandise licensing by Tim Acker and Judy Grady from Copyright Agency. It also included a fun, hands-on artwork pricing workshop with Tim Acker and Edwina Circuitt.

Always a favourite, the Art Centre reports presented an invaluable bonding experience. Challenges, successes and learnings were shared and discussed, and the one-on-one sessions with presenters were popular.

Members responded enthusiastically to Carly Davenport Acker and Curator Shona Coyle’s presentation of the NMA Endeavour 250 exhibition and cultural connections project. This project offers the chance to art centres to have uncensored expression of their own perspectives on the subject of the 250th anniversary of James Cook’s Endeavour voyage along the east coast of Australia.

Rebecca Dagnell and Curtis Taylor’s presentation, an introduction to the Northern Disclosure project, was a highlight and left Art Centres excited to get started. An update from Edwina Circuit, Arts Development Facilitator, on the Belonging project, was equally powerful. Edwina introduced some of the quality artworks and cultural stories that were emerging from this project. There was a great sense of excitement over the benefits and possibilities of Belonging, and members expressed their gratitude to the respectful nature of the exceptional work being conducted by Edwina and IACA.

A supportive, friendly and robust debate at the members meeting, demonstrated how highly engaged the membership are with one another and their peak body. The sense that it was a ‘safe space’ to talk about all manner of topics was clear, with all Art Centres contributing.

Members certainly weren’t left wanting at the IACA Members Dinner held at Yaya’s Hellenic Kitchen, where the mood saw a laid-back, rolling feast delivered late into the evening. High member engagement in all of the sessions, along with positive member feedback, confirmed that participants particularly enjoyed hearing updates about projects, new opportunities, learning and refining skills for Art Centre operations, and the opportunity of coming together to share and learn. The event concluded with a clear sense of excitement over upcoming projects.

Welcome new IACA staff

The IACA team has grown with two new staff members joining the Cairns office. We extend a warm welcome to Maxine See Kee who has commenced work as the new Finance and Operations Coordinator, and Geraldine Henrici as Project Coordinator.

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Many will know Maxine from her previous role at Gab Titui on Thursday Island. Maxine has worked extensively with local governments and artists from both Torres Strait and Cape York. Some of her previous roles include Project Support Officer for Cultural Development & Arts Development in the Torres Strait Region, Retail Manager with Gab Titui Cultural Centre and most recently, Finance Administration Officer with Cape York Land Council. We look forward to Maxine using this wealth of experience in her new role with IACA which will include event organisation, administration, finance and general assistance across all projects.

Geraldine Henrici has taken over from Emma Loban who left in July 2018. Geraldine brings to IACA over 10 years’ experience working in the Visual Arts sector, predominantly with Aboriginal artists and Art Centres in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Until recently, Geraldine held the position of Project Support Officer at the Art Gallery of Western Australia working on the Desert River Sea; Kimberley Art Then & Now project. Based in Broome, the role involved researching, recording and promoting the Aboriginal art and culture of the north-west and facilitating relationships between remote artists and the State Gallery.

We are sure both Maxine and Geraldine will make very valuable contributions to the IACA team and we look forward to working with them in 2019.

IACA Lucille Osborne Emerging Artist Memorial Fellowship

Congratulations are extended to Paula Savage and Fiona Ellisala of Ngalum Lagua Mineral/ Moa Arts for jointly winning the 2018 IACA Lucille Osborne Emerging Artist Memorial Fellowship. The winners were announced at the IACA Artists Welcome, and both artists enthusiastically selected the prize option of a placement at the Australian National University School of Art in Canberra. Paula and Fiona will travel to Canberra in March 2019 to take part in an exchange of knowledge with students at the School of Art, attend classes and practical workshops, and present on their art making.
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 easily donate via our DONATE NOW button on the IACA website www.iaca.com.au or email the manager manager@iaca.com.au. Donations are tax deductible.

Chubby Lilly by Ellarose Savage
60 x 55 x 35cm, ghost net and rope featured at Martin Browne Sydney.
Image: Lynnette Griffiths & Erub Arts