Printmaking by Yolngu artists of Northeast Arnhem Land

‘Another way of telling our stories’

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Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Research Program

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of The Australian National University

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Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. This thesis contains no material previously published or written by myself or another person, except where reference is made in the thesis itself. This thesis has not previously been submitted towards a degree or diploma in any university or other higher education institution.

Denise Yvonne Salvestro

12 April 2016

This research project has received clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian National University: Protocol: 2010/164
The art and culture is not different from the land and the sea. The art and culture and the songs, and the dance, and the kinship and clan relationships they are all connected into the land and sea. This is the Australian Indigenous structure. It was like this before and still is now. It is showing us who we are as Indigenous Australians. This structure was given to us by the ancestral beings, through our grandfathers and grandmothers, to our fathers and mothers, to the Indigenous Australians who are on the earth today. The sand sculpture, the armbands, the patterns and designs are all tools of that Country. (Marawili, D, 2012, p.4)
Names

The full names of people are used when first mentioned, but thereafter first names are used to avoid confusion as many are from the same family or have similar family names. The current spelling of Yolngu names is used. This may differ to that in earlier references. The Art Centre at Yirrkala has gone through various name changes from Yirrkala Art and Craft Centre to Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc, when it became incorporated in 2008. It is generally referred to as the Yirrkala Art Centre. Throughout this dissertation Buku-Larrnggay Mulka will be referred to as the Yirrkala Art Centre, and the print workshop as the Yirrkala Print Space.

Indigenous readers are respectfully advised that this thesis contains names and images of people who have passed away

Copyright permission for reproduction of images of artwork from Yirrkala has been granted by Buku Larrnggay Mulka Inc. as representative of the artists. For other images reproduced, permission has been granted by the copyright owners.
Dedication

Many of the Yolngu who inspired me to begin this research project and who generously shared their stories passed on during the period of this research

Gaymala Yunupingu, Dr Raymattja Marika, Gulumbu Yunupingu, Barrupu Yunupingu, Boliny Wanambi, Ralwurrandji Wanambi, Ms D Gurruwiwi, Mrs D (Yunupingu) Mununggurr, Dr J N Gumbula, Mr M Yunupingu AC, Gatjil Djerrkura OAM

This thesis is dedicated to their memory and to the current and future Yolngu print artists of Northeast Arnhem Land
Acknowledgements

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The seed of this thesis was sown back in 2000, when I needed a subject for a COFA Master’s research paper and Howard Morphy, who I had met at the Yirrkala Art Centre, suggested I write about the development of the Print Space at the Art Centre. Little did I realise where this would lead. I have to Thank Marcia Langton for reading that research paper, appreciating that there was so much more that needed to be recorded, encouraging me to write a thesis and instigating the process and Howard for supporting my application to do it at ANU and agreeing to supervise the thesis.

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I have dedicated this thesis to the Yolngu but it is also for my parents, Adelia and Giuseppe (‘Beppi’) Salvestro, to whom education was so important and who encouraged me to never stop learning — and were always there with constant love and support.

When I started this research little did I realise the enriching experiences that I would have and the amazing people I would be fortunate enough to meet. The thesis has finally been written but the greatest reward of all is having made such wonderful friends along the way.
ABSTRACT

Art plays a fundamental role in the lives of the Yolngu—the Indigenous people of Northeast Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia. Knowledge of their culture, laws, history and relationship to country has historically been passed on to successive generations orally and through their clan specific patterns and designs (miny’tji). Since first known contact with the outside world Yolngu artists have demonstrated innovation in adapting their art, and adopting introduced materials and techniques, to create art for the purpose of passing on knowledge and enlightening others about their ontology, culture and title to land.

This thesis provides the first comprehensive history of the introduction to, and use of the print medium by the artists of Northeast Arnhem Land with a focus on those artists working at the Print Space at the Buku Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre at Yirrkala. The Print Space is unique amongst Indigenous owned and run print facilities in that since its inception in 1995, locally trained artists and printmakers have been employed in the continuous production of limited edition prints.

The research undertaken has revealed that the successful incorporation of printmaking into Yolngu art production resulted from a combination of factors, with the Yolngu themselves being proactive agents in influencing the development of the Print Space and promoting the use of the print medium for political, social, educational and economic purposes. Women in particular enthusiastically advocated the acceptance of this introduced medium as printmaking played an important part in liberating female artists from their historically restricted role in art production.

The adoption of print technology was controversial. The issue arose as to whether the mechanical reproduction of sacred clan designs moved the creative away from the hand of the artists and their direct connection with the creator ancestors. A further concern was that printmaking had the potential to encourage the inappropriate use of miny’tji and the abuse of intellectual property. This dissertation considers the changing attitudes and various approaches taken by the Yolngu in addressing these sensitive issues and the manner in which some of the artists are adapting traditional practices to reproduce the intricacy of the clan patterns and designs in print, while protecting the restricted or sacred, deeper meanings within the miny’tji.
This thesis establishes that printmaking is a prime exemplar of cross-cultural collaborative exchange, facilitating innovation and individual creativity within Yolngu art practice. The collaborative nature of printmaking fostered significant reciprocal or ‘both ways’ learning exchanges through cross-cultural interactions between Yolngu artists and non-Yolngu schoolteachers, artists, art centre administrators, printmakers and gallerists.

Considered by the Yolngu artists as ‘another way of telling our stories’, printmaking has provided an alternative artistic avenue for affirming Yolngu identity and connection to country and passing on knowledge to the younger generation. This thesis argues that the successful incorporation of this introduced art form into their art production is testimony to the willingness of the Yolngu to accept change in order to ensure the sustainability of their art and culture.
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Glossary

The spelling used in this thesis follows the standard Yolngu Matha orthography. Distinct characters are used to reflect the distinct sounds in Yolngu matha other than in the use of ‘ng’ in place of the ‘long tail n’ (‘ŋ’) that is available in Yolngu font.

Y = Yirritja moiety   D = Dhuwa moiety

**Balanda** – non Yolngu person

**Bawu** – cloth made from a grass/and also refers to wind - used to refer to a sail, as in the cloth that catches the wind. And since Macassan time sails of the Macassan ships

**Bäru** – crocodile

**Bathala** – big, large, huge

**Bäyngu** – none, nothing, not at all

**Bol’ngu** – Thunderman, creator spirit (D)

**Bunggul** – ceremony, "business", rite, ritual celebration; songs sung with yidaki and clapsticks usually accompanied by dancing

**Buwayak** – ‘The emergent iconicity evident in the bark painting of Yolngu artists resulting from the visual and conceptual effect between figurative and geometric elements in bark paintings creating the property of faintness or transparency’ (Morphy, 2003).

**Birrka’mirri** – random, abstract, markings

**Bir’yun** – the shimmering brilliance achieved by the use of cross hatching in bark paintings in the process of creating vibrant yet clearly defined designs. (Morphy, 2003)

**Buku** – face, forehead; mind, will; hill, high peak, summit

**Dawu** – banyan tree

**Dharpa** – tree bush (generic) piece of wood or stick

**Dhäwu** – story, word, news, information, message

**Dhiyangu** – with this, using this

**Djanda** – lizard, goanna (generic)

**Djaykung** – file snake

**Djirikitj** – quail (Y)

**Djunggaya** – caretaker; the relationship a person has to the ceremonies and land of their mother’s clan and their mother’s mother’s clan

**Ga** – and, “well…”

**Galpu** – Yolngu clan name (Dhuwa)

**Ganma** – is the name of a lagoon where salt and fresh water meet. Water is a symbol of knowledge in Yolngu philosophy, and the metaphor of the meeting of two bodies of water is a way of talking about the knowledge systems of two cultures working together.
**Garma** – a ceremonial area that is open to everyone. Also an open forum where ideas can be shared and negotiated

**Garrangali** – crocodile nest, totemic for Madarrpa clan

**Guŋa** – rock or stone

**Gunyaŋ** – crab

**Gurtha** – generic word for fire, firewood

**Gurrtjpi** – stingray, totem for the Madarrpa at Bäniyala (Yilpara), Blue Mud Bay

**Gurrutu** – kinship, relationship

**Guwak** – koel cuckoo (Y)

**Guya** – fish (generic, not including sharks and stingrays)

**Larrnggay** – sun, time

**Ļarrakitj** – ceremonial hollow log

**Maďayin** – sacred, secret, an important sacred ceremony

**Malka** – yam

**Manikay** – song, music, ceremonial singing

**Manymak** – good

**Marrngu** – possum (Y)

**Marwat** – hair, leaf, foliage

**Milngiyawuy** – Milky Way

**Milngurr** – is the name of sacred spring water. It represents the ebb and flow of water and thus of knowledge.

**Miny’tji** – generic word for clan specific patterns and designs and for a painting and for colours and patterns existing within nature and within artwork

**Miyalk** – woman, female

**Miyapunu** – turtle (generic), sea mammal (collective for dugong, dolphin, porpoise, or whale) meat, flesh (of these)

**Mokuy** – ghost, devil, evil spirit, dead person

**Mulka** – touch, feel, take hold of, reach out and touch,

**Ngäpaki** – white person, European

**Ngärra** – a closed important or sacred ceremony of either moiety focused on clan identity during which a male initiate is shown sacred objects and introduced to secret-sacred knowledge

**Ngatha** – food (generic), vegetable foods

**Nhäwi** – “whatchamacallit?” “what’s it?” “you know”; or expressing hesitation, as in “uhm”

**Rangga** – sacred ceremonial objects

**Rärrk** – colour, painting, painted design
Räkay – water reed or sedge, especially edible rush corm (root)
Ringgitj – place which is sacred to special people
Rom – law, rule, custom, culture, tradition, behaviour, way of doing things
Wäña – home, land, country
Wangarr – Ancestral creator beings; also refers to the time of world creation
Wañ’kurru – Bandicoot (Y)
Wapitja – digging stick
Wäynin – meat (generic, hunted), animal (generic for bird, land mammal land reptile)
Wawa – brother
Wititj – Rainbow Serpent, olive python
Yapa – sister (of male), older sister (of female), first cousin
Yidaki – didgeridoo, drone pipe
Yoku – corm of the waterlily

In compiling this glossary of the Yolngu words that appear in this thesis I have referred to the following Yolngu dictionaries:

Yolngu – Matha Dictionary
F. David Zorc (Snr Lecturer)
School of Australian Linguistics
Darwin Institute of Technology
P.O. Batchelor, NT. 0845

Yolngu Matha CD Dictionary Version 3
Dictionary.ymd
Copyright Shepherdson College. 2002
Charles Darwin University.

CDU online Yolngu Matha Dictionary, 2014.
http://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au/
Ed. Michael Christie, Waymamba Gaykamangu, John Greatorex
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Introduction

‘Another way of telling our stories’

Doing your art and enjoying... because it is part of us — part of our culture. Art is a valuable resource in my family culture. It carries the story... it is not written like European, Ngapaki, have their stories told. It is by painting we tell our stories. That is how we were taught. Passed on to the young ones — telling our stories and painting. I was taught at a young age by my grandfather Mawalan who did a lot of painting but I didn’t take it on till after his passing. My first painting was in 1985. I enjoy doing it. I think about his encouragement when he started to sit with us grandchildren and teach us...He would go and collect bark and cut them into little blocks so we could sit and learn how to paint as children. (Yunupingu (Ulamarri), D, 2012)

These are the words of Djalinda Yunupingu Ulamari, a Yirritja moiety, Gumatj/Rrakpala woman, grand-daughter of the visionary Mawalan Marika, explaining the significance of art in her life and in the lives of Yolngu people of Northeast Arnhem Land, in response to a question I had posed during a field trip to Yirrkala in April 2012. The words were even more meaningful in that they were spoken in the Print Space at the Yirrkala Art Centre and accompanying her was twelve year old Gadaman Gurruwiwi (Galpu clan, Dhuwa moiety) who Djalinda introduced as her classificatory son and a great-grandson of Mawalan. They were visiting the Print Space because Gadaman had been the youngest participant in a recent printmaking project involving young members of the community and the prints resulting from that project, including that created by Gadaman, (Figures 9.31 & 9.32, p.309), were currently on display. Djalinda is part of two great art dynasties through her maternal Marika family and her paternal Yunupingu family and here with her was the youngest of the current generation of emerging artists from those dynasties. Gadaman also represented the new generation practising a new form of art informed by one of the oldest known art traditions in the world.

1. This was one of many field trips made to Yirrkala during the course of this research. Previous to this my partner and I had lived and worked in Northeast Arnhem Land for twelve years from 1998, providing dental services to the Yolngu in their remote communities. During that time knowledge of Yolngu art and culture was acquired first-hand through close interactions with the Yolngu in the work situation and through the friendships that developed.
The reaction to the inception of the Print Space at the Buku Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre at Yirrkala in 1995 and the associated expansion in print production were developments of great significance in the local art scene, and of relevance to the history of Australian art. The importance of establishing a permanent record of the unique history of the adoption and adaption of an introduced art form by Yolngu artists prompted this research.

**Thesis Objectives**

This thesis argues that the Yolngu have shown innovation in the manner in which they have integrated printmaking into their artistic practice and while enthusiastically embracing this new art form and accommodating change, they have retained respect for traditional values. To support this argument I provide an historical narrative that explores the sequence of events leading to the acceptance of prints as a means of educating and communicating, providing a conduit for individual creativity, and playing a role in the entry of Yolngu art into the contemporary art world.

Visiting the art centres at Yirrkala and other communities in Northeast Arnhem Land reveals the constantly evolving nature of Yolngu art in response to cross-cultural influences and individual initiative. The dialogue between the unchanging stories and change in form that applies to all forms of contemporary Yolngu art is exemplified in the use of printmaking by Yolngu artists. This research revealed that although the form and aesthetic of Yolngu art appears to have changed dramatically in its reproduction through printmaking, to the Yolngu there is no change in substance when the art is telling stories that have remained unchanged since creation.

As there has been no equivalent study to date, my aim was to provide a comprehensive record of the introduction to and use of printmaking by Yolngu artists in Northeast Arnhem Land, focusing on the Print Space at Yirrkala. In 1995 a dedicated print workshop was established at the Yirrkala Art Centre in Northeast Arnhem Land. In 2015 the Print Space celebrated twenty years of continuous print production involving 137 artists and employing locally trained printmakers in the creation of limited edition fine art prints. This marks a unique achievement for an Indigenous owned and run remote community print workshop. The Yolngu quickly came to
appreciate the benefits afforded by the multiplicity of printmaking and it evolved into a vital component of local art practice, fulfilling economic, educational, social and political purposes. Yolngu women played a pivotal role in the acceptance and development of printmaking and in the establishment of the Print Space and this thesis establishes that their continued involvement, artistically and in managerial and mentoring roles, has been vital to the sustainability of printmaking at Yirrkala.

My research revealed that there were multiple factors influencing the acceptance and sustainability of the print medium: the Yolngu have been strong agents in promoting its use and influencing how it evolved over time; interactions with the outside world; the relative autonomy of individual artists; and the respect for traditional values in art production. I have deliberately focused on certain episodes salient to my argument with consideration of the historical environment that facilitated these events, such as the presence of the Mission and the Art Centre. As the Print Space and the associated development of printmaking at Yirrkala could not have transpired without the existence of Buku Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre, I have included a history of its establishment at Yirrkala. Through this research I show that the progress of printmaking was a dialogic process between Art Centre, artists and printmakers, with the development of the Print Space over the past twenty years coinciding with the rapid evolution and expansion of the Art Centre as a whole.

This thesis further contends that that the interactive nature of printmaking upholds the Yolngu concept of a ‘both ways’ or reciprocal transference of knowledge involving learning and teaching, (ANKAAA, 2015, Creighton, S, 2003, The Living Knowledge Project, 2008, p.73). I argue that the acceptance of printmaking as a viable art form in Yolngu art practice has been facilitated by the reciprocal exchange of knowledge in cross-cultural collaborative relationships which were based on mutual respect for culture and beliefs. In order to demonstrate this I analyse a set of cross-cultural collaborative engagements between Yolngu and national and international printmakers and artists, and the development of ongoing programs targeting the younger members of the community. The willingness to explore new techniques and the inventiveness displayed by Yolngu artists independently and in collaborative workshops and external residencies are shown to be factors instrumental in positioning printmaking as a viable art form for the artists of Northeast Arnhem Land.
The establishment of the print workshop at Yirrkala generated an ongoing debate within the community regarding the acceptability of adapting traditional artwork to an introduced medium involving mechanical technology. The reproduction of clan specific designs - *miny’tji* - in print has been a constant issue at the Print Space. The process of mechanical reproduction was seen by some of the elders as taking the production of the work away from the hand of the artist and the direct connection with the creator ancestors who had created and passed on the designs. The very nature of printmaking as a mode of mechanical reproduction also raised the concern that multiple reproductions presented the opportunity for abuse of intellectual property. The changing situation regarding restrictions and what is considered appropriate use of *miny’tji* in printmaking is considered throughout this thesis with reference to the proactive reaction of the Yolngu to the breaching of intellectual property and copyright of their designs.

The success and sustainability of the Print Space and the incorporation of printmaking into Yolngu art has resulted from the commitment of artists, art centre management and printmakers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers, and the support of the Yirrkala community as a whole. The process has been one in which a dynamic trajectory has resulted from a combination of individual innovation and inter-and intra-cultural exchanges of knowledge.

**Methodological approach**

The primary aim of this research has been to provide the first comprehensive history of the introduction to, and use of printmaking by, the Yolngu artists of Northeast Arnhem Land with a consideration of the factors affecting those developments. In the course of this research I have used a combination of methodologies including art historical, anthropological, ethnographic and archival research. Consequently it is difficult to provide a clear articulation of the methodology employed as it is multi- and inter-disciplinary, based on multi-sited ethnography. Oral histories and archival records were employed to trace the historical progression of Yolngu printmaking and to establish its place in the timeline of Australian Indigenous printmaking. Interviews with artists, printmakers, gallerists and other collaborators were carried out in various
locations resulting in a wide-ranging account of Yolngu printmaking that combines the Yolngu perspective with that of non-Yolngu.

Considering there are seventeen different Yolngu languages or dialects still spoken in Northeast Arnhem Land, language was going to be a significant barrier to effective communication in the process of this research. With the aim of addressing this, the online Yolngu Studies course at Charles Darwin University\(^2\) was undertaken in the early stages of this research. Participating in that course added to my basic knowledge of the language, increasing my awareness of the multiple meanings that can be conveyed in one word and the subtleties that can be lost in translation. Greater insight into Yolngu kinship, cosmology and ideology was gained along with a deeper appreciation of the complexity of Yolngu society.

In this thesis I have endeavoured to represent the Yolngu voice, and in an effort to achieve this much of the material for this dissertation was derived from information acquired during multiple visits to Yirrkala and meetings with Yolngu artists. I also worked closely with both Yolngu and non-Yolngu management and employees at the Art Centre at Yirrkala. In compliance with ethics regulations, appropriate consent was at all times obtained to allow their words to be quoted. Interviews were recorded with Yolngu women who were at various times involved with the management of the Print space or worked there as printmakers: Marrnyula (Watjumi) Mununggurr, Naminapu Maymuru White, Naminapu#2 (Araluen) Maymuru and Ruby Djikarra Alderton. Other Yolngu artists interviewed included: Dhuwarrwarr Marika who provided insight into her varied art practice and Yolngu culture; Dhopia Yunupingu and Dhangal Gurruwiwi who shared knowledge relating to collaborative print projects; Ranydjupi Yunupingu translated for her sisters Barrupu and Nyapanyapa Yunupingu during discussions about their artwork; Lak-Lak Burarrwanga detailed the Yolngu myths that were the subject matter of her prints; Yalmay Yunupingu spent time explaining Yolngu social protocols and Yolngu hierarchy; Araluen Maymuru assisted with translation of the explanations given by Nyapanyapa Yunupingu about the ‘meaning’ in her art; Djuwakan#2 Marika offered his personal story and the inspiration for the subject matter of his printmaking; Wukun Wanambi discussed his role as a multi-media artist and archivist; and, during a

\(^2\) <[www.cdu.edu.au/yolngustudies]>
visit to his homeland of Yilpara, I discussed his art and the significance of clan mythology with Djambawa Marawili, (Marawili, D, 2011, Marika, D, 2011, Yunupingu, Y, 2012).

Each artist offered insight into the relevance of their clan patterns and designs and the manner in which they personally dealt with the issue of representing *miny'tji* in their printmaking. They acknowledged the important economic role printmaking has come to play in the community and how, as an alternative way of telling their stories, it has assisted in ensuring the continuity of their art and culture.

Interviews also took place with the non-Indigenous Art Centre management and other non-Yolngu local people who had some involvement in the Art Centre. Those Art Centre co-ordinators and art advisors directly involved with the establishment and ongoing management of the Print Space - Dianne and Andrew Blake, Will Stubbs, Kade McDonald and Annie Studd - have been interviewed on multiple occasions and have made themselves available for ongoing enquiries. These interviews provided a non-Yolngu perspective of the progress of the Print Space and Art Centre and were the main source of information relating to the establishment of the Print Space, detailed in Chapter 6. Andrea Kingston, a vocational training officer at the local school, provided insight into the series of print projects which took place in 2010, (Kingston, A, 2011) and are the subject of Chapter 8. These initiatives involved the school, the community and the Art Centre in collaborative projects aimed at ‘re-engaging’ the ‘disengaged youth’ of the community.

Interviews were conducted in various locations around Australia with individuals who had in some way contributed or been involved in the establishment and promotion of printmaking at Yirrkala. This included printmakers, artists, art administrators and government and university employees. The discussions would often introduce new individuals with whom contact would subsequently be made.

Historical information relating to the early days of the Yirrkala Art Centre, reviewed in Chapter 2, was provided by the inaugural manager, Chris McGuigan. Having previously worked with the Aboriginal Arts Board while they were developing the concept of remote art centres, McGuigan was also able to provide background information about this seminal government initiative, (McGuigan, C, 2012). Stephen Fox who managed
the art centre throughout the 1980s, described the development of the Art Centre during that period including his role in introducing printmaking and instigating the establishment of the dedicated Print Space, (Fox, S, 2011b, 2011c).

Jennifer Isaacs furnished valuable historical information from her time working with the Aboriginal Arts Board in the 1970s and elaborated on her mentorship of Banduk Marika in the early 1980s, (Isaacs, J, 2012). Anthropologist and school teacher John Rudder recounted his time on Elcho Island and the production, in 1968, of the first linocuts created by Yolngu artists, described in Chapter 3, (Rudder, J, 2013). Professor Diana Wood Conroy from the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong offered personal recollections and a rich source of unpublished material relating to the Yirrkala Exchange Project - the focus of Chapter 5, (Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96, 2012). Further information relating to this initiative was gathered in Darwin in meetings with Professor Sharon Bell and Leonie Molloy who had both been involved in the project as Head of Art Department and art lecturer, respectively, (Bell, S, 2012, Molloy, L, 2012).

Information provided by printmakers who were involved in teaching print techniques to Yolngu artists, was relied on for insight into the challenges and issues associated with introducing printmaking to remote artists. The printmakers each acknowledged the reciprocal nature of the cross-cultural, collaborative interactions. Theo Tremblay, now running Editions Tremblay Print Workshop in Cairns, Queensland, was interviewed while on a visit to Canberra. He elaborated on the part he played in encouraging the involvement of remote area artists in printmaking and in facilitating their attendance at residencies and workshops at the Canberra School of art and Studio One in Canberra during the 1980s and the early 1990s, (Tremblay, T, 2010). Those interactions relevant to this thesis are appraised in Chapter 3. Tremblay also supplied archival material including published and unpublished papers that related to his experience of collaborative printmaking with Indigenous artists, (Denholm, M, 1996, Gilmore, P, 1988, Tremblay, T, 1989).

Jörg Schmeisser (deceased 2012) was interviewed in Canberra on several occasions regarding his role in introducing remote area artists to printmaking during his time as Head of the Printmaking Department at the Canberra School of Art, (Schmeisser, J, 2011). Adjunct Professor David Williams contributed information apropos the
participation of Indigenous artists in the Artist in Residency programs during his time as Director of the ANU School of Art, 1985-2006, (Williams, D, 2012).

Considering the importance to the Yolngu of reciprocal or ‘both ways’ learning in collaborative interactions, I interviewed Sophie Creighton in Alice Springs, in relation to research she had carried out at Yirrkala. Further insight was gained by referencing her thesis: ‘The Yolngu Way: an ethnographic account of recent transformations in Indigenous education at Yirrkala, Northeast Arnhem Land’, (Creighton, S, 2003, 2013).

Howard Morphy, Professor of Anthropology at the Australian National University, shared his personal recollection of Narritjin Maymuru’s Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship residency at the University in 1978, related in Chapter 3, (Morphy, H, 2012). Artist and printmaker Heather Burness was interviewed in her print studio in Canberra where she discussed the collaborative working relationship she had developed with Narritjin’s classificatory daughter Naminapu Maymuru White, during Naminapu’s Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship residency. Burness outlined the complications that disrupted Naminapu’s tenure (awarded almost twenty years after that of Narritjin), and delayed the final production of one of the prints by a decade, (Burness, H, 2012b).

ANU Doctoral research candidate, Robyn McKenzie, explained how a print project, The String Figure etchings, developed out of her research into the String Figures collected from Yirrkala in 1948 by anthropologist Frederick McCarthy, (McKenzie, R, 2016).

Visits to Darwin en route to Yirrkala presented the opportunity to meet with many individuals who have played a part in the introduction of printmaking to remote Aboriginal artists, in particular printmakers who have worked with Indigenous artists at Northern Editions Print workshop at the Northern Territory University (NTU), now Charles Darwin University (CDU). Much of the historical detail in Chapter 4 was provided by Leon Stainer who initiated the first print workshops for remote artists at NTU and then ran workshops in remote Aboriginal communities, (Stainer, L, 2010a). Frank Gohier, who had been involved in the early days of these print workshops, discussed experimenting with techniques to accommodate the manner in which remote artists historically created their art, (Gohier, F, 2012).

Basil Hall has been one of the most important sources of information considering the role he played in assisting with setting up the Print Space at Yirrkala, as detailed in
Chapter 6, and subsequently continuing to work with the Yirrkala artists in print workshops and on special projects, such as those described in Chapters 6 & 7. He also provided in-depth detail about print workshops and projects organised through his eponymous studio, Basil Hall Editions, while based in Darwin and since relocating to Braidwood NSW in 2013, (Hall, B, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). Other printmakers interviewed who had worked with Hall on print projects with Yirrkala artists included: Jacqueline Gribben who facilitated a Japanese woodblock workshop at Yirrkala in 2007; Merran Sierakowski who collaborated with Hall on soft-ground etching workshops at Yirrkala in 2008 in preparation for the After Berndt project; and Sean Smith, a printmaker from Melbourne, who ran screenprint workshops with the young members of the community for projects that are described in Chapters 6 & 7, (Gribben, J, 2010, Sierakowski, M, 2012, Smith, S, 2012).

Smith was later interviewed at The Ownership Project print workshop and Gallery in Melbourne where he has promoted and exhibited the prints produced by the young artists at Yirrkala and facilitated an internship for Ruby Djikarra Alderton in 2012, discussed in Chapter 8, (The Ownership Project, 2012). Printmakers Simon White and Martin King were interviewed at the Australian Print Network in Melbourne regarding their involvement in collaborative print workshops with remote Indigenous artists in the Northern Territory, (King, M, 2011, White, S, 2011). White facilitated the first screenprinting workshops at Yirrkala in 2000, referenced in Chapter 6.

Angus and Rose Cameron have been promoting Yirrkala art since establishing Nomad Art in Darwin in 2005, (Cameron, R and Cameron, A, 2011). They are responsible for initiating significant cross-cultural print projects involving Yolngu artists, including The Seven Sisters (see Chapter 7) and Djalkiri which is the focus of Chapter 8. The Camerons supplied images, educational material and personal accounts of the experience of co-ordinating these projects. Artist and papermaker Winsome Jobling, who had worked on the Djalkiri project, was visited in her papermaking studio in Darwin to discuss and witness the challenges associated with creating the natural fibre paper that Yolngu artists were requesting for their prints, (Jobling, W, 2014). Artist John Wolseley, who had also been involved in the Djalkiri project, was interviewed in Darwin apropos his experience of that project and his ongoing collaboration with Yolngu artist, Mulkun Wirrpanda, (Hall, B, 2011, Wolseley, J, 2013).
Archival Material

During field trips to Yirrkala I was able to collate information about the artists and artworks through access to archival records and the database, facilitated by the Art Centre management. As part of the research process I assisted with the updating of the database and archival records. A further objective of this research is to compile, post thesis, a catalogue raisonée of the prints produced at the Yirrkala Art Centre and include this in a publication of the history of the Print Space.

In August of each year of this research project, volunteer work was undertaken at the open air Gapan Gallery at the annual Garma Festival\(^3\), where prints produced at the Print Space during that year are exhibited. This offered exposure to the annual production of the Print Space, and the opportunity to interact with the artists, printmakers, art co-ordinators and other Art Centre employees. Art forums held during the festival afforded the opportunity to hear artists discuss their work and listen to senior clan leaders imparting valuable insight into the cultural significance of art. The Garma Festival also provided the opportunity to meet individuals who had some involvement in the early days of printmaking at Yirrkala. Amongst those I was fortunate to interview included Ron Croxford who, during the 1960s, was headmaster at the first local government school; and Joan Wearne who had taught printing techniques at the school during the 1980s, (Croxford, R, 2013, Wearne, J, 2013).

Historically relevant articles relating to the Yirrkala Art Centre and early printmaking at Yirrkala were found in archives of local newspapers and other publications produced by the Literature Production Centre based at the Yirrkala School, (Literature Production Centre, 1983, 1988, 1992, 1993). Leon White offered documentation relating to print workshops held at the School in the 1980s, (Literature Production Centre, 1988). Ivor Alexander from the Communicable Disease Centre at Nhulunbuy, provided information and permitted photography of material relating to the health

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\(^3\) The Garma Festival is an annual festival promoting Aboriginal culture run by the Yothu Yindi Foundation and held each August at the Gumaj sacred Gulkula site 25 kilometres from Nhulunbuy, NT. Since its instigation in 1998, people have gathered for the sharing of knowledge and culture; to learn from and listen to one another at the largest annual celebration of Yolngu culture. ‘Garma is Australia’s most significant Indigenous event and a model for self-determination, reconciliation, Indigenous knowledge sharing, transfer and exchange’ (Yothu Yindi Foundation, 2014).
awareness project that involved the reproduction of artwork by Marrnyula Mununggurr (described in Chapter 8), (Alexander, I., 2012).

The Northern Territory University published papers associated with ground-breaking conferences that explored the promotion of printmaking by Australian Indigenous artists living in remote communities. The ‘Aboriginal Art at the Top’ symposium and exhibition held in Darwin in 1982, was instigated by remote Art centre coordinators in order to discuss issues relating to promoting and selling Aboriginal art from Top End remote communities, (Cooke, P and Altman, J., 1982). Contributors included Yirrkala Art Centre manager, Stephen Fox, and anthropologists, Howard Morphy, Luke Taylor and Jon Altman. Eleven years later, at the ‘Getting into Prints Symposium’ held in Darwin, Fox presented an update on current issues associated with managing remote art centres and introducing printmaking. On this occasion, Banduk Marika gave a presentation of her personal experience of ‘surviving as a printmaker’ in a remote community; Leon Stainer described print techniques and collaborative projects; and, Aboriginal art advocate and dealer Adrian Newstead discussed logistic and marketing issues affecting remote community art production, (Butler, R, 1993, Fox, S, 1993, Marika, B, 1993, Stainer, L, 2010a). These topics remain relevant and are explored in this thesis in relation to printmaking at Yirrkala.

Chapter 4 explores the Kaltja Business conference and the Australasian Print Project, held at the Northern Territory University in 1996. Sarah Pirrie, a lecturer in the Art Department at Charles Darwin University, recounted her first involvement with Indigenous artists at those events and made available unpublished archived material relating to the Kaltja Business Conference and The Meeting Place painting workshops, (Pirrie, S, 2014). The unpublished conference papers and other material revealed historically relevant information relating to the progress of, and specific issues associated with, art production by Aboriginal artists in remote communities, (Various, 1996).

During interviews held in Darwin, printmakers Jan Hogan and Basil Hall who had coordinated the cross-cultural collaborative Australasian Print Project, described the objectives and outcomes of that project, (Hall, B, 2011, Hogan, J, 2012). Nigel Lendon, Adjunct Professor at ANU, supplied further relevant information about the project which involved Yolngu artists in one of the first multi-cultural collaborations to explore

**Literature Review**

A review of the literature pertinent to this research revealed the scarcity of published material dedicated to printmaking by remote Indigenous artists. References on Australian Aboriginal art were consulted during the course of this research but, other than scant reference to Indigenous printmaking in Australia, there was a lack of in-depth analysis of printmaking by remote Aboriginal artists, (Caruana, W, 1995, Morphy, H, 1998, pp.410-413;#665, 2008, pp.50,75;). To set in context the dramatic changes evidenced with the introduction of printmaking, early writings that make observations about Yolngu art in general were sought out to provide a background to the form and content of Yolngu art and the significance of the gradual changes witnessed in reaction to the earliest and increasing outside influences on Yolngu art and culture. Anthropological studies investigating the content of Yolngu art by Mountford, Berndt & Berndt and Groger-Wurm were referenced; (Berndt, R M, Berndt, C H and Stanton, J E, 1982, Berndt, R M, 1958, 1978, Berndt, R M, 1983, Groger-Wurm, H M, 1973, 1977, Mountford, C P, 1956). The main body of material on the form, content and meaning of Yolngu art are the texts, papers and essays published by Howard Morphy; (Morphy, H, 1975, 1977b, 1978, 1989, 2005a, 2005b, 2009b, 2009c, 2011).


Exhibition catalogues, essays and conference papers, afforded the main source of information about remote Aboriginal printmaking. Catalogues produced for exhibitions of prints by Indigenous artists provided some insight into the introduction of printmaking to remote Indigenous artists. These publications were generally produced by the institutions that ran cross-cultural workshops and artist in residency programs. A common theme, and one which runs through this thesis, is an appreciation of the relevance of the collaborative nature of printmaking to the success of cross-cultural printmaking interactions. New Tracks Old Land, produced in 1992 by the Aboriginal Arts Management Association in collaboration with the Massachusetts College of Art, is of particular significance as it was produced to accompany the first comprehensive exhibition of contemporary prints from Aboriginal Australia to tour nationally and internationally. It contains essays by Theo Tremblay and the exhibition co-ordinators Chris McGuigan and Adrian Newstead; (McGuigan, C, 1992, Newstead, A, 1992, Tremblay, T, 1992). In 1996 the Canberra School of Art produced Groundwork, a catalogue of prints produced at the Canberra School of Art by Aboriginal artists from 1986 to 1996. Those who contributed essays included Theo Tremblay and Jörg Schmeisser; Nigel Lendon; and the Director of the school, David Williams; (McGuigan, C, 1992, Williams, D, 1996). The essays revealed a general recognition of the ease of familiarization and the innovation shown by Indigenous artists in the use of printmaking.

Anthropologist Gillian Hutcherson documented information about some of the earliest printmaking by women at Yirrkala in two publications, Djalkiri Wänga and Gong Wapitja, (Hutcherson, G, 1995, pp.8-9, 23, 39, 1998, pp.74-77). A catalogue for the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Printmakers first exhibition held at the University Gallery in Darwin in 1998, was edited by Cynthia Coyne as part of her research for a Fine Arts Master degree at Northern Territory University, (Coyne, C, 1998). The publication contains a catalogue raisonée of some of the first prints created by Yolngu artists and
printed on site at Yirrkala by locally trained printmakers Marrnyula Mununggurr and Mundul Mununggurr Wunungmurra. An essay by Coyne provides important historical data.

In 2000, the Northern Territory University produced, *Land Mark : Mirror Mark* a catalogue that provides details of collaborations between remote Aboriginal artists and printmakers at the Northern Editions workshops in Darwin, (Hall, B, Cameron, R and Stainer, L, 2000). In 2001 the National Gallery of Australia published a catalogue, *Islands in the Sun*, to accompany an exhibition of prints by Indigenous Australasian artists. An essay by Roger Butler provided a brief history of printmaking by Australian Indigenous artists. Nigel Lendon contributed an essay on cross-cultural collaborative printmaking in which he referred to the Australasian Print Project as an example of artists from different cultures successfully engaging to produce a collaborative artwork.

In 2009 The Australian National University published a catalogue of Aboriginal artworks in the University’s art collection. For the title of his essay on art from Yirrkala, ‘It’s all got a meaning… its own story’, Morphy has quoted Narritjin Maymuru from a speech given at the opening of the exhibition of artwork created during his Coombs Creative Art Fellowship at ANU in 1978. In his essay Morphy refers to the dialogue between continuity and change in Yolngu art. To illustrate this he describes an occasion when Narritjin emphasized the unchanging nature of Yolngu art, explaining that it all has meaning ‘its own story’ while at the same time revealing though his own practice the dynamic nature of the Yolngu artistic system, (Morphy, H, 2009b). The catalogue also features Indigenous prints in the University’s collection accompanied by an updated version of Lendon’s essay from the Groundworks catalogue, (Lendon, N, 2009). Lendon discusses the reproductive character of printmaking and poses the question of originality and authenticity of works created in cross-cultural collaborative interactions. (Examples of such interactions involving Yolngu artists are described in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9). In the earlier version of his essay, Lendon had proposed that introduced technologies, printmaking in particular, provided Indigenous artists with the opportunity for innovation in their art, enabling them to develop ‘new cultural forms’ and ‘new meanings and values’ in their art production, (Lendon, N, 1989).
Double Desire: Transculturation and Indigenous Contemporary Art, edited by Ian McLean, was published late in 2015, (McLean, I, 2014). This compilation of essays by fourteen authorities on anthropology and art, explores the emerging field of Indigenous contemporary art and the wide-ranging issues associated with its interaction with the contemporary world. In Part II Relational Agencies, essays by Una Ray, Quentin Sprague and Maya Haviland consider issues associated with interactions between non-Indigenous collaborators and Indigenous art and artists. In his essay entitled Relational Agency: The Elcho Island Memorial, Lendon introduces the term ‘relational agency’ to describe the politics of these exchanges.

In a series of recent essays Quentin Sprague provides a critical analysis of bark paintings and multi-media works produced by Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, (Sprague, Q, 2012). Her works have been acknowledged as ‘groundbreaking’ in Yolngu art production, with the term ‘meaningless’ having at times been used to describe some of her works as they appear to bear little reference to traditional art. Sprague discusses this label and the influence of collaboration and cultural exchange on the production of Nyapanyapa’s innovative works. Sprague’s observations are considered in Chapter 9 in which I discuss the influence of new technologies and intercultural interactions on the subject matter and form of the most recent prints produced by Nyapanyapa and other artists at Yirrkala.
1. Encounters and New Art

Since colonisation the Yolngu — the Indigenous people of Northeast Arnhem Land — have adapted the function and form of their art to accommodate enforced changes to their culture. An awareness of Yolngu history, beliefs and customs, and an understanding of the role of art in their daily life, is required to fully appreciate the significance of these changes. Consequently this dissertation begins with an introduction to the Yolngu, their cosmological view of the world and their concept of creation, and a précis of the known history of their contact with the outside world. Outsider interactions and European colonisation in particular, is considered in view of the impact these events have had on the art of the Yolngu. In reacting to these intrusions the Yolngu made adjustments to their social and religious practices and to their art. Along with the customary purpose of using art to pass on knowledge, they began to use it for political and educational purposes — as a means of informing the outside world about their culture. This chapter describes the gradual changes made to their art practice with reference to the associated social changes that, along with other adjustments, resulted in women playing a greater role in art production.

Location and Social Structure

The Yolngu\(^4\) inhabit the region known as Northeast Arnhem Land on the Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory of Australia. They belong to diverse clan groups that stretch south from the Walker River, north to the Island groups in the Arafura Sea across to Milingimbi and Ramingining in the west. The social structure of the Yolngu is based on clan groups which are divided into two moieties — Yirritja and Dhuwa — and are exogamous and patrilineal in descent.\(^5\) This dissertation focuses on the sixteen major clan groups living at Yirrkala and in the surrounding homelands (Figure 1.1, p.37).

\(^4\) The word *Yolngu* means person, human, Aboriginal person or people. The Aboriginal people living in Northeast Arnhem Land use this word to refer to themselves and use the words *balanda* or *ngäpaki* to refer to a non-Aboriginal or European. *Yolngu matha* refers to the group of languages spoken in their region (Zorc, D R, 1986).

Yolngu Creation

Everything is telling us who we are. (Gumbula, J N, 2009)
The creation of the Yolngu world took place in the distant past, in the ‘Time before the Morning’ (Wells, A, 1971, p. XIII). The creation stories for the Yolngu of the Miwatj — the ‘morning-side’ or Eastern region of Northeast Arnhem Land — relate to the Spirit Ancestors (wangarr) from each of the two moieties who came from the east onto the land and created the order and shape of the world. ‘Yolngu worldview sees every species of plant, animal, fish, bird or any place or person as belonging to one of the two balancing halves of the world (moieties); Yirritja or Dhuwa’ (Yirrkala Art, 2012).

Dhuwa and Yirritja - the key element to understand Yolngu knowledge. The ancestors gave us this structure and shaped people to have that identity. This identity isn’t only to do with human beings, it is also animals, land and the great numbers of things surrounding Yolngu people. These are the two worlds: this is Dhuwa and this is Yirritja. This guides ceremony, how to
perform our *Manikay* (songs), the artwork that goes with it and what we do in everyday life. (Gumbula, J N, 2009, p.4)

The creation stories for the Dhuwa people recount the activities of the *Djan’kawu* sisters and their brother who, led by the Morning Star, came by canoe from Baralku the mythical island of the spirits. The Yirritja creation stories are primarily based on male creator beings: *Banaitja* and *Laintjung* who emerged out of the sea and *Barama* and *Galparimun* who appeared inland (Wells, A, 1971, pp.5-56). As the creator beings walked along with their digging sticks they created the formations of the land, the rivers, watering holes, vegetation and all the creatures of the earth. The people and their languages, social order, ceremonial law and customs of everyday life, were set at creation by the *wangarr*. The activities of the Creator beings and the knowledge they bestowed relating to social laws (*rom*) and kinship (*gurrutu*) have been passed on to future generations through sacred symbols and ceremonies (*madayin*) which are recreated in their clan specific patterns (*miny’tji*) and re-enacted in song and dance cycles (*manikay*) and ceremony (*bunggul*). Children inherit their father’s moiety and the right to tell or paint that moiety’s creation stories. Historically, on reaching maturity, a male child would also take on the role of guardian (*djunggaya*) of his mother's land and in so doing undertakes associated ceremonial responsibilities. He would also be permitted to replicate his mother's, and mother’s mother’s, clan stories (Morphy, H, 1978, 1991, pp.57-74.).

These rules governed the way the people lived until outsiders came. In general outsiders failed to appreciate Yolngu belief systems based on the intimate relationships that exist between all things within the cosmos. Nor did they appreciate the Yolngu concept of the spiritual continuity of the present with the Ancestral past and the future, resulting in a cyclical rather than a linear perception of time and events (Christie, M, 1995). The expressions ‘The Dreaming’ and ‘The Dreamtime’ are often used to describe the concept of creation as perceived by Australian Aboriginal people. However this establishes an incorrect perception as it implies a Western quantitative, linear way of thinking whereas the Yolngu view of their world is cyclical in nature and
evaluated by qualitative attributes and relationships. The anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner created an apt expression in his attempt to describe it: ‘One cannot “fix” The Dreaming in time: it was, and is, everywhen’ (Stanner, W E H, 1979, p.24). According to Yolngu philosophy, what happened in the past — what was created and given to them by the Ancestral Creator beings — exists in the present and continues into the future. It is manifest in their land, their stories, law, ceremony, song, miny’tji and objects. When Yolngu look at something they see more than the outward appearance, they see the ‘inside’ or the sacred that has been given by the Ancestors — that which has always existed — then and now, and into the future.

To ensure the continuation of the cycles of life and the total functioning of the cosmos each clan group would periodically visit the sites where their Spirit Ancestors had travelled in order to re-enact their actions in ceremony. For the Yolngu these ceremonies and the land they were performed on were an essential part of their existence. When Yolngu are denied access to their land, their language, their sacred artefacts and ceremony they are cut off from this association with the Ancestral past. The Europeans failed to appreciate this deep connection with country, and in failing to appreciate the concept of belonging to country and caring for country they could not appreciate the consequences of separation from country. ‘An Aboriginal deprived of his homeland, and therefore his Dreaming sites, became nothing, a non-person, without vitality or hope for the future’ (Isaacs, J, 1977, p.5).

The Role of Art in Yolngu Life

Art plays an integral role in Yolngu daily life. In 1978 Yolngu clan leader and artist Wandjuk Marika, as chair of the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council for Arts, summarised the role of art in Aboriginal social and ritual life and its inextricable link to the land:

The land forms the link between the past and the present, and every feature is a reminder of our legendary ancestors who first lived here and whose lives are perpetuated in song and dance, and symbolically represented in the finely detailed patterns of our art. ... We express this in

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6 For further explanation of the term Dreaming as applied to the Aboriginal concept of creation, refer to: (Stanner, W E H, 1979, Stanner, 2009 & Williams, 1986, p.234)
our art which binds together all these elements to form the basis of our ceremonial and religious life. There is no real distinction for us between art and life: art is the expression of our beliefs, it upholds the laws by which we live and is an important element in the way in which we relate to the physical world around us. It is an integral part of our lives, not separate as it so often is in the life of Western man, but an important function in our ritual and of prime importance in our learning process. (Marika in, Edwards, R, 1978, p.7)

Wandjuk went on to state that considering all the changes endured by the pressures of the new ways, Aboriginal people are reaffirming their cultural identity with art playing a significant role: ‘For an outsider the language of art is easier to understand than the spoken language’ (Marika in Edwards, R, 1978, p.8).

**Miny’tji**

![Image of Yolngu miyalk with faces painted in preparation for bunggul at Garma 2003](Photographer R N Lanceley)

The Yolngu refer to the ‘finely detailed patterns’ that Wandjuk spoke of as miny’tji. Created and passed on by the Ancestral beings they contain the creation stories and the associated knowledge relating to sacred and social laws. The ordered manner and combinations of lines and colours carry deep meanings and result in patterns that are specific to regions, and detail which is specific to clans. These geometric patterns are traditionally laid out in sculptural form in sand and carved into objects or painted onto
faces, torsos, bark, hollow logs (*larrakitj*) and other objects, with a restricted palette of colours (black and white and natural ochres of red, yellow). Much of the variety of visual media that was produced was transient; only lasting for the time of the ceremony or the occasion for which it was produced (Figure 1.2, p. 40). The Yolngu do not have a specific word for art as we know it in the Western world. They use the term *miny’tji* to define an artwork but the word has wider meaning. It is also used to refer to the designs and patterns existing in both nature and in art and also the colours within those designs and patterns. Morphy provides the following definition:

Thus *miny’tji* can be used adjectively to describe anything that appears colourful... *Miny’tji* can also be used to refer to any regularly occurring pattern or design, whether it is natural or cultural in origin. (Morphy, H, 1989, p.304)

Morphy goes on to explain that the natural and the cultural are related in that the cultural designs are associated with that particular moment when the Ancestral beings emerged and created the land. As a result of this inextricable association with the creation of the land *miny’tji* are recognised as a form of title deed to land. The designs are seen to be imbued with the spiritual power of the Creator Ancestors so that in reproducing the designs the artist is connecting with them and their power and reaffirming connection to the land. In traditional painting the Yolngu use a fine brush — *marwat* — made from human hair. Using materials associated with the land keeps the intimate connection between the artist, the painting, the land and the Ancestral Creator spirits. As Stubbs interprets it:

The Yolngu say if you are going to paint the land use the land. This is what it means ... The hair brush is the wisdom. It flows from the same point as the water that is within the brain — within the mind of the Yolngu — that comes from the sacred source. The wellspring of clan identity is what grows that hair and that makes that mark on the bark. These are deep things that permeate every art making sensitivity of all Yolngu. (Stubbs, W, 2011a)

*Miny’tji* reflect the cyclical nature of the cosmos and the co-existence of the past, the present and the future in the here and now and so confirm the constant presence of the *wangarr* within the painting. The Yolngu refer to a particular ‘brilliance’ — *bir’yun*

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— emanating from the artwork which they recognise as evidence of the presence of the *wangarr* within the painting, as described by Morphy:

Thus *bir’yun* is the shimmering effect of finely cross-hatched paintings which project a brightness that is seen as emanating from the *wangarr* (Ancestral) beings themselves — this brightness is one of the things that endows the painting with Ancestral power. (Morphy, H, 1989)

Much of Yolngu art is of a secret-sacred nature and inaccessible to other than those with the requisite insight and status to access the knowledge. The patterns and designs replicated by the artists in body painting and on ceremonial objects are a ‘system of encoded meanings’ (Morphy, H, 1977b, p.vi). There are different levels of meaning: ‘outside’ — containing public knowledge that is accessible to everyone, and ‘inside’ — secret-sacred meanings containing restricted knowledge. This knowledge is gradually revealed to an initiate as they gain in status with each initiation ceremony and demonstrate that they possess the appropriate aptitude to receive the knowledge and laws contained within the sacred *miny’tji*.

At the Buku-Larrnggay Museum in 1990, the late Dr R. Marika gave the following explanation of *miny’tji* to a group of visiting *balanda*:

The Yolngu word *miny’tji* refers to any sort of colour or painting, but in the museum we have a special sort of *miny’tji* called *dhulang* — which is sacred painting, painting of sacred totemic designs, which date back from thousands of years to the oldest times. The paintings are not just pictures of things, but keepers of Yolngu knowledge. Our ancestors gave us the teachings and the designs together, and we still keep them. The symbolism behind the designs can be seen by someone who knows, to be in all the little details and shapes and colours of the work of art. The deepest knowledge is abstract, we know it is there, but it cannot be put into words. It cannot be seen, but it is still there, and it contains teachings given by the ancestors, and still carrying on down to the present contemporary Yolngu society. When old people paint, it is as if they are meditating, it is not just a man painting a design, but the design is a real meaningful and alive totem, which somehow communicates with the painter. When a person does a painting, it actually increases their knowledge of Yolngu law. There is communication going on. If these paintings are sacred, how can they be done for *balanda* (Europeans) to buy? The *balanda* can buy the painting, they can see the image and understand what it is about on the surface, they will learn the painting about Yolngu land, life, and beliefs. But they will not learn about the deep meanings of the paintings they buy. If *balanda* want to buy these
paintings, they must understand that they are not just pictures, but they contain the full story of Yolngu life and law. There are other things which Yolngu make for their ceremonials, like certain sticks, feathered string, and headbands, which are not to be sold to balanda. (Marika, R, 1990)

Dr Marika has used the word ‘abstract’ in a metaphysical sense to explain that there is more to the patterns than what the viewer sees on the surface — that imbedded within the miny’tji are the deep meanings that are only accessible to those who have the knowledge to interpret the symbolism. Historically these ‘inside’ paintings were geometric or abstract in appearance with few figurative elements. With increasing exposure to outsiders the Yolngu began to adapt their art to make it more accessible: more figuration was introduced to assist the viewer in understanding the story contained within the miny’tji. Djambawa Marawili, Yolngu artist and leader of the Madarrpa clan, made the following statement regarding his artwork exhibited at the Biennale of Sydney in 2006:

I don’t want to go to exhibitions and galleries and see people only looking at pretty pictures anymore. I want people to look at my paintings and recognize our law. It’s all I can do. (Marawili, D, 2006)

The Yolngu continue to adapt their artwork to enlighten others about their laws and their culture and to accommodate new purposes and new contexts. Artists are now reproducing sacred miny’tji in their public art but the deeper meanings remain hidden to outsiders.8 The relaxing of traditional restrictions regarding who can paint and what they can replicate was not without controversy. As discussed throughout this thesis, the introduction of printmaking precipitated further debate regarding its place in Yolngu art production and whether it was acceptable for miny’tji to be reproduced by mechanical means.

**Encounters with Outsiders**

After more than a century of colonisation the lifestyle and culture of the Yolngu was not as significantly affected by European contact as were Aboriginal groups in other parts of Australia. This was primarily due to their relative isolation initially resulting in

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only sporadic interaction. From the early 1900s, the situation was to change with the arrival of pastoralists, missionaries, anthropologists, and mining engineers exploring the region for mineral deposits. In the precolonial era the main contact with outsiders had been with sailors and fishermen from Japan and from Macassar in Southern Sulawesi, Indonesia. The Yolngu had long engaged in trade and commerce with the Macassan who had sailed on the seasonal trade winds to their shores, possibly from as early as the 17th century. They had established more trade and a more amicable relationship with the Macassans than with the Japanese who primarily came for trepang (sea cucumber) and pearls. The Yolngu traded trepang, turtle shell and pearls with the Macassans in exchange for alcohol, tobacco, rice, metal implements and other commodities. This long-established important source of trade, recorded in Yolngu song cycles and art, was allowed to continue after colonisation with the South Australian Government levying taxes from 1884 (Langton, M, 2011). The trade came to an abrupt halt in 1906 when the South Australian Government closed the borders to the Macassan in order to protect and encourage the local industry.

The earlier visitors, in particular the Macassans, did not come to force their culture on the Yolngu or to attempt any form of settlement or colonisation of the area: they came seasonally for purposes of harvest and trade. Despite some altercations there appears to have been mutual respect for culture and a sharing of knowledge and objects.

With the trading of goods and intensive cultural contact with the Macassans came change, innovation, disruption and eventual adaptation of regional Aboriginal culture and cosmology. (Langton, M, 2011, p.55)

The Yolngu adopted various aspects of Macassan culture into their daily lives: vocabulary (including the word balanda to describe a foreigner or outsider); foodstuffs (rice, sugar, tamarind); materials and implements such as cloth, tobacco, pipes and knives.

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9 When the Macassans might first have visited these shores is uncertain but a possible date for regular visits from the mid–1700s has been suggested from the diaries of Matthew Flinders, who encountered a Macassan prau while surveying the Malay Straits in 1803. The Captain, Pobassoo, informed him that he ‘...had made six or seven voyages from Macassar to this coast, within the preceding twenty years, and he was one of the first who came...’ (Flinders, M, 1814, p.230).

10 Refer to Macknight and Langton for accounts of the known history of the Macassan trade with Australian Aborigines and the reasons for its cessation (Langton, M, 2011, Macknight, C C, 1976).
Fig. 1.3 Mawalan Marika, *Macassan Cycle.*
Crayon on paper, image 71x61cm
(Image Courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka & Berndt Collection, Berndt Museum, UWA. WU716)

Fig. 1.4 LakLak Ganambarr, *Macassan boat.*
Soft ground Etching, 25x50cm. Ed.30, 2008
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 73A)

Fig. 1.5 Wuluwirr Mununggurr, natural ochre on bark with blue pigment.
90x97cm, c1930s.
(Reproduced courtesy Museum Victoria, Melbourne. DT-00031. Photographer D Salvestro)
The interactions and the relationships established between the Yolngu and the Macassans have been commemorated in Yolngu mythology – in *bunggul*, in *manikay* and in their art:

With so many ways to remember this history embedded in traditions, names, rock art, songs and sacred art, it should not be surprising that new ways of commemorating the ‘Macassan time’ and the rich social, cultural and material innovations of this time are created with each generation. If the ‘Macassan time’ symbolises the past, an adventurous and exciting age, it also represents the new and transformative, and a vision of the potential for friendship to enliven human affairs. (Langton, M, 2011, p.69)

Figurative imagery representing anchors, swords, knives, bottles, flags, sails, paddles and prau, are evident in much Yolngu art from the early bark paintings and drawings created in the 1940s for anthropologists, and more recently in contemporary prints produced by artists working at the Yirrkala Print Space (Figures 1.3, 1.4 & 1.5, p.45). The artists referred to the stories that were passed down by their forefathers, recalling the visits of the Macassan to Yolngu shores.

**The establishment of Missions**

The earliest recorded European exploration of the Northeast Arnhem Land region was by the Dutch in the early 1600s. They left their mark in place names including the naming of Arnhem Land after a Dutch East India Company sailing vessel that explored the region in 1623; and in Groote Eylandt, named by Abel Tasman in 1644. There is no known record of any meaningful contact at that time between the Dutch and the Yolngu. British exploration of the coastline began with Matthew Flinders in 1803, at which time he recorded in his diaries interactions with the Yolngu and the Macassans (Flinders, M, 1814, p.230). In 1827 Captain Phillip Parker King charted the coastline for the British. There followed irregular incursion to assess the land for pastoral and mining potential with some itinerant whites engaging in marginal industries such as pearling, trepang harvesting and buffalo hunting (Dewar, M, 1992, p.7-9).

Compared to the earlier visitors, the arrival of the Europeans was to severely impact on the lives of the Yolngu. By the end of the nineteenth century the non-Indigenous population of Arnhem Land was increasing and resulted in open conflict with the locals over competition for land. There is anecdotal evidence of massacres that occurred in
regions of Arnhem Land around the turn of the century (Trudgen, R, 2000). During this time the Anglican Church Missionary Society initiated Christian evangelical work in Arnhem Land by establishing the Roper River Mission in 1908 (Dewar, M, 1992, p.9). The missionaries had little knowledge of Aboriginal culture and although Yolngu society appeared to be both peaceful and fulfilling, some of the missionaries were intent on religious and social conversion. They worked to break down the social and cultural practices of the Aborigines and indoctrinate British social values and attitudes. By 1912 the Federal Government had allocated regions to the Methodist Overseas Mission and the first mission was established on Goulburn Island in 1916. James Watson established a mission on Milingimbi Island in 1923, and that year also saw a failed attempt on Elcho Island. The Reverend T T Webb was sent to the mission on Milingimbi in 1926. The Methodists came with a different approach to the Anglicans, showing a greater appreciation for the need to understand the country and its people and with the aspiration of seeing the settlements become self-supporting communities. Despite their efforts many of the missionary groups failed to grasp the intricacies of Yolngu society and their kinship and belief systems (Dewar, M, 1992, pp.9-10).

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in their land, the Indigenous people of Northeast Arnhem Land lived on country in various sized clan groups interacting with other clans in accordance with time-honoured laws for the purpose of trade and marriage, and in dealing with conflict. With the establishment of the missions the Aborigines were encouraged to move into the mission settlements. Many groups started to do so to access food, medicine and other services. Along with spiritual conversion some of the missionaries attempted to change social systems such as marriage practices. The combined effects of these attempted changes, and the added complication of different clan groups moving into missions located on another clan’s land, resulted in a breakdown in social order and the intensification of inter-clan conflict (Dewar, M, 1992, p.15-16).

Missions and settlements tended to bring together multi-clan and often multi-language group communities. Such communities were, if maintained beyond the time appropriate to some special and short-term purpose, alien to the Aboriginal way and created significant stresses among the groups forming them. (Isaacs, J, 1977)
With a growing dependence on the goods and services provided by the *balanda*, the Aborigines were often reluctant to move away from the missions. In the 1970s, increasing self-determination was to see a reversal of this movement in some areas, as evidenced with the Homelands movement in Arnhem Land. The move was instigated by leaders who feared loss of country and social order (Morphy, F and Marika, W, 2005, p.1).

**The Changing Role of Art**

The presence of Europeans in Northeast Arnhem Land became more constant from the 1920s. This was associated with an increasing impact on the lifestyle of the local people. Art had always played an important role in Yolngu society as a primary means of transmitting knowledge from one generation to the next and from early on the Yolngu showed a willingness to paint their stories to enlighten the outside world. It was to become an important means of communicating their history, stories and beliefs to the *balanda*. The Yolngu adopted introduced techniques to produce more art in various forms and for different purposes: political, didactic, as a means of reaffirming their connection to country, and ultimately for commercial gain. This opening up of their art was done in a considered manner in relation to what could be used and in what context, with the Yolngu maintaining control of the way it was used both internally and externally.

Morphy has proposed (Morphy, H, 1991, pp.2, 301) that in providing a new audience and new media, colonization allowed for an opening out of the art of the Yolngu with change in their society reflected in their art. While continuing to be central to ritual and didactic practices, the production of works of art took on an additional economic purpose and began to be produced as a commodity for sale to the outside world. Morphy suggested these changes reflected the attempts being made by the Yolngu to integrate with postcolonial Australian society. ‘New’ paintings were created to fit new contexts while continuing to perform the vital role of communication (Morphy, H, 1991, p.8). During the 1930s the earliest of these ‘new’ paintings produced by the Yirrkala artists were portable bark paintings (Williams, N M, 1976, p.272). In 1947–1948 this innovation was followed by drawings produced by the Yolngu artists for the
anthropologist Ronald Berndt, using the introduced medium of crayon on paper. Then, from the 1970s, printmaking was gradually introduced. This ‘new’ medium was accompanied by controversy over whether an art form that entails mechanical reproduction could be used to replicate sacred miny’tji.

Reaction to Change

In 1931 the Government declared Arnhem Land an Aboriginal Reserve set aside ‘for the use and benefit of the aboriginal native inhabitants of Northern Australia’. Media reports about events involving conflicts between ‘the blacks’ and outsiders, brought East Arnhem Land and the traditional lifestyle of the local Aboriginal people to the attention of the rest of Australia and ultimately led to the recognition of Aboriginal social and land rights. The first incident, in 1932, involved the killing of five Japanese fishermen by Yolngu in the Caledon Bay area. The following year, police expeditions were organised in response to reports of two white itinerants killed on Woodah Island in Blue Mud Bay. During one of the patrols a police officer, Constable McColl, decided to hold some of the women hostage as a ploy to entrap the suspect men. He was killed by a spear thrown by Dhakiyarr in defence of his wife, who was one of the hostages. Hearing that the Government was considering another punitive expedition, the anthropologist Donald Thomson ‘offered his services to go to Arnhem Land to seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict there’ (Thomson, D F, 1983, p.7). Prompted by these events Theodor Webb, superintendent of the Methodist mission at Milingimbi and chairman of the North Australia District, suggested the need for a mission in the Caledon Bay area (Dewar, M, 1992, pp.38-68). However, that plan never eventuated as a suitable site could not be found.

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12 This episode and its consequences — then and since — are recounted in the documentary Dhakiyarr versus the King. It concludes with the ceremony at the Supreme Court in Darwin in 2003 when 200 of Dhakiyarr’s descendants presented nine larrakitj to the Court in the presence of politicians, members of the judicial system and descendants of the McColl family, with the intention of restoring the injustices of the past. The action was multi-purpose: to have their law and culture recognised by a white court through the performance of a public funeral ceremony; to thank the High Court for freeing their ancestor; to lay their ancestor’s spirit to rest, and to ‘break the spear — the spear that flew between my family and the family of McColl’ (Wuyal Wirrinda in Murray, T and Collins, A, 2003).
Yirrkala Mission and Art Production

In 1935, in consultation with the senior landowner Mawalan Marika, a mission was established on Rirratjingu clan land at Yirrkala by the Reverend Wilbur Chaseling. Thomson visited Yirrkala on a fact finding expedition and to accompany back to their homeland, the recently released Yolngu men who had been incarcerated in Darwin for the killing of the Japanese fishermen. Thomson spent time in the region during the 1930s and early 1940s, doing field work and making efforts to understand Yolngu culture (Thomson, D F, 1936, 1949, 1983). The Yolngu explained their cosmology to him through paintings, dance and song. Thomson became one of the first anthropologists to attempt to categorize Yolngu art from the decorative non-sacred through to the secret sacred (Morphy, H, 1991, pp.182-201). The ethnographic image and sound material collated by Thomson during these expeditions formed the first significant collection of material culture from Yirrkala. As the European lifestyle increasingly impacted on their way of life, and fearing the loss of their land and cultural identity, the Yolngu looked to their art as a means of ensuring their survival. Thomson and the early missionaries, Chaseling and Webb, encouraged the Yolngu to produce paintings as a source of pride and to enlighten outsiders about Yolngu culture (Chaseling, W, 1957, Thomson, D F, 1949, Wells, E, 1982). They also saw the production of art as a means of creating a local economy, initially through sales to museums. When anthropologists Catherine and Ronald Berndt, and Charles Mountford visited the region in the late 1940s, the Yolngu senior men proceeded to paint their stories on barks and made drawings on paper for the anthropologists to take away with them.

New Media – ‘Another way of telling our stories’

European contact resulted in changes to both the medium and the audience for Yolngu art. In the 1930s, the artists began making art and objects for anthropologists, museums and other collectors of ethnography. Accessible mediums were the carved

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13 Now held at Museum Victoria, the Donald Thomson Collection is considered one of the most comprehensive collections of Aboriginal cultural heritage material in the world, and in 2008 was inscribed onto the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World register (Museum Victoria, 2015).
artefacts and the small bark paintings which historically were made for teaching purposes, and for display on the ceremonial ground in closed ngärra’ ceremonies\textsuperscript{14}. In the traditional manner, they used the fine hairbrush (marwat) to paint ochres mixed with plant-derived fixative\textsuperscript{15} to create non-sacred images on small portable sheets of bark. The audience expanded around the time of the Second World War when the missionaries encouraged the production of these carvings and small paintings for sale to servicemen and other visitors, including those collecting for the western art market. In an interview with Howard Morphy in 1975, the Rev Wilbur Chaseling, who had established the Yirrkala Mission in 1935, explained his involvement:

I started them painting craft within a week or so of arriving. I established the principle that I would give them nothing free-nothing except medicine. If they were to get things they had to work. I sent things only to museums and charged them the price I paid plus freight — I sent tons of stuff down. I realised that we had to start some kind of industry and craft seemed the obvious one, even if I had to burn some of the things produced at first I had to do it. (Morphy, H, 2005b)

One of the earliest records of Yirrkala artists using an introduced material in the production of art is provided by Chaseling in his book Yulengor (Chaseling, W, 1957). Chaseling relates a story of Reckitt’s ‘blue-bags’ disappearing from his wife’s laundry only to rematerialise in some bark paintings:

A well-known anthropologist stayed with us at Yirrkala and obtained a big selection of Aboriginal arts and crafts and bark paintings. He paid the Yulengor well, and they gave full play to their ingenuity, manufacturing such things as bows and arrows which, incidentally, are not used by aborigines. I saw several paintings in the collection in the usual red, yellow, white, and black, together with an additional vivid blue. Not having seen blue before, I could not account for it till later in the day my wife chanced to remark that several of her blue-bags had disappeared. (Chaseling, W, 1957, p.94)

Although the anthropologist is not identified it is plausible that it was Donald Thomson taking into consideration the time-frame, and the fact that one such bark produced in the 1930s displaying this vivid blue, is part of the Thomson collection in the archives of Museum Victoria. The subject matter of the bark, attributed to Wuluwirr Mununggurr,\textsuperscript{14} Ngärra’ are closed, sacred ceremonies specific to each moiety. Focusing on clan identity, restricted objects are revealed to the adult male initiates during the ceremonies (Morphy, H, 1991, p.81).\textsuperscript{15} The traditional orchid sap was eventually substituted by the introduced medium of PVA glue.
is a Macassan prau depicted in white with generous use of a blue pigment in the hatching and outlines (Figure 1.5, p.45). As Chaseling had observed, this was a colour not previously seen in Yolngu painting, although the use of blue dating from the 1880s has been recorded in Western Arnhem Land rock art and on Aboriginal artefacts from northern NSW regions.\(^\text{16}\)

**Paper and Crayon**

In 1946 the anthropologist Ronald Berndt, on a visit from Sydney University, introduced Yirrkala artists to the medium of paper and crayon. Berndt had initially suggested bark so that the Yolngu could paint their ‘short-lived ground and body designs to an enduring media’ (Stanton, J P, 2008, p.524). However, with the risk of a shortage of bark as the dry season approached and concerned that the fragile barks would not survive the journey back to Darwin, Berndt contacted his father in Adelaide with a request for paper and coloured crayons to be sent to Yirrkala. Although the Yolngu artists had never used crayons nor worked on paper prior to this they proceeded to draw confidently onto the paper with what was, for them, a totally new array of colours. Berndt’s intention had been to get duplicates of the barks already produced by the Yolngu artists but, to his surprise, he was presented with a completely different set of drawings:

> I decided to have all of them replicated in lumber crayons on brown paper. However, instead of obtaining duplicate copies ... I found that I was building up an entirely new series. While they were similar in style, they were visually different, less circumscribed and much more innovative in treatment. (Berndt, R M, 1983, p.34)

The Yolngu produced a total of 365 drawings for Berndt. They did not replicate the body designs in the customary ochre colours, but used ‘a vibrant palette of blues, oranges, greens and turquoise, the splendour of which has not diffused with the passing of time’ (Stanton, J P, 2008, p.524).

\(^{16}\) Ryan describes Reckitt's blue as appearing in rock art dated in the 1880s at Nourlangie Rock in Western Arnhem Land, and used by prisoners at Fannie Bay Goal Darwin in 1888 (Ryan, J, 2004, p.99). Nink also refers to Nourlangie Rock and to its presence on a shield produced in NSW in the nineteenth century (Nink, K, 2006, p.8).
This new medium, the new colours, the new situation and new audience, inspired the artists to replicate their clan *miny’tji* and depict stories about their everyday lives and events (Figures 1.6, 1.7). The Berndt Collection of Yirrkala Drawings, considered to be one of the most important collections of Australian art, has been conserved in the Berndt Museum of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia. In 2006 the UNESCO National Committee of Australia added the collection to the Memory of the World Register, describing them as: aesthetically significant, resonating with religious meaning, and ‘demonstrating the complexity and structure of Yolngu spiritual beliefs’ (UNESCO National Committee of Australia, 2006). In 2013, eighty one of the drawings went on public display in a dedicated exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW, then toured to Queensland Art Gallery and Charles Darwin University Art Gallery (Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2013). According to Stanton the Yirrkala Drawings, were considered by Ronald Berndt to be the ‘jewels of his collection’ as they provided a unique accumulation of cultural knowledge (Stanton, J P, 2008, p.523). In a paper presented to the Aboriginal Art and Craft Market conference held in Darwin in 1982, Berndt stated...
that he considered the innovation seen in Aboriginal art at that time as the most exciting thing happening in the Australian contemporary art scene. However he expressed concern that the increasing influence of introduced non-Indigenous materials on the design and workmanship of Aboriginal art would see it lose its inherent Aboriginal quality: ‘While internal production must be safeguarded by Aborigines themselves, there is no reason why artists who themselves now produce for both channels should not impose their own internal standards on items destined for an external market’ (Berndt, R M, 1983, pp.35-36). The reaction of the Yolnu artists when introduced to printmaking would have reassured Berndt that such concerns were, in this instance, being addressed. As described in Chapter 6, following the establishment of the Print Space at the Yirrkala Art Centre in 1995, the Artists Committee imposed conditions on what could or could not be printed and ruled that the senior clan leaders must be consulted regarding appropriateness of what is produced through printmaking. The Berndt drawings saw the first instance of Yolnu replicating sacred miny’tji in anything other than traditional colours and allowing these non-conventional reproductions to be publicly displayed. This opening up of their art involving a new medium and new colour palette was to be witnessed again with the introduction of printmaking technologies.

The 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land, (AASEAL), was another early anthropological field trip for which Yolnu artists were requested to produce artwork specifically to document and assist in explaining their culture and beliefs (Mountford, C P, 1956, Vol.1.). The AASEAL expedition team visited Yirrkala shortly after the Berndts, to carry out anthropological, botanical and other scientific studies. This collaborative project involving the American National Geographic Society, the Smithsonian Institute Washington, and the Australian Commonwealth Government Department of Information, was led by photographer and ethnographer Charles Mountford who made the following observation regarding the creativity displayed by the artists in the artwork collected.

I did not meet an aboriginal who could not, or did not want to paint. There is certainly no special artist class. In watching these men and others at work, I was impressed by their sureness. They seemed to have a fully conceived picture in their mind before they started to paint; it was seldom that an artist altered a design or corrected a brush stroke (Mountford, C P, 1956, p.15).
Similar observations of the ‘sureness’ that Mountford observed with the Yolngu in their approach to creating artwork, have been made in recent times by printmakers when witnessing the decisive manner in which many Yolngu artists approach their artwork. When interviewed for this research, many of the non-Yolngu printmakers working with Yolngu artists for the first time commented that it appears as if they had a preconceived idea of exactly what they were going to paint. It is only with increased awareness that those with previously little knowledge of Yolngu culture came to appreciate that this was so because Yolngu art practice historically involves the replication of familiar clan stories and designs.

A majority of the series of barks commissioned by Mountford during the AASEAL expedition were distributed in 1956 between the Smithsonian Institute Washington, and Australia’s State museums and galleries. These historic gifts, which formed the core of the latter’s Indigenous contemporary collections, were unprecedented: until then, the works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists were not well represented in the collections of major Australian galleries (Jones, J, 2009, p.3). It was more commonplace at that time to see such works exhibited as ethnographic pieces in a museum rather than displayed as art within a gallery context. From this point on, associated with much debate, there was to be a gradual change in the perception of contemporary Aboriginal art. With the added developments of Aboriginal artists taking on and working with modern media and Western techniques and introducing new subject matter into their art, contemporary Aboriginal art progressed from being studied by anthropologists as ethnographic art to becoming accepted as contemporary art.

17 The Art Gallery of NSW deputy director, Tony Tuckson was instrumental in supporting the move that pioneered the recognition ‘of Indigenous art within the context of contemporary culture’ (Jones, J, 2009, p.3). Tuckson went on to increase the Art Galleries collection through expeditions to the Top End supported by the art patron Dr Stuart Scougall. He curated, Australian Aboriginal Art, the first exhibition dedicated to Aboriginal art, which toured Australian State Galleries in 1960–1961. Tuckson’s commitment resulted in the creation of the first permanent gallery dedicated to Aboriginal art in an Australian art museum.

A Widening Audience

Following the disruption of the Second World War their continued to be a focus on the production of bark paintings and woodcarvings with the missionaries now encouraging the artists to also produce artwork specifically for the Western art market. This was reinforced by art curators, collectors, and dealers who began to visit the region from the 1950s. The Reverend Gordon Symons who came to Yirrkala in 1954 continued to support the sale of art as a means of the Yolngu expressing pride in their cultural heritage and as a source of income. The responsibility of buying and selling the art was given to the lay missionary Douglas Tuffin, whose tenure at Yirrkala lasted from 1950 to 1963. From 1955 he acted as the art advisor and played a role in getting women involved in painting (Williams, N M, 1976, pp.274-275). Tony Tuckson, Deputy Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), visited in 1959 with philanthropist and collector Dr Stuart Scougall. The series of barks they commissioned from the Yolngu senior men contributed to the foundation of the Australian Aboriginal art collection at the AGNSW. Scougall continued to visit, bringing other collectors with him. The Reverend Edgar Wells, who arrived at the Yirrkala mission in 1962, provided a record of visits that took place in June-July 1962:

Dr Stuart Scougall, specialist in Aboriginal art, Mr John Molvig, artist, and Mr Rudy Komon, gallery proprietor, arrive with offers of help at all levels for Aboriginal artists and encourage the Aborigines to produce works of art for sale. Mr Jim Davidson, collector of Oceanic and Pacific art visits Yirrkala and organises regular purchases of all forms of Aboriginal art. (Wells, E, 1982, p.132)

Jim Davidson, a private collector and gallery owner from Melbourne, became an important buyer during the 1960s. He was popular with the Yolngu who looked forward to his visits and worked hard to fulfil his commissions. Davidson established the Aboriginal and Pacific Gallery in Melbourne through which he sold to clients, including the National Gallery of Victoria (Ryan, J, 2004, p.97). Scougall’s assistant, Dorothy Bennett, branched out on her own and went on to become an important purchaser of the art of the region as well as promoting and selling Indigenous Australian art nationally and internationally. There was also growing interest from European collectors and museums. The European artist Karel Kupka, who visited several times between 1956 and 1964, amassed collections of barks to take back to

**Politically motivated Art Production**

The Reverend Wells was only at Yirrkala for a relatively short period of time (1962–1963) but from his earlier experience at the Milingimbi mission (1950–1960), he was aware of how important it was for the Yolngu to maintain their traditional association with the land of their forefathers. Furthermore, he appreciated the role their art played in this. It was apparent to him that ‘the loss of land carrying with it identification with the great myths and legends of the people, threatened the awareness of future generations with a loss of the total cosmogony of the Aboriginal people’ (Wells, E, 1982, p.22). Wells realised that any disruption to their social and religious structure would have a devastating effect on the Yolngu:

> The preservation of the Aboriginal heritage must not only be seen as embracing the geographical site, ... but also it must always be borne in mind that there is an intrinsic pattern to Aboriginal thought, a basic world view... epic poetry, historic figures, the place of man in the ecosystem of the Aboriginal universe, all these have their place within the culture of the Aborigines. Thus a threat to the known places of Aboriginal spirit behaviour, the land symbols, marine and sky symbols, fauna and flora, posited a total calamity to the social structure of the Aborigines because it was all held together by a pattern of mind based on religious and spiritual forms. (Wells, E, 1982, p.10)

The clan leaders realised that in order for others to understand and respect their culture and long-standing attachment to the land they would have to allow the outsiders access to their creation stories and laws. They saw their artwork as the most effective way of doing this and so art production took on a greater role in addressing political, social and fiscal issues as well as catering to the growing outside interest in their art and craft.

**The Elcho Island Memorial**

A significant movement which highlighted the adjustments the Yolngu were prepared to make to their laws and art in order to ensure the survival of their culture and land was seen on Elcho Island in 1957 with the construction of what became known as the
Elcho Island Memorial. This involved the controversial public display of a grouping of usually restricted *rangga*\(^{19}\) emblems of the Elcho people. There was a further break with tradition in that female members of the community had assisted the men in painting some of the wooden poles and sacred emblems (Figure 1.8, p.59). The chief protagonist, Burrumarra, referred to the assemblage as a “Memorial”. His aim was to affirm Yolngu sovereignty by showing the outside world that the Yolngu were united under Yolngu law. The Berndts heard news of this while on a visit to Yirrkala in February 1958 and made arrangements to visit Elcho to witness the “Memorial” themselves. Ronald Berndt described this as a political act and an attempt to integrate the ‘traditional’ Aboriginal world with the outside world. He referred to the incident as ‘an adjustment movement’ (Berndt, R M, 1962, p.24). There were those, led by Burrumarra, who saw the public exposing of their *rangga* as change in traditional practice where the old was being incorporated into the new, both spiritually and materially (Berndt, R M, 1962, p.40). Morphy provides the following interpretation of the motives of those instigating the movement and their intent in exposing their *rangga* through the Memorial:

> The movement had both internal and external objectives. One aim was to modify the form of society by bringing all of the clans together, and to create unity by displaying all of the sacred objects together in public. It was argued by some that the separation of the clans, centred on and symbolized by the sacred objects that they held, made it difficult to create a united front for negotiating with Europeans. ... The memorial was at least as much directed towards European Australians as an internal audience. ... The intention was to set up an exchange relation with Europeans: by showing Europeans their most sacred and valuable possessions they hoped to get in return better education, employment, control over access to their lands and more influence in their own affairs. ... The memorial was both a bid for autonomy and ... a ‘remodelling of society. (Morphy, H, 1998, pp.240-241)

Morphy contends that rather than an exchange of goods or rights it was an exchange of perception of values. ‘What they were demanding in return for their acceptance of certain European values was the recognition of the value of Yolngu culture by white Australians’ (Morphy, H, 1983, p.112). They had shown their sacred symbols so that

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\(^{19}\) *Rangga* — sacred ceremonial objects, used in secret ceremonies and traditionally not revealed to the opposite sex.
the outsiders would appreciate that they had a system of land tenure and law and had expected this would be respected.

Lendon provides a complementary evaluation of the Elcho Memorial (Lendon, N, 2014b). He concurs with the assessment that the Memorial was created as a result of a reaction by the people to a particular series of events, both internal and external, impacting on their society and threatening their culture, but considers it from a different perspective. Lendon focuses on the significance of the innovative form of the elements of the Memorial and the non-traditional materials used in its construction. Berndt appears to have viewed it as an assembly of sacred objects with a purely symbolic function, created in reaction to the social transformation taking place on Elcho at that time. Lendon sees it as more, describing it as an ‘architectonic ensemble’ composed of modern materials - milled timber and enamel paint - that were available to the artists at that time. He suggests that ‘The Memorial stands as an extraordinary instance of the capacity of remote Indigenous artists to respond creatively to the
advent of modernity’ (Lendon, N, 2014b, p.111). Lendon proposes that its political motivation was complex, both as a Christianising motive on the part of the three main protagonists and as an attempt to create a new political relationship between the Yolngu clans. In constructing the Memorial the Yolngu adopted and adapted introduced materials to recreate their traditional elements in a form that was both new and contemporary and in so doing generated a hitherto unknown artistic form. This creative initiative taken by the Yolngu prompted a further break from traditional practice - a breaching of law in allowing women to be involved in the creation of certain sacred objects and allowing them access to knowledge and ceremonial performances that historically were not accessible to them. The creation of the Memorial, coupled with the attitude of the missionaries toward traditional practices, proved divisive. Several of the clans decided to move their ceremonies from the island to the mainland and some of the women chose to leave the Island for a period of time.

Leaders from Yirrkala who had close relationships with the Elcho community were invited to participate in the movement. Although initially reluctant to do so, four of the Yirrkala senior men - Mawalan Marika and three Gumatj men including Munngurrrawuy Yunupingu - attended the public ceremony. They were later reluctant to discuss the experience with Berndt, telling him that they had deliberated for a week before agreeing to show their rangga (Berndt, R M, 1962, pp.24, 67-68). That they did contribute rangga to the Memorial is confirmed by the fact that Berndt makes reference to Gumatj and Rirratjingu elements in his description of the memorial (Berndt, R M, 1962, pp.52, 61-62).

**The Yirrkala Church Panels and the Bark Petitions**

The Yirrkala community was to experience other instances of the use of their art for political purposes in the years that followed. In 1962, Wells encouraged those Yolngu whose traditional lands were being threatened by the establishment of a mine in the area, to use their art as a political tool (Wells, E, 1982, p.31). The Yolngu once again looked to their art to educate outsiders and to assert their claim to country. Wells met with the community leaders to discuss how they might use bark paintings displaying the designs manifesting their relationship to land as a means of asserting their sovereignty, and to show Europeans that they too had a sacred law and a religious life.
With the imminent threat of some of their land being excised for mining purposes, one of the senior men (according to Wells this was probably Narritjin Maymuru (Wells, E, 1982, p.58).) suggested they paint something to place in the church to show that they too had a spiritual belief system. After discussion it was ‘proposed that a panel from each of the Dhuwa and Yirritja moieties be painted to show the descent of contemporary Yolngu from the Ancestral beings ... to assert the authority of Yolngu power structures and to show that there was no inherent incompatibility between Christian and Yolngu beliefs’ (Mundine, D, 1999, p.22). In another move to affirm their entitlement to country, the most senior of the clan artists, including those who had painted for the Berndts and for Mountford, worked together to create the Yirrkala Church Panels (Figure 1.9). Wells described this as an example of the use of Aboriginal art in the fight for survival of the art of the people and the totemic lands of their Ancestral birth (Wells, E, 1982, p.59).

![Image](image_url)

Fig. 1.9 Church Panels, 1962/63, in situ at Yirrkala Mission Church 1963-1974. (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka)

The Ancestral narratives were painted onto two hardboard panels, each 3.6 x 1.2 metres, in the traditional manner using marwat and ochres. On one panel was
represented the Yirritja and the other the Dhuwa creation stories.\textsuperscript{20} The panels were completed in 1963 and put on display in the Yirrkala Mission Church until 1974 when they were removed by a new Methodist Minister who is said to have considered them ‘heathen’. The panels were left outside, unprotected under the eaves of the Church subject to the ravages of the weather, until 1978 when they were rescued by the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre. In 1988 the Church Panels were put on permanent public display in a specially designed room in the museum at the Art Centre. For the Yolngu they represented title deeds establishing legal tenure to their traditional clan estates (Gosford, B, 2013).

The Church Panels were to be the inspiration for The Bark Petitions (Figure 1.10, p.63), which were compiled and sent to Parliament House in Canberra in 1963 to express the concern of the Yolngu at their land being excised, without consultation, to accommodate a bauxite mine.\textsuperscript{21} This unique document consists of two pieces of paper featuring a petition, written in both English and the local Gumatj language, glued to pieces of bark. The borders of the bark are painted in sacred clan designs which describe the threatened areas and affirm the title to land of the various clans. The presentation of the Petitions anticipated the first Land Rights case to be heard in an Australian court: the 1970 Gove Lands Right Case: \textit{Milirrpum v Nabalco} (Wells, E, 1982, pp.79-108, 121-128, Williams, N M, 1986, pp.157-192). The presiding judge, Justice Blackburn, acknowledged the Yolngu had laws but ruled that these did not relate to title to country and, in declaring \textit{terra nullius}, pronounced the case lost. Although defeated, this case set a precedent and led to the establishment of the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976.\textsuperscript{22} The Bark Petitions are now on permanent display in Parliament House Canberra in recognition of their significance in the fight for Aboriginal land rights.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Ann Wells provides a description of the panels and the related stories in \textit{This their Dreaming} (Wells, A, 1971).

\textsuperscript{21} Williams provides details of the establishment of the bauxite mining enterprise and the Yolngu struggle to assert their rights (Williams, N M, 1986).

\textsuperscript{22} Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976: Purpose: to allow for grants of land to Aboriginal People and allow them to protect their land. The inalienable Title was held by a Land Trust. The 1976 Act was amended significantly in October 2006: to allow a Land Trust, with the consent of the traditional owners, to lease a community to a government body for 99yrs (ATNS, 2012).

\textsuperscript{23} The Yirrkala petitions are significant as a key part of the persistent claim for constitutional change which achieved the amendment of the Australian Constitution (S.51, S.127) in 1967, the statutory
The Church Panels and The Bark Petitions are examples of Yolngu adapting their art for a specific purpose in reaction to change being imposed on their society. Morphy described them as effective in facilitating cross-cultural communication, proposing that ‘The use of art in this way required adjustments in Yolngu society’ and that ‘in reality they were the result of long-term (and continuing) processes’ (Morphy, H, 2011, p.273).

Opening up their art to the outside world

The extent to which the locals would consider sharing knowledge in order to preserve their culture was again in evidence in the late 1960s when anthropologist Helen Groger-Wurm visited Yirrkala. Aware that the mining development and the increased influx of balanda and western lifestyle would have compounding and drastically modifying effects on the traditional lifestyle and culture of the locals, Groger-Wurm had undertaken a project to collect and record details of traditional material culture of the Aboriginal people of North Australia. At Yirrkala she met with Mawalan and other leaders of the two moieties to explain her purpose, which was to collect as complete a

acknowledgment of Aboriginal land rights by the Commonwealth in 1976, and the overturning of the obstacle of the concept of terra nullius by the High Court in the Mabo Case in 1992 (National Archives of Australia, 2011).
record as possible of their paintings so that they would not be lost to future
generations. In order to do this, apart from the access to secular works, she requested
that they consider revealing to her the ‘inside’ information contained in the secret-
sacred religious paintings. After much deliberation the old men agreed as ‘they were
aware that their old heritage might be lost and they wanted it preserved’ (Groger-
Wurm, H M, 1973, p.x). This was another example of Yolngu relaxing their laws and
making adjustments to their traditional practices in order to ensure the survival of
their art and culture. However, the Yolngu imposed strict conditions on Groger-
Wurm’s use of the information, informing her that they had only given permission as
they considered her not an ‘ordinary women’, but an ‘old balanda business women’.
Appreciating that the amount of detail provided by the artists was dictated by the
perceived integrity and motives of the person making the request, Groger-Wurm
recorded the mythology of sacred and secular bark paintings of both Yirritja and
Dhuwa moieties. In the 1973 publication of her research Groger-Wurm concluded:

Traditionally all sacred patterns of eastern Arnhem Land originated from
the Dreamtime and continued through countless generations to the
present. However, as the last of the men who grew up according to the old
“law” pass away, so they take with them a great part of this ancient
heritage, and with it the art of bark painting in its traditional form. It is
hoped that this book will help to pave the way, not only for a deeper
appreciation of this Aboriginal art form but record the depth and
complexity of thought in Aboriginal traditional life and culture. (Groger-
Wurm, H M, 1973, p.132)

Although the Yolngu had revealed restricted information to Groger-Wurm for the
purpose of ensuring the survival of their art and culture, the sensitive nature of the
secret-sacred elements contained in many of the paintings described by Groger-Wurm
caused such controversy when they were revealed that the publication was withdrawn
from distribution.

‘Both ways’ learning

In the following decades, anthropologists explored the changes manifest in other
aspects of Yolngu society. In the early 1990s, ANU PhD research candidate, Sophie
Creighton, carried out an ethnographic study of the Gaŋma\textsuperscript{24} Movement: a Yolngu push for ‘both ways’ education which had taken place at the Yirrkala School from the 1980s through to the early 1990s (Creighton, S, 2003).

The Yolngu used the terms ‘both ways’ or ‘two ways’ to describe the reciprocal exchange of knowledge that takes place through cross-cultural collaborative interactions based on mutual respect for each party’s culture and beliefs. In recollecting his first dealings with the Yolngu at Yirrkala the missionary Chaseling had made the following comment: ‘I found I had a lot to learn from them before presuming to teach’ (Chaseling, W, 1957). This disclosure suggests that the Yolngu were engaging in inter-cultural reciprocal or ‘both ways’ exchanges of knowledge during their earliest interactions with outsiders.

Creighton proposes that the Yolngu, rather than reacting passively to changes being wrought by the education authorities, actively instigated means of ensuring survival of their culture through cross-cultural dialogue and exchange. Creighton likens this to the cross-cultural exchange in Yolngu art production described by Berndt and Morphy in their studies (Berndt, R M, Berndt, C H and Stanton, J E, 1982, Morphy, H, 1977b, 1978). Described throughout this thesis are examples of print workshops and projects in which ‘both ways’ or ‘two ways’ cross-cultural dialogue and exchanges contributed to positive outcomes.

In view of the fact that the majority of the teachers at the school were women, Creighton also considered the effect of the Gaŋma Movement on gender issues within Yolngu society. ‘The school provided women with an alternate avenue for obtaining status as knowledgeable individuals’ (Creighton, S, 2003, p.25). Creighton paralleled this to the increased autonomy being experienced by women as artists in an arena which was historically male dominated. This thesis explores the proposal that the introduced medium of printmaking has offered the female artists at Yirrkala an additional avenue for increasing their status and autonomy, as well as providing another vehicle for the expression of individual creativity.

\textsuperscript{24} Gaŋma is a Gumatj (Yirritja) word, referring to a site where salt and freshwater mix to form brackish water. It is used ‘as a metaphor for specific relationships between Yolngu clans’. In recent years the term ‘has been extended and applied to thinking about Yolngu/Balanda cross-cultural exchange and hybrid cultural forms that are made possible where two cultures meet’ (Creighton, S, 2003).
The Changing role of Women in Art Production

The introduction of new materials and techniques, and new subject matter and content, was to have an enduring impact on the Yolngu approach to art. Challenges arose in relation to the issue of who could paint and what they could paint. In Yolngu culture painting was historically the prerogative of males with women usually painting under the supervision of the male members of their family, or painting on utilitarian objects and on faces for ceremony. With the increasing influence of outsiders this gradually changed. When the missionaries at Yirrkala took control of commercial art production, they supported women producing paintings in their own right. Teachers coming to work at the newly established school also influenced the course of art production. Yirrkala became one of the first communities to address the growing market for small barks and carvings created by women artists (Hutcherson, G, 1998, pp.1-6).

Mr. Ron Croxford, the first headmaster of the Yirrkala School from 1958 to 1964, was a guest of honour at the 2013 Garma Festival. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview Mr Croxford who spoke of the great respect he had for the Yolngu and his resolve during his time there, to assist them in maintaining their culture (Croxford, R, 2013). Croxford had introduced a program of Yolngu art and craft at the school and had approached some of the senior men to ask if they would be interested in coming to the school to teach the boys carving. They agreed immediately and two of the senior men, Mawalan and Mutitjupu, began to teach carving and then bark painting. Croxford explained that at this stage, the girls at the school were also painting but only in the Western style with water paints. He had noted that although they were good artists, their works lacked the quality of those produced by the boys who were being instructed by the senior men. Believing that the girls would also benefit from knowledge of traditional art techniques, Croxford again approached the men to ask if they would also consider teaching the girls to paint. On this occasion the reaction was not so positive. The men went off to consider his proposal and months passed before they approached Croxford and asked him to come and talk to them. Croxford well remembered that meeting late in 1958, in the shade of the Mission church:
They asked me: “Nhe marrngi — you understand what you have asked us wawa?” I couldn’t show that I had forgotten. I said: “Yow, manymak, yes, I understand.” They said: “Yes … well, old Mawalan can teach.” I said: “Manymak. That is very good.” They had taken six months to make the decision to teach the girls. That was very important as I look back on it now, as it was a complete break with culture. (Croxford, R, 2013)

Croxford described the early work produced by the students as very childlike, but Mawalan was a great teacher and the students were enthusiastic learners. Croxford was eager to stress that he had no other direct involvement — this was their project and they ran it entirely. He was not aware of what was being taught other than noting the improvement in the quality of the artwork. Two of the boys went on to win a children’s international painting competition and many of Mawalan’s students went on to become acclaimed artists (Croxford, R, 2013). Croxford’s version of events are confirmed by Mawalan’s biographical record at the Mulka Centre at Yirrkala (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 2013), and in the details of a notice in an issue of the community newsletter Yuṯana Dhäwu. It announced that Mutitjupu Mununggurr (1932–1993) was the first bark painter to win the overall Best Painting prize at the 1990 Telstra Art Awards. The article provided further detail of Mutitjupu’s background and involvement in teaching:

Mutitjupu’s father was Wonggu, but at about seven he moved to Yirrkala and was brought up by another famous artist, Mawalan Marika. Later Wonggu moved to Yirrkala and it was these two great men who taught Mutitjupu how to paint and carve. In 1958, Mutitjupu, together with Mawalan, would teach the young boys bark painting and carving every Monday at the school at Yirrkala. Older women such as Roy Marika’s sister taught young girls such as Gulumbu, Mutitjupu’s wife, weaving, dilly bags and mats. (Literature Production Centre, 1990)

The Gulumbu referred to was Gulumbu Yunupingu who was to go on to become one of the most important and prolific artists working out of the Yirrkala Art Centre until her death in 2012. Gulumbu produced works in bark, larritji and print; won major art awards; and was represented in national and international exhibitions. She was one of eight Australian Aboriginal artists invited to provide artwork to be integrated into the structure of the Musée de Quay Branly which opened in Paris in 2006.25 Her

contribution featured *gan’yu ga garak* - stars and the universe (Figures 1.11 & 1.12), motifs which Gulumbu used to represent everyone living in the universe - people of every tribe and every colour- and to express her wish that people of the world could learn to live in peace and harmony with understanding and unity between people and cultures.

We all must work together — and the stars show us that we are all the same underneath. We can all look at these stars whichever sky we are looking at. (Gulumbu Yunupingu in Print Space, 2013)

In her screenprint (Figure 1.11) entitled *Wänga, Ngaraka Garak* (Homeland and the Universe), Gulumbu has depicted people in a shelter asleep or sitting around their fires, watching the stars above. She uses the colour red to symbolise the struggles her people endured to retain their homelands: ‘The red colour in the background is of those whose blood has spilled onto this land. This they call *Gulang wanga*. The stars above are a peaceful place where no blood has been spilt. Infinity connected to us all’ (Print Space, 2013). Gulumbu used her work to promote ‘both ways’ learning and to educate others about the relevance of country to her people and their unity with the universe.

opening of the new building at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Amongst her other achievements Gulumbu translated the Bible into her Gumatj language and set up a traditional healing centre to share knowledge about Yolngu healing practices

26 Refer to Addendum: Print Techniques, for description of the various printing techniques referred to in this dissertation
Fathers passing on knowledge to daughters

From 1964 to 1966, Keith Thiele assumed the role of art production coordinator and buyer for the Yirrkala mission store. He selected works that he knew would be in demand, which up till that time had been the barks created by the older men. In response to an increasing market for works by women, Thiele actively encouraged women to paint and when production was exceeding demand, he actively sought out new buyers (Williams, N M, 1976, p.275). At times he found it necessary to restrict production by compiling a list of favoured artists who produced the better quality items. ‘The list included two women, one of whom was a daughter of Mawalan. Mawalan, encouraged by Tuffin, taught his daughters to paint around 1955, thus making them the first women to practice art previously restricted to men’ (Williams, N M, 1976, footnote 4, p.275). Mawalan’s daughters, Dhuwarrwarr and Banduk were later to be amongst the first Yirrkala women to become involved in printmaking at Yirrkala.

With the establishment, in the late 1960s, of the mining township of Nhulunbuy just twenty kilometres away, the Yolngu living at Yirrkala were witnessing the negative affect of alcohol, predominantly on the male members of their families. Fearing a breakdown of their social structure, many of the senior men began to teach the female members of their families to paint to ensure that knowledge of their culture would be passed on to future generations. Gulumbu Yunupingu (1945–2012) watched her father Munggurrawuy Yunupingu paint and learnt their clan stories from him. Mawalan had already started to teach his daughters, Baynggal (c1940) and Dhuwarrwarr (b1946), how to paint their clan stories while his youngest daughter, Banduk (b1954), would help mix his ochres. When interviewed at her home at Yirrkala, Dhuwarrwarr Marika recollected being taught by her father Mawalan:

I learnt to paint here at home with my father Mawalan and brother, Wandjuk. When I was a child I used to watch my dad and brother doing all the art. They used to tell me a story and that I had to paint what was told to me - only Rirratjingu painting. My father used to do the art only on bark painting, but my father and brother they started on paper work – the crayon thing they did it on paper. They did those in this Church here, but before that they did crayon paintings. That's what my father did - Berndt ones. They taught me, my brother and my father taught me, back before in the 50s and 60s. They used to paint the images and the cross hatching,
they used to tell me what it means — belongs to the Rirratjingu painting. I watched till I was about twelve and then started to do my own when I got older.... that’s where I became an artist... I wouldn’t have done it on my own. My father and brother taught me to carry on that artwork for our children and for our grandchildren to pass onto. My art is important to me - for my life, my spiritual belief and for my children. (Marika, D, 2011)

Narritjin Maymuru was another senior artist who broke with tradition and started to teach the women in his family to paint. Like Mawalan he had created drawings for Berndt in 1947, and in 1963 was an instigator for the Church Panels and involved in the production of the Bark Petitions. He continued to show initiative in using art to address the changes being wrought by the presence of the white man. Narritjin was one of the first artists to try and market his own art. In the early 1970s, before the establishment of the mission art and craft store, he had opened a ‘shop’ at the front of his house from where his family sold paintings and craft. In 1976, when issues at the Mission shop caused trading to be temporarily suspended, he took his artwork out to the airport to take advantage of the visiting tourist trade (Morphy, H, 1991, pp.10-13, 30-36). Narritjin looked to other introduced art forms to inform the outside world about his culture. During the 1970s he worked with the film maker Ian Dunlop in creating a series of seminal documentaries about Yolngu painting and ceremony (Dunlop, I, 1971-1974). His status and creativity was recognised even more widely when, in 1978, he became the first remote Indigenous artist offered an H C Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University. It was here at the Canberra School of Art, that Narritjin became one of the first Yirrkala artists to cautiously explore the medium of printmaking.

Narritjin taught his daughter Galuma Maymuru (b1951), (Figure 1.13, p.71) and his brother Nanyin’s daughter, Naminapu (b1952): ‘My father, Narritjin Maymuru taught me to paint. I would sit with him and watch him do his work. I started do work at about 13 years. I helped him do his barks’ (Maymuru White, N, 2012). Galuma’s description of her personal experience reflects that recounted by the other women:

This is what I really learnt from my father. First when I was still in school at Yirrkala he used to let me sit next to him, me and my brothers and he used to show us all the paintings from Wayawu and Djarrakpi. And he’d say this is our paintings and I’m telling you this about the paintings for in the future when I’m passed away you can use them. (Print Space, 2012b)
These women have all become renowned artists in their own right and have all been actively involved in advancing the use of printmaking at Yirrkala. They have in turn passed on their knowledge and artistic skills to their own daughters and sons, many of whom have also become established artists. The influence these pioneering women have had on print production at Yirrkala, their print output and that of those to whom they have passed the knowledge, is explored in the following chapters of this dissertation.

**From Yirrkala Mission to Yirrkala Community**

In 1972 Yirrkala ceased to be a mission and the Yirrkala Dhanbul Community Association, comprised of representatives of the thirteen main clan groups in the area, was incorporated under the Northern Territory Association Incorporation Act. By the early 1970s, with mining activity impinging on their sacred clan lands and with the Government of the day having adopted a policy of self-determination, many families chose to move back to their clan land in order to protect it by showing that the land

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27 In 2008 Yirrkala became part of the East Arnhem Shire and the Council took over local government. Fourteen (14) Shire Council members represent six wards, with three elected members from Yirrkala representing the Gumurr Miwatj Ward. The Shire headquarters are in Nhulunbuy with a service delivery centre in Yirrkala. The Shire consults community members through the Local Board of 12 locally elected community members, the Yirrkala Mala Leaders Association. Yirrkala also has representation on the Northern Land Council which deals with matters relating to the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 (East Arnhem Shire Council, 2012).
was occupied. There were those who also wanted to distance their families from the impact of the mine and the developing township of Nhulunbuy. Those living in the homelands lived a relatively isolated existence from Western society and were able to practice many aspects of their traditional cultural lifestyle. In their view this reconnecting with country was also a way of re-establishing their contact with the power of their Spirit Ancestors. The Aboriginal Homelands movement in Northeast Arnhem Land and Central Australia ‘represents one of the most significant Aboriginal initiatives since the first white settlement’ (Isaacs, J, 1977, p.6), demonstrating the determination of the Aboriginal people to assert their right to exist and maintain their own culture on their own land. The homelands were socially functional with the people ‘living on or near their own country, and for Yolngu this is a potent source of wellbeing, both spiritual and social’ (Morphy, F, 2010, p.8).

Art production became an important source of income for many living in the homelands, providing an alternative to social security as it did for many who remained living at Yirrkala. The proximity to their sacred sites and the power of the Ancestors was recognised as a stimulus for the production of their traditional art and craft, the sale of which ensured their economic survival (Isaacs, J, 1977, p.9). The significance of art and craft production was acknowledged by Howard Morphy in a report written for the Australia Council in 1975, which stated: ‘At present the outstations offer no paid employment opportunities other than craft production. As the people wish to develop industries over which they have as much control as possible, craft is clearly the best industry to begin with’ (Morphy, H, 1975, p.3). The report concluded that as the market for craft objects being sold for the tourist market was more vibrant that that for the higher quality traditional painting sought by collectors, there was the risk that the locals would resort to producing more of the souvenir art. Morphy proposed that it was of ‘fundamental importance’ that the Australia Council, through its Aboriginal Arts Board, support the Yirrkala mission by endorsing the production of high quality art to ensure a sustainable market. He further recommended support for the training of the

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28 The homelands surrounding Yirrkala are serviced by the Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation (LHAC). The number of homelands varies as some of the smaller ones are only inhabited in the dry season. The larger permanently inhabited ones, of which there are over thirty, range in populations from 20 to over 100 people. The population of Yirrkala also fluctuates seasonally — rising in the wet season from around 900 to over one thousand when people come in from the homelands (East Arnhem Shire Council, 2012, Morphy, F, 2010).
local people in marketing to enable them to ultimately control all aspects of their industry. The Australia Council went on to develop the concept of art centres to facilitate this function. Wandjuk Marika, who was a founding member of the Australia Council and a member of the Aboriginal Arts Board from 1973 (Chairman from 1975 to 1979), was a staunch supporter of this initiative. He appreciated how beneficial such an enterprise would be, not only to his people but to all Aboriginal peoples living in their remote communities (Marika, W, 1995, p.119). Art centres came to play vital roles in art production, the economy, and social life of many remote communities.

**Conclusion**

This chapter established that following colonisation, the Yolngu of Arnhem Land made adjustments to their art practice to accommodate the changing circumstances of their lifestyle. They chose to share their culture and art with outsiders in order to educate, to affirm their connection to country and to sustain their identity and culture. Artists displayed innovation in the manner in which they adopted and adapted introduced materials and techniques to create artwork for cultural, didactic, political and economic purposes.

The following chapter describes the realisation of the Government concept of remote area art centres in the 1970s and then focuses on the establishment of the art centre at the remote Arnhem Land community of Yirrkala. The Art Centre established at Yirrkala in 1976 took on the duties of the mission store and, has evolved to become one of the most successful in fulfilling the intended objectives of an art centre as set out by the Australia Council. Considering printmaking reliant on specialised materials and equipment, this art form would not have been a viable option for the artists at Yirrkala without the existence of the Art Centre and ultimately the support of the Australia Council. The following chapter explores the manner in which the Yirrkala community supported and was actively involved in the establishment of a community art centre and the positive influence the Yirrkala Art Centre has had on art production and the community as a whole. The proactive role played by local women in the acceptance and sustainability of the Print Space at the Yirrkala Art Centre is also explored.
2. Yirrkala Art Centre

Considering the relevance of the art centre program to remote communities, this chapter begins with a précis of the implementation of this initiative by the Australia Council throughout the 1970s. This is followed by a review of the evolution of the Mission-run art and craft shop at Yirrkala into an Aboriginal-owned and run Art Centre that has expanded the range of services and facilities it offers and is today acknowledged worldwide for the production of innovative contemporary fine art.

This chapter proposes that the Art Centre at Yirrkala has fulfilled the original objectives of a community art centre and supports this assertion by exploring the impact it has had on the community and the artists of the region. It demonstrates the manner in which the people of Yirrkala were proactively involved in the inception of their local Art Centre and worked collaboratively with non-Indigenous management in the production and promotion of quality art to ensure the sustainability of the Art Centre, their art and their culture. Further initiative was shown by the artists and the Art Centre management in supporting the introduced medium of printmaking as an alternate source of income and a conduit for individual creativity.

The diversification of the output of the Yirrkala Art Centre following the introduction of printmaking is described, with consideration given to the influence of artistic collaborations with non-Indigenous artists and printmakers and the role played by the local women. The contribution of non-Indigenous management to the ongoing success of the Art Centre is assessed considering the often intimated appraisal that art centres would fail to thrive if not for the presence of and expertise provided by non-Indigenous administrators.

The Australia Council

In 1971 HC “Nugget” Coombs, retired public servant and activist for the rights of Indigenous Australians, lobbied Prime Minister Holt to create a public funding body for

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29 H C “Nugget” Coombs, acknowledged as one of Australia’s most influential arts administrators, was an economist and prominent public servant. After his time as inaugural Chairman of the Reserve Bank of Australia, he retired from public service in 1968 and concentrated on his interest in the arts and his
the arts. The Australian Council for the Arts was created with Coombs appointed its first Chair. At the same time, in recognition of the role that traditional art and craft could play in the promotion of Aboriginal culture and in the economic development of Aboriginal communities, the Federal Government, through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, set up a non-profit company. The objective of the Aboriginal Arts & Crafts Pty Ltd was to assist with the production, distribution and marketing of Aboriginal art of a high standard, in order to preserve traditional skills and culture (Isaacs, J, 1977, p.23, Peterson in Loveday, P and Cooke, P, 1983, pp.60-65).

Under the Whitlam Government, in 1972, the Australia Council for the Arts became The Australia Council. Coombs continued on for a year as its Chair, overseeing the Council’s expansion to include dedicated Boards comprised of practitioners of the various art forms (McGuigan, C, 2012).

The Aboriginal Arts Board

The Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB) was set up in 1973 in recognition of the need for economic support to assist in the revival and survival of artistic traditions of the Aboriginal people of Australia. It replaced the Aboriginal Arts Advisory Council which had operated since 1970, and took over the responsibility for the preservation and development of Aboriginal art.

The Government-appointed members of the AAB were all Indigenous — the first time in a bureaucratic setting that Aboriginal people had power over funding and decision making. Dick Roughsey, the founding Chairman of the Board (1973-1976), declared: ‘Of prime concern to the Board is the urgent task of making it possible for traditional Aboriginal communities to use their artist skills as a means of surviving culturally and economically’ (Roughsey, D, 1976, p.62). The first meeting of the Board was held in Canberra in May 1973 at a National Seminar on Aboriginal Arts. The resolutions formulated at this seminar formed the basis of the Aboriginal Arts Board policies and programs. Underpinning the programs that emerged from the AAB was the concept of Government-subsidised community art centres supporting remote artists within a communal setting rather than providing individual grants to artists. The objective was passionate activism for the rights of Aboriginal Australians. On his retirement from the Arts Council he became an advisor on Aboriginal affairs to the Whitlam Government.
for the AAB to provide resources for the production, promotion and marketing of art by supporting the purchase of equipment and facilitating access to training workshops to encourage the practice of contemporary, non-traditional art skills (Roughsey, D, 1976, p.40). This aim was realised at Yirrkala with the establishment of a dedicated Print Space in 1995.

Remote Community Art Centres

In developing their model for an art centre, the Government considered the manner in which a particular system of resourcing outstations was being implemented at Maningrida in central Arnhem Land (McGuigan, C, 2012). In the early 1970s Peter Cooke and Dan Gillespie operated the Maningrida Outstation Resource Centre, visiting the outstations to deliver food supplies and child endowment and pension cheques. While there they would purchase art and craft for the Maningrida craft shop where the artwork was documented, orders from retailers down south were filled, and sales made to visiting art buyers (Cooke, P, 2016). Chris McGuigan, an advisor to the AAB, visited Maningrida to observe how they functioned and report back to the AAB. The Board recognised that employing personnel with the requisite expertise to organise production and to manage the marketing of the artworks was a good model for ensuring the self-sufficiency of remote artists. The non-Aboriginal administrative staff of the AAB travelled to remote communities to explain the purpose of the AAB and discuss how an art centre could assist the artists and their community in preserving their art and culture. McGuigan had observed that when bureaucrats visited communities the locals were often reluctant to meet with them, but — indicative of the relevance of art in their society — at the mention of art and culture the local people were always interested and keen to talk.

30 In 1976 three non-Indigenous men, Dan Gillespie, Peter Cooke and David Bond, assisted by a number of local men arranged the supplies for the outstations. Gillespie and Cooke had lived in the region for some years and were strong advocates for land rights, the outstations movement and Aboriginal self-determination (Altman, J, 2008). Gillespie, had been a teacher at Maningrida from the early 1970s, and during that time took over the management of the art and craft production. By the late 1970s, under Peter Cooke’s stewardship the art and craft shop had evolved into the Maningrida Art centre, which employed local artists, Charles Godjuwa, Johnny BulunBulun, George Garrawan and later Peter Bandjurldjurl to work with the art co-ordinator (Cooke, P, 2016).

31 McGuigan had a public service background having worked for the Dept of Aboriginal Affairs where he managed the funding for arts and culture program from 1972.
McGuigan spent the following ten years establishing art centres in remote communities across central and northern Australia. The Aboriginal Art Board acted as a resource agency providing support and funding and often managing the budgets of the art centres. The art centre model proved effective in creating a base through which remote artists could work. This has been the case at the Yirrkala Art Centre, with many of those Yolngu living in the homelands around Yirrkala relying on it for managing the sale of their artwork. The introduction of printmaking, with its reliance on specialised equipment and materials, made access to the facilities and workshops provided by the Art Centre, particularly relevant.

The Australia Council provided funding for remote community art advisors and for field officers to visit the homeland areas to source artwork. In order to encourage the production of quality items, a policy was instituted that the AAB only purchase the finer artworks. Initially sales were poor with the Australian audiences expressing an indifferent attitude to Aboriginal art. This resulted in the Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd. accumulating an extensive collection, much of which was later donated to major museums and galleries, including the National Gallery of Australia and the Australian Museum in Sydney (McGuigan, C, 2012, Morphy, H, 1975). Throughout the 1970s, the AAB set out to raise the profile of Australian Aboriginal art through a program of national and international art exhibitions (Berrell, N, 2009).

From Mission Store to Yirrkala Art and Craft Centre

Rirratjingu clan elder and artist Wandjuk Marika was recognised as a great spokesman for his people and for Aboriginal culture in general.\(^\text{32}\) The whole time he was on the AAB, from its inception till his death in 1987, Wandjuk petitioned for support for the artists at Yirrkala. During the period that the Methodist Mission was at Yirrkala, it

\(^{32}\) Wandjuk Marika was at the forefront in the fight for copyright protection of Aboriginal art which he initiated at a meeting of the Australia Council for the Arts in 1974. Following an exhibition of his artwork, Wandjuk was made aware of the unauthorised reproductions of his clan designs on tea-towels and other merchandise created for the tourist market (Johnson, V, 1996). ‘Often those of us who have sold pictures, or are the owners of particular stories, are saddened when we see that some unauthorized person has made an imitation painting to depict our private property, the legends of our people. This happened to me, when I discovered one of my stories represented in a design on a tea-towel. I was so hurt by this insult that I could not paint for four years. I felt that part of my spirit had been drained from me, and I kept wondering what my father would have felt had he seen the way in which our stories had been stolen from us’ (Marika, W, 1976,p.66).
managed the local store, which was also the main purchaser of art and craft. The Yolngu were concerned that those working at the store and the visiting collectors who lacked understanding of the inherent meanings of the artworks, would fail to treat the works in a respectful manner. But, as they were reliant on the Mission for sales, the Yolngu were reluctant to complain. According to McGuigan, the store manager paid the artists on size with little consideration given to the quality of the barks and carvings produced. The artwork was all kept ‘in a pile in a corner at the back of the store until organised to be sold, usually at Church sales or from a Mission stall at the Adelaide show — treated as tourist craft rather than works of art’ (McGuigan, C, 2012).

While on an anthropological field trip to Yirrkala in 1973, Howard Morphy was made aware of Wandjuk’s concerns. Morphy contacted Bob Edwards, the director of the Aboriginal Arts Board, with a proposal that the Board underwrite the purchase of art to be sold at an exhibition in Canberra. With the assistance of Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd, Morphy curated an exhibition at the Australian National University in Canberra. The exhibition was a great success, with all works sold, enabling a substantial return to the artists at Yirrkala (Morphy, H, 2009b p.113).

In 1975, at the suggestion of Bob Edwards, Morphy wrote a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, based on the experience of his anthropological research field work at Yirrkala. The recommendations Morphy made regarding the assistance the AAB could provide in the production and marketing of art, although specific to the Yirrkala situation, was applicable to other remote communities. He identified the particular issues affecting the marketing of local art through the Mission store and made suggestions as to how the AAB could assist in ensuring appropriate financial reward, so that quality art continued to be produced.

Yirrkala art can be divided for marketing purposes into two categories, souvenir art which is a recent innovation and collectors’ art or fine art, which is basically traditional in character. It is vital, for the future of all art and craft production at Yirrkala, that the fine artists get the optimum return for their labour. If they do not, then there will be no incentive for people to continue producing traditional art of quality and no incentive for young men to go through the arduous process of training to be artists. Although as I have suggested, the two categories of art cater for different markets, experience from other parts of the world suggests that the cessation of production of high quality traditional art will lead to a deterioration in the quality of souvenir art. It is of fundamental importance
that the Aboriginal Arts Board and the mission co-operate together and with the people of Yirrkala to ensure that this process does not occur in Arnhem Land. (Morphy, H, 1975, p.12-13)

Morphy’s submission had distinguished between the variety of artwork being produced and the range of markets they were addressing, from high end fine art produced by the more recognised artists for sale to galleries, museums and collectors, through to ‘tourist art’ (Morphy, H, 1975). He recommended the intervention of the AAB to ensure the continued production of quality items.

McGuigan went to Yirrkala with Wandjuk to meet with the main administrative body for the community, the Yirrkala Dhanbul Council. Discussion took place about what could be done to assist the artists and improve the processing of the works. McGuigan recommended the art centre model, explaining that although the AAB did not provide funds for working capital, it provided advice and funding for administrative costs. The Council approved a proposal to allocate funds for working capital and requested that McGuigan assist in drafting an application to the AAB for a grant to establish an art centre. When the notion of an art centre was first introduced to the members of the Yirrkala community they embraced the proposal and became actively involved in its development. As he was about to leave Yirrkala, McGuigan was approached by Roy Marika,33 Rirratjingu clan spokesman and a member of the Dhanbul Council, who told him that what he was doing was a good thing and would McGuigan consider taking on the art centre management job.

McGuigan persuaded the Australia Council that there was much business to be done in the North and that if relocated to Yirrkala, he could continue his work there while overseeing the establishment of the Yirrkala Art Centre. A grant was organised and McGuigan returned to Yirrkala at the end of 1975. He arrived to find that in its enthusiasm to get the art centre established, the Dhanbul Council had decided to use

33 Dadaynga (Roy) Marika (1931–1993) was the youngest surviving brother of Mawalan, a highly regarded leader of the Rirratjingu clan. Dadaynga gave testimony to the select committee inquiring into the grievances of the Yirrkala people when they learned that the Commonwealth government was in negotiation with a mining company wanting to mine their land. He was a signatory to the Bark Petition which asked the federal government to consult with the Yolngu people over their traditional lands before it leased them to mining companies. Later Dadaynga took a key role in negotiating with Nabalco over the mining of bauxite on Yolngu land. He formed a strong relationship with Nugget Coombs of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs. He was awarded an OBE in 1971 for services to his people (National Museum of Australia, 2008).
the old clinic site and had already arranged for basic maintenance and painting of the building to be carried out by the locals. This action, coinciding with the withdrawal of the Methodist Overseas Mission and the Land Rights and Homeland Movements, was recognised as an act of self-determination by the Yirrkala community (Yirrkala Art, 2012).

In 1976 the Yolngu artists established ‘Buku-Larrnggay Arts’ in the old Mission health centre (Figure 2.1). This now Yolngu-run facility came under the auspices of the remote area art centre program supported by the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council. (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 2013). At that time there were no maintained roads to the remote homelands, only dirt tracks, so at least once a week McGuigan and a staff member flew out in small chartered aircraft to purchase the art and craft. A collection was gradually built up and items were either passed on to commercial galleries or to organised exhibitions. The market was small but there were also a few collectors who made sporadic visits to the community to buy the artwork. McGuigan described this as a type of patronage system, where some gallery owners and private collectors from down south would buy from a particular artist who consequently came to rely on them for commissions and sales. After having worked for fifteen years with the first
generation of artists, Dorothy Bennett continued to visit as a field officer for the Aboriginal arts advisory committee. Between 1973 and 1986 she collected and sold artwork for Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd, and is recognised as one of the pioneers of the commercial art and craft enterprise in the Top End (Newstead, A, 2014 p.159).

The artists soon realised that relying on a couple of art dealers who might or might not visit did not provide for a reliable source of income. The Art Centre became a more attractive alternative and soon the senior men who were the main artists became more involved. They would visit regularly to look at the works, deliberating as to what was appropriate and how the artworks should be displayed. They also discussed what could be done to build more of a market in the nearby mining town of Nhulunbuy and educate its balanda (non-Yolngu) inhabitants. In the early days of the Mission store a decision had been made to not sell works through town outlets at the expense of the Yirrkala outlet and to ensure that the community maintained control over what was produced and how it was priced (Morphy, H, 1975, p.9-10). In 1976 the clan leaders agreed to hold an exhibition in the town to alert the locals to the quality of the art being created and available through the Art Centre. They rented the meeting room at the town hotel — The Walkabout — and the walls were hung with an impressive collection of large bark paintings. McGuigan described the occasion:

All the artists came and gave speeches in Yolngu matha. Not many locals turned up but that wasn’t the point — they [the Yolngu] were there saying: “Hey, this is who we are. This is our country. This is our statement to the world.” .... It was quite an event. (McGuigan, C, 2012)

This initiative, which they had taken in order to retain and strengthen their cultural identity and assert their autonomy proved effective in reviving interest in the Art Centre.

Following his recall to Sydney at the end of 1976, McGuigan continued his involvement with the Yirrkala Art Centre through recruitment of his replacement Michael O’Ferrall and the subsequent manager Stephen Fox34. In 1992, while Director of the Aboriginal Arts Management Association, McGuigan co-ordinated the ground-breaking exhibition

34 McGuigan later assisted in establishing a connection between communities and Redback Graphix for the printing of educational and political posters.
of Aboriginal prints, *New Tracks Old Land* (discussed further in Chapter 4, pp.153-155). The exhibition, which featured works by Yirrkala artists, toured nationally and internationally to great acclaim.

When asked to comment on the assertion that many arts advisors dictated what kind of art is produced, McGuigan acknowledged being aware of those who attempted to do so but during his involvement he had observed that it was ultimately the artists who controlled what they produced. In his opinion the majority of managers were focused on being facilitators and marketing the art works.

**The Yirrkala Art and Craft Centre**

The Art and Craft Centre at Yirrkala, established in 1975, took over the role of the Mission store in providing an outlet for the art and craft of Yolngu residing in Yirrkala and in the surrounding homelands where many chose to live following the establishment in the late 1960s of the bauxite mine and the township of Nhulunbuy. Yolngu carving, bark paintings, fibre mats and baskets were sold through the Art Centre. However, it has done more than promote and market local art and craft — it has evolved into a multi-media centre that is fulfilling the role of a cultural centre for the Yirrkala community. Perceived by the locals as ‘their’ centre, it plays a vital social and economic role in the community: it is an important source of training and employment; a meeting place and centre for other activities; an archive; and a museum for the display of historically important works and artefacts, including the Yirrkala Church Panels.

It is widely acknowledged that the success or otherwise of an art centre is to a great extent dependent on the aspirations and commitment of the art centre management, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, working with a committed group of local artists. My research has revealed that the success and sustainability of the Yirrkala Art Centre is a result of this and a combination of other factors, including the fact that the community has been actively involved since its inception and has maintained a sense of ownership and control of the Art Centre. The Art Centre also supports local artists, and facilitates the training of locals to fill administrative and operational roles. The history of committed management working with innovative and pro-active artists has
resulted in the diversification of output, from creation of traditional art and craft to working with introduced media and modern technology. In achieving these outcomes the Yirrkala Art Centre has set a new standard for the successful functioning and sustainability of a community art centre.

**Art and Craft Centre Reviews**

Various reviews have been carried out to determine the effectiveness of the different models of art centres in operation. *The Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Industry: Report of the Review Committee*[^35] (Altman, J, 1989), argued that the strong and rapid growth of the industry up to the mid-1980s provided economic and cultural reasons for ongoing Government support. The recommendations this review put forward for future strategies were supported by other reviews. In 2000, Felicity Wright and Frances Morphy carried out a survey for a project initiated by Desart Inc. In summarising the outcomes of the research, the ACCS (*The Art and Craft Centre Story*) (Wright, F and Morphy, F, 2000), refers to the success of the Aboriginal arts industry and the role played by art centres, concluding that:

> From the 1970s, these incorporated organisations have evolved as the most efficient and effective institutional arrangement for collecting and marketing (via wholesale and retail) the art works of Aboriginal producers. The crucial role played by art centres in mediating between Indigenous artists and the market is widely acknowledged and uncontested today. (Wright, F and Morphy, F, 2000, Vol 2, p.4)

Since the publication of these reports there have been mixed outcomes for the various art centres surveyed. Some have failed to thrive while others, including that at Yirrkala, have developed into major centres of art production and play a pivotal role within the community. The reasons for success or failure are multifactorial with quality of management, the commitment from local artists and community organisations and consistency of quality of their output being cited as the most relevant. Another significant factor for art centres achieving financial independence has been the proximity to accessible and popular tourist destinations (Altman, J, 1989).

[^35]: Referred to as *The Altman Review*: Jon Altman being the Chair of the Review Committee.
The accessibility of the Yirrkala Art Centre is assured by the presence of a nearby airport which, until recently, had been well serviced because of the bauxite mine and its associated infrastructure. There have been negative repercussions associated with the ‘mothballing’ of the bauxite processing plant in 2014. The decrease in the population of Nhulunbuy, and of ‘fly in fly out’ contractors, has already resulted in a reduction in the frequency of air services. The full impact of the closure of the plant, and associated decrease in population at Nhulunbuy, is yet to be determined. The Yirrkala Art Centre and the surrounding remote communities are a vital part of the tourist trade of this region and are being increasingly promoted as destinations for cultural and eco-tourism. It is anticipated that any negative impact will be countered by this increase in tourism, with an alternate source of regular clientele now being provided by the increasing frequency and popularity of cruise boats visiting the region.

**ANKAAA and Desart**

In March 1987, in another example of self-determination, sixteen of the Aboriginal owned and controlled community art and craft centres from Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia, collaborated to form a peak body with the aim of fostering the Aboriginal arts industry for the benefit of both the artists and their organisations. Originally known as The Association of Northern Central Australian Aboriginal Artists (ANCAAA), the prime objectives of the association included lobbying for government support and protecting Indigenous copyright. In 1992 it underwent a name change to ANKAAA, replacing ‘Central’ with ‘Kimberley’ when the central regions formed a separate Government-funded, not-for-profit Aboriginal Corporation, Desart (The Association of Central Australian Aboriginal Art and Craft Centres). At the time of this research Desart represented forty art centres, and ANKAAA forty-eight centres located in the Tiwi Islands, Darwin, Katherine, Kimberley, and Arnhem Land regions (ANKAAA, 2015). Such organisations have been recognised as playing a significant part in the success of art centres by acting as agents of change in response to community needs. According to Morphy, their effectiveness can be credited to the respect they show for community values and the fact that they work at the local level within the community to create social cohesion, while at a national level they provide a link to public and private sectors of the art market (Morphy, H, 2009a p.123). The 2012
ANKAAA Value Statement (Figure 2.2) reflects this commitment to supporting artists and community and sustaining culture and art, while promoting ‘two-way’ learning.

The Value Statement highlights the important role of art in keeping communities strong by passing on knowledge from the ancestors and teaching respect for country. ANKAAA perceives its role as a meeting place that facilitates interaction between the art centres, government and industry. It applies the concept of ‘two–way’ learning to
these interactions as well as to interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (ANKAAA, 2015). The current Chairman, renowned Yolngu bark painter and Maḏarrpa clan leader Djambawa Marawili, is a past Chairman and current member of the board of the Art Centre at Yirrkala.

The conclusions arrived at by the ACCS in relation to the proactive manner in which the successful art centres continued to operate are supported by Djambawa in the following statement:

The community Art Centre network across Australia is an outstanding example of contemporary Indigenous agency. Our inherited patterns and designs are our identity and also: a ‘talking stick’, title deed, weapon, and means of economic empowerment. (Marawili, D, 2014)

Djambawa acknowledges the vital role art centres play in facilitating skills development for the creation of business and job opportunities in communities and articulates the shared belief that the expression of their art is fundamental to maintaining and sustaining Aboriginal cultural identity.

Yirrkala Art Centre – An Example of Collaborative Agency

In general, since their inception, Government supported local art centres have proved effective in facilitating the production and marketing of art from remotely located communities throughout the Northern Territory. The positive outcomes that can result from a successful cross-cultural collaborative working experience between art coordinators and remote artists are demonstrated in the following overview of the evolution of the Art Centre at Yirrkala from its inception until the time of this research.

Michael O’Ferrall (1945–2013) was employed as art coordinator for the Yirrkala Art & Craft Centre in 1978, following the departure of Chris McGuigan. He came with a background in Asian and museum studies and experience in organising arts festivals. ‘His work there as community arts co-ordinator gave every opportunity to combine communication and commercially sound advice to Aboriginal artists keen to sell and exhibit locally and nationally’(Cornish, P, 2013). After leaving Yirrkala in 1979, O’Ferrall maintained a strong commitment to Yolngu art and Aboriginal art in general and continued to provide support to the community whenever he could. He was replaced
by Stephen Fox who had studied art and printmaking at the South Australian School of Art. Fox credits his interest in Aboriginal issues to a ‘life-changing’ external course in Aboriginal Studies run by Max Hart at the Torrens College of Advanced Education. In 1979, responding to a Government advertisement for remote Aboriginal community art-co-ordinators, Fox was interviewed by McGuigan and subsequently accepted the offer of a posting to Yirrkala (Fox, S, 2011c).

![Image](http://example.com/image.jpg)

**Fig. 2.3** Ralwurrandji Wanambi, Stephen Fox, Yilila Munungguritj at Kakadu following attendance at the opening of the Art at the Top Exhibition held in Darwin, 1982 (Image courtesy S Fox)

Fox took pride in the fact that he only ever employed local people during his time at the Yirrkala Art Centre. An employee whose contribution Fox described as ‘essential’ to the running of the Art Centre was Ralwurrandji Wanambi (1959–2013). Having attended the local school Ralwurrandji was proficient in English and maths and had done a typing course (Hutcherson, G, 1998). She worked for periods of time at both the community council office and at the school’s Literature Production Centre before commencing employment with Fox at the Art Centre in 1981:

...for the first five years she worked with me at the gallery. She did all the sales. On the buying trips she would handle all the money and paying. I would tell her what the prices were, she would write it in a book and pay everybody. She was someone I could really rely on. (Fox, S, 2011c)
Ralwurrandji travelled with Fox and artist Yilila Munungguritj, to Darwin for the Art at the Top exhibition and symposium in Darwin in 1982 (Figure 2.3, p.87). The event was instigated by the co-ordinators from seven of the Northern Territory Top End Art Centres and was presented by the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory with the objective of promoting the traditional art and craft of the Aborigines of Australia. One of the facilitators, Peter Cooke, made the following observation in his Introduction to the accompanying publication: ‘It is through their art that they speak most clearly today. The special relationship that Aborigines have with their land and the animals and spirit beings that inhabit it are expressed in contemporary Aboriginal art’ (Cooke in Cooke, P and Altman, J, 1982 p.5). His concluding comment, that in order to understand and appreciate Aboriginal art consideration should be given to what has affected its form and content, remains relevant to the art being produced today.

In his presentation Fox commented that, after three years working at Yirrkala, he had come to question whether he could recognise quality in a piece of Aboriginal art: as a white man he was unable to appreciate the art as would an Aboriginal person whose art rose from their ‘strong connection with, and belief in, a rich religious heritage’ (Fox, S, 1982, p.10). To illustrate how this deep association with the land is reflected in their art, he related an experience with a ‘great old Manggalili man’36:

One day this man placed three rocks (ochres) and some white clay (pigment) in front of me. The red rock, he said, was his blood, the yellow his fat, the black rock his skin and the white clay his bones. These colours made up his palette. (Fox, S, 1982, p.11)

Fox described the art being produced at the time as contemporary art with some of the works appearing as they did in the past, while others had a very new feel about them. He made the point that ‘Whatever their appearance, the work has a quality peculiar to itself – linked to a rich religious past which is now in the present’ (Fox, S, 1982).

Ralwurrandji stayed on at the Art Centre until 1984, choosing to leave at the same time as Fox. She returned to work with him again when he was recalled in 1990. Naminapu Maymuru White was another local who came to work in the art and craft shop during Fox’s time. Fox credited a strong family background in art to the efforts of

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36 Fox has since confirmed that he was referring to Narritjin Maymuru. (Fox, S, 2011a)
her uncle Narritjin in his commitment to teaching his extended family to paint. Although an infrequent visitor to the Art Centre, Narritjin became an important mentor to Fox, adopting him into his family and teaching him about his culture. Narritjin was active in promoting Yolngu culture to outsiders, wanting to share his work with balanda in the hope that with understanding they would come to respect his people, their culture and their art.

Having studied photography and printmaking at art school, Fox was keen to teach these techniques to the Yolngu. When he met Narritjin and the other senior leaders they made it clear to him how they perceived his role:

They told me I wasn’t there to teach them art — they knew how to paint — I was there to show them how to market it. (Fox, S, 2011b)

Fox acknowledged this as a major responsibility of the manager of an Art Centre but by gradually introducing the Yolngu artists to the medium of printmaking he was able to influence the diversification and development of art production.

Narritjin had already been exposed to printing techniques while on a creative arts fellowship at ANU in 1978. The series of etchings he created at the Canberra School of Art in collaboration with master printmaker Jörg Schmiesser are the earliest etchings produced by a Yolngu artist. (This experience is discussed in greater detail in the following Chapter). However, Narritjin was not particularly taken by the technique of printing and was not convinced that this was an appropriate medium for replicating traditional art. He was concerned that multiples would devalue the work, and that the mechanical nature of reproduction was taking the creation away from the hand of the artist. Narritjin chose not to explore the process further and did not promote the process at the Art Centre (Morphy, H, 2012).

Yilila Mununggurritj

The first on-site experience of printing on paper at the Yirrkala Art Centre came about in the early 1980s when Fox observed the intricate detail in the day to day carvings being brought in by a young woman called Yilila Mununggurritj. While other women were collecting pandanus and making mats Yilila would come in with what Fox
described as: ‘amazing pictographs — picture-stories carved and painted on yidaki. It was still tourist art, as that was the mainstay of the Art Centre in those days when people weren’t into buying big money things’ (Fox, S, 2011c). In recognition of her skill, Fox was paying Yilila more than the others for her work, and started teaching her printmaking techniques. The lack of printing equipment and the limited materials available at the Art Centre at that time restricted what he was able teach.

Yilila and a friend would regularly present at the Art Centre on a Saturday and work in the back room carving woodblocks. Fox taught them to carve on a soft Indonesian wood, Jelutong,\footnote{Jelutong, Dyera costulata: the heartwood is creamy white to straw coloured. The fine, straight and even grain makes it easy to work with.} which he had purchased from a timber yard in Adelaide. It held together well and did not crumble when cut with the single-edged razor blades with which they were accustomed to carving their wooden artefacts. The blocks were printed by hand using a Japanese baren to rub the back of the paper — a technique in which Yilila became proficient (Fox, S, 2011b). (See Addendum: Print Techniques.)

According to Fox Yilila needed little instruction in technique as she had an instinct for precise drawing and cutting. The subject matter of the majority of her prints was secular with cross-hatched backgrounds. Yilila created images relating to the land and her culture, depicting scenes of local life, hunting, animals, fish, birds and spirit figures (Figures 2.4, 2.5, p.91). The small, rectangular woodblocks were printed by the Literature Production Centre at the Yirrkala Central School and sold as greeting cards through the Art Centre. In 1982 Fox decided to print a selection in a limited edition of twenty, and sent them south to sell through Hogarth and Coo-ee Galleries in Sydney. Museum Victoria purchased a selection and featured them in an exhibition, *Women’s Work: Aboriginal Women’s Artefacts in the Museum of Victoria* (Wrench, R, 1992, p.69).

Prints were also purchased by Flinders University Art Museum at the initiative of Professor Vincent Megaw. From the early 1980s the University had begun to actively acquire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art to augment teaching and research. Although Yilila was now producing collectable art, Fox regretted that she did not at the time achieve the recognition or the accompanying status of an artist. Yilila went on to
run workshops at the Yirrkala School, teaching the children the technique of the Japanese baren, until she left the community to reside in Darwin.

Fig. 2.4 Yilila Mununggurrij. Wayin ga mokuy carving, 1982
Woodblock, 285x65mm
(Courtesy Yirrkala Art Centre. Photographer D Salvestro)

Fig. 2.5 Yilila Mununggurrij. Wayin ga mokuy, woodblock print, 1982
Image, 285x65mm (Courtesy Museum Victoria, Melbourne, Item X86241. Photographer D Salvestro)

The sense of ownership felt by the locals since the inception of the Art Centre is evidenced by the regular news items that appeared in the monthly community newsletter, Yuṯana Dhäwu, (loosely translated as Today’s News), published by the Literature Production Centre from the 1970s. During his time as the manager, Stephen Fox frequently posted comments and provided updates on the activities at the Art Centre. The following notice and invitation that appeared in the May 1983 edition of Yuṯana Dhäwu in both Yolngu matha and English was indicative of the degree of community involvement encouraged by the Art Centre:

**YUŤA YĂKU ARTS & CRAFTS-GU**

For a long time now we have been thinking of a new name for the craft centre. This is because some artists were unhappy at their paintings having YIRRKALA ART tickets on them which confuses Europeans buying the paintings who think that all the ART belongs to Yirrkala. We are putting a new name to the Council to consider. This name was suggested by Gawirrin No.1. The new name is as follows: BUKU-LARRNGGAY ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTRE. Anyone who has any ideas on this, please come and see the craft shop staff. (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 1983)
The new name, *Buku-Larrnggay*, translates as ‘the feeling on your face as it is struck by the first rays of the sun, i.e. Facing East’ (Yirrkala Art, 2012). This refers to the location of the Art Centre and the people it represents from the *Miwatj* region (the area of land east of Milingimbi). The intention was to identify the Art Centre as representing and being a gathering place (a *ringgitj*) for all those Yolngu living in that part of Arnhem Land.

Reproduced in the May 1983 edition of *Yutana Dhawu* was a copy of a newspaper article, *Prolific Art from Australia* (Figure 2.6). It outlined the progress of the Art Centre and current activities, making reference to the planned diversification into printmaking (Ormiston, M, 1983).

![Image of newspaper article](image-url)
The two artists featured were Yilila, and Djambawa Marawili who would become, in 1992, one of the first male artists to produce a print at the Art Centre and the first artist to incorporate sacred *miny’tji* in a screen-print. (The issues surrounding this are discussed in Chapters 3, 6 and 10). The article celebrates the fact that Yirrkala Art and Craft was achieving widespread recognition and had become a financially viable entity. After only seven years in operation, the Art Centre had become self-funding apart from an Australia Council grant that supported the position of Art Centre Manager (Blake, A and Blake, D, 2013).

Fox left the centre in 1984 and was replaced as art advisor by Julie House who remained from 1985 to 1988. On her return to Yirrkala following the death of her brother Wandjuk in 1987, Banduk Marika was offered the position of Manager of the Museum and Craft Centre. During her time away she had started printmaking, was exhibiting her work and had received invitations to participate in residencies at several universities. (Details of these residencies are described in Chapter 3). Banduk had also gained experience in curating having worked on exhibitions in Sydney with her mentor Jennifer Isaacs. In 1985 she and Isaacs had formed a company, *Miyalko*, (*derived from* *miyalk*, the Yolngu word for women) that assisted remote Aboriginal artists by exhibiting their traditional and contemporary works in Sydney.

According to an interview conducted by her husband Mark Alderton in 1990, when she took over the management in 1988 Banduk had the idea of expanding the training and the role of the local employees at the Art Centre. She explained that she had resigned from her position in frustration at not being able to get her ideas of reform into practice:

> When I arrived I saw that the Craft Shop needed to develop. A disintegration process was underway, the place was bankrupt and less work was being created. The Aboriginal staff were not being trained towards self-management and were not keen to take responsibilities. When I took over I wanted the staff of the Craft Shop to be more business-like and to be responsible to the artists, to their culture and to the public. ... In the end the Yirrkala Dhanbul Council and even the artists didn’t recognise the need for them to invest in the long-term value to the culture of such an ambitious project. This realisation destabilised and frustrated me and for the moment I have separated myself from the project. (Marika, B and Alderton, M, 1990)
On leaving the Art Centre Banduk became more engrossed in the environmental issues affecting her community. She turned to the issue of protection of their land and took up the environment campaign that her brother’s death had prevented him from pursuing. While working at the Art Centre she had considered a project that involved compiling a list of the native plants associated with art, weaving and dying, and creating a garden in front of the craft shop with information panels that would inform visitors of the plants’ association with the local art and craft (Hutcherson, G, 1998, pp.75-77). Along with her environmental work Banduk continued to produce prints which, at that particular time, she chose to have editioned off-site. The subject matter reflected her interest in the local environment and its relevance to her people.

With the Art Centre experiencing financial difficulties an interim administrator, Harvey Creswell, was appointed for a few months until Fox was recalled in 1990 to help resurrect the struggling enterprise. Fox returned to find that there was ‘stuff everywhere and no money in the bank’ as people had been paid in advance for artwork. ‘I told them that wouldn’t happen anymore — People get paid when the art comes in. No-one gets cash advances. You can’t run a business like that. They said that was fine...’ (Fox, S, 2011c). Fox was delighted when Ralwurrandji returned to assist him in re-establishing the Art Centre. They now had to contend with competition from a new art and craft centre, Nambarra, which had recently been opened by Yirrkala Business Enterprises (YBE) on the other side of Nhulunbuy. However Fox and Ralwurrandji were able to restore a working relationship with the artists in the homelands and soon ‘Buku-Larrnggay just resurfaced and off it went’ (Fox, S, 2011b).

In 1990, funding from a Government Bicentenary Grant saw the opening of an extension to the Art Centre to accommodate a museum. Along with a special annex for the 1963 Church Panels, the museum was to house a collection of important barks by past clan leaders and artists from the 1960s and 1970s, and items marking other

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38 Other projects eventuated including various local Yirrkala Landcare projects with Banduk, in 1992, being appointed vice-chair of the newly-established Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation which trains Yolngu rangers. A book on the plant species of North East Arnhem land was published: Rirratjingu Ethnobotany: Aboriginal plant use from Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, Australia /Banygul Yunupingu ... [et al.] Pub: Darwin: Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory, 1995. The Marika sisters give the Rirratjingu description of local plants and their uses with Dr. Glen Wightman from the Northern Territory Conservation Commission providing the English translation.

39 Nambarra Arts and Craft centre was established by Yirrkala Business Enterprise (YBE) on the other side of Nhulunbuy in the late 1980s as an initiative of the General Manager YBE, Gatjil Djerrkura (1949–2004). It was renamed YBE Arts Centre, but ceased trading in the mid–2000s.
significant events in Yolngu history. These included ceremonial artefacts and body decorations and the message sticks made by Wonggu in 1935 for Donald Thomson to take to his sons imprisoned in Darwin.\textsuperscript{40} There were displays of archival photographs of the Yolngu Reconnaissance Unit that served in World War II; and copies of the 1963 Bark Petition and the 1988 Barrunga Statement. A special handout printed for the opening event carried the following statement:

This Museum opening marked the successful completion of nearly twenty years of activity by Aboriginal men and women, artist and community leaders who have been concerned that their arts and culture be safely preserved for the future. Throughout the 1970s and 80s individual items of arts and crafts have systematically been collected to represent the material and religious life of the Aboriginal people of Eastern Arnhem Land. (1990, p.4)

Also included in the handout was a transcript of a speech made at the opening by Naminapu Maymuru-White, the newly-appointed trainee curator at the museum, in which she articulated the importance of sustaining Yolngu art:

Yolngu Art is very important to me, because it depicts Yolngu life from the beginning of time, the present, and the future. The survival of the Yolngu culture, traditions, customs, laws, social behaviour, spiritual connections with the land, environment and the universe. For thousands of years we have kept our art alive and we will continue to keep it alive for our children’s children’s children and the future generations. It is now the present time, things have changed, people change, and everything will continue to change. Therefore changes must occur within our art world, in terms of self-management, and efficient running of the Museum, purchasing items, selling, and marketing. There are important views that the community at Yirrkala should be working towards, putting into practice and developing. I am very pleased to be a training Curator because it means that we are making a positive move into the development of the Yolngu Art and the future running of the Museum. These changes need to occur, for the benefit of the Yolngu race. The community needs to take this into account as the high priority listing and seriously work on determining the future issues to do with Yolngu art and craft and the maintenance of the art. Naminapu Maymuru-White. Buku-Larrnggay Museum Curator. April 1990. (Maymuru White, N, 1990)

\textsuperscript{40} Following the killing of Japanese fishermen in Caledon Bay in 1933 and the imprisonment of Wonggu’s three sons, the Government sent Donald Thomson to Arnhem Land as a mediator. Thomson told Wonggu that as leader, he was responsible for keeping peace. Wonggu gave Thomson a message stick to take to his sons in prison in Darwin. Wonggu explained that the marks on the sticks represented him sitting and maintaining peace among the people (Thomson, D F, 1983, p.22-32, 80-81).
In her opening speech, Naminapu demonstrates her pragmatism and willingness to accept change for the sake of the survival of Yolngu culture and art. Although she does not specifically refer to printing or issues relating to the use of miny’tji in print, she does anticipate the conflict that arose with the introduction of this medium to the artists at the Yirrkala Art Centre. Her statement echoes the observation made by Morphy in a paper written in 1981:

... it can be stated that all the Yolngu clans have found ways to participate in the art and craft industry and that all have done so with reference to the possible effects that this may have on the uses and value of art in Indigenous contexts. They have done so at a time when their society faces problems of adjustment to and economic integration with post-colonial Australian society. Over the years there have been changes in many aspects of Yolngu society including ones related to the functioning of the artistic system. In particular there has been an increased participation of women in ceremonial life, and an opening out of previously restricted phases of ceremonies. (Morphy, H, 1981)

As this research establishes, the easing of restrictions on the participation of women did not only apply to ceremonial life — it was also evident in the change in the restrictions governing the production of traditional artwork. Women were being given more autonomy to paint and evolve as artists in their own right. The gradual introduction of the non-traditional medium of printmaking allowed even greater freedom of expression and this was an opportunity the women wholeheartedly embraced.

In the early 1980s Naminapu had spent some time away from Yirrkala living in Melbourne with her balanda school-teacher husband Leon White. According to Naminapu, it was Leon who had first introduced her to screenprinting on fabric. Leon would make the screens and Nami would create the designs to print onto T-shirts which they gifted to family members (Maymuru White, N, 2012). Naminapu recalls that her first design was the crab design — gunyan — a motif which would come to feature regularly in her later work. On their return to Yirrkala Naminapu became involved in the print workshops at the local school, assisting Joan Wearne in teaching the children while expanding her own printmaking skills. She returned to work at the Arts Centre in 1990 when offered the position of curator for the new museum. Naminapu undertook training with the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and
Sciences and held the position of Curator at the museum until 1996. She was then able to concentrate on creating her own artwork and establishing a reputation as a printmaker.

**A Print Space for the Art Centre**

In 1993, Fox successfully applied for a grant from ATSIC\(^\text{41}\) for a major building expansion that was to include a print workshop. The Art Centre was completely redesigned by architect Danny Wong from Speargrass architects in Darwin, to incorporate a new gallery, a courtyard and a printmaking workshop. The courtyard was considered an essential feature as it would provide an open outdoor area where the artists could work. Fox retired from the Art Centre before building began, leaving it to the new co-ordinator, Andrew Blake, to oversee the expansion. (Blake, A and Blake, D, 2013, Fox, S, 2011b) The Print Space was finally commissioned in 1995 (Mulka, 2013). It is not on record whether Banduk Marika was aware of Fox’s plans for a dedicated print workshop at the Art Centre but at the same time, and quite independently, Banduk was drawing up plans for the establishment of a Print Studio at Yirrkala as part of her dream of a grander project for a ‘Yirrkala Art Craft Centre of Excellence’ (Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96). Through personal contacts Banduk had initiated negotiations with the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong for setting up what was to become known as the Yirrkala Exchange Program. Considering the relevance of that project as a cross-cultural exchange with a major institution, involving printmaking, it is the focus of Chapter 5.

When Dianne and Andrew Blake\(^\text{42}\) arrived at Yirrkala at the end of 1993, they inherited an art centre of good repute. This they credited to the manner in which Fox had been running the Centre in close collaboration with the Yolngu. According to the Blakes, his regard for the Yolngu people, their culture and their art, was evident in Fox’s handling of the artwork. Andrew Blake recalls that Fox would tissue-wrap every carving — ‘to

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\(^{41}\) ATSIC, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (1990–2005) was the peak representative body of Australian Government through which Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders were formally involved in the processes of government affecting their lives. It was superseded in 2013 by the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, a division of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

\(^{42}\) To avoid confusion when referring to the either Dianne or Andrew Blake, their first names or both first and family name will be used from hereon in.
him the value of the art was more than dollars and cents. It was made by someone and he was charged with looking after it [while] at the same time working to make a profit for them’ (Blake, A, 2013).

The Blakes were both artists and had been motivated to apply for work in remote communities through a combination of their love of Aboriginal art and a desire that their young son grow up with a greater exposure to, and a greater awareness of Aboriginal culture than they had. The move to Yirrkala was their first experience of working in an Aboriginal community. Although they knew little about running an art centre Dianne and Andrew were mindful of the inherent responsibilities that the job demanded, especially being sensitive to the risks associated with an outsider dealing with another’s culture and working within tight financial constraints. With the little knowledge they had of Yolngu culture, they were very aware that they would have to rely on help from the locals. This was made more imperative with the realisation that the locals regarded this as their community art centre and were proactively involved in its management. The Blakes decided to have regular meetings to ensure they were kept in touch with community issues and the locals kept informed of what was happening at the Art Centre. They actively encouraged the locals to attend the meetings:

   We would drive around the community and depending on what was on the agenda we would sometimes fly people in from the outlying communities. There was transparency, other than [with] financial details, so they would be made aware of what was going on and then it would become common knowledge. (Blake, A, 2013)

The meetings were kept informal and usually held outside in the garden under a tree. With this inclusive approach, the Blakes won the trust of the people and Andrew was soon adopted by Marrnyula Mununggurr. Being recognised as family meant that the Blakes were included in activities from which outsiders were normally excluded and allowed them to participate in discussing issues of a sacred and sometimes even secret nature (Blake, D, 2011).

The fortnightly ‘craft run’ to the homeland communities to purchase art and artefacts gave the Blakes the opportunity to meet more artists. With increasing numbers of artists involved and the source of artwork growing, the Blakes were becoming
overwhelmed by having to absorb all the new cultural information. They decided to set up an artists’ committee that would be the point of contact with the local artists and be responsible for making informed decisions on the artists’ behalf.

**Artists Committee**

At a meeting of senior clan members and artists held at Buku-Larrnggay Arts on 4 July 1995, Andrew Blake proposed the formation of an Artists Committee. Present were Yolngu elders and artists: Dula Ngurruwuthun, Gambali Ngurruwuthun, Witiyana Marika, Mawalan 2 Marika, Langgani Marika, Djutadjutja Mununggurr, Boliny Wanambi, Baluka Maymuru and Naminapu Maymuru. Blake explained that although such a Committee would ensure the artists’ involvement at the Art Centre, it would still be under the umbrella of, and answerable to, the local Dhanbul Council. He advised the appointment of office bearers and the scheduling of regular monthly meetings to ensure the Committee was viable and effective. Witiyana Marika proposed advising the community that Buku-Larrnggay staff would act on ideas from this Artists Committee and that a regular letter be produced to keep people informed of the activities of the committee and the Art Centre (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 1995).

It was at this meeting that Will Stubbs was introduced as the new staff member who was coming on board as assistant art co-ordinator to Andrew. Having practiced as a criminal lawyer in Sydney, Stubbs worked with the Aboriginal Legal Service in Darwin prior to moving to Yirrkala in 1994. His status at the Art Centre was to be different to the usual art co-ordinator as Stubbs was married to a local school teacher, Dhalulu (Merrkiyawuy) Ganambarr. Although he came to the Art Centre without a background in art, his marriage placed him in a unique position of having an immediate and close family relationship with many of the artists. Dhalulu’s mother was Gaymala Yunupingu (c1935–2005), already established as one of the most popular and prolific artists working through the Art Centre. Her extended family of artists included the Yunupingu sisters: Nyapanyapa (b1945), Gulumbu (1945-2012) and Barrupu (1948-2012). Stubbs was in the sensitive position of having to accommodate working with...

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43 Stubbs’ wife Dhalulu (Merrkiyawuy) Ganambar, headmistress of the Yirrkala School, is also an artist and part of a family with a great artistic heritage.
women with whom he had an avoidance relationship, including his mother-in-law and her sisters who were his classificatory mothers-in-law.

A number of issues were discussed at the inaugural meeting, including a suggestion for a name change to incorporate the word gärma, which would reflect the fact that the Art Centre performed a wider cultural function than being limited to art. Of particular significance was the discussion about custodianship of miny’jii, as the following transcript of the meeting indicates:

Andrew: on the topic of Custodianship of Miny’jii it is important for the safeguard of Buku-Larrnggay and its staff, that paintings produced for sale at Buku-Larrnggay are politically correct through the eyes of Yolngu. When painting clan designs it is the responsibility of the artists to have the permission.

Djutadjuta: The Church Panels were painted by the old men for the law to stay firm.

Nami: Church Panels [are] like a law and that law will never change.

The position of the Dhalwangu was ratified by Dula as being available for public viewing. This came from discussions between him and Gawirrin. He explained the ownership of the Gapu design. Dula explained the method of learning rather than teaching – watching old men paint.

It was agreed that by using Balanda paints and canvas etc. was against this tradition and inappropriate.

Witiyana proposed that the system of seniority and custodianship be used. (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 1995)

The discussion highlighted the significance of the Church Panels as a record of Yolngu law and its relevance to all that took place in the Art Centre. There was unanimous agreement that the use of certain introduced materials was unacceptable, but at this stage there was no reference to printmaking or the acceptability of a machine being involved in the production of their art.

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44 In Yolngu society strict behavioural rules regulate interactions between certain individuals. An avoidance or ‘poison’ relationship, applies in situations when a person cannot have direct communication with another, such as between a man and his mother-in-law or between siblings of opposite sex after puberty.

45 ‘Item 7: A proposed name change, deleting “Art” to make it read Buku Larrnggay Gärm Centre is put to council. The word Gärm was discussed by the committee to focus on ‘Cultural Aspects’ rather than just Art’ (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 1995). This name was only used for a short time, with the word Gärm referring to a sacred but public ceremony being replaced by Mulka – to touch or hold. So that Buku-Larrnggay Mulka refers to the feeling of the first rays of the sun (i.e. Facing east) touching the face (Zorc, D R, 1986).

46 Dhalwangu is a Yirritja moiety clan name, including those Yolngu with the family names of Gumana and Wunungmurra, from the Gängan and Gurrumurru homelands.
A draft notice was compiled for displaying in the Art Centre during the opening of the new building, planned for the 26 February 1996 (Figure 2.7). The notice proudly introduced the Art Centre as: ‘A centre that is on Yolngu land, owned, run and directed by Yolngu for Yolngu.’ And amongst its objectives stated: ‘A centre — unique in its commitment to produce fine contemporary art from a rigidly held traditional base.’

Handwritten by Stubbs was the additional directive ‘At the direction of elders, no acrylic, no canvas, no confusing imagery’ (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 1996b).

The meeting discussions and the objectives outlined in the draft notice are significant in that they confirm the Committee’s respect for the traditional laws and their ongoing commitment to consulting elders regarding appropriateness of subject matter.

Printmaking is not specifically mentioned but, as it is an introduced medium, the ruling that the use of balanda materials is contrary to tradition and inappropriate, would apply to the print medium. The gravity of the meeting declarations and the reiteration of the statements in the proposed public notice, confirming as they do the commitment to a traditional base, suggest that the acceptance of printmaking and the replication of miny’tji in print were to be truly momentous breaks with tradition.
The pride in their local artists and their work is revealed in the final statement referring to the ‘extraordinary talent of the many artists of the strongest Indigenous art movement in the country today’. The reference to a ‘movement’ supports the notion of the dynamic nature of Yolngu art and the willingness to consider and accept change in order to ensure the maintenance and preservation of Yolngu culture.

**Organisational structure of the Art Centre**

Stubbs describes his command of the language, *Yolngu matha*, as only ‘passable’, but his informed grasp of it allows him to communicate adeptly with the locals. His knowledge of Yolngu customs and laws means that he is often called upon to provide an opinion on the appropriateness of a work of art. When questioned about the functioning of the Yirrkala Art Centre, Stubbs pointed out that to understand Yolngu philosophy one has to appreciate the structure of Yolngu society and their system of belief, which is all about land ownership, spirituality and sacredness:

In order for the *ngäpaki* to understand — and I'm guessing as I'm not a Yolngu — you have to come to grips with a totally different structure of society and the universe... The key to understanding everything that happens in Yirrkala is knowing we are on Rirratjingu land. In the Yolngu dimension that means that they own us and everything on it. It means that they direct our activities and have full authority and sovereignty... It means the bulk of the people in Yirrkala are guests on Rirratjingu land — they are on Rirratjingu Yothu Yindi land or Rirratjingu/Gumatj land... That's what land ownership is about. No-one can forget it. [But] it is invisible to white men [who] don't understand these are absolute concepts. (Stubbs, W, 2011a)

Stubbs explained further that the Art Centre worked because it occupies a space within Rirratjingu land that is akin to *ringgitj* — a place that is sacred to special people (Zorc, D R, 1986). He likened it to a universal embassy providing a neutral ground where all clans can meet with equal standing. In this case, the ‘special’ group of people are the artists, who meet in this special space that has been assigned as an area where they produce and trade their art (Stubbs, W, 2011a).

When the Blakes took leave from the Art Centre in 2000, Stubbs assumed the additional managerial roles. The Art Centre was about to go through a period of expansion with the addition of The Mulka Centre — a digital archive and multi-media
studio. Stubbs has developed a reputation as an astute co-ordinator and is recognised as a passionate collaborator and advocate of Indigenous arts and art centres. His dedication was acknowledged in 2015 when he received The Arts Council Visual Arts Award (Advocate), which honours the exceptional achievements of an Australian artist or arts professional who has made an outstanding contribution to the development of Australian art (Australia Council for the Arts, 2015). In accepting the award Stubbs said he did so on behalf of the Yolngu elders and artists who had mentored, educated, and supported him and he acknowledged the work of his predecessor and colleague, Andrew Blake.

The Blakes returned to the Yirrkala Art Centre in 2006 staying on until 2011. Each returned to their previous roles: Andrew as art co-ordinator and Dianne as an advisor in the Print Space. During this time they facilitated significant collaborative print projects (described in Chapters 6 and 7). Andrew attributed the creativity evident in contemporary Yolngu art to a combination of the dynamic nature of the Yolngu culture and the willingness of the artists to challenge the boundaries (Blake, A, 2011b). In the following chapters, this thesis explores this notion in relation to printmaking, which even the most conservative of artists have embraced, appreciative of the opportunities for experimentation with the variety of techniques it offers.

**Art Centre Incorporation and funding**

Until it became an incorporated entity in 2008, the Art Centre was nominally under the auspices of the Yirrkala Dhanbul Council comprised of Rirratjingu and associated clan members. Stubbs pointed out that although the Art Centre employees were technically employed by the Council, the Council did not interfere with the daily administration of the Art Centre, which was financially independent, kept its own records and accounts and took instruction from the Artists Committee. When the Northern Territory implemented the amalgamation of local Councils into regional Councils, the Art Centre was forced to choose whether to become an asset of the East Arnhem Land Shire or become independent.

In 2008, under the Northern Territory Incorporations Act 2008, the Art Centre became an incorporated body – Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc. The organisational structure of the
Art Centre was minimally affected by Incorporation, with the Artists Committee members being retained as members of the Board of the Corporation. There was also minimal change in the manner in which the business was administered; other than the accounting was now handled by an on-site book-keeper, and other in-house administrative staff took over the roles that were previously carried out by Yirrkala Dhanbul Council.

![Yirrkala Art Centre, 2011](image)

(Figure 2.8 Yirrkala Art Centre, 2011  
(Photographer D Salvestro)

Funding continues to be sourced through Government Grants and is supplemented by the income from sales and support from philanthropic organisations. Additional Grants and sponsorships are sourced for staff training and for specific projects. Although funding for the Centre has in the past been reliant on recurrent Government grants, in more recent years the Art Centre (Figure 2.8) has been so productive and so successful in its marketing that it has come close to self-funding from sales (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 2013).

The transformation of the art and craft shop at Yirrkala into a vibrant and successful multi-media cultural centre is a result of the determination and resourcefulness of the local community working in collaboration with committed art centre co-ordinators. In achieving this it has fulfilled the original objectives of an art centre, as proposed by the Federal Government in 1973. The resolve to fulfil those objectives is reflected in the Art Centre’s own Objectives, as recorded in the Constitution of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc. that focus on promoting cultural and economic viability and working for the good
of the whole community. Listed as the principal objective of the Association is the establishment and maintenance of:

a centre for the promotion of Yolngu art and without limitation the promotion and preservation of any and all aspects of Yolngu culture including: art, performing art, visual art, craft, community arts, any other movable cultural heritage, literature, music, design, electronic records, film, video, television and radio of whatever nature... (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc, 2008).

That the Art Centre was now accepting of introduced art forms is supported by the extensive range of media included in the list of art forms being promoted ‘without limitation’ by the Art Centre. This endorsement demonstrates the willingness of the Yolngu to accept change and to adapt their art to accommodate change. Although introduced contemporary media has been integrated into Art Centre production, the Yolngu have maintained control of the quality and content of their artwork by ensuring an awareness of traditional guidelines and an adherence to the restrictions imposed by the Artists Committee. With respect to painting there remains strict adherence to the concept of ‘using the land to paint the land’. While canvas and acrylic paint remain unacceptable, the innovative artworks produced by multi-media artist Gunybi Ganambarr have seen discarded introduced materials becoming an accepted medium — deemed acceptable by the fact that they had become part of the country on which they were ‘found’. 47

Conclusion

The historical record provided in this chapter supports the assertion that from its inception, the Yirrkala Art Centre has satisfied the objectives of a Government subsidised remote community art centre in that: it has played a vital role in the community on many levels, artistic, social, educational and economic; the local community played a proactive role in the establishment of the Art Centre and continues to be involved in its administration; and the Art Centre is sustained by the

47 Critically acclaimed Yolngu artists, Gunybi Ganambarr (b1973) who lives and works out of his homeland of GanGan was the first Yolngu artist to work with ‘found’ material. He avoided creating an issue with the elders as he did not bring in ‘new’ material as such but was making use of discarded material — pieces of conveyor belt rubber, masonite, perspex, chicken wire, PVC piping, corrugated metal sheeting, roof insulation, aluminium foil — that had been left lying about on country and so in his opinion had become part of country.
production of art that is acclaimed by institutions and sought after by the art market. While displaying innovation in the approach to their art making, the artists continue to be respectful of their traditional guidelines. Relevant to its progress is the extent of involvement of the non-Indigenous art co-ordinators. Positive outcomes have resulted from their working in a collaborative manner with the artists and the community and being aware of and showing respect for the local culture and law. While many other art centres have failed to thrive the ongoing commitment of community, artists and art centre management, and the reciprocal sharing of knowledge between all involved, has contributed to the sustainability of the Yirrkala Art Centre.

The following chapter provides a synopsis of the introduction of printmaking to remote Indigenous artists. The initial exposure of Yolngu artists to printmaking at local schools, through workshops and in artist in residence programs at major teaching institutions, and the nature of the collaborative exchanges in these experiences, is investigated. The controversy surrounding the appropriateness of using an introduced art form incorporating a mechanical element to reproduce miny’tji is explored, along with the central role played by female artists in the acceptance and implementation of the print medium at the Art Centre.
3. Collaboration and the Introduction of Printmaking

To set in context the use of the print medium by Yolngu artists, this chapter begins with a general background to the introduction of printmaking to remote Aboriginal artists in the Northern Territory. My research suggests that the Yolngu were amongst the first remote area Aboriginal artists to print on paper and puts into perspective the achievements attained by the artists at Yirrkala in the relatively short period they have been using this adopted technology.

Following a précis of the introduction of printmaking to urban and remote Indigenous artists, consideration is given to the role played by the local school teachers, female artists, printmakers and the Art Centre management at Yirrkala, in assisting with and encouraging the use of introduced materials and printing techniques. Teachers and institutions were, in general, the first to introduce printmaking to remote communities – initially printing on fabric and then printing on paper. This chapter explores the concerns that were raised by the senior clan members regarding the appropriate use of clan specific miny’tji and describes the actions that were taken to ensure awareness of the significance of the designs and patterns and the restrictions that applied when reproducing them.

The ongoing involvement in printmaking and the evolution into limited edition fine art printmaking could not have come about without the input of non-Indigenous printmakers who had a common passion for sharing their skills with Indigenous artists. Artist in Residence programs at southern institutions were an initiative that provided remote artists with the opportunity to engage with master printmakers, learn new techniques, and participate in an exchange of knowledge during collaborative print projects. This chapter presents some of the earliest examples of such interactions with artists from Top End remote communities, focusing on Yolngu artists.

Collaboration and ‘Both Ways’ (Reciprocal) Learning

Collaboration is a familiar concept to Yolngu. Their traditional societal functioning was based on collaboration. In their daily life, members of the community cooperated in
performing daily tasks, and during ceremony family members worked together in the creation of the ceremonial painting and other visual media. The consequent post-contact changes to their way of life has moderated the relevance of collaboration in daily social and domestic activities but the notion has persisted in the creation of artwork for both ceremony and commerce — especially in the production of barks and *larrakitj*. This thesis proposes that the embracing of the technique of printmaking by Yolngu artists has been facilitated by the fact that the activity incorporates the familiar practice of collaboration as well as there being a recognised similarity between some of the techniques employed in printmaking, such as carving and layering, with their time-honoured art and craft techniques. This chapter provides examples of collaborative printmaking workshops, residencies and special projects involving Yolngu and other printmakers and artists that demonstrate these concepts. The impact of the unique challenges that face printmakers working with remote artists is considered with reference to particular innovations that both artist and printmaker have advanced in order to address the challenges.

When interviewed about their involvement in cross-cultural collaborative workshops and projects, many of the Yolngu suggested that it was not a one-way learning experience — while the Yolngu are learning printing techniques from the *balanda*, the *balanda* are also learning something from them — learning about Yolngu culture and beliefs and learning about the Yolngu way of creating art. Without exception those non-Yolngu printmakers and artists who have worked with Yolngu artists concurred that while introducing the Yolngu to new techniques, the exercise proved to be a personally profound learning experience for them. Yolngu beliefs and ontology impacted on their personal values and on the approach to their own work, while technically the Yolngu artists frequently challenged the printmakers to investigate new ways of applying techniques so that the outcome was more acceptable to the Yolngu aesthetic. This becomes evident in the accounts of such experiences described in this and the following chapters.

**Historical Background to Aboriginal Printmaking**

Wiradjuri man Kevin Gilbert (1933–1993); writer, activist and artist, is credited as having been the first Australian Aboriginal artist to produce a print on paper (National
Gilbert created linocut prints in the mid–1960s while serving a prison sentence. He had learnt the linocut technique, (see Addendum: Print Techniques), in a prison art program at Long Bay Gaol and then improvised with the lino tiles from the floor, using a modified spoon as his engraving tool.

In 1965, mature, I saw art and writing as a way to communicate. My Father’s Studio was my first lino print. Carved with tools I’d made from a spoon, gem blades, nails on a piece of old, brittle lino off the prison floor. I wanted to show the natural pride and completeness of the Aboriginal artists, the cave, the art, the landscape. (Gilbert, K, 1992)

In 1970 Nugget Coombs, the Chair of The Australia Council for the Arts, on hearing that Gilbert was soon to be released from prison, approached Council staff member, Jennifer Isaacs, with an idea for helping fund him on his release. Coombs was aware that Gilbert had been doing linocuts in prison and suggested to Isaacs that they arrange for an exhibition to sell the works. ‘So I printed them myself, physically — with my feet. I stood on my kitchen table holding weights — I was the press — literally!’ (Isaacs, J, 2012). The prints were exhibited at the Arts Council Gallery in 1970, just prior to Gilbert’s release in 1971. In the early 1980s Isaacs was to play a role in promoting the use of printmaking by remote Aboriginal artists through her relationship with Yirrkala artist, Banduk Marika.

**School Workshops introducing Printing Techniques**

During the late 1960s, Northern remote area Aboriginal artists were being introduced to printing techniques by school teachers. This research supports the suggestion put forward by printmaker Theo Tremblay that the first prints on paper created by Yolngu artists were produced in 1968 on Elcho Island, when schoolteacher John Rudder provided local artists with linoblocks onto which they proceeded to translate their carved designs. It is likely that they are ‘the oldest existing block prints by tribal Aboriginal artists’ (Denholm, M, 1996).

Rudder had been Assistant Principal at the Yirrkala School from 1964 to 1968. During that time he developed a keen interest in adult education. When transferred to the school on Elcho Island in 1968, he set about establishing adult education classes. Recognising the local talent for carving into wood Rudder decided to introduce the
local artists to printmaking. He approached some of the best artists on the island: Manydjarri, Djorrbum and Matjuwi, and suggested they might like to try carving their clan ceremonial stories onto some discarded battleship linoleum that he had found and cut into blocks. With no printing equipment on hand, Rudder produced the first lot of 4x6 inch prints, using whatever ink he could find and rubbing by hand with the back of a spoon onto folded foolscap paper. So that the prints would be appreciated for the effort that had gone into creating them, they were sold to the locals for the token price of threepence each. Making use of an old Gestetner printer Rudder also printed copies for a community magazine (Rudder, J, 2013).

When interviewed, Rudder was unable to confirm the exact date that he produced these first prints but recalls that it was soon after his arrival on Elcho in 1968. This is substantiated by the fact that one of the prints — the cockroach and wallaby story carved by Manydjarri — was reproduced on the cover of Elcho Island vital statistics 1969 (Figure 3.1, p.111), a publication that was distributed by the Mission throughout Australia with the aim of recruiting teachers. Rudder recalls sending the prints to the Darwin administration to show them the outcomes of his adult education programs and presumes they then decided to use one of the images in order to advertise the skills of the local artists (Rudder, J, 2013).

In 1978 Rudder moved to Canberra to do post graduate research at the Australian National University where, in 1981, he met Theo Tremblay a newly appointed lecturer in lithography at the Canberra School of Art. Aware of Tremblay’s history of working with Indigenous artists Rudder showed him the Elcho linocuts. Impressed with what he saw, Tremblay was anxious to print them but was concerned that the lino had become extremely fragile with age. Tremblay eventually printed two sets of each of the ten linocuts in 1985. One set was on mould-made rag paper and the second set on paper handmade by Tremblay from cotton rag and pampas grass (Figure 3.2, p.111). The

48 Battleship linoleum is a heavy grade linoleum used for high traffic situations. The name derives from the fact that it was originally manufactured for the U.S. navy for use on warship decks.

49 The Canberra School of Art began with art classes at the Canberra Technical College. In 1976 the College’s Art School gained independence and was reconstituted as the Canberra School of Art. Its first Director was Udo Sellbach, 1977–1985. In 1988, the Canberra Schools of Art and Music amalgamated to form an autonomous statutory authority, the Canberra Institute of the Arts, which amalgamated with the Australian National University in 1989. A name change to the National Institute of Arts (NITA) in 2000 was followed by a merger with the Faculty of Arts in 2004. In 2006 it became part of the ANU’s College of the Arts and Social Sciences (Agostino, M, 2009, p. xi).
latter he gifted to the Collection of the National Gallery of Australia (Gilmore, P, 1988) and he also gave copies of the proofs to Rudder (Rudder, J, 2013). The prints have since been included in exhibitions and catalogues featuring Aboriginal printmaking.

Fig. 3.1 Manydjarrji. Wurrupari and Gjandi
Image: 12.6x101cm on cover of Elcho Island Vital Statistics, 1969
(Courtesy State Library South Australia. PRG 933: Photographer N Lendon, 2014)

Fig. 3.2 Manydjarrji. Wurrupari and Gjandi
Each Image: 12.6x10.1cm
Printed T Tremblay CSA, 1985
(Courtesy National Gallery Australia, NGA 87.610.B)
(Photographer D Salvestro, 2014)

In a related development in the late 1960s, teachers on the Tiwi Islands began introducing local artists to printing techniques (Edwards, R, 1978, p.50, McCulloch, S and Childs McCulloch, E, 2009, p.247, Wood Conroy, D, 1976). While Rudder was introducing linocut printing on Elcho Island, Madeline Clear, an art teacher at the Mission School on Bathurst Island in the Tiwi Island group, was also introducing printmaking to the Island’s local artists. In 1969 Clear had encouraged three young students, Bede Tungutalum, Giovanni Tipungwuti, and Eddie Purantatameri, to make simple woodcuts featuring the local fauna (Wood Conroy, D, 1976). These were initially printed on rice paper then transferred to silk screens and used as textile designs. This was the start of Tiwi Designs silk screen workshop, which initially focused on printing on fabric. Of the three, Tungutalum was the only one still involved in printing when, in 1974, under the auspices of the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, Diana Conroy arrived to work as an art adviser at Tiwi Design. She was impressed by the

50 Elcho Prints were included in the two major touring print exhibitions: New Tracks Old Land (McGuigan, C, 1992, pp.24-25); and Islands in the Sun (Butler, R, 2001, pp.28-29).
natural talent for realistic drawing displayed by the young men and suggested they explore using these skills to reproduce, in print, the circles and cross-hatching of their traditional designs. The fabrics they subsequently produced had a ready market locally and on the nearby mainland. Conroy’s dream was to one day see Tiwi Designs run by Tiwi management and provide onsite training for local youth. By encouraging the use of new techniques to reproduce traditional designs she hoped that the Tiwi Designs Workshop would act as a bridge between the old beliefs and the present (Wood Conroy, D, 1976, pp.50-53). Conroy’s aspirations have been realised in that Tiwi Designs was incorporated as Tiwi Designs Aboriginal Corporation in 1980. It has the reputation of being one of the longest running remote Aboriginal art centres and now produces a wide range of artworks, including limited edition prints, along with the fabric printing that established its reputation.

**Introducing Printing at Yirrkala School**

As Clear had done on Tiwi, the local schools and teachers in the Yirrkala area played a role in introducing the locals to basic printing techniques – first on fabric and then on paper. The earliest hands-on experience of printing for many of the women and school students occurred in the 1970s, when silkscreen printing on fabric was taught by the non-Indigenous teachers at the Dhupuma College and the local Yirrkala School. (The school is today officially known as the Yirrkala Community Education Centre (CEC) but throughout this dissertation it will be referred to as the Yirrkala School). Following the example of the painting workshops held at the School in the 1960s, local artists were invited to participate in printing workshops to teach carving techniques and to instruct the students in traditional designs and clan stories. This provided an opportunity to ensure that the students were aware of the rules associated with the use of the clan specific designs.

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51 52 Dhupuma College was a community supported, Federal Government funded initiative established to provide education to remote Aboriginal children in preparation for secondary education or vocational training. It was opened on 1 July 1972 by Prime Minister William McMahon (McMahon, S W, 1972) on a site 25km from Yirrkala and operated successfully until 1979, when it closed abruptly as a result of the Government ceasing to fund it in favour of Darwin-based Kormilda College (Dhupuma College, 1972-1979).

52 The local school at Yirrkala has had many name changes over the years. When established by the Methodist Mission in the 1930s it was referred to as the Yirrkala Mission School. When the mission left it became known as the Yirrkala Community School, then the Yirrkala Central School. Currently it is officially the Yirrkala Community Education Centre, Yirrkala CEC, but is commonly referred to as the Yirrkala School.<https://web.ntschools.net/w/yirrkala/Pages/About-Us.aspx>
In the 1970s, screen-printed T-shirts were produced at the School under the guidance of art teachers Lew Burroughs and Leon White. At Dhupuma College the art teacher Lyn Lampshead ran adult education classes in batik, tie-dying and screenprinting on fabric. According to anthropologist Gillian Hutcherson, who spent time at Yirrkala in the early 1990s researching the art of the local women, the most requested items were funerary flags and coffin shrouds printed with sacred designs (Hutcherson, G, 1998, p.71).

Fig. 3.3 Yilila teaching at Yirrkala School, 1983
Unidentified students. (Image courtesy S Fox)

Fig. 3.4 Yilila with students & woodblock prints at Yirrkala School, 1983
(Image courtesy S Fox)

Joan Wearne arrived at Yirrkala in 1982 when her husband Greg was appointed Vice Principal at the Yirrkala School. She came to play an instrumental role in promoting printmaking techniques at the School. Apart from teaching the secondary age students, Wearne was interested in trying to establish closer links between the School and the community. She encouraged the women from the community to come into the school to participate in projects and to mentor the students. It was in the process of doing this that she visited the Art Centre and saw Yilila Mununggurritj doing her woodblock printing. Wearne asked Yilila if she would be interested in coming to work with the students in the art department at the School. Yilila agreed and in 1983 started teaching woodblock printing at the School using the Japanese baren as Fox had taught her at the Art Centre, (Figures 3.3 & 3.4).
With this technique it was simple to print on paper but when the students wanted to start producing cards to sell, the lack of printing facilities at the school posed a problem. This was overcome when arrangements were made for them to access an old Gestetner printer in the Literature Production Centre located at the back of the School (Wearne, J, 2013). Wearne recalled the many positive educational and social outcomes that resulted from this interaction with the wider community (Wearne, J, 2013). The women would come in to discuss women’s business and bush medicine with the older girls and introduced Batik lessons. The following article about the batik workshops appeared in the community newsletter, Yuṯan Dhāwu:

The post primary girls have been doing a Batik workshop.
Banunydi Marika has been coming to Yirrkala and teaching the girls. Banunydi went down to Ernabella a few years ago to learn how to do Batik and she has been to Indonesia to see how Batik is done over there. It was a really good course and the girls made a large batik each. They had to think of a design, draw it on the material, then wax the design and dye the material. The pieces of Batik are hanging in the domestic science room. (Literature Production Centre, 1983)

The students moved on from woodblock printing and batik to working with a photosensitive technique for screenprinting on fabric (see Addendum: Print Techniques). The main subject matter was the school emblem, which they printed onto T-shirts and bags. In order to avoid printing anything that would offend, the students sought approval for each design they wanted to replicate. Despite this precaution Wearne recalled the first occasion that a final product caused controversy. The Dhalinybuy School had arranged a school visit to Canberra and wanted a local design printed onto cloth bags. One of the local men was asked to work out a design for Wearne’s class to print. Wearne presumed it was acceptable, as the design came from a member of the community however, after the first bags were printed, a meeting was called. They were told by some of the senior members of the community that the bags were not to be used as there was a section in the middle of the design that was sensitive and should not be shown outside Dhalinybuy. To resolve the issue, Wearne had the girls cut out the sensitive part of the print and presented those pieces with the original screen back to the community for safe-keeping. The girls at the School then created a simple crab design with no special significance, printed this onto fabric
and sewed that onto the bags in place of the controversial centre piece that had been removed.

Fig. 3.5 School designs. (Yutana Dhwu, Sept. 1991, p.14. LPC Yirrkala)
(Yirrkala School Literature Production Centre. Photographer D Salvestro)

Wearne spent some time away from Yirrkala in 1989 returning to the School in late 1990. Then in 1991, she was presented with another dilemma when the controversial design resurfaced: the new Homeland teacher at Dhalinybuy approached Wearne with the same design asking for it to be printed on T-shirts. Wearne initially refused, recounting the story of the original controversy to the teacher. On this occasion the problem was resolved by masking out the sensitive central part of the design before printing. In order to reassure the community that she was aware and respectful of Yolngu laws and to avoid being confronted with a similar situation in the future, Wearne placed a notice about printing school logos on T-shirts in the local newsletter, Yutana Dhawu (Figure 3.5). It included a warning from the Homeland schools about the limitations on using sensitive designs (Wearne, J, 2013).

In 1986 Wearne accompanied Naminapu Maymuru and six of the students to the Central Australian Community of Utopia, renowned for its batik printmaking, to
participate in batik workshops. Six of the Utopia women travelled to Yirrkala the following year to run more workshops at the School. Funded by the Aboriginal Development Unit of the Northern Territory Department of Education, Wearne continued to run printing workshops at the School into the early 1990s. She also introduced batik to more women in the community through classes held at the Adult Education Centre and the Women’s Resource Centre (Wearne, J, 2013).

In 1988, Banunydji (Yunupingu) Marika, who had run the initial batik workshops at the School, went on to establish a screenprinting business in collaboration with Trevor van Weeren, an art teacher from Nhulunbuy High School. Galupa Screenprints was set up at the Gunyangara Homeland Centre near Banunydji’s Homeland of Galupa on Melville Bay. Banunydji had established the enterprise with financial support from family members and had applied to the Department of Employment, Education and Training for funds to train six people. The training and production assistance was provided by van Weeren. The secondary students from the Yirrkala School visited the workshop to see Yolngu designs being printed onto fabric, tea towels, T-shirts and notecards (Hutcherson, G, 1998, p.71,72). Amongst the trainees were Dhuwarrwarr Marika, Dhopiya Yunupingu and her husband Djalu Gurruwiwi, all of whom went on to establish a reputation as print artists.

The working relationship between van Weeren and the Yolngu artists was an example of a cross-cultural reciprocal learning experience, as described by Dhuwarrwarr: ‘He taught me and I taught him... We supported each other and I also explained to him traditional art’ (Dhuwarrwarr Marika inWest, M and Marika, B, 2008 p.173). Dhuwarrwarr considers herself a teacher as well as an artist and believes it is important to teach the children so that they can ‘carry on the work and pass on the stories’. Along with the more traditional art forms, Dhuwarrwarr has employed printmaking to achieve these outcomes.

Dhuwarrwarr and Naminapu continued to be pioneers in this new aspect of art production. From being taught to paint by their fathers, they went on to attend screenprinting and batik workshops, becoming proficient in fabric printing. When the Print Space was opened at the Art Centre in February 1995, they were amongst the first women to become involved and to produce limited edition prints through the
facility. Dhuwarrwarr describes this as one of the many phases of her art career that started with traditional bark painting and pandanus weaving and evolved to include creating wall murals and printing on fabric and paper (Marika, D, 2011).

From Fabric to Paper

Woodblock and screenprinting proved so popular and such a useful teaching aid at the Yirrkala School that other workshops were organised. In 1988, the Yirrkala School and Laynhapuy Homelands Association organised a Lino Printing Workshop as part of a Stage Two RATE program — a Remote Area Teacher Education Program operated by Batchelor College, in the Northern Territory\(^53\) (Yunupingu, Y, Maymuru, W, Munyarryun, B and Bromot, D, 1988). The program came about as a result of a request from the community who were aiming to control the development of education in their community. The project was run by Yolngu teachers — two from Yirrkala and two from the Homelands: Yalmay Yunupingu, Wurrthalminy Maymuru, Badangthun Munyarryun and Dhumudal Bromot. As part of their training program they were required to do all the preparation for the week-long workshop, which they then ran with the assistance of the balanda teachers. This also provided an opportunity for the students to learn more about their culture and who they were: to this end the workshop included instruction in gurruţu (relationships) and djalkiri\(^54\) — the foundation of their culture and land. An important part of this involved the students learning about their totems and creation stories and understanding the important differences between the clan designs and the inside and outside laws, to ensure that

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53 Batchelor Institute began in the late 1960s as a small annexe of Kormilda College on the outskirts of Darwin, providing programs for Aboriginal teacher aides and assistants in community schools. Between 1988-1999 it was known as Batchelor College then in 1999 the current Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education was established by the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Act 1999 as ‘... an educational institution for the tertiary education of Indigenous people of Australia and the provision of other educational and training programs and courses, and facilities and resources for research and study, and for related purposes. A central task of the Institute is the provision of tertiary education and training programs which engage students in the development of appropriate responses to issues of cultural survival, maintenance, renewal and transformation, within the context of the national and international social, political and economic order’ (Batchelor Institute of Tertiary Education, 2014).

54 Djalkiri — literally foot or footprint related to a definite place and point in time. Used to describe the foundation of Yolngu culture and of the land — metaphorically refers to the ‘footprints’ of the ancestors left on the land during the spiritual foundation of the world and a sign of the interaction of Yolngu with their land and the ancestors who walked that land before them. (Yolngu Matha notes for Language Learners at Yirrkala, p.28. Literature Production centre, Yirrkala, 1995)
the clan-specific patterns and designs (*miny’tji*) were not misused. For this instruction they called on senior members of the community:

The Yolngu teachers felt really confident in running the show because they had important jobs to do and they felt that they were in charge of the organisation of the workshop as part of their job. Before the Workshop we collected information from various people about Yolngu designs and *Djal Kirby*. We also invited a special and important person to come and give a talk about these Yolngu designs and *Djal Kirby* to all of the Workshop participants as an introduction to this important Workshop. (Yunupingu, Y, Maymuru, W, Munyarryun, B et al., 1988, p.74)

The aim of the project was to make the workshops an enjoyable way of learning printing techniques, developing literary skills, learning about their culture and encouraging working relationships between teachers and learners. The teachers kept a journal setting out the objectives and daily tasks, with reviews on the outcomes accompanied by copies of the lino prints produced (Post Primary 2 girls, 1988). To provide feedback about the workshops the students were asked about their reaction to the workshops and their daily experiences. Their responses included comments such as: liking the workshop because ‘it was different’; learning more than they thought they would; or failing to attend because they were finding it ‘too hard’ (Yunupingu, Y, Maymuru, W, Munyarryun, B et al., 1988, pp.77,78).

An important outcome of the project was dealing with the issue of appropriate use of *miny’tji*. The teachers stated that: ‘It is important to remember that while we were using *balanda* materials and technology to make the prints we were also using important Yolngu ideas, skills and knowledge’ (Yunupingu, Y, Maymuru, W, Munyarryun, B et al., 1988, p.81). Despite having Daymbalipu explain how careful the students had to be with the use of *miny’tji* and that they could only use their own *djalkiri*, the School was once again forced to deal with a situation of inappropriate use of a Homeland design. The teachers described it as an issue ‘related to ownership and responsibility for designs’ (Yunupingu, Y, Maymuru, W, Munyarryun, B et al., 1988, p.81) when a leader from one of the Homeland Centres, distressed at seeing one of his mother’s designs being used, informed them that it was too sacred and should only be used for special occasions. The teachers recognised what had led to this becoming a concern: the teachers had approached those people who ‘owned’ the *djalkiri* design but had failed to consult others who should also have been consulted before making a
decision to use the design that was ‘too obvious to be shown in public.’ In order to find
a solution to the problem the Yolngu teachers discussed the situation with
Daymbalipu. The *balanda* teachers did not become involved admitting to finding the
Yolngu philosophy and the situation too complicated for them to understand. The
Yolngu teachers acknowledged that ‘Solving a problem helped us learn an important
lesson’ (Yunupingu, Y, Maymuru, W, Munyarryun, B et al., 1988, p.81)

The journal of the activities included daily reports with examples of the prints
produced. The subject matter of the prints tended to feature totemic fish, birds,
animals and plants on a background of clan specific *miny’tji*. As the community had
instigated the project, the activity reports were featured in the local newsletter *Yutana
Dhäwu*, accompanied by images of the works being produced (Figure 3.6). The print
workshop had provided an opportunity for many of the participants to display their
carving skills and artistic ability (As evidenced in the image of the shark, executed with
a keen sense of perspective, mid top row above the article in Figure 3.6).
In their final report the teachers concluded that on the whole ‘the students were happy and interested in being in this workshop and to learn new skills and develop new abilities’ (Yunupingu, Y, Maymuru, W, Munyarryun, B et al., 1988, p.81). The teachers reported that the workshop had highlighted issues that needed to be considered in planning future workshops. Although most students said they would welcome another workshop as they were keen to learn more, others were ‘frightened by the way the workshop was organised as they thought the other students might laugh at their work’ (Yunupingu, Y, Maymuru, W, Munyarryun, B et al., 1988, p.81). Most importantly, the students had enjoyed the exercise and learning about their language, their culture, their totems, their miny’tji and their djalkiri.

When asked who she considered was most responsible for directing the ongoing focus on print workshops and instigating the exploration of the various forms of printmaking at the School, Wearne was quick to point out that it was usually a Yolngu initiative. The community were the driving force behind the projects, with the teachers and other balanda assisting with the logistics of the program implementation (Wearne, J, 2013).

A few years later the Yirrkala School experienced another example of the community and teachers initiating a collaborative printmaking project employing ‘both ways’ learning to promote cultural awareness and artistic expression. The project arose out of the friendship between Mandawuy Yunupingu, the lead singer of popular Aboriginal rock band, Yothu Yindi and fellow rock star Jimmy Barnes. Mandawuy had been headmaster of the Yirrkala School from 1989 to 1992 and, following a visit to the school by Barnes and his family in August 1992, a Sister School relationship was set up between Yirrkala School and the school attended by Barnes’ daughters — the Gib Gate School in Mittagong NSW. As explained by Naminapu Maymuru in an article in the local newspaper, the objective was to foster relationships between Yolngu and balanda:

On Tuesday 25th of August, we had the launch of the Sister School Program by Robert Tickner, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Yirrkala’s sister school is Gib Gate School in Mittagong, NSW. We talked and exchanged our knowledge, stories and culture through a satellite link up, live on air thanks to modern technology. This talk was led by Mandawuy Yunupingu, the lead singer of Yothu-Yindi at Yirrkala and by Jimmy Barnes and his wife Jane at Gib Gate. The two singers are behind the Sister School scheme to break down the barriers between Yolngu and Balanda. We thought some of the
students would be nervous and shy, but they performed very well. One of the students talking was Gorrnha on “Both Ways Education.” We did well, and I’m proud to be part of this school and the community. I would like to say thank you to the teachers, both Balanda and Yolngu for putting everything together. I’d also like to thank the teachers at the other school for being sister school. Goodbye. Nami Maymuru. (Literature Production Centre, 1992, p.13)

Libby Turner, an art teacher from Gib Gate School, visited Yirrkala in 1993, to run print workshops. The linoprints produced by the students were used in the production of a calendar that went on sale through the Literature Production Centre at the School, (Figures 3.7, and Figure 3.8, p.122). Some of the students who were involved in the production of the linocuts for the calendar, including Naminapu’s son, Patrick White, went on to continue printmaking through the Print Space at the Art Centre.
Workshops and Artist in Residency Programs

From the late 1970s Yolngu artists from Northeast Arnhem Land have been invited to participate in Artist in Residence programs at tertiary institutions. Exposure to Western art practice inevitably impacted on the aesthetics of Yolngu art and consequently influenced art production at Yirrkala. This is evident in the outcomes of the following residencies that involved Yolngu artists in printmaking: Narritjin and Banapana Maymuru at the Australian National University in 1978; Banduk Marika at Canberra School of Art in 1984, Flinders University in 1986 and University of Wollongong in 1991; Naminapu Maymuru-White at Australian National University in 1989, 2000 and 2012.

The following extract from an article written in 1981 by J V S Megaw, head of the Discipline of Visual Arts at Flinders University, provides an insight into the concept of artist-in-residence programs:

There is nothing new in the concept of artists-in-residence – or poets – or actors – or musicians-in-residence, for that matter — but the implications behind such a title are perhaps less usually considered. The artist — or whatever — is brought from 'outside' to practise his or her art within a social or cultural context that is not his or her own. The situation is then by definition artificial, the purpose being either overtly to offer artists an opportunity to execute their art untrammelled by 'normal' needs and distractions or, often, almost covertly, the artist may be seen in, or required to perform, the role of teacher to those of a very different cultural background or level of skill. What is perhaps, strangely, not at all common,
certainly in Australia, is the extension of the artist-in-residence concept to Indigenous artists and craftsmen of the Fourth World. (Megaw, J V S, 1981)

In relation to his last comment, Megaw went on to identify the residency of Narritjin and Banapana Maymuru at Australian National University in 1978 as a significant exception, as it was the first example of a Yolngu artist being invited to participate in such a program. That residency expanded to encompass the first collaborative printmaking workshop at a tertiary institution involving a remote Aboriginal artist, Narritjin, working with the Head of the Print Workshop, Jörg Schmeisser.

Megaw used the term ‘transitional art’ to describe the type of artwork produced by Indigenous artists at such residencies and defines the term as: ‘these are “assimilated” or “reintegrated” arts, the results of culture contact giving rise to new art forms such as acrylic paintings of Western Desert artists or the taking up of already established art forms or styles by peoples of the Fourth World’ (Megaw, J V S, 1981). Megaw’s concept applies to this dissertation considering the fact that the Yolngu have adopted an art form introduced by their colonisers and have used it to suit their purpose of educating and preserving their culture. Artworks produced during each of the programs are referenced to illustrate the innovative manner in which the Yolngu artists have used printmaking to reproduce their traditional iconography and to tell their stories. In so doing they have created a form of ‘transitional art’.

A philosophy common to each of the Institutions was to provide programs that would nurture cross-cultural exchange between the visiting Indigenous artists and the students in their art schools. This chapter describes significant programs that succeeded in fulfilling that objective and the Yolngu concept of sharing knowledge through ‘both ways’ learning.

Jörg Schmeisser

Jörg Schmeisser (1942–2012) was one of the first printmakers to interact with Northern Territory remote Indigenous artists. Having studied in Germany and Japan,

55 Megaw refers to the definition put forward by Nelson Graburn, (Graburn, N H H, 1976, p.1), of ‘Fourth World’: comprising all those native peoples whose lands and cultures have been engulfed by the nations of the First, Second and Third worlds and as such have no countries of their own and no power to direct the course of their lives.
Schmeisser came to Australia in 1976 to take up a Visiting Fellowship at the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University. He travelled to Canberra via the north of Australia where he visited Arnhem Land with the local rock art expert, George Chaloupka. Schmeisser was introduced to Chaloupka’s friend and guide Albert Waradjima, a local Djambarrpuyngu man. As was his custom, Schmeisser travelled with small etching plates onto which he could draw directly. After watching Albert working on a bark, Schmeisser offered to show Albert how to scratch his designs into an etching plate using the drypoint technique (see Addendum: Print Techniques). He believed this could have been the ‘first exchange of knowledge in that way’ (Schmeisser, J, 1996, 2011). Schmeisser recalled Albert commenting that it was just like doing his bark painting and when Schmeisser suggested that by doing this, you can then print many pictures from it, Albert asked: ‘why would you want more than one?’ (Schmeisser, J, 2011). This research revealed that Albert’s reaction and the comments he made were to be often repeated in initial interactions between printmakers and Yolngu artists. Schmeisser was to experience such a reaction to a printing technique again in 1978, when he introduced Narritjin Maymuru to etching at the Canberra School of Art.

Narritjin and Banapana Maymuru at the Australian National University

In 1978, the Australian National University awarded Creative Arts Fellowships<sup>56</sup> to Narritjin Maymuru and his son Banapana Maymuru. The invitation had been instigated by anthropologist Howard Morphy, who had worked with Narritjin while carrying out his doctoral thesis fieldwork at Yirrkala in the early 1970s. As part of their fellowship the recipients were expected to give talks and tutorials for the anthropology students. Narritjin and Banapana were also invited to participate in painting workshops. The residency was to culminate with an on-campus exhibition of the bark paintings and carvings Narritjin and Banapana had created during their residency. In Morphy’s view:

56 The ANU Creative Arts Fellowship was established in 1965 at the instigation of Dr H C Coombs, ANU Pro-Chancellor, to encourage creative work in the Arts in Australia. In 1996, it was renamed the H C Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship in recognition of Dr Coomb’s contribution. Fellowships were filled by invitation rather than by public advertisement, with the fellows selected by the Vice-Chancellor in consultation with an advisory committee. The Fellowship was intended for experienced artists with recognised professional standing in their community and included Indigenous artists from a traditional background (Research School of Humanities and the Arts, 2012).

57 Howard Morphy’s thesis: *Too many meanings*: an analysis of the artistic system of the Yolngu of North-east Arnhem Land, was submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University in December, 1977 (Morphy, H, 1977b).
When Narritjin Maymuru, together with his son Banapana, was awarded a Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University in 1978, it was the culmination of a lifetime’s achievement as an artist. It also provided another opportunity for him to engage with the wider Australian community in persuading them of the value of the Yolngu way of life to ensure that their rights were recognised. (Morphy, H, 2007, p.28)

During the residency, Morphy suggested that Narritjin and Banapana might also be interested in exploring some of the facilities available at the Canberra School of Art, located on the campus grounds. Morphy and the Head of the Research School, Anthony Forge, approached Schmeisser, who was at that time Head of the Print Workshop, with the suggestion that the visitors try their hand at printmaking. Recalling his previous enlightening experience with Waradjima in Northern Australia, Schmeisser readily agreed (Morphy, H, 2012).

Schmeisser’s association with both departments facilitated movement between the Research Centre and the School of Art. He visited Narritjin and Banapana in their studio and watched them work on their barks. Schmeisser then asked if they would be interested in working with him to explore the process of etching. This was at a time when Aboriginal artists from remote communities had little if any involvement in printmaking and it was certainly an unfamiliar practice to the Yolngu artists. Narritjin, who saw himself as a professional artist in the Western sense with an interest in all things to do with the technology of art production, was keen to try his hand at this unfamiliar process (Morphy, H, 2012).

According to Schmeisser his personal experience of working with Narritjin and Banapana was one that involved a reciprocal exchange of knowledge (Schmeisser, J, 2011). Considering neither Narritjin nor Banapana had any knowledge of the various print processes available, Schmeisser suggested etching as he envisaged the Yolngu artists could readily apply the cross-hatching used in their painting to this technique. Aware that Narritjin had experienced working with new materials when introduced to crayon and paper by the anthropologist Ronald Berndt some three decades earlier, Schmeisser suggested they first draw lines on the plate with pencil. He proceeded to explain each of the stages to them and demonstrated how the cross-hatching could achieve textures of different densities. Narritjin was quick to see the potential of achieving variations in contrast with different ways of infilling. As they progressed he
began to raise questions: ‘why would you want to make prints of them?’ and ‘how can you make more than one picture from this piece of metal’ and ‘why would you want to have more than one picture?’ (Schmeisser, J, 2011).

I pointed out that one of the great qualities of printmaking was that now you have something not once but fifty times so you can reach fifty people and you can make fifty times the money... but this basic concept of printmaking did not really interest him. (Schmeisser, J, 2011)

The process of mechanical reproduction also raised the issues of intellectual property and copyright. Narritjin perceived the act of printing as something that was taking the production of the work away from the hand of the artist. This experience coincided with Wandjuk Marika championing the Yolngu concerns relating to the breaching of intellectual property and copyright of their designs. The exercise was further complicated when the artists reacted with surprise at seeing the image become reversed in printing or, as Narritjin observed, ‘the wrong way around’ (Schmeisser, J, 2011). This was another reaction that was to become familiar to those printmakers introducing printmaking techniques to remote Aboriginal artists.

Faced with these challenges, Schmeisser became acutely aware of the complexities associated with appropriate use of design in Yolngu art and the cultural differences that exist in the approach to art:

I said... if we draw this and scratch into the plate and we put it in an acid, it bites. I wasn’t sure how much of this they understood but they were absolutely willing to do what I had suggested. I then made the first stumble which quite clearly indicated to me that we were talking about different things: I suggested that they could also ‘do this’ and drew some lines — not cross-hatching but slightly oblique — and Narritjin said: “No”. When I asked, “why not?” He replied: “That’s not mine.” I then asked, “what’s not yours?” and “does it matter?” I knew too little about their work and they knew little about the Western. I was not there to steal something or copy something, but to do something that I thought would be successful. It was obviously something completely different, not only the sensitivity — that it is not just dots but that it may be a map or even the law — was something I was completely unaware of at that time and, I think, so too were my colleagues. (Schmeisser, J, 2011)

58 At a meeting of the Australia Council for the Arts in 1974, Wandjuk Marika’s initiative launched the campaign for copyright protection of Aboriginal art.
Having recently come from Europe and working in a European way, for Schmeisser it was quite acceptable that ‘if you liked a picture you copied it and perhaps printed it and then sold it’ (Schmeisser, J, 2011). Schmeisser admitted that he failed to appreciate ‘what the fuss was about if I put a few dots together and said it was mine’. Narritjin explained to Schmeisser that to the Yolngu, these were ‘not just scratchings or dots’ — that there were deeper meanings of a sacred nature within the markings.

Narritjin went on to enlighten Schmeisser further by describing how the Yolngu patterns contain knowledge relating to laws, identity and connection to country and explained that Yolngu can only replicate their own clan’s and not anyone else’s markings. They went on to discuss the differences between Western and Yolngu art. Schmeisser described the whole experience as ‘ending on a positive note’ with each coming to appreciate the other’s skills, boundaries and expectations. Schmeisser was very conscious of the importance of allowing an artist to make their own choices. During the workshops he was careful not to attempt to influence Narritjin in any way and found that Narritjin was happy to experiment (Schmeisser, J, 2011).

In his prints, Narritjin chose to depict totemic animals and sacred spirit figures central to Manggalili creation stories — subject matter that was in keeping with that of his bark painting (Figures 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11, p.128). Of the plates Narritjin created two featuring figurative representations of animals and birds of his Yirritja moiety (Figures 3.9 & 3.10): koel cuckoo (guwak), emu (majwiya), bandicoot (wan’kurru) and possum (marrngu). The other (Figure 3.11) has a mokuy or spirit figure. Considering the sensitive issues surrounding the use of sacred miny’tji, Narritjin was careful to only create works that were open — able to be seen by outsiders and the non-initiated.

According to Morphy and Schmeisser, it was primarily Narritjin who worked on the etchings. Banapana may have helped with some of the animal etchings but the public mokuy figure was entirely Narritjin’s creation (Morphy, H, 2012, Schmeisser, J, 2011). Referred to as Man in the NGA Collection (National Gallery of Australia, 2012), Morphy identifies the figure as Nyapilingu, the Manggalili clan female Ancestral Creator being. The use of this design is limited but not restricted, as the figure represents a public statement of clan identity.
Fig. 3.9 Narritjin Maymuru, Yirritja animals and birds
Etching proof, 22.4x20cm, 1978
(Courtesy National Gallery Australia, NGA 86.2373)

Fig. 3.10 Narritjin Maymuru, Bandicoots
Etching proof, 20x25cm, 1978
(Courtesy National Gallery Australia, NGA 86.2371)

Fig. 3.11 Narritjin Maymuru, Man or Nyapilingu
Etching proof, 24 8x19.4cm, 1978
(Courtesy National Gallery Australia, NGA 86.2372)

The animal prints depict the Manggalili totemic emu and the possum, the main Ancestral being at Djarakpi. Each of the etchings features cross-hatched backgrounds of Manggalili clan miny’tji. Morphy suggests Narritjin would have described the design in the background of Figure 3.10 as a ‘travelling design’, marking the journey of the
possum. It is a generic design not associated with any particular place whereas the design in the middle of the possum’s body is the backbone of Manggalili clan design (Morphy, H, 2012).

Morphy describes Narritjin as a master craftsman who liked to learn about different approaches to art but would not consider becoming engaged until he had thoroughly considered all aspects of the art form and all possible consequences of his involvement. Narritjin was not convinced that this was an appropriate medium and he had not made a definitive decision regarding its acceptability. His prime concerns were that multiples might devalue his work in some way and that by making multiples others could get access to his designs and could also reproduce multiples of them. Interested in exploring how prints were made, Narritjin was happy to see the end result of the prints he had created and was satisfied knowing that they would be left behind as a collection. However, at that time, he had no intention of continuing with printing (Morphy, H, 2012). Narritjin’s return to Yirrkala in 1979 coincided with Stephen Fox coming to take up the position of Art Centre manager. Fox developed a very close relationship with Narritjin and his recollection that Narritjin was not interested in progressing with printing, preferring to work with the natural materials more familiar to him, supports Morphy’s observation that Narritjin had reservations about the technique (Fox, S, 2011b).

Schmeisser printed several proofs of the plates using different qualities of paper to create different effects (Morphy, H, 2012). These were the earliest etchings created by a Yolngu artist in the context of a print workshop. Due to lack of time they were not editioned as they were done toward the end of Narritjin’s residency when he was working to a deadline to produce paintings for the exhibition, Manggalili Art,\(^5\) where works created by him and Banapana during their residency, were to be shown. Nugget Coombs gave the exhibition opening address at the Art School in December 1978. In his reply speech, Narritjin described the works on display: ‘It’s all got meaning ... its own story’ (Morphy, H, 2009b, p.120). Along with prints produced by other visiting

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\(^5\)Almost thirty years later, in 2007, a selection of the works created by Narritjin during the Fellowship in 1978, were exhibited with the works of two other prominent Australian National University Creative Arts Fellows — Sidney Nolan and Arthur Boyd. The exhibition, Three Creative Fellows, Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd and Narritjin Maymuru, was held at the ANU Drill Hall Gallery and the works were described as having a common theme focusing on the connection between country and personal creativity (Morphy, H, 2007).
Indigenous artists, Narritjin’s etchings are now part of the Art School collection where they are considered a valuable resource for teaching and research and are regularly reproduced in publications.

Throughout the 1980s, Schmeisser and Theo Tremblay advocated for Indigenous artists to be represented in the School of Art Residency program. The success of Narritjin’s time at the Canberra School of Art was a catalyst for the School to consider other Indigenous artists for the program. Schmeisser’s connection to the ANU Department of Anthropology and Tremblay’s empathy with Indigenous people, acquired through time spent in remote communities, facilitated the movement of visitors between the Canberra School of Art, the Humanities Research Centre and the Department of Anthropology. Schmeisser looked back on this as ‘the first exchange of ideas and expertise of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists that took place within the Canberra School of Art and the first real step towards translating traditional ideas and forms into the new language of printmaking’ (Schmeisser, J, 1996, p.10).

Theo Tremblay

Tremblay was appointed to the staff of the Canberra School of Art in 1981 and is credited with playing a pioneering role in nurturing not just the School’s collaboration with Aboriginal artists, but also the whole Aboriginal printmaking movement (Grishin, S, 1994, p.14-15). Schmeisser and Basil Hall also acknowledge Tremblay as responsible for establishing contacts with many of the northern Australian Aboriginal communities and initiating remote artist’s visits to the School as Artists in Residence. Tremblay was passionate about working in collaboration with Indigenous artists following his experiences in his native America. His involvement with Australian Aboriginal artists began in 1983 at the Canberra School of Art when he instigated a project, *Mara Maru* (Black Hands), to make printmaking facilities available to both urban and remote Aboriginal artists. Joe Croft, a representative from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, introduced him to Maningrida artists, Johnny Bulun Bulun and England

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60 Narritjin made the most of his residency at ANU. Such was his interest in the production side of things he also got involved in the technical possibilities offered by the University outside the arts. One such opportunity was provided by the Engineering Department, where Narritjin spent some time making spearheads before his departure (Morphy, H, 2012).
Bangala, with whom he collaborated to create the first lithographic prints to be made by remote Aboriginal artists (Tremblay, T, 1992, p.19).

At the Institute of Aboriginal Studies Biennial Conference, *Aboriginal Arts in Contemporary Australia*, held at the National Gallery of Australia in 1984, Tremblay drew attention to the lack of support for remote Indigenous printmaking. On the final day, during a discussion on marketing strategies involving a panel of art advisors and gallery directors, Tremblay was surprised that no mention was made of Aboriginal prints or printmakers. He asked why there was not more being done in Australia to promote printmaking by Aboriginal artists. The hostile reaction to his comment came as a surprise, until he realised from the ensuing debate that most of those present were not associating ‘prints’ with the limited edition fine art prints that he was alluding to, but rather with mass produced reproductions that they considered would degrade Indigenous art. Furthermore, he perceived a reluctance to experiment with an introduced art form that was not considered ‘genuine traditional’. Tremblay argued that printmaking had the potential to provide another income stream for remote artists, while helping to promote Indigenous artists and their work, and foster better communication between cultures (Tremblay, T, 2010).

It was at that conference that Tremblay met Banduk Marika and, impressed by her work, invited her to work with him at the Canberra School of Art. They were to share a long working relationship. Tremblay introduced Banduk to new techniques and collaborated with her on some of the most significant works produced by her during future residencies at the Canberra School of Art.

**Banduk Marika at Canberra School of Art, 1984**

Banduk started her printing career in Sydney in the early 1980s under the guidance of Jennifer Isaacs (Isaacs, J, 2012). They had met through Banduk’s brother Wandjuk, who had known Isaacs since they had worked together on the Aboriginal Arts Board. When Banduk moved to Sydney with her husband and young family she sought out Isaacs as someone who knew her family and her story and who might help her find employment. Aware of Banduk’s artistic heritage (daughter of Mawalan #1 and sister to Wandjuk) and realising the extent to which Banduk was missing family and country,
Isaacs encouraged Banduk to paint. Banduk initially was reluctant to do so, insisting that even though her family were artists she was not. Isaacs asked her to draw something and was impressed when Banduk produced ‘the most beautiful stork drawing — just drawn in pencil’ (Isaacs, J, 2012). As it was not practical to get bark for her to paint on, Isaacs suggested Banduk try carving on lino. Banduk felt comfortable with this as it was reminiscent of the wood carving her sisters did back home. She attended print workshops at the Willoughby Community Art Centre and at East Sydney Technical College. As her works became known, she was invited to participate in a number of group exhibitions around Sydney – the first being at Season’s Gallery, North Sydney, during the NSW Women and Arts Festival in October 1982.

In May 1984, Banduk accompanied Isaacs to the Aboriginal Arts in Contemporary Australia conference. Isaacs saw this as an opportunity for Banduk to meet the pivotal people involved in the Aboriginal art scene at the time. Banduk had with her a folio of her current production of black and white linocuts, which she was selling for thirty dollars each. Tremblay and Vincent Megaw from Flinders University were amongst those who took an interest in her prints and were to go on and play a role in furthering her printmaking career (Isaacs, J, 2012).

Tremblay saw potential in Banduk’s simple black and white prints and asked if she would be interested in coming to the Art School to work with him and experiment with colour. The two weeks they spent working together resulted in what Tremblay described as a sharing of knowledge that motivated him to experiment with innovations in materials and technique:

The more I talked with her the more interesting it got. We could work together for hours saying nothing and suddenly blossom with all sorts of informative conversation... It was lovely the way we were making artwork — for all posterity; the piece of artwork was the product of two people at one moment in time. The fact that we were using western presses and western pigments and western papers began to propose problems as well as possibilities. We used hand-ground pigments and mixed them with linseed oil. We tried other oils and varnishes that were eucalypt-based. They smelt wonderful but I didn’t know what they’d do to the paper. (Tremblay, T, 1989)

The first small linoblock Banduk worked on with Tremblay featured a heron (gayntjur). Tremblay initially printed it in black and white and then, to demonstrate that it was
possible to print in multiple colours, he showed Banduk how to overlay it with colour using the reduction linocut technique (see Addendum: Print Techniques). Banduk used ochre-like colours of red and yellow outlined with white lines, as in traditional painting. The print, *Marrma Gayntjurr* (two herons), was featured in Isaacs’ 1989 publication, *Aboriginality* (Figure 3.12, p.135).

![Fig. 3.12 Banduk Marika, Marrma Gayntjurr Reduction linocut, 178x118mm, 3rd state, 1984 (Image courtesy NGA, collection No. 6762487.621. Photographer D Salvestro)](image-url)

Their experiments with colour linocuts culminated in Banduk producing the colour reduction linocut *Djanda and the Waterhole* (Figure 3.13. This print received...
widespread acclaim for the manner in which Banduk had succeeded in reproducing, in print, the effect of a Yolngu bark painting. Tremblay described it as: ‘… unique and probably one of the most advanced colour prints of its type for an Aboriginal artist — complex and beautiful…’ (Tremblay, T, 2010).

Morphy commented on the technical accomplishment of reproducing the traditional layering effect of colours finished with a white outline: ‘She deliberately chose a sequence of colour printing that would highlight the brilliance of the white in order to convey the spirit of Yolngu aesthetics’ (Morphy, H, 1998, p.248).

During the course of their working together, Banduk had revealed to Tremblay that her brother Wandjuk was not happy with her employing a technique that was not ‘traditional,’ to reproduce traditional iconography (Tremblay, T, 2010). Alluding to the Western perception of a work of art standing on its own, Tremblay suggested that the medium was irrelevant when the artist is trying to convey a message. He pointed out to Banduk that the unique feature of the print medium — its multiplicity and consequent accessibility — enabled greater dissemination of knowledge and this would be an asset in her endeavour to promote the survival of her culture through her art (Tremblay, T, 2010).

Tremblay reported that although Wandjuk had initially expressed displeasure at Banduk working with printmaking, on sighting the Djanda and the Waterhole print he personally conveyed his approval to Tremblay (Tremblay, T, 2010). Wandjuk considered the coloured prints more acceptable than Banduk’s early monochromatic prints as the results were a closer representation of their traditional ochre-coloured clan patterns.

The intervention of mechanical reproduction did not appear at this stage to be of concern to Wandjuk. His overriding concern was that the clan designs be accurately replicated. There is no evidence that at this time Wandjuk harboured the concern that was to become an issue at Yirrkala with the establishment of the print workshop regarding the disconnectedness from the spiritual in the use of mechanical technology to reproduce miny’tji. He continued to have concerns regarding the misappropriation and reproduction of Aboriginal clan designs by others without permission, and the potential for outsiders to disregard intellectual copyright and inappropriately use
Aboriginal clan designs. As he had articulated in 1975: ‘It is not that we object to people reproducing our work, but it is essential that we be consulted first, for only we know... and only we can give permission.’ (Johnson, V, 1996).

**Banduk Marika Artist in Residence, Canberra School of Art, 1985**

Eager to have Banduk continue working with him at the Art School, Tremblay approached Udo Sellbach, Director of the Canberra School of Art, and Jörg Schmiesser, Head of the Printmaking Workshop, with the proposal for a print residency for Banduk (Tremblay, T, 1995, p.5). Banduk returned to the Canberra School of Art later in 1985 as an Artist in Residence with a student scholarship and a stipend from a special studies grant. Tremblay also secured a commission from the Australian National University to subsidise the editioning of her works (Tremblay, T, 1989, p.23). He envisaged exciting possibilities arising from this initial collaboration ‘between a white man and an Aboriginal artist working on limited-edition prints’ (Tremblay, T, 2010).

Keen to address the fact that most remote Aboriginal artists were not aware of the potential of print media, he argued that prints as an art form should be made available to Aboriginal artists who ‘had the images but not the machinery of the West to express them’ (Tremblay, T, 1989, p.25). Tremblay made the observation that in general the prints being produced by remote artists — whom he referred to as ‘traditional’ Aboriginal artists — tended to ‘parallel existing traditions’, and he suggested that printmaking offered the less traditional artists the opportunity to express themselves ‘almost without constraint’ (Tremblay, T, 1989, p.25).

David Williams, Director of the Canberra School of Art from 1985 to 2006, saw the involvement of remote Aboriginal artists in the visiting artists program as an initiative that enabled ‘a dynamic exchange of ideas and values across cross-cultural boundaries’ (Williams, D, 1996, p.4). Such programs provided the visiting artists with newly acquired skills that they could take back to their communities. The issue of lack of funding resulted in the program stalling at the end of the 1980s when the Department of Aboriginal Affairs removed support for the extra costs involved in engaging Indigenous artists from remote communities. Artists rarely travelled alone and were usually accompanied by another family member or group, which added to the already considerable expense associated with the long distances. Williams regretted that the
visiting artists program at the Canberra School of Art was curtailed as a result of the funding cuts (Williams, D, 2012).

**Flinders University Art Museum Artist in Residency Program**

In addition to the Canberra School of Art residency and workshops, in 1986 Banduk was invited to participate in an Artist in Residency program at Flinders University, Adelaide (Isaacs, J, 2012). At a time when Aboriginal art was not yet fully accepted as part of the contemporary art scene, the vision of Prof JVS Megaw resulted in the Flinders University Museum in Adelaide being at the forefront of collecting and promoting Australian Indigenous art. In 1979, another initiative of Megaw’s was realised with the founding of the FUAM Artist in Residence Program. This was supported by Robert Edwards, Chair of the Aboriginal Arts Board, and John Kean, the resident art adviser for Papunya Tula Artists. Megaw explained the thinking behind the program:

> It was felt that it would add an invaluable dimension to the "teaching" of Aboriginal art to experience the benefit of learning from those whose art it was. Since there was — and is — a perceived need amongst several Aboriginal groups for training opportunities in Whitefella’s art techniques, such small-scale residencies offer a chance for artists to learn something, not only of such new techniques outside the often intimidating context of a formal art school, but also experience the organisation of a small artists’ studio/workshop. (Megaw, J.V.S., 1988)

Grants in support of the program came from the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the Visual Arts Discipline of Flinders University. The program, which took place between 1979 and 1992, involved a series of short-term residencies for Indigenous artists of diverse backgrounds. Banduk Marika’s residency in 1986 was preceded by those of other Aboriginal artists from remote Top End communities, including Bede and Francine Tungatalum from Tiwi.

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61 Associate Professor of Visual Arts and Archaeology at Flinders University, Megaw and his wife, Dr M Ruth Megaw, were both scholars who, from the late 1970s, had shown a keen interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. With Megaw’s encouragement of the study of new developments in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, the University incorporated topics on Aboriginal art in its curriculum, becoming the first Australian University to do so. The Flinders University Art Museum (FUAM) was formally established in 1978 to house an expanding collection of art. As a reflection of the widening of teaching interests, the collection which had originally centred on prints by European masters, quickly grew to encompass prints and paintings by non-Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other Indigenous peoples (Flinders University Art Museum, 2012).
Islands in 1980 and David Malangi (1927–1999) from Ramingining in 1982. The works produced during the residencies contributed to the development of FUAM’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collection. As Megaw had envisaged, the residencies lent substantial encouragement and support to Indigenous arts practice, as it gave artists the opportunity to learn new techniques in a studio and workshop experience that was not readily available to most of them in their own communities (Flinders University Art Museum, 2012).

Banduk produced a series of linocut prints (Figure 3.14) during her residency at Flinders and, as part of the reciprocal exchange philosophy of the residency program, was invited to participate in a cooperative venture involving the production of a painting depicting two versions of a brolga — one Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal (Megaw, J V S, 1988). The association with Flinders University was ongoing, with Banduk being invited back in 1988 to talk to Visual Arts students about her personal experience of developing her art in contemporary Australia.
In 1988, Banduk was offered another two week Artists Residency at the Canberra School of Art, funded by the Department of Education and Employment Training (DEET). Due to family commitments (she had returned to Yirrkala following her brother Wandjuk’s death) and the fact that she had just accepted a job offer to manage the Art Centre at Yirrkala, she declined and recommended the residency be offered to Naminapu Maymuru White.

**Naminapu Maymuru-White at the Australian National University**

Naminapu took up the ANU residency in 1989, finding it an exciting opportunity to expand her knowledge of the linocut technique and to learn other ways of producing Yolngu art (Maymuru White, N, 2012). She was one of the first Yirrkala artists to be introduced to lithography, producing two lithographs, *Nuykal at Wayawu I and II*, (Figures 3.15 & 3.16) featuring Manggalili clan totems and miny’tji. Then, in collaboration with Tremblay, she produced a black and white linocut triptych, *Nyapilingu Wapitja*, also referred to as *The Sacred Digging Stick* triptych (Figure 3.17, p.139).

![Fig. 3.15 Naminapu Maymuru White, Nuykal at Wayawu I](Image courtesy National Gallery Australia, Canberra. NGA. 90.656)

![Fig. 3.16 Naminapu Maymuru White, Nuykal at Wayawu II](Image courtesy National Gallery Australia, Canberra. NGA. 90.657)

As the subject of her triptych, Naminapu chose the most important female ancestor of the Manggalili clan, *Nyapilingu*, as had Narritjin for one of the etchings produced during his residency in 1978. In the top panel of the triptych, *Nyapilingu* is shown carrying her *wapitja*, or sacred digging stick. The diagonal cross in the second panel represents string spun from possum fur worn across her torso as a symbol of her importance. The animals in the bottom panel are the totemic possums. The composite
shape of the three images reflects the shape of the *wapitja* itself and each image has a background of finely cross-hatched Manggalili clan *miny’tji*. The black and white triptych, commissioned by the Art Centre advisor Stephen Fox, was editioned by Theo Tremblay at the independent print workshop, Studio One, in Canberra.

![Fig. 3.17 Naminapu Maymuru White, *Nyapilingu Wapitja* Black & White linocut triptych. Ed.50, 1989 Dimensions of panels: Top: 45.8x20cm. Mid: 45.4x20cm. Bottom: 45.6x19.6cm (Courtesy National Gallery Australia, NGA 94.1300.AC)](image1)

![Fig. 3.18 Naminapu Maymuru White, *Nyapilingu Wapitja* Colour Reduction linocut triptych. Ed.50, 1996 Dimensions of panels: Top: 45.8x20cm. Mid: 45.4x20cm. Bottom: 45.6x19.6cm (Personal collection & photographer D Salvestro)](image2)

Tremblay visited Yirrkala in 1993, at the invitation of Banduk. While there he was offered the opportunity of furthering his working relationship with Naminapu when he was approached by Fox with the idea of reproducing Naminapu’s *Nyapilingu* linocut in colour. Tremblay thought this an exciting prospect and discussed the feasibility of working on a coloured version with Basil Hall. Two years later Hall went to Yirrkala with the original blocks and worked with Naminapu to replicate them in the colours of her choice. Naminapu built up the layers of ochre colours and black in such a manner that

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62In 1983, recognising that there was a need in the Canberra region for editioning and printmaking facilities independent of the Canberra School of art, artist/printmakers, Dianne Fogwell and Meg Buchanan, set up Studio One. When their partnership was dissolved in 1985, the open access printmaking facility became an incorporated association. In 1990, its facilities were incorporated into the Megalo Print Studio to form a comprehensive printmaking facility for artists and the broader Canberra community.
they resembled the complex layering of paint on a bark painting. She then created a second set of blocks for the white rarrk (cross-hatching) so that could be applied last as is done in bark painting. The lino blocks, including an uncut block for the background grey, were printed and editioned in 1996 by Hall and Tremblay at Studio One (Hall, B, 2011). This was one of the first prints by a Yolngu female artist to incorporate coloured sacred miny’tji designs. Although it is considered an ‘open’ design (that is, not restricted) the fact that Naminapu had taken the initiative to create a coloured sacred design in a non-traditional medium is indicative of the autonomy that Yolngu women were beginning to experience in art production.

The colour reduction linocut triptych (Figure 3.18, p.139) won the inaugural Works on Paper Award at the 1996 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA). When asked whether there were issues with her reproducing sacred miny’tji in print, Naminapu explained:

_Yaka,[no] bāyngu [not a] problem... We had to choose our own natural miny’tji._ (Maymuru White, N, 2012)

Naminapu has affirmed her right as a senior artist to replicate her own clan design — one that she is allowed to use as it is ‘outside’ or ‘open’ miny’tji, and does not contain the deeper layers with restricted ‘inside’ or secret-sacred knowledge.

**Groundwork**

In 1996 the Canberra School of Art staged an exhibition of prints that had been created by urban and remote Aboriginal artists during their residencies at the School: *Groundwork, Aboriginal Artists’ Prints from the Canberra School of Art.* In the accompanying catalogue, the director of the School, David Williams described the significance of the catalogue, the residencies, the works and the exhibition:

_The publication of this catalogue has fulfilled a number of different functions. It is timely documentation of a significant initiative, a catalogue raisonné, an anthology of key texts by members of the Canberra School of Art academic staff, and an opportunity to reproduce some of the most_
compelling examples of graphic art produced in Australia in the past decade (Williams, D, 1996).

Reproduced in the catalogue were the Elcho linocuts printed by Tremblay in the early 1980s, Narritjin’s three etchings, five linocuts by Banduk and Naminapu’s black and white Nyapilingu triptych. The catalogue essays acknowledged the relevance of the residencies to the advancement of printmaking by Aboriginal artists. The editor, Lendon, suggested that the collection of prints were a ‘confirmation of the place of innovation in contemporary Aboriginal art’ and that in the range of works there was ‘evidence of cultural dynamism and individual expression’ (Lendon, N, 1996, pp.6, 8). Schmeisser acknowledged the pioneering work of the Art School in this area and provided a cautionary note in relation to the issues that arise with involvement in cross-cultural collaborative art creation. He advised printers to have ‘heightened sensitivity for the Indigenous artists’ particular situations, traditions and immediate intentions,’ and warned against making decisions as to what might be considered appropriate for their art as it should be ‘entirely their decision what subject, form or medium to choose’ (Schmeisser, J, 1996, p.11). Tremblay described his experience of working with Aboriginal artists for ten years and discovering that, on the whole, they are ‘eager to learn new means of expression’. In his opinion the Groundwork exhibition demonstrated that ‘printmaking is evolving into a major extension of the classic forms of Aboriginal art and is a powerful tool in the continuing growth of contemporary Aboriginal culture’ (Tremblay, T, 1996, p.16).

**Gaymala Yunupingu Canberra Workshop**

While working at the Canberra School of Art and at Studio One, Tremblay was to introduce other Yolngu artists to printmaking techniques. Gaymala Yunupingu (c1935–2005) was introduced to printmaking and the lithographic technique (see Addendum: Print Techniques) at Studio One. Accompanied by Fox, Gaymala travelled to Canberra in 1992, to attend the opening of an exhibition of her paintings at A Girls Own Gallery (AGOG). Studio One happened to be in the same building and Fox took the opportunity to take Gaymala to have her try her hand at printing. Hall invited her to take part in a lithography workshop with Jan Hogan and Judy Watson. Hogan remembered well the experience, as it was her first big print project and the first time she had worked with a remote artist. Hogan looked to Hall for advice and he suggested she start by showing
Gaymala some of her work. At the time Hogan was experimenting with washes and the lithographic technique. She recalled the interaction with Gaymala:

Gaymala said: “you tell me what you want me to paint.” and I suggested the first thing that came into my head ... “something like — Yam?” She laughed and said: “I can’t paint that they’re not in season!” Then she did a wash... It was the classic thing of printmaker influencing the artwork... it was my first big editioning job. (Hogan, J, 2012)

In collaboration with Hogan, Gaymala produced her first two lithographs in limited editions of 30: one featuring Baru (crocodile) (Figure 3.19), her Yirritja Gumatj clan creator ancestor, and the other a Dhuwa story about Djaykung (file snake) (Figure 3.20), which she had the right to paint as it was from her mother’s Galpu clan. Gaymala was to become one of the most recognisable, innovative and prolific print artists at Yirrkala.

**Naminapu Maymuru-White: Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship, 2000**

Naminapu returned to the School of Art at ANU in 2000 to take up a Creative Arts Fellowship. Her skills as a printmaker already acknowledged, it was suggested that Naminapu would appreciate the opportunity of working with other artists and being able to further develop her skills in printmaking (Morphy, H, 2000). Naminapu commenced the Fellowship in September, working on a group of bark paintings and prints dealing with themes from Yolngu Ancestral narratives. An exhibition of the works produced was planned for the end of her Fellowship in November, 2000.
Naminapu was aware of the etchings that Narritjin had done while there in the late seventies and was keen to try the technique. Morphy and the Deputy Director of the ANU School of Art, Nigel Lendon, approached Heather Burness, one of the teachers in the Print media and Drawing Workshop, to see if she would like to work with Naminapu.

Burness recalled their meeting and the development of her working relationship with Naminapu (Burness, H, 2012b). Even though Naminapu had previously been involved in a workshop at the School, this was for her a new interaction, experimenting with a new technique with a new printmaker, so similar issues arose as with earlier experiences of non-Indigenous printmakers working with Indigenous artists. Burness had little knowledge of Naminapu’s work or her subject matter—other than being aware that Naminapu’s previous experience with printmaking had been with linocut and screen-printing. To take advantage of Naminapu’s experience of working directly onto a matrix, Burness chose to work with one of the most direct mark making processes in etching, the sugar lift technique (see Addendum: Print Techniques).

Burness then consulted with Naminapu regarding the image she wanted to create and the size and orientation of plate she preferred. Naminapu wanted to replicate a clan story associated with the sand crab (gunyan):

Naminapu said: “We have to put a crab here and a crab here.” I asked if she wanted the crab to be white or colour... at that time I had no idea of how important the colours were. Nami painted the crab in the sugar lift which was white, which meant that when it was processed with the black bitumen it became an open bite area. This may have confused her a little — but it was very subtle and [in my eyes] very beautiful as it captured the plate tone. In my ignorance I thought it was finished. (Burness, H, 2012b)

But then Naminapu told Burness that there had to be other marks — some in red ochre and some in black — so other plates had to be cut. At the same time they were working on another plate with a subject that Naminapu often painted on bark and larritj: Milngiyawuy — the Milky Way. This features in Manggalili mythology as a river in the sky which is the resting place of the Ancestral spirits who appear, along with subsequent Manggalili souls, as the stars in the night sky. It is also the home for the Ancestral freshwater crocodile (Print Space, 2012b). A series was printed in black and white and then Naminapu decided she wanted to do another series of the same design...
but with yellow ochre in it (Figure 3.21). The *Milngiyawuy* print was becoming more complex and although some were printed in the studio with the students assisting, the majority were outsourced for printing.

![Figure 3.21 Naminapu Maymuru White, *Milngiyawuy* Etching, 29x49cm, Ed.35, 2000 (Photographer D Salvestro)](image)

The sugar lift print, *Gunyan the crab at Djarrakpi*, was left incomplete as Naminapu’s tenure was interrupted by her sudden return to Yirrkala at the news of the death of her eldest son. It was planned that she return to Canberra the following March to complete the *Gunynan* etching but she was not to return to work on the plates again until 2011. The project was resurrected when Burness met up with Naminapu and her husband Leon White in 2009, at the *Barks, Birds and Billabongs* symposium at the National Museum of Australia. Naminapu expressed concern that the print had not been completed and told Burness that the print had to be finished, especially considering the tragic incident that had interrupted its progress. It was at this time that Naminapu explained the image to Burness and the story associated with the sand crabs that play a significant role in Manggalili mortuary ceremony — *Yingapungapu*. Their presence symbolises the cleansing of flesh from the bones of a deceased and ‘operates as a metaphor of the process of human death and burial’ (Morphy, H, 1991, p.259). Considering the family tragedy that had interrupted the residency in 2000, and

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now learning the relevance of the imagery, Burness came to appreciate the even deeper significance of the print.

In the interim, Burness had built her own home studio and suggested that the print be finished there. Funding to cover materials and Naminapu’s travel costs then became an issue. Anxious to see the print finished, Naminapu’s husband Leon offered to provide the funds for her travel while the Yirrkala Art Centre agreed to subsidise the cost of materials. The zinc plates had sustained damage over the years and required extensive reworking. Burness worked on them for almost a year and had them ready for Naminapu when she finally returned to Canberra in May 2011 (Burness, H, 2012b).

At this stage, Naminapu was still unfamiliar with the different outcomes of the various print techniques. However, with increased exposure to the techniques Naminapu soon became more comfortable with the end results. Her visual acuity and attention to detail impressed Burness who described Naminapu as a ‘traditionalist’, insisting that things had to be done in a certain way because that is what her father had told her — ‘and so it must be continued’. She wanted the image to look as it would on bark and was determined to get the colours as close as possible to traditional ochre colours, never hesitating to tell Burness when the yellow or red were not the ‘right’ yellow or red (Burness, H, 2012b).

Fig. 3.22 Naminapu Maymuru White. Finishing white lines of Gunyan etching with marwat Print: 49x29.5cm. Ed.30, 2012. (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka)
Burness recognised this as ground breaking work. Naminapu actually painted the colours onto the plates with a *marwat* for which, on this occasion, she used the hair of Burness, her adopted *yapa*, to make the brush. In so doing Naminapu was complying with the Yolngu concept that to paint the land you use the land to maintain the continuity between the land, the artist and the artwork. As is done on a bark painting, and as she had done with the *Nyapilingu* linocut, Naminapu completed one print by painting the white outlines last, working directly onto the colour proof of the print with the *marwat* (Figure 3.22, p.145). Burness completed the printing of the coloured plates for the remainder of the edition but the final detail of the white outlines was left to be added to the etchings at the Print Space on Naminapu’s return to Yirrkala. As it transpired Naminapu was unable to present at the Print Space to hand paint the final white lines onto each of the prints, so the final detail for the editioning of thirty prints was left to Ruby Dijikarra Alderton, the nineteen year old daughter of Banduk Marika. In training as a printmaker at the Print Space, Alderton, copied the white lines onto acetate and then screenprinted them onto each print.

A Capital Arts Patrons Organisation (CAPO) Fellowship enabled Burness to visit Yirrkala in May 2012 and observe Alderton adding the white to Naminapu’s print. Burness commented that after twelve years the print had finally been realised (Burness, H, 2012b). Naminapu’s *Gunyan* print was ground breaking in many ways – she had applied traditional methods in creating a print and had seen the final detail of sacred *miny’tji* printed at the Yirrkala Print Space.

While at Yirrkala, Burness came to appreciate Naminapu’s spiritual connection to place. She was made aware of how important the flow of saltwater and freshwater was in Yolngu cosmology, both culturally and environmentally. The mixing of freshwater and saltwater is also used by the Yolngu as a metaphor for ‘two way’ or ‘both ways’ learning — the coming together of knowledge. This sharing of knowledge occurs where the waters coalesce and so is considered a most fecund area, as it is in reality with nature. Burness acknowledged that this had a profound influence on her own work (Burness, H, 2012a). Theirs had been a truly collaborative reciprocal learning experience. Burness had helped Naminapu to understand some printing

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65 Inspired by her Yirrkala visit, Burness created a body of works which were exhibited in an exhibition, *From Yirrkala: Saltwater, Freshwater Flow*, held at Nomad Art in Canberra in October 2012, along with those works produced in collaboration with Naminapu.
processes: the three colour plate process and thinking ‘back to front’. Naminapu had helped Burness appreciate the importance of the detail, the finishing, ‘getting it right’ and the deeper significance that Yolngu see in an image (Burness, H, 2012b).

**Conclusion**

To place the involvement of Yolngu artists in printmaking in context, this chapter began with a general overview of the introduction of print techniques to remote artists in Northern Australia. The proposal that there exists a correlation between the collaborative nature of the printmaking process and the concept of collaboration and ‘both ways’ learning in Yolngu society was then explored through the experience of the introduction of printmaking to the Yirrkala community as it evolved from school based workshops to Yirrkala artists attending artist in residency programs at outside teaching institutions.

This chapter has demonstrated that Yolngu teachers and community members were proactive in instigating art-based programs as a means of educating the younger members of the community. Their initiatives were facilitated by balanda teachers at the Yirrkala School who were also instrumental in encouraging community engagement, and mentoring of students by older members of the community. The programs were important in addressing awareness of sensitive cultural issues, in particular the appropriate use of miny’tji when applied to the use of an introduced art form such as printing. These examples of cross-cultural, collaborative ‘both ways’ learning projects resulted in positive outcomes for the community — educational, social and cultural.

The involvement of artists from Yirrkala in artist in residency programs was explored as a further example of the reciprocal exchange of knowledge that manifests through cross-cultural printmaking workshops. Those Yirrkala artists invited to participate in the earliest of the residencies were Narritjin Maymuru, Banduk Marika and Naminapu Maymuru White. Their experiences played a part in the recognition and acceptance of printmaking as a viable art form for the artists at the Yirrkala community.

The works on paper produced by the three artists during their residencies have been recognised as ground breaking. Considering their historical significance as innovative
Aboriginal art and their relevance in the evolution of Yolngu art, they have featured regularly in scholarly texts, catalogues and landmark exhibitions: Banduk’s 1986 *Djanda and the Waterhole* linocut travelled in *Dreamings, The Art of Aboriginal Australia* exhibition, which toured the USA in 1988 (Sutton, P, 1988, p.180,204); the three etchings produced by Narritjin at the Canberra School of Art in 1978 were featured in the *New Tracks Old Land*, touring exhibition, along with Naminapu’s 1990 black and white, *Nyapilingu* linocut triptych, and three of Banduk’s 1992 linocuts. Their works are also represented in major Australian public collections and have been exhibited in other significant national exhibitions: *The Dreamtime Today*, 1986, (Flinders University of South Australia); *Groundwork, Aboriginal Artists’ Prints from the Canberra School of Art*, 1996; *Indigenous Art at the Australian National University*, 2009; and *Islands in the Sun*, 2001.

Considering the importance of the interaction between printmakers and Yolngu artists in progressing printmaking at Yirrkala, the following chapter describes individuals, workshops and institutions that played a part in Yolngu printmaking.
4. Workshops and Exchange Projects

In the previous chapter the experiences of the first Yirrkala artists to attend residencies in outside institutions were appraised with respect to their influence on the acceptance of printmaking by Yirrkala artists. There are institutions and individuals who have played ongoing roles in the introduction of printmaking techniques to remote Aboriginal artists through collaborative workshops held at teaching institutions or onsite in the remote communities. Symposia and conferences have provided the opportunity for discussing issues specific to Indigenous artists working remotely and have provided further opportunities for the artists to explore the print process and to then take this knowledge back to their communities.

This chapter considers the contribution of those institutions and individuals who played pioneering roles in taking printmaking to remote artists. Their endeavours were not without challenges, both logistic and artistic, which are explored in the light of the eventual outcomes of the interactions. Printmaking projects and groundbreaking conferences that have impacted on remote artists are described with focus on two significant cross-cultural projects that were the initiative of printmakers working at the Northern Territory University in Darwin and in which Yirrkala artists played significant roles — the 1996 Kaltja Business Conference and the 1997 Australasian Print Project.

Introducing new Techniques to Remote Indigenous Artists

The Northern Territory University, now Charles Darwin University, has played a leading role in the promotion of printmaking in remote North Australian and Central desert Aboriginal communities through onsite workshops, residencies and symposia and by providing training within the communities. In 1989 Leon Stainer who was employed as a printmaking technician at the newly-founded Northern Territory University, established the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Print Workshop (A&TSIPW). His first direct experience of working with Indigenous artists had occurred when he had

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66 When the Northern Territory University (NTU) was established in 1989, the printing workshop of the Darwin Institute of Technology became part of the University Art Department. NTU underwent a name change to Charles Darwin University (CDU) in 2003.
attended a workshop at the Canberra School of Art in 1991 and was invited to proof plates for Jörg Schmeisser and Theo Tremblay. Stainer also spent time working with Tremblay at Studio One where he met printmakers, Basil Hall and Jan Hogan (Stainer, L, 2010a).

Tremblay and Hall were at this time encouraging remote Aboriginal artists to participate in print workshops at Studio One. Artists from Yirrkala and Munupi on the Tiwi Islands attended workshops in etching, lithography and reduction linocut techniques. Over the next six years, printmakers at Studio One conducted workshops in Arnhem Land, Warmun (Turkey Creek), Indulkana (APY Lands) and Utopia. In 1983, England Bangala and Johnny Bulun Bulun from Maningrida were the first artists from Arnhem Land to draw on lithographic stone under Tremblay’s guidance at the Canberra School of Art. Tremblay was keen on promoting the technique of lithography, as he believed that the more traditional remote artists would feel comfortable with the idea of drawing on stone as it was natural material. When introducing printmaking to remote Aboriginal artists, Tremblay was careful to choose a technique that he felt would resonate with the artists’ traditional way of working and he experimented with techniques to make them more accessible to the Indigenous artists. In 1992, Tremblay took his stones to Ramingining in the Northern Territory to experience working with the artists in their own communities. To make the new technique feel more familiar, Tremblay invited the artists to paint directly on to the lithographic stone with the ochres they used in bark painting (Tremblay, T, 1995, p.24). As he had anticipated, by associating the technique with a customary material the artists were quick to pick it up. Then, to capitalize on their carving abilities, Tremblay devised what he referred to as an ‘original’ technique for screenprinting that involved carving: he had the artists carve the image into linoleum blocks which he then printed onto an acetate sheet before exposing directly onto a photosensitive silkscreen. This avoided the reliance on screenprinting facilities which, in those early days of printing, were not readily available in the remote communities. With remote artists showing an increasing interest in printmaking, art centres, institutions and independent printmakers were more actively addressing the logistic challenges of providing the training and facilities required.
Getting into Prints Symposium

In 1993, the A&TSIPW was expanded into the Northern Territory University Print Workshop (NTUPW). That year, Leon Stainer worked with the art advisor at Munupi Art, Annie Franklin, and Stephen Anderson from ANCAAA\(^{67}\), to set up print workshops to coincide with an inaugural symposium on contemporary Aboriginal printmaking. *Getting into Prints* was convened by Tim Smith, lecturer at the School of Fine Arts and Steve Anderson from ANCAAA, with assistance from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. It was held at the University from 19 to 22 April, 1993, to coincide with the International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples Symposium. *Getting into Prints* was considered a groundbreaking event in the history of printmaking in Australia as it was the first symposium dedicated to issues affecting Indigenous printmaking. It provided an overview of the current situation and addressed problems specific to remote communities. Teaching institutions, printmakers, artists, gallery dealers, remote art centre managers and art co-ordinators, were invited to participate. Hall and Tremblay attended representing Studio One. The Keynote speaker was Roger Butler, curator of Prints, Posters and Illustrated Books at the National Gallery of Australia. In his keynote address Butler explained the National Gallery’s policy on collecting and curating Aboriginal prints and then addressed issues specific to the production of prints by Indigenous artists:

> It is not a matter of chance that Australian Aboriginals began to produce prints in the late 1960s. The origins lay in the need to preserve and promote the traditions of their visual culture, printmaking offered the possibility of vital new forms of artistic expression ... The context for the emergence of prints was political. (Butler, R, 1993 p.2)

Butler suggested that the general political upheaval existing in Australia during the late sixties, coupled with the emergent awareness of Aboriginal issues, had stimulated creative output in defense of culture and the preservation of identity. In support of his statement Butler quoted eminent Yolngu clan elder and spokesperson, Galarrwuy Yunupingu:

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\(^{67}\) See Chapter 2 for detail of ANCAAA and 1992 change to Desart and ANKAAA (ANKAAA, 2015)
When we paint — whether it is on our bodies for ceremony or on bark or canvas for the market — we are not just painting for fun or profit. We are painting as we have always done to demonstrate our continuing link with our country and the rights and responsibilities we have to it. Furthermore we paint to show the rest of the world that we own this country, and that the country owns us. Our painting is a political act. Unfortunately non-Aboriginal people often remain ignorant of this fact, or deliberately choose to ignore it. (Yunupingu, G, 1993 p.65)

Other presenters at the Symposium included Yolngu artist, Banduk Marika, and art centre co-ordinators, Stephen Fox from Yirrkala and Annie Franklin from Munupi Arts. In his presentation entitled: Outsider coming in Sometimes not really invited (Fox, S, 1993, p.17-20), Fox recounted his experience of introducing printmaking at Yirrkala. He stressed the importance of ensuring that the process was appropriate technology and that it was done sensitively to ensure that mechanical mass reproduction of an image did not detract from the power and spirit of the original creation. The selection of tools, inks and images is important, but equally important is ensuring that it is ‘friendly technology – something that could easily be used at home or out in the bush, where most of the art at Yirrkala is still produced’ (Fox, S, 1993, p.18). Fox proposed that a new process had a better chance of being accepted and enduring if the artists had themselves instigated the introduction of the process. He believed the acceptance, and continued and diversified use of printmaking at Yirrkala, was related to the fact that the Yolngu themselves had played an active role in progressing the practice.

Banduk Marika was the only Aboriginal artist from a remote community invited to present at the Symposium. In her presentation, Surviving as a Printmaker (Marika, B, 1993, pp.35-37), Banduk provided a personal account of her involvement in printmaking and referred to the particular aesthetic, moral and technical challenges facing remote Aboriginal artists involved in printmaking. She pointed out that for Aboriginal people, art related to caring for land and it was for them important that their stories be correctly interpreted, irrespective of what art form was being employed. Banduk described the situation in her own community where she perceived a lack of appreciation (both internally and externally) for the role of women in art production, and the general lack of facilities for promoting printmaking skills (Marika, B, 1993). The situation at Yirrkala in relation to these two issues was to change dramatically with the establishment of the Print Space in 1995. The following chapter
explores the attempt that Banduk personally made to address these issues through her involvement in the University of Wollongong–Yirrkala Exchange program.

Other speakers at the Symposium covered a range of topics pertinent to Art and Craft organisations, including, training, marketing, conservation, health and safety, sustainability and intellectual property issues. Stainer demonstrated print techniques and ran workshops. When interviewed, Stainer commented that he believed these workshops were a catalyst for printmaking in remote communities as, soon after, there was a notable increase in enquiries from artists interested in attending workshops to try this ‘new way of doing art’ (Stainer, L, 2010a).

Associated with the conference were two exhibitions: *Prints by Aboriginal Women from the Munupi Art Centres*, and *Collaborations, Prints by Aboriginal Printmakers from the Canberra School of Art*. The introduction to the *Collaborations* exhibition catalogue (Northern Territory University, 1993, p.1) maintained that this retrospective of a selection of the works produced over the past ten years by Aboriginal artists at the Canberra School of Art, provided an insight into the potential of the use of this medium by Aboriginal artists. The twenty-nine works exhibited included works by Yirrkala artists, Banduk Marika and Naminapu Maymuru White. While other artists had chosen to incorporate European motifs and perspective in their work, Banduk Marika’s work was singled out as demonstrating the ability for artists to create works that mirrored traditional bark painting. Exhibited were three works created by Banduk in 1985 in collaboration with Theo Tremblay: a lithograph, *Gudurrku (Brolga Dreaming)*; a four-colour reduction linocut, *Guyamanda (two fish)*; and a three colour reduction linocut, *Bäpi (snake)*. Naminapu Maymuru White was represented by a lithograph produced in collaboration with Tremblay in 1989, *Kingfisher Dreaming Totem* (Northern Territory University, 1993, p.3).

Exhibiting concurrently was the Australian premier of a touring exhibition, *New Tracks Old Land, Contemporary prints from Aboriginal Australia*. The exhibition was considered groundbreaking as it was the first exhibition of a comprehensive collection of prints produced by Australian Aboriginal printmakers (McGuigan, C, 1992). This was a collaborative project organised by the Aboriginal Art Management Association in Sydney and Jeffrey Keough, director of the Massachusetts College of Arts in Boston USA. Co-curated by Adrian Newstead and Theo Tremblay, it had toured to North
America in 1992 to great acclaim. Included in the exhibition were works by Yolngu artists: Manydjarri’s Elcho linocut, Ngaliindi – Moon-man; Naminapu Maymuru’s black and white triptych, Nyapilingu (Figure 3.17, p.139); Narritjin Maymuru’s three etchings (Figures 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, p.128); and three linocuts by Banduk Marika, Djanda and the Sacred Waterhole (Figure 3.13, p.133), Malka (Yam) 1992, and Daymirri (whale) 1990.

The co-ordinators, Chris McGuigan from the Aboriginal Art Management Association and Jeffrey Keough, envisaged that the exhibition would increase the exposure of Aboriginal culture to the Australian and wider public and would alert the artists to the benefits of printmaking (McGuigan, C, 1992, p.7). North American art critics congratulated the curators for ‘amassing a body of work that shows the strength of printmaking in Aboriginal communities’ (Temin, C, 1992). One critic acknowledged the significance of the exhibition in relation to Australia’s changing perception of the culture of their Indigenous people, describing it as not only compelling ‘for its rich, evocative imagery but also for the way it grapples with the current debate over Australia’s Indigenous culture’ (Lloyd, A W, 1993). An Australian art critic referred to the creativity and adaptability displayed by the Aboriginal artists: ‘The versatility of some of these artists, and their capacity to switch mediums without compromising personal vision or traditional cultural content, is astounding’ (Fenner, F, 1995). Banduk’s print was singled out for its relevance to the Yolngu sense of identity and attachment to country:

Banduk Marika’s Djanda and the Sacred Waterhole, (1985) depicts two goanna lizards, symbols that remind her, she says ‘of the strength of my people, my land, my laws, my custom’. For all their potent imagery, such works also carry a contemporary political message that is evident to Aboriginals. (Lloyd, A W, 1993 p.69)

In his catalogue essay, Tremblay made the following observation:

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68 New Tracks Old Land was co-curated by Adrian Newstead of Coo-ee Aboriginal Gallery in Sydney and printmaker Theo Tremblay who as an alumnus had facilitated the collaboration with the Massachusetts College of Art, Boston.
69 My research suggests that this print is incorrectly labelled as Malka-yam, in the New Tracks Old Land catalogue, No.22, p.74. It should read mawuka for yam. malka refers to the feathered string used in ceremony (Zorc, D R, 1986); <http://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au>
My experience based on working with Aboriginal artists for more than ten years from all parts of the country is that the artists are eager to learn new means of expression. As this exhibition reveals, printmaking is evolving into a major extension of the classic forms of Aboriginal art and is a powerful tool in the continuing growth of contemporary Aboriginal culture. (Tremblay in, McGuigan, C, 1992, p.18)

Two years later Newstead reflected on the significance of the *New Tracks Old Land* exhibition: he believed it had contributed to positioning Aboriginal art in the realm of contemporary art produced by a living culture rather than ethnographic art, as it had long been categorised. He listed other potential positive outcomes including the sharing of culture and skills with the First Nations artists of North America, the participation of Australian Aboriginal artists in print workshops throughout North America, and future collaborative touring exhibitions (Newstead, A, 1994).

Within two decades some of the outcomes that Newstead perceived in his 1994 statement have in fact been realised by the print artists at Yirrkala. In 2013, a series of reciprocal cross-cultural interactions took place between Yirrkala artists and First Nations and other artists from North America: a group of First Nations artists attended a two-week workshop at Yirrkala reciprocated by a Yirrkala artist then travelling to USA to participate in a workshop with First Nations artists at the Tamarind Institute of Lithography in New Mexico: Canadian printmaker Paul Machnik ran a two-week workshop at Yirrkala to introduce a new etching technique to the local artists; the *Yuta* Series of limited edition prints produced by the younger generation of artists in 2012 (described in Chapter 9), were exhibited in Sun Valley Idaho. In 2015 a selection of prints from Yirrkala Print Space were exhibited in Aspen Colorado.

**Northern Territory University Print Workshop**

Due to the increased demand following the *Getting into Prints* Symposium, Stainer began to organise more workshops for remote communities at the NTU Print Workshop. Etching and linocut techniques were taught at the first of the workshops held in 1994, with artists from Munupi Arts (Melville Island), Ernabella Art, Oenpelli and Injalak Art Centres attending. When Stainer was joined by printmakers Franck Gohier and George Watts, the workshops expanded to include offset lithopress and stone lithography (see Addendum: Print Techniques).
In 1996, a collection of the sugar lift etchings, lithographs and linocuts produced by Stainer, Gohier and Watts in collaboration with remote area artists toured in an exhibition, *Printabout*. This was an exhibition of many firsts: the first time such works were seen together as a collection; the first touring exhibition from NTU’s collection; and the first exhibition of Northern Territory works curated for and toured by Artback NETS NT. In the foreword to the catalogue the Executive Officer of Artback NETS NT, Denise Officer, expressed the hope that this would encourage other artists to try printmaking and alert artists and audiences to the fact that the multiplicity of prints made them more accessible and more affordable. In her view this was not an isolated evolution in contemporary Aboriginal art:

The idea of collaborative work is not new to Aboriginal artists. In the Northern Territory they have worked with the printmaking technicians in resolving problems of colour and true representation of ancient images. Aboriginal culture, based on a shared understanding, has continually encouraged this collaborative process. It is beneficial to all. (Officer in Monger, K, 1996, p.1)

In the Introduction to the catalogue, Roger Butler credited the *Printabout* exhibition as documenting the historic change in Aboriginal art instigated by the NTU Print Workshop — it had provided those Aboriginal artists, who had no previous access to printing equipment, the option to explore the many forms of printing ‘in a relaxed atmosphere and at their leisure’ (Butler in Monger, K, 1996, pp.2-3).

As the Indigenous artists became comfortable printing in one technique, other techniques that were considered applicable to the artist’s particular style, were introduced. Stainer described the progress.

We would do some research into artists’ work and then decided which way to go. With the etchings we were using sugar-lift so the artists painted directly onto plates with a sugar lift solution — so everything was quite painterly. It seemed the right thing to do as we were working mainly with painters. (Stainer, L, 2010a)

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70 Artback was funded by the Australia Council and NT Government Office of the Arts and Cultural affairs, its objective was to tour quality contemporary art to regional and remote venues throughout the Territory. It toured the *Printabout* exhibition as part of the National Exhibitions Touring Support Programme. (Monger, K, 1996).
The printmakers once again resorted to adapting existing techniques to ensure that the medium was accessible to artists. Gohier’s first technical innovation came about during a workshop associated with the *Kaltja Business* conference in 1996. Gohier and Stainer were working with the renowned Kimberley artist Rover Thomas (1926–1998) on his *roads cross* etching, using the sugar lift technique. As the sugar lift only came in black or brown, Rover was having trouble understanding how they would end up with the ochre colours he wanted in the final print. Gohier experimented and finally succeeded in creating ochre-coloured sugar lift by mixing into the sugar lift solution, red, yellow and black powders that were normally used in ceramic glazes. As the coloured sugar lift now mimicked ochre paint Rover was able to visualise the colour of the final print (Gohier, F, 2012). Apart from the interest generated by the conference, Stainer credits the visit by Rover Thomas, as influential in creating a market for Aboriginal prints created at the NTUPW. ‘Once we started working with Rover people down south started to take notice and Northern Editions started to take off’ (Stainer, L, 2010b).

Basil Hall arrived from Studio One in Canberra in mid–1996 to take up the newly created dual position of part-time lecturer in the Art Department and Manager of the print workshop. Stainer continued on as workshop technician and collaborator/printer. With this move north, Hall became more greatly immersed in collaborative printmaking with Aboriginal artists. He enthusiastically supported the delivery of workshops to the remote communities, as well as introducing the concept of themed projects. The relationship he had established with Yirrkala artists at Studio One was furthered by the invitation in 1995 to assist in establishing a Print Space at the Yirrkala Art Centre.

*Kaltja Business Conference 1996*

Soon after his arrival, Hall participated in the landmark *Kaltja Business* Conference with Stainer and artist and printer Jan Hogan who had also just relocated north to join the NTU Art Department. The *Kaltja/ Business: Industry or culture?* Conference was held at the Northern Territory University from 15 to 18 August, 1996. The purpose of this Indigenous cultural conference was to consider matters relating to the management
and growth of art centres in Northern and Central Australia (Girdham, J, 1996). Lawyers, artists, anthropologists, art centre co-ordinators and commercial gallery owners were invited to present papers addressing issues affecting Aboriginal art in the areas of marketing, copyright and cultural policy development. Tim Smith, lecturer at the School of Art, had conceived the idea of inviting Indigenous people to participate in the conference to provide a platform for their perspective on the immediate and long-term position of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and craft industry. The conveners — Art Theory lecturer, Michiel Dolk and administrator, Hilary Furlonger — brought together over a hundred key figures involved with the promotion of Indigenous art and culture from the Kimberley, Top End and Central Desert regions. A novel component of the conference was the staging of art workshops for the eighty-five participating artists from the remote communities of Warmun, Fitzroy Crossing, Lajamanu, Utopia, Ali Curung, Melville Island, Haast’s Bluff, Ernabella, Darwin and Yirrkala. Another purpose of the gathering was for the artists to mark the conference by developing individual and collaborative works in various media for an exhibition that would tour nationally.

Hogan described the conference as personally enlightening, as it was her first experience of working so closely with groups of remote artists. She continues to describe it as ‘the best conference I have ever been to’ primarily because of the interaction with, and input from, the Indigenous artists – ‘they came and worked at the University, painting there as teachers and painters and inviting the students back to their communities...then they did prints as well!’ (Hogan, J, 2012). For the whole week, the visiting artists sat and worked outside in the courtyard under bough shelters producing ‘the most amazing art.’ Hogan likened it to a map of Australia with the groups of artists setting up their own fireplace in specific sites dictated by kin relationships.

The students from the art school were involved in working bees for the week, giving them the opportunity to interact with the Indigenous participants. The occasion provided a unique opportunity for Indigenous artists to make speeches and be interviewed. The first gathering presented a steep learning curve for the non-Indigenous participants, especially in relation to understanding hierarchy and dealing with Indigenous cultural protocols. Hogan described *Kaltja Business* not just as an
example of a successful cross-cultural dialogue between people of disparate cultures, but also as one that operated at the intra-cultural level between the Indigenous groups with their distinctive regional cultures (Hogan, J, 2012).

![Fig. 4.1 Artists at Kaltja Business workshop in courtyard at Northern Territory University. (Image courtesy CDU Department of Visual Arts and Humanities)](image)

Artist Peter Adsett supervised the distribution of canvases and paint to the artists from each of the ten communities for them to paint their own stories and a representative piece that would become part of a larger collaborative mural (Figure 4.1). Rover Thomas produced two canvas paintings, including a work featuring an ‘X, called Waringarri, being his Mirriwoong clan word for a ceremonial gathering of people from different language groups. 71 This representation of a meeting or crossing of roads provided the title, The Meeting Place, for the composite collaborative mural. It also provided the name for a subsequent exhibition that toured Australia for eighteen months. 72 The individual units of the modular mural represented a wide reach of place and variation in technique, reflecting the diversity of Aboriginal culture. Collectively the composite work reflected the importance of land and tradition, common to all.

71 Rover came to use this as a recurring theme to symbolise the intersection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The impact of this image was such that the Australian Government reproduced it in 1999 in publications promoting Reconciliation. (Thwaites, V, Salmon, F and Angel, A, 2012)

72 Supported by ArtbackNT and NETS Australia, The Meeting Place exhibition toured between 1998–2000 to locations throughout Australia increasing awareness of Australian Aboriginal culture and art practice. The mural was acquired by the Northern Territory Government for their art collection.
To the surprise of all, the artists produced their paintings in just three days, so the organisers were compelled to look to other projects to keep the visitors occupied. The print department was approached with a request to run additional workshops. Stainer, Gohier, Hall, and Hogan hastily organised workshops in aquatint, linocut, lithography, etching and drypoint (see Addendum: Print Techniques). For the majority of the forty-five participating artists, this provided the first exposure to printmaking and the first opportunity to produce limited editions prints. Stainer and Gohier collaborated with Rover Thomas in reproducing his *roads cross* canvas in several print editions.  

Amongst the artists keen to try the etching technique were a group of women artists from Fitzroy Crossing who had never done any print work. According to Hall they had no problem in adapting to this unfamiliar technique and produced the ‘most exquisite drypoints’ that were the ‘stand-out results’ of the workshops (Hall, B, 2008, p.22). The suite of works produced by the women is still considered amongst the strongest prints produced by remote Aboriginal printmakers and ‘have yet to be surpassed in strength of line and expressive purpose’ (Angel, A, 2010).

Fig. 4.2 Yirrkala artists at Kaltja Business Conference, Darwin, 1996
Marrnyula Mununggurr, Naminapu Maymuru White, Gaymala Yunupingu & Dhuwarrwarr Marika
(Image courtesy CDU Department of Visual Arts and Humanities)

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73 The first of the editions entitled *Tokyo Crossroads*, was a four-coloured etching incorporating sugar lift etching with aquatint and was printed in a limited edition of 20. Hall collaborated with Rover in 1997 to produce a black and white version.
The Yirrkala Art Centre was represented by Yolngu artists Gaymala Yunupingu, Dhuwarrwarr Marika, Marrnyula Mununggurr and Naminapu Maymuru-White, all of whom had previous experience of printmaking (Figure 4.2, p.160). After participating in the week-long series of talks and meetings, they stayed on for the additional workshops, which provided an opportunity to learn new techniques. Proofs of the prints created during the workshops were printed and the plates were then taken back to Yirrkala for final editioning.

The conference and the interactions with the remote Aboriginal artists proved edifying for the staff members who were new to working with remote Aboriginal artists and with little knowledge of their culture or their approach to art. Hogan was impressed with their technical ability and the assured manner in which they approached their work:

...the greatest artists I have ever met, showing such confidence. They just did them and they were fantastic... where we would map everything out they would just start in one corner and finish in the other and it all worked. (Hogan, J, 2012)

Sarah Pirrie, who had recently arrived to teach in the art department after graduating from RMIT in Melbourne, was taken aback at the impact the interaction with the Aboriginal artists had on her and the other non-Indigenous participants. She was assigned to work with the Fitzroy Crossing mob and, apart from their warmth and sense of humour, Pirrie was impressed by the strength of the images created in a medium that was new to them. She came to appreciate that the skill is in the understanding of the subject rather than the familiarity with the material, and that for the Aboriginal artists:

Art isn’t about self-identity – it is something bigger – it is part of the community, part of the discussion. At the end of the day conveying information requires a really strong understanding of who you are conveying it to. First and foremost it is a story amongst themselves ... no matter what people say about the commercialisation of it all it is something that is about their own culture and their own story. (Pirrie, S, 2014)

74 RMIT: Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.
The manner in which the cross-cultural exchange of knowledge unfolded — sitting, watching, talking and listening to stories — proved a profound learning experience for Pirrie. Having the opportunity to observe the groups of Aboriginal artists engaging in dialogue while creating a painting helped the University staff and students appreciate the significance of the artwork and the importance of discussion. This interaction with Indigenous artists, their empathy with nature and the manner in which they convey this in their work, was to strongly influence Pirrie in the approach to her own work (Pirrie, S, 2014).

The Kaltja Business conference, like the Getting into Prints symposium, proved to be a catalyst for the expansion of printmaking in remote communities. Numerous requests came in for staging of workshops within the communities as well as on-campus. The positive outcomes were widespread, as evidenced by the reaction to The Meeting Place exhibition as it toured nationally. A report to the Australia Council provided the following feedback with regard to the cultural and ongoing benefits of the project:

The most obvious benefit to the community was a new understanding of meeting and the cooperative approach that is exhibited by these Aboriginal Artists and the way they address their work. Collaboration is the essence to Aboriginal survival, whether it is through art practice or social and economic partnerships. The title of the collection sums it up. A Meeting Place on many different levels. (Artback NT Arts Touring, 2001)

Hall and Hogan were to further explore cross-cultural collaboration and the concept of a common meeting ground later in 1996 when they co-ordinated a print project: The Australasian Print Project – The Meeting of Waters, which involved remote Indigenous artists and invited artists from the south-east Asia region.

The Australasian Print Project – The Meeting of Waters

Following on from the success of the 1996 Kaltja Business conference and The Meeting Place project, the NTU print workshop hosted another cross-cultural collaborative print project in 1997. This project was to have significant input from Yolngu artists. When notified that the Australia Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS), had selected Darwin as the venue for their planned 1998 conference, the Head of the NTU School of Art, Tim Smith, asked Jan Hogan and Basil Hall, to devise a print workshop and exhibition to coincide with the conference. Inspired by the
Australia Pacific Triennials, Smith considered Darwin as perfectly situated for such an event and for acting as a meeting place for the Asia Pacific region. Part of the brief was that the project involve Indigenous artists and be a vehicle for welcoming visitors onto this land.

Hogan and Hall were both relative newcomers to the area and as ‘southerners’ they realised that they were considered by the locals as culturally different as someone from Southeast Asia. Their impression of Darwin as a melting pot of cultures inspired the concept for the Australasian Print Project, which they envisaged as not just a collaborative art experience but a forum for cross-cultural dialogue. The objective was to gather a group of established artists from Australia and its Southeast Asian neighbours, who had little experience of printmaking and, through the print medium, establish a dialogue about the sense of place. The ‘place’ of Darwin was to be the common ground for the exchange, and artists from Indonesia, the Philippines, Arnhem Land, New Zealand and Darwin were invited to participate (Hogan, J and Hall, B, 1998). The Australasian essence of the project was in keeping with Smith’s vision for the Art School and University to be recognised in the Asia Pacific region.

As the Kaltja Business conference had been their first experience of a collaborative workshop involving Indigenous artists from remote communities and had highlighted just how little they knew about the communities, Hall and Hogan decided to invite an artist from Arnhem Land to be the Indigenous representative: someone committed to cross-cultural dialogue who would be comfortable meeting and working with other artists from other countries and willing to undertake a two week project in Darwin. For advice they turned to a colleague, Nigel Lendon, who had recently spent time in Arnhem Land researching the National Gallery of Australia exhibition, *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story*75. Lendon recommended Djalu Gurruwiwi, an artist and elder of the Galpu people who had been an advisor to him and had impressed Lendon with his knowledge, artistic skills and cross-cultural experience. Djalu had worked with outsiders at the annual Garma Festival held near his homeland in Arnhem Land as well

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75 Wally Caruana, Albert Djiwada, Djon Mundine and Lendon co-curated the 1997, National Gallery of Australia exhibition, *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story 1937–1997*. Lendon and Caruana edited the accompanying catalogue. In the Director’s Foreword, Betty Churcher described the exhibition as significant for experiencing ‘the transmission of artistic traditions from one generation to the next; reinforcing the knowledge and beliefs of the past, while revealing their relevance in the present’ (Churcher in Caruana, W and Lendon, N, 1997, p.5).
as through international travel with his *yidaki* business. He was a world-renowned master of the *yigaki*, as well as a respected senior artist who painted in ochres on bark, *larrikitj* and other material culture. He and his wife, Dhopiya Yunupingu, had participated in the 1995–1996, University of Wollongong-Yirrkala Exchange program, (see Chapter 5), where they had gained some experience of printing with the linocut technique. Djalu accepted the invitation on condition that his wife was able to accompany him. Part of the learning experience for Hogan and Hall was the realisation that the Indigenous participants did not come alone but came as a family unit. Extra funding had to be found to accommodate Dhopiya who was an artist herself, and came to be actively involved in the project in her own right.

Peter Adsett, a Darwin-based New Zealand painter, was invited to participate as he had worked with Hogan and Hall at the *Kaltja Business* conference and had previous experience of working with Indigenous artists. Adsett in turn suggested Ardiyanto Pranata, an Indonesian batik artist and painter from Yogyakarta who was interested in working with Australian Indigenous artists. Yuan Mor’O Ocampo, a Philippine mixed-media and installation artist from Manila, heard about the project while on a residency at the National Art School in Sydney, and expressed his interest in participating. Common to each of the artists was that they had little experience of printmaking.

Hogan had been successful in applying for funding through the Australia Council to run a print workshop linked to the conference. When the ACUADS conference was cancelled, permission to continue with the print project was sought and approved by the Australia Council.

![Fig. 4.3 Djalu Gurruwiwi, Peter Adsett, Adiyanto Pranata, Yuan Mor’O Ocampo Australasian Print Project, NTU, 1998. (Image courtesy B Hall)](image-url)
The five artists gathered in Darwin for the printmaking workshop in July 1997. At the beginning the participants spent time getting to know each other — sitting and talking about their backgrounds, their culture and their work as artists, (Figure 4.3, p.164). The expectation was that through a process of sharing of ideas and using the medium of printmaking for experimenting and working together, the artists would come to respect and understand each other’s traditions, culture and art practices. Although Darwin was not Djalu’s country he was a custodian of land to the east and was representing the Northern Territory. He went to great lengths to provide a proper welcome for the visitors and to ensure that they learnt about his Yolngu culture.

I would like to share my culture and my knowledge with everyone regardless of who they are and where they come from. This is my gesture of friendship and goodwill which I hope will lead to better understandings between Balanda and Yolngu (Aboriginal people from North East Arnhem Land). This is my part in the Reconciliation process. In return, I hope you will gain insights into my people’s life and our struggles... I hope you will respect our law, our culture, and our way of life — autonomy and independence (Gurrwiwi, D, 2014).

In order to facilitate interactions with outsiders and incorporate outsiders into their world, Yolngu establish kinship (gurrutu) with new people entering their lives. Essential to gurrutu is ensuring an understanding of the Yolngu cosmological view of the world and the obligations that go with relationships, especially with regard to personal interactions and land ownership. For Djalu, the yiḏaki played a vital role in the sharing of his culture and knowledge. He invited the other participants to join him in looking for wood to make a yiḏaki especially for the occasion, (Figure 4.4, p.166).

Adsett had a property at Humpty Doo on the outskirts of Darwin and suggested they go there to do the ‘hunting’. This provided an opportunity for Djalu to strengthen his connection with them all, and in particular, with Adsett (Hogan, J, 2012). There were two waterholes located on Adsett’s property. When Djalu saw them he expressed his concern that non-Aboriginal ownership would displease the traditional owners. Adsett told Djalu that a Larrakia elder had explained the relevance of the waterholes to him. The waterhole that was fed by the river dried up in the dry season and so died, while the spring fed waterhole was ‘living water’ and the home of the rainbow serpent.

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77 The Larrakia people are the traditional owners of the land in and around Darwin, Northern Territory.
Adsett had been made aware that the place was rich in meaning as these waterholes contained symbols pertaining to life and death (Adsett, P, 1999, Introduction). After spending time talking with Adsett, Djalu was reassured that the Larrakia elder had entrusted Adsett with the role of caretaker and that Adsett appreciated the spiritual significance of the waterholes and was taking care of them.

Hogan described a curious and enlightening incident that the group witnessed on one occasion during their stay. Djalu had gone down to the waterhole to hunt with his spear when a rainbow suddenly appeared in an oil slick on the water. Djalu pointed, drawing their attention to it, then put down his spear and refrained from any further hunting (Hogan, J, 2012). His reaction and the significance to his Galpu clan of the sighting of a rainbow on water was later explained: In Galpu mythology, Witi tj, the olive-headed python, travelled through Galpu clan lands and shared the waters with djaykung (file snake) who lived amongst the dhatham (waterlilies). Their movement under the water causes ripples and when the sun shines on the scales of the snake, a rainbow-like prism of light is formed on the surface of the water. This rainbow (djari) represents the lightning within Witi tj and the power of the storms created by Witi j (Print Space, 2012b). During Lendon’s research for the Wagilag Sisters Story, Djalu had explained to Lendon that Witi tj connects many Dhuwa moieties as they are all Witi tj people who ‘come together and help each other in friendship’ (Lendon in Caruana, W
The lightning created by *Wititj* is his way of speaking to people and connecting them. Another of Lendon’s advisors, Andy Waytjuku, brought this into a contemporary context by suggesting that in the present day this can be interpreted as *Wititj* working to create bridges between Aboriginal society and white society (Waytjuku in Caruana, W and Lendon, N, 1997, p.130). Djalu recognised the appearance of the rainbow at Adsett’s waterhole as a sign of the spirituality of the site and would have interpreted it as a sign that *Wititj* was creating a bridge between those people present at the site that day.

The waterhole experience correlated with the purpose of the project of a coming together and an exchange of ideas about place. Hogan observed how the artists, although from different backgrounds, seemed to understand the protocols and hierarchy with respect to relationships and negotiations. Djalu and Dhopiya made each of the artists aware of where they were placed within an Indigenous kinship system and how the hierarchy affected the particular relationships and modes of participation. This opened the way for more meaningful interaction and cultural exchange, outside the usual experience of most of the participants.

We wanted to create an environment in which experimenting and doing were paramount: where the process of printmaking, the process of collaboration and the process of understanding were allowed to weave through the event. The artists had to find a way. A way of communicating their ideas, their beliefs and their marks. And what about the significance of a mark? How to locate across cultures, especially if that mark has a relationship to restricted or sacred motifs? By using printmaking as a meeting point, we were hoping the artists would learn from each other and through their exploration and struggle to make a new material hold meaning, they would be able to gain insight into the meaning the others were trying to convey. The artists all had confidence in their tradition, culture and art practice to be able to respond to the new medium. Through a visual language, and understanding of Place and what that meant to each artist to develop (Hogan, J and Hall, B, 1998).

The participants all appreciated that each artist had a means of mark-making that was significant to them and their cultural identity. Following their experience at the waterhole they agreed that water had united them and as it provided a common ground they decided to incorporate it in their work as a central theme uniting their work.
Each of the artists was asked to create an individual print using a print technique that was new to them. The collaborative nature of the experience evolved with the artists interacting with each other during conceptualisation of their works and then by working with different printmakers in the production of their individual prints. Djalu and Dhopiya chose to do two screenprints (Figure 4.5). As the printmaking workshop at that time was not set up for screenprinting, these were editioned off-campus by Shaun Poustie at Red Hand Prints' workshop. Adsett and Mor’O Ocampo did etchings that were printed onsite by Hall and Stainer. Pranata created a lithograph, printed by Hogan, and an etching that was printed by Hall.

The Director of the Arts Program at Asialink, Alison Carroll, was invited by Hogan and Hall to review the project. She and Lendon interviewed the visiting artists regarding their work and to gauge their reaction to the workshop. The artists appreciated that in

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78 The first stage of Red Hand Prints started in Darwin, Australia, in 1996 when Franck Gohier established Red Hand Prints with Shaun Poustie as an open access Printmaking studio. It offered free, expert printmaking tuition to the Darwin community and a professional Fine Art editioning program to numerous Aboriginal communities throughout the Kimberley, Tiwi Islands, Arnhem Land and Central Australia. Poustie left in 1998. Red Hand Prints is now a privately owned workshop run by Gohier and his artist wife Chayni Henry (Red Hand Prints, 2014).

79 Asialink, founded in 1990 with the support of The Myer Foundation and The University of Melbourne is ‘Australia’s leading centre for building Asia capability, public understanding of Asia, and appreciation of Australia’s role in the Asian region. The role of Asialink Arts is to develop opportunities for cultural exchange between Australia and Asia and improve the Asia capability of the cultural sector based on the principles of partnership, collaboration and reciprocity’ <http://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/arts>

14 August, 2014.
all their work, a mark could potentially be interpreted in many ways. As it had relevance to each of the artists, either personally or in the techniques employed in their work, water had become the universal theme in the works they were creating. Adsett commented that each of the participants had strong mark making and that all were surprised to find they shared a visual language in the use of crosses and circles. This was Adsett’s first experience of collaborative printmaking and he described what a revelation the introduction to printmaking had been for him, as it had given him the freedom to do things that he could not do in painting. Djalu explained the imagery in his work and the multiple meanings of some of the motifs he had incorporated (Lendon, N, 1997).

The First Collaborative Print: Gapu, Tubig, Air, Water

For the final interaction, it was decided that the artists should produce a collaborative print. The central theme of water was reflected in the title for the resultant screenprint (Figure 4.6, p.170), which was composed of the words for water in each of the participants’ native language: Gapu = Yolngu; Tubig = Filipino; Air = Indonesian; Water.

Everyone agreed that Djalu’s image should be in the middle of the print in acknowledgement of his authority and the Aboriginal participation in the project (Lendon, N, 2014a). This also supported the concept that his piece, occupying the centre or ‘eye’ of the work, represented Australia surrounded by the visitors. Before the other artists’ positions could be established it was necessary that classificatory relationships be verified by Djalu.

In determining the positioning of their particular contribution in the collaborative artwork, the artists deferred to the adoptive kinship relationships that Djalu and Dhopiya had established. Lendon made a schematic drawing under Djalu’s guidance showing the layout and the relevant gurrutu (relationship) between each of the artists (Figure.4.7, p.172) with their appropriate skin names (målk).

Dhopiya’s image with her Yirritja moiety motifs of larrakitj, wan’kurra (bandicoot) and djirikitj (quail) is at the top. She had adopted Mor’O Ocampo as her classificatory son (waku), so he was placed below her at the bottom of the print. In order to connect his image to the elements within hers, Dhopiya advised Mor’O Ocampo on the appropriate forms and colours for the imagery of the quail and crocodile eggs in his
section of the print. Djalu adopted Adsett as his brother and Pranata as his father, so they are on either side of Djalu’s central image of his Dhuwa creator spirit, *Bol’ngu* (Thunderman).

Fig. 4.6 *Gapu, Tubig, Air, Water I* Screenprint, 89x69.6cm. Ed.35, 1997
(Image courtesy NGA. Acc. No: 99.126)

Fig. 4.7 Schematic drawing showing *mālk* and *gurruṯu* of artists
(Diagram Courtesy N Lendon)

In his image to the left of Djalu’s central panel, Pranata has used traditional batik motifs and referenced the waterlilies in the waterholes on Adsett’s property. Adsett’s
image to the right of Djalu’s reflects the stream on his land and also includes reference to the leaves of the waterlily that Djalu had noted there. According to Hogan, Adsett didn’t think his contribution should be located where it was. He saw himself as land-based and grounded so felt he should have been at the bottom. Hogan agrees that from a Western perspective the image is quite unbalanced, but in her opinion rather than the layout, it is more a result of Adsett’s work being so strong that it draws attention from the centre. This ‘lack of balance’, she suggests, reflects that in their approach to cross-cultural collaboration the artists chose to ignore Western aesthetic conventions (Hogan, J, 2012). Lendon recalled the artists being very aware that their collaboration was producing a new kind of art that was in a sense, creating its own aesthetic criteria (Lendon, N, 2014a).

The works produced at this workshop so impressed members of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) that they purchased a selection and offered to assist the project by funding a proposed second stage dialogue between the participating artists and printers, planned to take place at the Northern Editions workshop later in 1998. SOCOG went on to promote the project as part of the pre-Olympic, A Sea Change, program of cultural activities, to the extent of appropriating the name, Meeting of Waters, for the event.

**The Meeting of Waters Exhibition**

An exhibition of the prints and other works by the artists from the Australasian Print Project was held at 24HR Art –Northern Territory Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, in September, 1998. It was to coincide with the artists regrouping in Darwin to create a second collaborative print for the second stage of the project. The title, The Meeting of Waters, once again reflected the common theme of water that united them. Works created by the five artists in their usual disciplines were exhibited along with those prints created during the first stage of the project. The Northern Territory Department of Arts and Museums (NTDAM) provided assistance with the catalogue production. The cover was designed by Adsett and hand screenprinted in collaboration with Hall. In the catalogue introduction, From the Heart, the curators, Hogan and Hall, opened with a quote from Djalu Gurruwiwi: ‘Yo. It’s manymak -good - meeting together, working together, and help one another, from the heart, you know’ (Gurruwiwi in Hogan, J and Hall, B, 1998).
The second collaborative print: *Gapu, Tubig, Air, Water II*

The second collaborative print was not included in the catalogue as it was being worked on during the period of the exhibition and was not editioned until 1999 (Figure 4.8). This large composite work, consisting of five separate etched and aquatint plates, was technically more challenging than the first collaborative screenprint. The central theme of water continued with the artists deciding to incorporate into their images a river flowing through each plate, connecting them all. Despite the complexity of the work, the decision-making was much easier than in the first project, as the artists had established their relationships and were now comfortable working together. The layout was conceived with Djalu’s role once again acknowledged by his plate being placed centrally with the other artists’ plates on either side. On this occasion the collaboration was even closer, with the artists each contributing in some way to another’s print. A waterhole that Adsett featured in his image was in-filled with cross-hatching by Djalu, so reasserting their relationship to each other and to the land. That the visiting artists were influenced by the Yolngu artists is evident in their final print, as they all incorporated aspects of Yolngu iconography and style in the execution of their work.

![Fig. 4.8 Gapu, Tubig, Air, Water II, Etching & aquatint](Images courtesy of NGA. Acc. Nos: 99.145A-E)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate 1: Yuan Mor’O Ocampo &amp; Peter Adsett</th>
<th>Plate 2: Ardiyanto Pranata &amp; Dhopiya Yunupingu</th>
<th>Plate 3: Djalu Gurruwiwi</th>
<th>Plate 4: Ardiyanto Pranata &amp; Dhopiya Yunupingu</th>
<th>Plate 5: Peter Adsett &amp; Yuan Mor’O Ocampo</th>
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A selection of the works from the project, including the two collaborative prints, were part of the first major exhibition of contemporary prints by Indigenous artists from Australia and the Australasian region (Butler, R, 2001, pp.102-105). The exhibition,
Islands in the Sun, Prints by Indigenous artists of Australia and the Australasian region, which toured Australia in 2001, was co-organised by the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) in collaboration with the Cairns Regional Gallery. In an accompanying publication, co-curator Roger Butler provided a description for the *Gapu, Tubig, Air, Water II* collaborative panel:

The cross-hatched section through the centre of the entire piece represents water. Each artist determined the position of the water, and Djalu approved the use of the hatching, done by his wife Dhopiya for each of the artists. In panel 1 the water becomes a billabong on Peter Adsett’s property at Humpty Doo, Northern Territory. It then flows through Yogyakarta and Arnhem Land in panels 2-3, before becoming the Pasig River, which winds through Manila in the Philippines. (Butler, R, 2001, p.103)

The touring exhibition brought together a collection of prints by artists from Arnhem Land, Bathurst and Melville Islands, Torres Strait Islands, Papua New Guinea, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. A linocut by Banduk Marika, *Banumbirr*, from her 2000 *Yalangbara* suite, featured on the cover. The section on *Prints by Aboriginal Artists from Arnhem Land* featured the complete *Yalangbara* suite of six prints along with Banduk’s 1989 reduction linocut, *Miyapunawu Narrunan*, three of the Elcho Island linocuts printed by Tremblay in c1985; and the two *Yirritja ga Dhuwa Ngatha* panels (Figures 6.20 & 6.21 p.223) created at Yirrkala Print Space in 1999 (Butler, R, 2001, pp.25-28). The Australasian Print project was described by Lendon as part of his catalogue essay entitled *Unfamiliar Territory: An art of constant translation*; and images of the prints produced during the project included in the section entitled, *The Cross-Cultural Experience*, were singled out as an innovative group of collaborative works that crossed traditional geographic and cultural boundaries (National Gallery of Australia, 2001, pp.94-96 and pp.102-105) They were described as having given the Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and Indonesian and Filipino participants, the opportunity to communicate their quite different ideas, beliefs, knowledge and their marks through the printmaking medium. The exhibition, which toured nationally and to New Zealand, was credited with contributing to the understanding of contemporary Indigenous art (National Gallery of Australia, 2001).
Other critics considered that the project had set the right dynamic for a significant exchange both culturally and artistically, as expressed in a review of the exhibition:

All artists found resonances of the theme in their previous work and the circumstances of their lives. As a consequence, the prints retain individual motifs and preoccupations, but bear the hallmarks of hard decision-making and negotiation. (Murray, D, 1998)

In his essay, *On the Possibility of Collaboration*, which appeared in *The Meeting of Waters* exhibition catalogue, Lendon made the following comment:

Is it possible to anticipate the outcome of a collaborative project? On one level, this project reflects a widespread curiosity to see whether the rhetoric of cross-cultural collaboration can be translated into interesting and worthwhile art through artists’ experience of new circumstances, in this case, a new medium. In hindsight, the outcomes of this project have shown that the NTU Print Workshop presented the right dynamic, the right mix of factors to make a significant exchange possible, and enable the participants (artists and printers alike) to explore unfamiliar territory in significant ways. (Lendon, N, 1998)

Hogan also considered that the objectives of the project had been achieved:

‘Throughout the project the artists showed great generosity and integrity in their exchange of ideas, with respect and understanding of another world view’ (Hogan, J and Hall, B, 1998). Hogan found great satisfaction in working on a project that came to fruition and worked so successfully throughout. It also provided the prospect of ongoing cross-cultural exchange with the artists planning to maintain contact and visit each other’s communities.

![Fig. 4.9 Djalu Gurruwiwi & Basil Hall screenprinting at workshop, NTU, 1998. Dhopiya Gurruwiwi and Peter Adsett observing. (Image courtesy B Hall)](image)
The objectives of this project - a meaningful exchange between participants who were personally exploring either a new situation or a new medium — applies equally to another cross cultural project, the Djalkiri Project that was to take place in Arnhem Land twelve years later. Its objectives and outcomes are explored in Chapter 8.

**Conclusion**

The role played by printmakers and institutions in Darwin cannot be overestimated for the impact they had on the acceptance and development of printmaking in remote Aboriginal communities. They were responsible for establishing some of the earliest programs designed to impart the knowledge and expertise required for remote artists to practice printmaking in their communities. The Northern Territory University through its Aboriginal Print Workshop and then Northern Editions, nurtured not only the remote artists but the printmakers who came from elsewhere to work with remote Aboriginal artists. Yolngu artists played a significant part in these pioneering cross-cultural workshops and projects. The prints produced have been recognised for their quality and innovation, and the programs, the artwork and the resultant exhibitions, have been acknowledged for the role they have played in increasing awareness of Aboriginal culture and for promoting the use of printmaking as a means of sustaining Aboriginal cultural identity.

The following chapter explores the model and the outcomes of a print project that was instigated by a Yolngu artist, Banduk Marika, and involved the Yirrkala community in a cross-cultural collaborative exchange program with the University of Wollongong.
5. The Yirrkala Exchange Project

The previous chapter provided a record of the introduction of printmaking to remote Aboriginal artists with reference to institutions and individuals who have been dedicated to promoting this art form to remote artists. This chapter explores an exchange project between the Yirrkala community and the University of Wollongong as an example of a cross-cultural collaborative printmaking initiative involving Yirrkala artists and a southern tertiary institution. It was instigated by Yolngu print artist Banduk Marika with the original objectives of initiating reciprocal exchange print workshops to enhance the printing skills of local artists, and to establish an onsite print facility at Yirrkala. The project outcomes are analysed with regard to the initial objectives of the project and the initiatives that evolved during the course of the project.

The University of Wollongong – Yirrkala Exchange

The University of Wollongong – Yirrkala Exchange project came about as a result of Banduk Marika’s friendship with Diana Wood Conroy, a lecturer in the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong. These two women played a central role in the implementation of what came to be known as The Yirrkala Exchange project. To the extent that it was realised, the project had significant impact on all involved — the artists, the University members of staff and the student body. Although failing to continue as originally intended, it has had ongoing benefits and those who instigated the project deemed it had merits as a model for comparable art related cross-cultural collaborative programs. This project is considered in detail in support of the statement that the female artists at Yirrkala have played a prominent role in promoting printmaking at Yirrkala. By encouraging and participating in cross-cultural collaborative print projects the women have assisted in establishing printmaking as a viable art form at Yirrkala.

Diana Wood Conroy has provided much of the material for this research through interviews and in making available a portfolio of unpublished material that offered comprehensive detail of the project. Wood Conroy introduced other key participants,
who in turn provided invaluable insight into the various stages of the project by elaborating on the associated challenges and achievements. The following record of the project is based on that material.

**Banduk Marika Artist in Residence at University of Wollongong**

In July 1991, Banduk Marika was an Artist in Residence in the Faculty of Creative Arts (FCA) at the University of Wollongong (UOW). The residency was facilitated by Diana Wood Conroy, a lecturer in the Faculty, who had a long-standing friendship with Banduk since they had shared accommodation in Sydney in the early 1980s (Wood Conroy, D, 2012). Banduk fulfilled the program requirements of working with the students in the print studio and creating original work in the form of a series of large linocuts. She gave informal talks about her work and presented a seminar to the students about her country and the place of art in her community. To commemorate her visit, Banduk and the students designed a logo that was printed onto T-shirts to promote the Faculty of Creative Arts, the University, and the Aboriginal Education Unit (AEU) that had subsidised Banduk’s travel. While at the University she became involved in other cross-cultural activities. At the request of the AEU Banduk participated in a seminar with Aboriginal artists from Sydney and Wollongong and joined staff and students on a field trip, arranged in conjunction with the local Aboriginal Lands Council, to a local Aboriginal painting site (Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).

In a presentation to the students, Banduk spoke of the increasingly relevant role that art was playing in promoting awareness of, and sustaining Yolngu culture:

> As my art developed and I began to exhibit more I learned of other Aboriginal artists who were also trying to express themselves, trying to express the needs of their lands, through art via the commercial art market. Because Aboriginal people needed to do this, and the art became a much wanted commodity — for good or bad the art has been a way of helping the culture survive, recording a lot of things that might have been lost. ... I had to become not just an artist but a speaker about my art and culture. (Marika in Wood Conroy, D, 1995)

Banduk’s commitment to this undertaking resulted in her instigating a ‘two way’ cross-cultural exchange between the University and her community at Yirrkala. Following her residency, Banduk approached the University through Wood Conroy, with a proposal
to establish an exchange of knowledge and of artists between the University and Yirrkala. The exchange would be reciprocal with staff and students visiting Yirrkala and the Yolngu artists having the opportunity to visit Wollongong. Banduk’s ultimate ambition was to establish an ‘Art Centre of Excellence’ within the Yirrkala community.

In order to assess the feasibility of the proposal, the Faculty sent Wood Conroy to Yirrkala in July 1994 (Wood Conroy, D, 2012). During her stay Wood Conroy canvassed the community to assess their reaction to the proposed exchange and visited key organisations in anticipation of them becoming involved and facilitating the project.

The practical issues that needed to be considered included infrastructure support, the availability of essential equipment and materials, and visitor accommodation. The report back to the University was positive. Those local organisations approached: Yirrkala Community Education Centre (CEC), Laynhapuy Homelands Schools, Adult Education and School Council, Women’s Resource Centre, Dhimurru Land Council, Buku-Larrnggay Art and Craft Centre, were all in support of the proposal. The following extract from the School headmaster’s report in the local newsletter reflected the optimistic outlook for the project (Banduk is here referred to by her familial name of Mämburra):

During the last part of the term, we are having two big workshops running at the school. Mämburra has been working to organize these workshops for a very long time, and now they are actually going to happen. The first is a workshop with adults and potential school leavers. Two Lecturers from Wollongong have come up to run this workshop which will teach print skills with fabric, utilize computer technology and also cover some aspects of running a small business enterprise and copyright issues. Mämburra is hoping this will be the beginning of a worthwhile association with Wollongong University and that there will be other workshops held both here and at Wollongong in the future. (Extract from Report from the Principal, Yuṯana Dhāwu, Aug/Sept 1994, p.2).

Having identified the short term needs of local training and the expansion of techniques in the art arena, Wood Conroy suggested that the Yirrkala School (the CEC) be involved as it provided education from primary through to adult education. The particular skills identified as targets included silk screening for textiles, printmaking, ceramics, computer skills and art management, incorporating marketing and professional practice. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Wollongong approved funding through a Vice Chancellor’s Challenge Grant for the first two stages of the
project to be held at Yirrkala: a two week printmaking workshop planned for September 1994, and a four week multidisciplinary workshop encompassing printmaking, textiles and sculpture for January/February, 1995 (Bell, S, 2012).

**Pilot Project, 12 - 21 September 1994**

The pilot project held at Yirrkala in September 1994 was co-ordinated by Faculty staff members, Leonie Molloy and Trish Woods. The activities for those first two weeks were focused around printmaking skills. They brought with them essential materials and set up an improvised workshop in the home economics room at the Yirrkala School. Participants included post-primary students, teaching staff and established local artists. The students were shown colour reduction lino printing and stencil printing for fabric, while the local artists were introduced to new techniques in linocut and woodblock printing and experimented with silkscreen printing on fabric. In the second week the older students produced an editioned book of the linoprints. In their report on the visit, Molloy and Woods commented on the surprisingly high standard of the first prints produced.

At the end of the two weeks, all participants were enthusiastic about follow up visits to reinforce and further develop the skills learnt, and to introduce more complex techniques. At this early stage the participating artists were already contemplating the need for a community controlled and run, professional printmaking facility. They also expressed a keenness to learn professional practice skills associated with printmaking such as copyright, editioning and marketing (Wood Conroy, D, 2012).

In her workshop report, Molloy stated that she considered the success of the initial workshops was due to the fact that there was a direct relationship with the skills used in traditional painting and carving. She suggested that future workshops be designed to reflect the community’s needs and existing cultural practices. Molloy believed that the University of Wollongong could play an important role in providing expertise and professional development to the community (Molloy in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).

Trish Woods, a graduate of the College of Arts, reflected on the experience from her Koori point of view and made several recommendations. Concerned that not all university facilitators would have the appropriate cultural awareness for such visits,
and considering reciprocal visits by Yolngu to the University were being proposed, Woods suggested it would be prudent to offer ‘both ways’ cultural awareness classes. She also cautioned that programs be designed with regard for the relevance of family and kin relationships in Yolngu society. In order to address the obvious clan tensions within the community, Woods recommended the use of an autonomous print facility that would give total community access. All participants agreed that there was a need for a proper well-equipped facility independent of the Community Education Centre (Trish Woods in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).

As the acting Sub-Dean of the Faculty of Creative Arts, Molloy provided an additional report to Wood Conroy with suggestions to be considered in preparing for future workshops. Molloy identified two main participating groups — post primary students at the school, and artists in the community. She made the following recommendations: closer liaison with the school and teachers; the preparation of a course outline; teaching of more complex relief printing skills; and, as requested by the artists and teachers, the presentation of certificates of attainment to confirm successful participation in the workshops.

Molloy was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm shown by the artists for the idea of establishing a professional print workshop in the community — one that would be run by a local committee for the artists and the community. While at Yirrkala she had discussed this with Andrew Blake at the Art and Craft Centre. Blake revealed to her that the proposed extension to the current facility had provision for an etching press and a photographic facility. Molloy was of the opinion that the local artists had demonstrated their ability to benefit from a fully professional facility:

This planned facility would provide an excellent complementary facility for the Community Print Workshop, but in no way can it provide the type of professional print facility which these artists could take advantage of. The standard of their artwork, shown in their paintings and prints, and their demonstrated ability to skilfully learn and master printmaking techniques which I used at this pilot workshop, convinced me that they need an advanced professional facility such as that which is used by practicing artists in other parts of Australia. The few artists from this community who have been artists in residence at tertiary institutions (Wollongong, Deakin, Canberra), with print making facilities have amply demonstrated their ability to use the print medium to a high level of competency and
sensitivity to contemporary printmaking developments. (Molloy in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96)

Molloy supported the concept of an on-site, fully professional facility to take advantage of the local artists’ interest in exploring this new medium of printmaking and to assist in developing their innate talent. The interest the project had engendered was evident from the coverage it was receiving in the local newspaper, Yutana Dhawu, (Figure 5.1), which was regularly featuring the prints being produced at the workshops.

![Printing Workshop article in Yutana Dhawu, Aug-Sept 1994]( Courtesy Literature Production Centre, Yirrkala. Photographer D Salvestro)
Yirrkala Workshops, 26 January – 24 February 1995

The second workshop, held at Yirrkala at the beginning of 1995, was attended by four University staff: Sue Blanchfield (textiles), Ian Gentle (Sculpture and ceramics), Trish Woods and Rachel Burns (printmaking). The objective of this workshop was to extend the printing skills and introduce textiles. The first challenge presented when the visitors arrived earlier than expected to find the school unprepared, with the students still on holidays. The group made use of the time to set up the workshop and carry out an inventory that revealed the next challenge — a depleted stock of supplies. These logistic issues highlighted the necessity for advance planning when dealing with a remote community, including communicating directly with the school to confirm appropriate timing of the visits and pre-ordering of materials to ensure they arrived on time.

At the end of the visit, the participating University personnel were again required to provide a report to the University Department Head. Suggestions were made and experiences related, with all anxious to describe how the project had impacted on them personally and professionally. Sue Blanchfield, who was overseeing the textile workshop, had decided to focus on the medium of batik, as the skills required complemented those of printing and could be improvised with minimal equipment. She had also considered the historical link that the region had with the Macassans and was aware that some of the women and students had participated in batik workshops organised by Joan Wearn with the Utopia community in 1986–1987. The first endeavours of the participants were experimental in nature, but once they became accustomed to the qualities of the materials they started to create pieces with deliberate representations of clan totems and traditional patterns. Some of the works combined the batik technique with the lino block printing they had learnt in the workshops run during the 1988 RATE program. In a faxed communication to Wood Conroy, Blanchfield expressed frustration that in Banduk’s Studio application the focus had been on printing on paper and not fabric:

The quote for equipment caters for paper printing only, i.e. there is no allowance for textile printing which seems an oversight in my very biased opinion. I can’t see paper prints becoming a business, but textiles would give it a chance. (Blanchfield in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96)
As this thesis reveals, contrary to Blanchfield’s prediction, it was in fact printing on paper that the Yolngu took to more enthusiastically. With the establishment of the Print Space at the Art Centre in 1995, works on paper overtook textile printing. (Artists at the Nambarr Arts and Craft Centre carried on printing on fabric but this ceased with the closure of that centre in 2006).

Burns was involved with the paper printing workshops attended by groups of students. Many of the younger ones had no understanding of English and had to rely on the older students to explain the processes. All were taught the linocut technique. Printing first on paper and then onto squares of material which were joined to form a wall hanging. The primary school students made three wall hangings for the school, incorporating designs based on the local environment and marine life. The post primary collaborated with artists Dhangal Gurruwiwi and Rachel Yunupingu (daughter of Banduk) to make curtains from the batik cloth they had produced. Unlike the previous all-female workshop these workshops were also attended by male members of the school. Burns commented that the primary students were refreshingly uninhibited and produced works with a beautiful freedom of expression while the older students were more reserved and sought guidance and approval. Banduk was involved as an advisor and Marrnyula Mununggur, who was employed at the Art Centre, was amongst the local artists who attended along with the art advisor from the Art Centre, Dianne Blake.

For Burns, the exchange of knowledge was one of the most important aspects of the project, with the visitors gaining invaluable insight into the place and its culture. She was adopted by one of the cultural advisors, Dhangal Gurruwiwi, and found the development of this friendship and the family relationship, provided for a more open form of communication. Burns described the Yolngu skills in carving, weaving and painting as labour intensive and requiring of a deft hand. She confessed that the visitors had all failed in their efforts to acquire these traditional skills, but acknowledged that this ‘unique experience’ had impacted on her own work.

As a Koori, Trish Woods had a greater appreciation of the different concepts of community, relationships and time, than did her non-Indigenous colleagues. Woods recognised the value of not committing the Yolngu to a timetable and questioned the
fact that the teaching institution was programmed to achieve objectives and outcomes in a specific time frame, failing to take into consideration the very different concept of time held by the Yolngu.

As part of the cross-cultural exchange, while at Yirrkala the University staff participated in several weekend excursions organised by Banduk Marika. They ‘went bush’ to hunt for food and to collect plants for dyes, pandanus leaves for basket-making and ochres for painting. Trish Woods identified three levels to this particular learning experience: environmental, cultural and personal. This exposure to community life increased the visitors’ understanding of traditional culture and the community’s needs. Considering the insight they provided into Yolngu culture, Burns rated the bush outings as ‘the biggest reward of the teaching process’ (Burns in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).

This second visit had alerted the UOW staff to the challenging circumstances particular to presenting workshops in remote communities. In their final reports they all agreed that there was community enthusiasm and support for the project and for the continued involvement of the University. As Molloy had observed in the first workshop, the local artists were keen to continue expanding their knowledge and skill base, and welcomed the idea of a purpose-built facility in the community. Regarding the prospect of future workshops, all the UOW visitors agreed that along with close contact with the school, it was important to maintain those friendships and working relationships that had been developed in the wider community. An exhibition of textiles and prints held at the school at the end of the workshops was so well received by the Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy residents, that the artists expressed interest in continuing to exhibit and sell their works outside the community.

In an overview of the first stage of the exchange project, Wood Conroy reiterated the participants’ enthusiasm for the project while acknowledging the challenges presented by the logistic issues associated with providing remote workshops. There was potentially an additional financial complication in that the community artists expected to be paid for attending the workshops, which the current funding could not support. Considering Banduk had acted on the pilot project as the liaison person between the community artists and the Faculty, Wood Conroy suggested she be retained as a
consultant along with Dhangal Gurruwiwi, who, as a teacher and cultural advisor at the School, would be a valuable intermediary (Wood Conroy, D, 2012).

At the conclusion of these two workshops, it was obvious from the reports provided and the reactions of those involved, that the exchange of knowledge had been reciprocal and had produced positive outcomes. The community had benefited from having the University staff and students teach them new techniques, while the University visitors had benefited from involvement with such a creatively rich and culturally dynamic community. Wood Conroy had made a point of expressing her recognition of the talent and visual sophistication of the Yolngu people in their production of art. The potential for the University to be a model for innovative reciprocal, cross-cultural, educational exchange encouraged the Dean, Sharon Bell, to apply for funding to further develop the artist and student exchange program throughout 1995. In an application for a DEET81 National Priority Reserve Fund Grant, the intended benefits and outcomes were listed. The teaching and research would operate through a curriculum that considered the interaction of art and society in a contemporary Aboriginal community. It was envisaged that the project would ultimately contribute to the Reconciliation process by having University staff and students interact and collaborate with Yolngu people to further understanding, and appreciation of Aboriginal culture as part of the national Australian identity (Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).

The application was successful and facilitated two major workshops at Yirrkala: a print making workshop at Nambara82 (the Arts and Craft Centre located on the other side of Nhulunbuy); and an Artist in Residence posting at the University for Yirrkala artists. Although initially focusing on the visual arts, there was a recognised potential for the inclusion of music, theatre and creative writing in the program. Bell considered that securing a foundation for this educational and artistic exchange would contribute to

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81 DEET was the Department of Education, Employment and Training of the incumbent Northern Territory Government.
82 Nambara Arts and Crafts Centre, was an initiative of Gartjil Djakura (1949–2004), Chair of Yirrkala Business Enterprises(YBE) –one of the first independent, Aboriginal funded enterprises in the Top End run by a board with representatives from each of the 26 Yolngu clans of Arnhem Land. Established in the mid–1990s Nambara ran successfully for a number of years before closing in 2006. During this time local artists worked in its screenprinting facility printing local iconography on fabric for souvenir items, such as T-shirts, tea towels and napery.
establishing a relationship of trust, mutual respect and reciprocity (Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).

**Yirrkala Workshops, June–July 1995**

For the third workshop, Wood Conroy, three members of staff: Rachel Burns, Jonathon Greenwell and Kathy Orton, as well as two post-graduate students, two undergraduate students and a local Wollongong artist, travelled to Yirrkala. The aim of this workshop, which took place from 10 June to 1 July 1995, was to build on skills already introduced and to introduce limited edition, multi-colour relief printing on paper. The visitors spent time developing relationships and increasing awareness of cultural issues, primarily by associating with the women (Figure 5.2, p. 187). Banduk again organised field trips where the visitors joined the artists, women and children, in hunting for food in the bush and on the beaches, and collecting wood for carving.

Seventeen Yolngu participated in the lino workshop. As only the coloured inks had arrived when the workshops started, other materials including lino tiles and paper were borrowed from Nhulunbuy High School. Despite the makeshift print studio and the lack of supplies, the tutors reported that some fine work was produced. The main supplies arrived in the second week. In her final report, Orton commented on how happy the women were carving the lino, often taking the tiles home with them to work on overnight, and continuing to cut lino on the final days of the workshop. The three printers had trouble keeping up with them and had to work over the weekends to complete the editions. Orton noted that the women seemed more interested in carving the lino than seeing the end product. This preference can be explained by the fact that the women would have found the lino carving familiar as it was reminiscent of their traditional wood carving. They were already ‘carvers’ but, as printmaking was still relatively new to them, they were not yet ‘printers’. Consequently, at this stage they may have appeared more interested in the process of creating than realising the final print.
Jonathon Greenwell had come along to explore the feasibility of running a carving workshop as a precursor to building an open plan structure as a base for introducing carving with power tools. He soon realised that this would not be practical because of the mobility of the population, with the majority of the men working in their homelands away from the distractions of Yirrkala. Greenwell spent time getting to know the men in the community and exploring with them other avenues for more appropriate carving. Of relevance to the progress of printmaking was the fact that
Greenwell attended the lino print workshops every day to work with the young male students. He believed his presence increased the interest of the young men in what otherwise was seen as women’s business (Figure 5.3, p.187).

This visit further confirmed the widespread interest in the workshops, with discussion taking place around the feasibility of extending the program to those living in Homelands. Logistic and financial issues had to be taken into account when considering whether it was more practical to bring people in from the Homelands to attend workshops at Yirrkala, or for the tutors to visit the Homelands. The sale of the prints was a popular topic of conversation, with talk of staging exhibitions in Darwin, and in Wollongong in association with the University. The Art Centre was approached and Andrew Blake expressed interest in selling the prints through their shop.

**Yirrkala Studio Project 12–27 September 1995**

The exchange program continued with another workshop in September 1995. This included provision for skills-based training to musicians and visual artists. Bell reported on the progress:

To date a cross cultural experiential learning environment has been established. A dialogue on contemporary arts techniques has been initiated. Professorial practice strategies are being shared. The extension of this dialogue to multi-disciplinary arts practice and the shared exploration and development of understanding of the logic of artistic endeavour and cultural practice is an obvious yet challenging progression. Moreover, this progression to a higher level of abstraction will facilitate analysis of Yolngu paradigms for cross cultural teaching and learning in multi-disciplinary arts. (Bell in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96)

Recognising that a successful reciprocal exchange of knowledge had occurred throughout each of the workshops, Bell was confident of future fruitful interactions and exchange of knowledge and ideas. This supported Wood Conroy’s acknowledgment in her report that the workshops had been valuable to all, with the input from both parties creating a solid base of trust and support.
Yirrkala Artists at University of Wollongong, July–September, 1995

Two artists from Yirrkala, Nancy Gaymala Yunupingu and Valerie Mulminyina Dhamarrandji, went to UOW for two weeks in July–August 1995 (Figure 5.4). With the assistance of tutor Kathy Orton, they produced several editions of three-colour lino prints which later went on sale in the University’s Long Gallery. Sitting on a rug in the courtyard, the artists interacted with students as well as with local Aboriginal community members which Wood Conroy saw as significant in breaking down barriers between staff, students and Aboriginal people (Figure 5.5).

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Fig. 5.4 Gaymala, Mulminyina & son, & Kathy Orton holding Mulminyina’s Dolphin linocut Court yard Faculty of Creative Arts UOW, July/August 1993. (Image courtesy D Wood Conroy)

Fig. 5.5 Dhopiya with Wood Conroy and students. Faculty of Creative Arts Courtyard, UOW September 1995. (Image courtesy D Wood Conroy)
In September 1995, the Artists in Residence were Djalu and Dhopiya Gurruwiwi. Djalu held ‘Men’s workshops’ during which he played the *yidaki* (didjeridoo) and explained the significance of the instrument (Figure 5.6). Dhopia and Djalu participated in painting and printmaking workshops and interacted with local Aboriginal people. Artworks produced during the Wollongong workshops were purchased by the University for teaching purposes and for inclusion in the University art collection (Figure 5.7).

![Fig. 5.6 Dhopiya & Djalu Gurruwiwi & students in the Faculty of Arts Courtyard, UOW September 1995. (Image courtesy D Wood Conroy)](image1)

![Fig. 5.7 Gaymala Yunupingu & Kathy Orton, showing Gaymala’s Star linocut Faculty of Creative Arts courtyard, UOW, July/August, 1995. (Image courtesy D Wood Conroy)](image2)
According to Bell, one of the most challenging aspects of the exchange, financially and logistically, was that the Yirrkala artists never travelled alone and always came to Wollongong as families – ‘not just the artist but the whole mob’ (Bell, S, 2012). The funding did not provide for accommodation for families, but fortunately at that time the University was more flexible and solutions were found. Bell was mindful of how profound the exchange concept was and how closely allied it was to Yolngu philosophy. The older Yolngu women involved in the project valued the experience and were determined to have their young people exposed to being ‘down south’ where the bases of power of Balanda society were located. They believed that to understand the outside world and the Yolngu position in that world, the younger generation had to go out and experience it first-hand (Bell, S, 2012).

With this in mind, in January 1996, Dhangal brought her two children, and Witiyana Marika accompanied three of the post primary young men, to Wollongong. They took part in print workshops over a two week period. Witiyana was at the time a member of the internationally recognised Yolngu rock band, Yothu Yindi, and he met with the head of the music school, Houston Dunleavy, to consider the prospects of a music exchange. From the original print project the ‘two way’ learning and exchange of knowledge was expanding into other departments of the University. The young men from Yirrkala staged a traditional dance at the opening of the exhibition of prints from the workshops and participated in sporting and other events with young members of the local community (Figure.5.8, p.192).

**Exhibitions**

The works produced in the workshops were exhibited at three exhibitions over the period of the exchanges. In July 1995, *Freshwater/Saltwater*, held at the Long Gallery at the University was opened by the principal of the Yirrkala School, Nalwarri Ngurrawuthun. She commented that this project was as it should be — an example of ‘both ways, working together’ (Nalwarri in Wood Conroy, D, 1995). The title *Freshwater/Saltwater* reflected the Yolngu concept of the place where the two waters meet and mix and create a rich and complex dynamic balance. In her introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Wood Conroy explained the appropriateness of this title for
the exhibition by quoting Mandawuy Yunupingu (1956–2013), former principal of the Yirrkala Central School and lead singer of the rock band, Yothu Yindi:

For us, the sight and smell of brackish water expresses a profound foundation of useful knowledge – balance. ... The deep pool of brackish water is a complex dynamic balance. In the same ways, balance of Yolngu life is achieved through ebb and flow of competing interests, through our elaborate kinship system. And I feel that in the same ways balance between black and white Australia can be achieved. (Yunupingu in Wood Conroy, D, 1995)
The Vice Chancellor described the exhibition as one of the best he had seen at the Gallery. Many of the artworks were subsequently acquired for the University’s permanent collection, as were works from the *Yolngu in Wollongong Exhibition of Prints*, held at the Project Gallery in Wollongong from 9 – 20 January, 1996.

Prints and canvases created during the workshop were also exhibited in March 1996 at the *Native Title Now* exhibition, held at the Tandanya Gallery in Adelaide as part of the Adelaide Festival program. This included works by Djalu Gurruwiwi, Dhopiya Gurruwiwi, Marrnyula Mununggurr, Dhangal Gurruwiwi, and Witiyana Marika (Figure 5.9).

![Image](image.png)

**Fig. 5.9 Witiyana Marika, Turtle Hunting**  
Linocut print & related lino tile. Each 32x49cm, 1996  
(Print and Linocut courtesy University of Wollongong Archive. Photographer D Salvestro)

**University of Wollongong – Yirrkala Art Collection**

The works produced during the exchange programs are archived in the University of Wollongong, Yirrkala art collection. They are a testament to what the artists learnt during the workshops and how they combined their newly acquired skills with their traditional artistic skills and Yolngu aesthetic, to create contemporary prints. Soon after the exchange workshops the printing department at the University was closed down due to budgetary constraints. Bell gifted one of the now redundant printing presses to Northern Editions recognising that the Northern Territory University was now in a better position than Wollongong to offer workshops to remote artists. As a result of this gesture, some of those artists who had attended the workshops and worked with the presses at the University of Wollongong would at a future date, have the opportunity to use the print presses again in Darwin.
Final Exchange Workshop October 1996

Funded by a DEET grant, Sue Blanchfield and Rachel Woods made what was to be the final exchange project workshop visit to Yirrkala. During the two week visit they were to run workshops on Contemporary Studio Practice in Printing and Textiles at both Yirrkala and Nambara. The workshops focused on adult artists and listed to attend were: Dhapiya Gurruwiwi, Dhangal Gurruwiwi, Djalu Gurruwiwi, Marmbarra (Banduk) Marika, Boliny Wanambi, Robyn Mununggurr, Dhumadal Dhamarrandji, and Naminapu Maymuru White. The first workshop was held at Nambara which had more modern facilities, having recently received new printing equipment. This decision created an issue with Banduk who, threatening to cancel the Yirrkala workshop, raised her concerns with Wood Conroy explaining that there were local ‘political’ issues between Yirrkala and YBE, the organisation that ran Nambara. Wood Conroy apologised to Banduk for any offence that may have been caused, but suggested that they could not be expected to be aware of all the ‘innuendos of Yirrkala politics’ (Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96). Banduk pointed out that this was a Yirrkala initiative and should always be seen as such and not be confused with YBE projects. The delicate situation was soon resolved and the workshop at Yirrkala went ahead.

Following discussion with the School and Andrew Blake at the Art Centre, it was decided that for this adult-focused workshop the lino printing press from the school would be relocated to the new print workshop space at the Art Centre. Blanchfield reported that conducting workshops away from the school facilitated establishing working relationships with the artists and was more convenient for equipment maintenance.

With the local artists showing a growing interest in attending the workshops and better facilities becoming available, Blanchfield recommended in her final report that funding be sought for future exchanges. She also recommended supporting a travelling exhibition to take advantage of growing outside interest in the prints from Yirrkala and to ‘firmly establish the Faculty’s links with the Yirrkala artists exchange project’ (Blanchfield in Wood Conroy, D, 2012).
Outcomes

The Yirrkala Exchange project was suspended when the DEET Grant ran out and no further funding could be secured. Bell regretted that the National Priority Grant that had funded the original project no longer existed as, at the time, it was the only scheme in the sector which gave significant amounts of funding to projects that were more closely aligned to learning and teaching rather than being strictly research-based. It also had a reasonably open set of criteria, enabling the University to focus their original application around the concept of community engagement. The funding had also been generous enough to allow them to extend the project over more years than the initial budget had proposed (Bell, S, 2012).

Wood Conroy persisted and approached the Australia Council (AC) with a request for assistance in the development of the project. In a letter to the Chair, Hilary McPhee, Wood Conroy had set out the perceived benefits of the proposal, stating:

The Buku-Larrnggay Art Centre has just completed a beautiful addition to their building. We are hoping that the University may be able to negotiate using this space occasionally to continue to have workshops, and to build on the network of relationships that have been established. We have learnt a great deal about the necessity of establishing trust, of going slowly and being open to Yolngu systems of pedagogy. Our National Priority grant is coming to an end, with perhaps one more exchange in September, 1996. We are hopeful of continuing the exchange, and expanding it into the area of music composition … Any future plans to establish Banduk’s vision of a Studio centre, with the University expertise and involvement which she sees as vital, is dependent on substantial funding. (Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96)

Although Wood Conroy’s approach was unsuccessful, encouraged by the ongoing support from the University, Banduk continued to actively seek funding for the Art and Craft Centre of Excellence and the broader exchange proposal. In a letter to Joh Prior, the Project Officer at ATSIC, she explained her vision and expressed her appreciation of the support given by the staff in the Faculty of Creative Arts. Bell and Wood Conroy had also written again in support of the proposal stating that it would be a great asset to the remote community as it would increase its status in the wider Australian art world and provide a means of generating income (Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).
Banduk approached government bodies, institutions and other potential participants to garner support. That the concept was perceived to have merit and received wide-reaching support was evident in the comments made in letters of endorsement received by Banduk. Prior commented that the proposal fitted in well with the ideas of Reconciliation and had the potential to open up different avenues of work and broaden the income-earning potential for artists. Members of Parliament, including Federal member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon, endorsed the potentially positive impact on the Reconciliation process while local member, Syd Sterling, saw it also providing encouragement for the growth and development of local artists.

Arts organisations such as the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and the National Association for the Visual Arts, referred to it as an extraordinary joint cross-cultural initiative that would provide excellent opportunities for cross-cultural education. Wally Caruana, Curator Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art, NGA, suggested that the proposal provided ‘more than the development of a range of techniques and media but an exchange of ideas and values ‘(Caruana in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96). The Director of the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association, Michael McMahon, summed up the perceived benefits suggesting the project ‘would greatly enhance the skills and methods available to your community to develop and preserve its culture and would also, through exchanges and exhibitions, be an important way in which non-Indigenous people could learn about that culture’ (McMahon in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).

Consultants, Street Ryan and Associates, were contracted through the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, to carry out basic market research to establish the potential viability of the project. In June 1995, they provided a draft feasibility study for an ‘Art Centre of Excellence’ at Yirrkala. The proposal contained a comprehensive budget plan and an outline of the proposed objectives of the Centre, suggesting it had the potential to become a major centre of art and craft-learning across cultures. In summation they described it as:

... a bold vision that combines academic achievement, research training, National and International exchanges and a potential business with prospects for healthy growth. (Street Ryan & Assoc in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96)
At this stage Banduk had the plans drawn up for her ‘Art Centre of Excellence’ but, despite all the written and verbal support, her project was not to be realised as she was unable to secure adequate funding. In the meantime, the Yirrkala Art Centre was about to undergo extensive building renovations that included a dedicated print space. Dianne Blake had participated in one of the workshops organised by UOW and was aware of the positive outcome of the collaborative interactions between Yolngu and balanda. She was amongst those who wrote letters of support suggesting that such a centre was:

... a positive step for the Yolngu way of life, developing skills through workshops allowing the artists a greater depth of field, adding to the expansion of their creativity and providing a choice of recreational/professional options to the lifestyle (Blake in Wood Conroy, D, 1994-96).

With these words Dianne Blake was foretelling the role of the Print Space that she would soon be intimately involved in establishing at the Yirrkala Art Centre.

**Ongoing Benefits**

This chapter has described the Exchange project that developed between the community of Yirrkala and the University of Wollongong, as an example of a pioneering cross-cultural collaborative exercise in ‘two way’ learning. The University identified and resolved issues as a result of experiencing the unique cultural, logistic and financial challenges associated with interacting with a remote community. Although the project stalled due to lack of funding, as Bell reflected, the project had actually achieved what it had set out to do — be involved in an exchange of knowledge while introducing new skills to remote artists and facilitating access to equipment and materials. Bell saw the project as aligned with the Yolngu philosophy of ‘two way’ learning and considered it a successful coming together of philosophies, with a sharing of knowledge based on mutual respect (Bell, S, 2012). Through this project the University had established that it could engage in a reciprocal learning process and contribute to communities, rather than seeing communities just as sites of research.

Although the Exchange Project failed to progress as initially envisaged, a connection was forged and the relationship between the University and Yirrkala artists has
continued. Leonie Molloy took two years leave from the University and went to work at the Yirrkala School in the Literature Production Unit with the aim of setting up a multi-media unit to assist with creating an inventory of the valuable archival material and with publication of educational material and newsletters. She also assisted in setting up the School’s bilingual program. Sue Blanchfield returned to Yirrkala in 2001 to work with artists Marrnyula (Watjumi) Mununggur, Djapirri Mununggirritj and Dhangal Gurruwiwi on a specific project to produce works to be included in a planned exhibition of printed cloth. The artists then attended the University in 2004 as Artists in Residence, where they continued the collaboration with Blanchfield in developing designs to reproduce on fabric. The three artists participated in the Tracking Cloth\(^3\) symposium, and accompanying exhibition at the Wollongong City Gallery, where they also gave artist’s talks. Linoprints that they worked on during the residency were featured in an exhibition of prints from Yirrkala (Figure 5.10) that was held concurrently in the Long Gallery at the University (University of Wollongong, 2004).

![Image of artists](image_url)

**Fig. 5.10** Dhangal Gurruwiwi, Djapirri Mununggirritj, Marrnyula (Watjumi) Mununggurr. Artists in Residence at University of Wollongong, 2004. (Image Courtesy University of Wollongong)

\(^3\) The *Tracking Cloth* exhibition toured through South East Asia and regional Australian galleries. The exhibition documented the work of a select group of Australian textile and fibre artists whose work had been influenced by travel and interacting with other cultures. The new ideas and techniques experienced by these artists were expressed in their work. (Bell, S, 1997)
Conclusion

This chapter has described the Yirrkala Exchange Project as an example of an innovative cross-cultural educational exchange that, despite failing to achieve continuity as conceived, had positive outcomes for all involved. As also experienced in the Artists’ Residencies and exchange programs discussed in the previous chapter, the ‘two way’ knowledge transfer between Yolngu and non-Yolngu affected both the philosophical outlook and the artistic practice of all participants. An unexpected outcome was the enduring effect that the interactions had on the non-Indigenous participants. In general they were unprepared for the profound impact that being exposed to Yolngu cosmology and Yolngu art practice would have on them, personally and professionally. The Yolngu artists in turn learnt practical skills and aspects of Western art practice which extended the range of their artistic output and assisted in the creation of a new income stream. The reciprocal exchange of knowledge at the core of these interactions was a vital factor in the positive outcomes of the project.

With the project coming to an end due lack of funding, there were objectives that remained unfulfilled, most significantly for Banduk Marika was the unrealised dream of her ‘Art Centre of Excellence’. However, the benefits that she envisaged would come from having a professional print facility in the community would soon become a reality with the building of a dedicated print workshop at the Yirrkala Art Centre. The following chapter explores the factors that affected the development of that Print Space and have contributed to its productivity and sustainability.
6. The Print Space at Yirrkala

Printmaking is a collaborative process in which the artist is dependent on the printmaker and the associated equipment and materials for the production of the artwork. Chapter 3 considered the role played by the local teachers at Yirrkala in introducing printmaking to the community through basic print workshops, first on fabric and then on paper. Prior to the establishment of an onsite facility, those Yirrkala artists interested in furthering their printmaking skills had no choice but to travel to attend workshops at outside institutions. Printmaking became more accessible to local artists with the establishment of a dedicated print facility at the Yirrkala Art Centre offering onsite workshops run by visiting and local printmakers.

This chapter provides an historical record of the development of the Print Space at Yirrkala and explores the factors that contributed to the acceptance of printmaking and ongoing successful production of limited edition prints. This chapter proposes that a combination of productive collaborative interactions have contributed to its success. The Yirrkala Art Centre has been fortunate to have had a continuum of committed and long-serving co-ordinators and art advisors who have consistently shown respect for the values of Yolngu culture and art when introducing new techniques. This combined with the enthusiasm and the willingness to accept change demonstrated by the Yirrkala artists and community and the ongoing role that the women continue to play as innovative artists and in managerial and teaching roles, have been relevant to its sustainability.

The controversial issue of the reproduction of miny’tji in print has been a constant since the introduction of printmaking. Throughout this chapter the gradual changes to the restrictions originally imposed on printmaking by the Artists Council, are described.
The Print Space – a product of Collaborative Interactions

Dianne & Andrew Blake, 1993–2001

From the time of their arrival at Yirrkala in 1993, Dianne and Andrew Blake supported the extension of the artists’ oeuvre through the use of different media while promoting a standard of fine art. They played an important role in the development of the Print Space and in ensuring its success as a commercial venture. The Blakes encouraged the artists to apply their traditional methods to the print medium in order to create innovative works that retained an inherent Yolngu character. The Print Space offered the artists more diversity and the opportunity to produce secular art outside the established rules that applied to the more traditional painting. This was facilitated by the improved access to facilities for print production and by the introduction of new colours to the Yolngu palette. Andrew\textsuperscript{84} suggests that the Print Space offered an avenue of artistic expression for those artists wishing to avoid the responsibility that goes with production of restricted painting. At the same time it provides an alternative medium for reaffirming cultural beliefs and identity (Blake, A, 2011b).

According to Andrew, structured teaching has never had a place in the Yirrkala Art Centre and, to date none of the Yolngu staff at the art centre has had formal art school training. It has always been hands on and ‘give it a go’ with a focus on understanding the processes involved. His belief is that:

\begin{quote}
Everybody is artistic — some better than others. If you want to do it and enjoy making art you have a chance — for Yolngu people making art is part of their very being. (Blake, A, 2012)
\end{quote}

When questioned about the extent of involvement of Art Centre management in the evolution of a work, the Blake’s stated that their aim was to ensure that the artists have complete artistic freedom in conceiving their artwork. They see the main role of the advisors in the Print Space is to teach techniques and provide a sound understanding of the principles of printmaking. They are there to give technical advice and to ensure the works are of the required standard to qualify as fine art. Andrew

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{84} In identifying the Blakes, to avoid confusion I will from here on use their first names to identify Dianne or Andrew rather than using their family name.
\end{footnote}
considers it the co-ordinator’s responsibility to keep up to date with what is popular in the market place and keep the artists informed so that they are aware of what might be of interest to the art buyer. They believe it is for the artist to decide what they create with the awareness that to be successful in the art market the art must be of a certain quality and standard. Andrew singled out those artists with the most ability to excite the market place as those who are ‘prepared to push the envelope. Whether this is by design or by sheer exuberance, such as with Nyapanyapa, is the unknown’ (Blake, A, 2011b).

They credit much of the success of the Print Space to the high participation rate which results in a broad range of editions and a varied selection of stock. The work destined for the art market is rigorously produced to ensure it is accepted as contemporary fine art. To this end, editions are kept small and working on large blocks is discouraged until acceptable standards are attained. When there has been cause to intervene, it is usually to advise the younger, less experienced artists, and in those situations every endeavour is made not to discourage or be too judgemental (Blake, A, 2012, Blake, A and Blake, D, 2013).

**Basil Hall**

In preparation for the establishment of the print studio, the Blakes called upon Basil Hall to advise on the purchase of equipment and to assist with the installation of a second-hand printing press. Hall’s first interaction with Yirrkala artists had been during his time as director of Studio One in Canberra (1987 until 1996). The opportunities for collaboration became more frequent when he relocated to Darwin mid–1996 to take on the position of co-ordinator of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Print Workshop (A&TSIPW) at the Northern Territory University. His involvement with remote Aboriginal artists was to increase with the print workshops that were held onsite as well as out in the communities. It was opportune for Hall that he was asked to assist with setting up the print workshop at Yirrkala at the same time as he was planning to visit to work with Naminapu on the coloured version of her *Nyapilingu* triptych. He recalled the excitement of establishing a print facility in such a remote community:
Andrew and I dragged the print press in and starting running off the first prints with Marrnyula and her younger sister Rerrkirrwanga, who were there and willing to try things out. It wasn’t the beginning of printmaking at Yirrkala, but it was the beginning of printmaking there [on site]... and now fifteen years later ... there are Yirrkala prints in major collections. (Hall, B, 2011)

They started with little equipment other than the printing press. The lack of drying racks meant that the prints had to be laid out on the floor to dry (Figure 6.1). Once the press was installed there was discussion as to how best to advertise the new Print Space and whether they should go out into the community to invite the artists to come. Will Stubbs recalled his reaction:

It was ready... and my instinct was to drive around quickly to grab everyone and bring them in to start printing straight away. That’s what I thought we should do. We have a print shop let’s start printing. I’ll go and get them! But Andrew said: “No. it’s all right... They’ll find out about it. The people who want to will come when they want to come in and it will just grow.”... That’s something I remember... and it was so. Basically it was self-selecting. The artists who were interested pursued it rather than us selecting who to go and get to be involved. (Stubbs, W, 2011a)

Andrew Blake suggested that they should not pressure the artists but allow them to come in their own time. This proved to be the right approach as gradually some of the women artists came to the Art Centre curious to see what it had to offer. Amongst the first were women who had previous experience of printmaking: Naminapu#1 Maymuru White who was at the time working with Hall on the coloured version of her Nyapilingu linocut; Gaymala Yunupingu (c1935–2005) who, like Naminapu, had a
history of working at the Art Centre with Fox and had experienced printmaking at institutions away from Yirrkala, including working with Hall in Canberra; and Dhuwarrwarr Marika who had been introduced to screenprinting on fabric by the balanda schoolteachers at the Yirrkala School. With long-term employee, Marrnyula (Watjumi) Mununggurr, these women were instrumental in initiating local interest in and acceptance of printmaking as an alternative to the traditional art promoted by the Art Centre.

The Print Space was officially opened in February 1996. A significant feature that Fox had incorporated into the design of the new extension was an open verandah outside the print room. Dianne Blake described this as an important part of the Art Centre — the artists gravitate to this outdoor area which they consider their own space. They feel comfortable sitting together, working on their barks and prints, discussing techniques and ideas, while consuming copious cups of tea (Blake, D, 2011).

**Data entry: Documenting and Editioning Prints**

A system was set up to identify and record artists and their works. The number assigned to an artist reflects the chronological order in which they produced their first print at the Print Space. Every artist who has produced an edition at the Yirrkala Print Space has been assigned a number — to date 136 artists. Each print edition is identified by a letter of the alphabet, so that an artist’s print work is identified by a combination of their identification number and a letter of the alphabet starting from A through to Z. Subsequent editions produced by the artist are allocated the succeeding letter of the alphabet. If they have produced over twenty-six editions the cycle begins again with double letters. No artist has been assigned the number 1. Fox believed that this was in recognition of the fact that Yilila Mununggurritj had produced the first edition of prints at the Art Centre and this allowed for the possibility of posthumously producing further editions from her woodblocks (Fox, S, 2011a). However, as Yilila’s woodblocks were hand printed and editioned with Fox at the art centre in the 1980s, long before the inception of the Print Space, they in theory are not eligible for allocation of a Print Space identification number. The number 2 was assigned to Dhuwarrwarr Marika, who was the first artist to have a print editioned at the new workshop in 1996. This print,
identified as No.2A on the Print Space database, is the black and white linocut *Daymirri* (Figure 6.2).

The print features a Rirratjingu totemic sea creature on a background of semicircular crosshatched Rirratjingu *miny’tji*, representing the waters of her saltwater country. The linocut was created by Dhuwarrwarr at a workshop at Northern Editions with final editioning done at Yirrkala. Marrnyula was assigned the number 3 and Nyapanyapa 4. The prolific output of these two artists in twenty years of printmaking has resulted in each having worked their way through the alphabet twice. (The second round identified with double letters and the third round with triple letters and so on). Banduk has the number 14 reflecting the fact that although Banduk was involved with the Art Centre from the late 1980s she did not actually produce a print onsite until late in 1996. Banduk’s earliest prints, numbered 14A, 14B, 14C, although sold through the Print Space were actually produced in the early 1990s at Whaling St. Studios North Sydney in collaboration with print maker Diana Davidson. The first print Banduk had editioned at Yirrkala was a linocut, *Yäthiny*, allocated identification number 14D.

The first male artist to produce a print in 1996 was artist, activist and Madarrpa clan leader, Djambawa Marawili (print artist number 12). Considering he was at that time the Chairman of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka this was a significant move forward for the acceptance of printmaking. In his first print Djambawa reproduced figurative imagery and diamond patterns that identify him, his clan and country (Figure 6.3). The subject
of his linocut, *Garrangali*, is the nesting ground of the Ancestral crocodile (*baru*) and a sacred Madarrpa clan site associated with fertility and fire. In the description he provides for the Madarrpa clan *miny’tji* he has incorporated in the image, Djambawa alludes to a deeper meaning within the patterning: ‘The field of geometric design has some reference to this dangerous area and the Ancestral crocodile’ (Djambawa Marawili in Print Space, 2012b).

The issue of appropriate use of Miny’tji in Print

With the creation of the dedicated Print Space came issues associated with what artists could or could not reproduce in print. Since the introduction of printmaking, artists have been reproducing the patterns that convey their stories and identify their clan and country. The Print Space enforces the Yolngu philosophy that artists must observe the restrictions on the use of clan-specific sacred *miny’tji* and not compromise the integrity of any *miny’tji*. At an Artists Committee meeting in 1996, Gawirrin Gumana decreed that it was not acceptable for a machine to make sacred *miny’tji*, stating that— ‘to paint the land, you must use the land ’. This related to the historical belief that in keeping country inclusive with design *miny’tji* should only be reproduced using natural materials — wood, earth pigments — and be drawn by hand using *marwat* — the brush made from human hair that maintains the connection between the land, the creators of the design, and the execution of the design. The ongoing debate and the role of the Artists Committee in overseeing print production in the early days of the Print Space is revealed by the following extract from the transcript of an Artists Committee meeting in February 1996:

(8) Print w/shop: lino + etching showed
— discussion of whether these prints are sacred. Still under the control of AC[Artists Committee]

Gawirrin & Dula: Manymak. [good] Again more than what it is — people can’t go to roots — can’t complete. (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 1996b)

According to Andrew Blake (Blake, A, 2013), the Artists Committee were discussing the content of two prints, one unidentified and the other Dhuwarrwarr’s first linocut, *Daymirri*, which had actually been created off-site at Northern Editions in Darwin. The
discussion centred on whether the designs reproduced were of a restricted nature. If this was found to be the case their reproduction in print would be deemed unacceptable and it would not be permissible for it to be printed at the Print Space. As the discussion reveals, Gawirrin and Dula approved the prints (‘manyamak’), acknowledging that the uninitiated would not be able to read the deeper, hidden secret-sacred meanings. The Rirratjingu clan miny’tji that Dhuwarrwarr had reproduced was classified as an ‘open’ sacred clan design and not of a restricted secret-sacred nature. The committee would also have taken into consideration Dhuwarrwarr’s elder status which gave her the authority to determine what was appropriate for her to reproduce. This acceptance by senior artists, firstly of printmaking as another means of telling their stories, and then in accepting representation of ‘outside’ miny’tji in print, were judgements that signalled significant changes in Yolngu art production. At a meeting in April of that year, there was further debate regarding printmaking with concern expressed as to whether knowledge was being appropriately used in the Print Workshop. There was also the responsibility of maintaining control of clan designs — if a machine could so readily reproduce their designs, then any outsider could do so without restraint. Once again there appeared to be a sanctioning of printmaking by the Committee. Deliberation focused on the appropriate wording for a sign to be put up at the Art Centre that would ‘read something like Understand to protect miny’tji’ in work space’ (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 1996a). In order to ensure this ‘understanding’ a suggestion was put forward that printmakers with local knowledge be sought to run workshops. Included in the list of names submitted for consideration were: Trevor van Weeren, the teacher from Nhulunbuy School who had long been involved in teaching many of the women to print on fabric; local Rirratjingu print artist, Mämburra (Banduk Marika); and Colvin Crowe, then manager of the Nambara Art Centre. This research revealed that none of these suggestions were taken up and Marrnyula and Dianne Blake continued to be responsible for the in-house training of the artists.

From its instigation the Print Space was expected to abide by the rules and regulations imposed by the governing Artists Committee. When it became an incorporated entity,  

85 As discussed in Chapter 2, Wandjuk Marika had raised the issue of copyright and intellectual property through the Aboriginal Arts Board during the 1970s, following the discovery of reproduction of clan designs on commercial fabric and tourist objects. (Johnson, V, 1996, Marika, W, 1976)
governance of the Art Centre transferred to the members of the Board of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc. The Board has continued to reinforce the restrictions and the revisions levied by the original Artists Committee in order to ensure that the integrity of clan specific miny’tji is not compromised.

**Printmaking – Women’s Business**

In the early days it was predominantly the women who showed interest in this introduced mode of art production and for a period of time it was associated with, and remained the domain of, the female artists. At that time the men were more interested in the more traditional painting and carving. Printmaking provided an avenue for the women to express their artistic creativity without the constraints that historically had been imposed on their art production, and allowed them to work more independently of their fathers and husbands. There was the added incentive of the commercial advantage that soon became apparent, with prints proving popular as they were relatively inexpensive compared to bark paintings. Women of all ages—established artists as well as newcomers—gradually became involved in print production.

**Marrnyula Mununggurr**

Marrnyula Mununggurr has been employed continuously at the Art Centre since first approaching Fox in the early 1990s, asking if she could work there. From the outset Fox considered Marrnyula one of the outstanding individuals. He recognised, by the manner in which she worked, that Marrnyula demonstrated the right temperament and touch to be a very good printmaker (Fox, S, 2011b). According to Stubbs the *gurrutu* (kin relationship) that Andrew Blake had with Marrnyula was to play a significant role in the acceptance of printmaking at the Art Centre:

> Because she is an artist and because she is [working] here and because it’s OK through Andrew’s kinship for Marrnyula to do it and she is a respected person of substance within the community, then acceptance flows — because she is a conservative from a conservative family and yet she is doing these radical new things routinely, whether Japanese woodblock, screenprint or lino. She was the first and abiding printmaker and with
almost every new form of print she has made the first print. If you look at records she is one of the first each time. (Stubbs, W, 2011a)

Marrnyula’s training as a printmaker was primarily on site at workshops run by Hall at Yirrkala (Figure 6.4). The only offsite training she has received was in Darwin along with Naminapu Maymuru-White and Dhuwarrwarr Marika at Northern Editions during the Kaltja Business conference in 1996. Dianne Blake describes Marrnyula as always keen to learn, embracing everything new and quick to pick up the techniques of each printing process:

...with the ability to appreciate what would happen with one colour on top of the next and if cut in this direction it would come out that direction. She has an innate understanding of the various technical processes, so that when she starts a new work she can already see the finished product. (Blake, D, 2013)

As Stubbs pointed out, Marrnyula has played a pivotal role in the Print Space since its inception, having had constant input as manager, printmaker and mentor as well as through the production of her own innovative work. She is recognised for using a wide range of techniques, with subject matter ranging from her clan designs and traditional stories and lifestyle, to contemporary social issues and daily life within the community. Many of the prints that Marrnyula produces are based on the non-restricted designs of her father’s Djapu clan, in particular the miny’tji representing the freshwater at her homeland Wandawuy. Figure 6.5 (p.210) shows the first coloured reduction linoblocks that Marrnyula experimented with during an onsite workshop with Hall.
Marrnyula replicated a Dhuwa pattern with traditional palette of black and white, and red and yellow ochres. As this was purely an exercise in technique, the print was not editioned and only colour proofs were printed (Figure 6.6). Andrew Blake commented that Marrnyula has since ‘pushed the boundaries’ with the different configurations and colours she uses (Figures 6.7 & 6.8), ‘taking the mundane Djapu clan design to another level’ (Blake, A, 2011b).

To date Marrnyula has produced over fifty editions of prints, including commissions for special portfolios and projects. Her prints usually sell quickly and she is regularly
invited to participate in group and solo exhibitions at public and commercial galleries. Between 1997 and 2000, before screenprinting facilities were available at Yirrkala, Marrnyula produced a series of screenprints in collaboration with Hall at Northern Editions. This included a five colour print, *Buwakul, Hunting Yam* (Figure 6.9, p.210) which was editioned by Studio One Print Workshop in Canberra for inclusion in the 1997 ORIGINS Folio: Marrnyula was one of thirteen ‘significant’ contemporary Indigenous Australian artists invited to provide a limited edition print for this commemorative print portfolio commissioned by the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG), for the 2000 Olympic Games Arts Festival. When asked about her involvement in printmaking and why she considered it important, Marrnyula provided the following explanation:

I like doing both [bark painting and printing] — my own art. Also I like to do painting here. When they are doing their art like printing, they got story. We ask those ladies to tell the story of what the painting is about. They tell the story and we write it on the computer. It’s always story — it’s painting. We get the story so when people come in they can read the story — they see the prints. It’s important for us to tell the story — for our people and for *balanda* to come in and look at it, so they understand about our work. Also when the kids grow up they can see the story about their art.

(Mununggurr, M, 2011)

With regard to the appropriateness of her reproducing this *miny’tji*, Marrnyula explained that when she first started to paint barks she had asked permission of her father, Djutjadjutja Mununggurr. He had taught her to paint the Djapu design, but she was only permitted to paint the unrestricted designs:

That's my own designs speaking... because I decide to do printing... it's my idea *ga* my choice to do that. It’s only outside part of *miny’tji* — it’s only freshwater. (Mununggurr, M, 2013)

Creating prints is, in Marrnyula’s opinion, no different to painting: ‘...it’s same with printing it’s the same work ... still the same ... like art’ (Mununggurr, M, 2011). Marrnyula continues to create barks as she likes using the hairbrush (*marwat*). While producing her own art and training other artists in printmaking, Marrnyula continually undertook further training in printmaking and administrative skills. She was the first Yolngu employee to complete courses in computer studies and to acquire database skills. With these abilities, she assisted in developing the Print Space database, with
responsibility for recording the artists’ biographies, translating the print stories and documenting them onto the database.

**Basil Hall Editions – Introducing Print Techniques**

The medium of monochrome linocut was chosen to create the first prints at the Print Space as cutting into the linoblocks emulated the traditional incising done in the soft Milkwood carvings that many of the women produced for the Mission shop. The women showed an immediate adeptness at carving into the flat linoblocks and were quick to accept the black and white printing, even though the process was contrary to that of the colour layering in their traditional artwork. Most significantly, they had to come to terms with white being the base colour rather than being applied on top of other colours, as was usual in the finishing of traditional painting. In the early days each of the artists inked and printed their own work and the editions were kept small to ensure that the artists came back to engage more regularly with the process (Blake, A, 2012).

In the ensuing years, while some of the artists attended workshops at outside teaching institutions, workshops focusing on specific techniques were conducted at Yirrkala with invited printmakers. Hall has returned regularly to provide on-site training for the staff and to work on special collaborative projects. In 1997–1998 he introduced colour reduction linocut, screenprinting, collography and etching (Figure 6.10, p.213). The artists welcomed the introduction of colour as they could now experiment as well as attempt to replicate their traditional patterns, as Marrnyula explained:

> The colour reduction prints, we wanted them to look like the bark paintings, so people can look at the bark and see it in the prints. Some artists wanted bright colours from their own imagination. (Marrnyula Mununggurr in Coyne, C, 1998 p.74)
Quality control has always been an important part of the process. Hall ensures that the artists appreciate the importance of attention to technical detail and that they are aware that if the Print Space is to be taken seriously in the fine art market it must produce sound works that stand up as archival quality, limited edition prints (Hall, B, 2010a). Over the years, this philosophy has been maintained, with prints produced at the Print Space regularly represented in major awards and public exhibitions. Many of the artists become actively involved in the actual printing of their work while others show no interest in taking a hands-on role in the printing. However, the artists are usually present to watch their prints come off the press and the excitement of this process is in itself encouragement for them to create more prints (Blake, A, 2013).

In September 1998, prints produced at the new Print Space were, for the first time, exhibited in Darwin at the Northern Territory University Gallery (Figure 6.11, p.214). Black and white and colour reductive linocuts by twenty three of the Yolngu artists — thirteen Yirritja and ten Dhuwa—were displayed with their relevant stories (Coyne, C, 1998 p.20). Also exhibited were four of the first screenprints created by Yirrkala artists that were editioned in 1997–1998 by Basil Hall at Northern Editions in Darwin (Figures 6.12, 6.13, p. 215).
Screenprinting and the ‘Explosion’ of colour

New techniques have been introduced when it is decided that a specific technique would best suit a particular project or when the artists complain of being bored with the technique they are currently using and request to be taught ‘something different’. However, as Hall noted, new techniques are not always immediately accepted — the time has to be right:

They always think about things very carefully over there....every time we have introduced a new medium it involved a lot of discussion. ...then one day the time is right. It has to happen at the right time — sometimes you have an idea and nothing happens. You make a proposal that is much too early and not the right time, then boom — suddenly it happens. (Hall, B, 2011)

Such was the case when, in 1995, Hall considered introducing screenprinting to the Yirrkala artists. To determine whether the artists and Artists Committee members might find this technique appealing and acceptable, he sent over the acetates and a copy of the first screenprint produced by an Arnhem Land artist — Goose Egg
Hunting by Ramingining artist, George Milpurrurru (1934–1998). The Committee considered the suggestion at one of their meetings, but nothing eventuated until two years later when Hall discussed the idea further with Djambawa Marawili, who decided he would like to try the technique. In collaboration with Hall, Djambawa created his ochre-coloured Djet screenprint, (Figure 6.12).

![Fig. 6.12 Djambawa Marawili, Djet Screenprint, 67x49cm. Ed.45, 1997 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 12C)](image1)

![Fig. 6.13 Marrnyula Mununggurr, Gaŋgal ga Djärrwit Screenprint, 39x18cm. Ed.45, 1997 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 3E)](image2)

This was the first print by an artist associated with the Art Centre to contain ochre-coloured sacred miny'tji. Morphy explained the significance of that section of miny'tji accompanying the figurative representation of the story:

> The Djet paintings belong to the most public level of Yolngu art. They are illustrations of cautionary tales — instructional yet entertaining. Yet as is the case with all Yolngu art, the sacred is always continuous with the profane, the outside always leads inwards. (Morphy, H, 2007, p.34)

The story of Djet provided by Djambawa for the database Print Story is accompanied by the following pronouncement from the Art Centre:

86 The screenprint, Goose Egg Hunting, image 43.6h x 65.6w cm, dated 1993, was printed in a limited edition of 75 by Basil Hall and Ros Evans at Studio One in Canberra. Signed in black pencil, 'X', with explanatory text: 'George Milpurruru’s mark / Witness: Brian Yambal. It was included in the Virtuosi Portfolio of prints by twelve Australian artists commissioned by Youth Music Australia in 1994.
To claim ownership of this story Djambawa has chosen to incorporate the sacred designs and icons of the mortuary sand sculpture Yingapungapu found at his country Bâniyala. Whereas the essence and ritual encoded in this block of sacred design and the elliptical sculpture on top is profound, it is used here to stipulate title to myth and country. (Print Space, 2013)

Blake suggested that in producing this print, Djambawa was not only validating his relationship with his land, but was also proclaiming his authority to choose what he could print and what he had the right to replicate (Blake, D, 2013).

During a visit to his homeland of Yilpara, I asked Djambawa about the significance of the Djet story. He pointed to the relevant landform and explained:

_Djet_ is from where the point is — _Ngarriwuy_ — the story of this country. _Baru_ — when you are talking about the other side. Every part of the area the clan have their own story. The clan have their own dignity, their own songs, dance singing, everything. If connected with the family you know a part of the ceremony. (Marawili, D, 2011)

And when asked why he had chosen the print medium to tell his clan stories:

It’s another way of telling the story, of country or of the communities. For me when I used to look at something I try to pick up and turn around put it onto there — a new technique happening, a new way of telling. Very important. As I said I can do anything — whenever a new style comes into my life I just pick it up... use every skill. I can do it on bark I can do it on the log, then I can do it... exactly this... it is easy for me to do it on the print. Very easy. That is the skill from the bark. (Marawili, D, 2011)

Hall described how Djambawa had worked all day on the acetates and how intriguing it was to watch him constantly re-evaluate the design, scratching out what he decided was inappropriate for a print (Hall, B, 2011). Djambawa’s _Djet_ print was conceived at his homeland and marketed through the Art Centre, but as Yirrkala lacked the required screenprinting facilities at that time, it was printed offsite by Basil Hall and Shane Poustie at Northern Editions in Darwin. This meant the Art Centre was released from having to confront the issue of whether they could approve a machine in their Print Space producing this particular traditionally coloured sacred _miny’tji_.

Although not without controversy, this move by Djambawa established a precedent, as had Dhuwarrwarr with her _Daymirri_ print and Marrnyula when she used the print medium to replicate her father’s Djapu design in colour in an early screenprint.
Marrnyula’s print, (Figure 6.13, p.215), *Ganngal ga Djärrwit* (catfish and mussels), was also printed at Northern Editions in Darwin in 1997. Marrnyula described the image as: ‘...a freshwater story. This painting belongs to Djapu people and the background lines represent freshwater at Wandawuy River’ (Print Space, 2013). With this description, Marrnyula explains that within the crosshatched *miny’tji* is a story that is accessible to all — an ‘outside’ story. The acceptance of the use of printmaking to reproduce *miny’tji* as a means of reaffirming identity and title to land was facilitated by the status of each of these artists at the Art Centre and within the community.

![Figure 6.14 Gawirrin Gumana, *Ganggan* Screenprint, 56x37cm. Ed.25, 1999 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 32A.)](image1)

![Figure 6.15 Bakulangay Marwili, *Gapu, Wan’kurru: moŋukpuy dhäwu’* Screenprint, 65x44cm. Ed. 25, 1998 (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 33A)](image2)

![Figure 6.16 Gaymala Yunupingu, *Dharpa Dawu* Screenprint, approx. 45x30cm. Ed. 12, 2000 (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 8V)](image3)
Gawirrin Gumana (b. c1935) and Bakulangay Marawili (1944–2002) were the next senior male artists to express interest in trying the technique. Bakulangay was recognised for his innovative artwork, as verified by his artist profile on the Print Space Database, which describes him as: ‘An artist with a creative flare that is at times controversial re Yolngu sacred designs and its conservatism’ (Print Space, 2012a). Gawirrin had initially questioned the validity of printmaking as a means of reproducing clan *miny’tji*, so it is significant that he was to produce one of the early coloured prints incorporating an element of *miny’tji*. The screenprint he created in 1999 carries the name of his homeland, Gäŋgaŋ (Figure 6.14, p.217), and features his clan totemic turtles with his Yirritja moiety Dhalwangu clan equilateral diamond pattern on their backs. Gawirrin however, chose to represent the *miny’tji* in non-traditional colours of purple, green and blue. Bakulangay’s Gapu, *Wan’kurru. moŋŋkuy dhäwu’* (saltwater story), features elements of *miny’tji* surrounding figurative representation of clan totemic sea creatures (Figure 6.15, p.217).

The two prints were editioned at Northern Editions in August 1999, during a screenprint workshop co-ordinated by Dianne Blake. She and Andrew travelled to Darwin to attend the workshop with Boliny Wanambi (1957–2011), Marrnyula Mununggurr and Mundul (Nyalung) Wunungmurra.

**On site Workshops**

With the Art Centre now having its own on-site print facility it became more feasible for the printmakers to run the workshops at Yirrkala rather than dealing with the logistic and financial issues associated with sending groups of artists to Darwin. Simon White was invited to Yirrkala in September 2000, to run a week long screenprint workshop. The first screenprint editioned at Yirrkala was *Dharpa Dawu* (Figure 6.16, p.217), by Gaymala Yunupingu. It was editioned on rudimentary screenprinting equipment, by Dundiwuy Mununggurr-Wunungmurra, Marrnyula Mununggurr and Dianne Blake.
The technique proved so popular that White visited on two further occasions to extend the training, by which time the Art Centre had ‘upgraded’ the equipment, having purchased a second hand screenprinting table with a vacuum cleaner providing the suction, (Figure 6.17). The artists enjoyed working with the bright colours that were so different to those historically available to them. Apart from the new colour palette, Marrnyula provided another explanation for the appeal of screenprinting — the layering process was similar to that used in bark painting:

Same like bark painting, we do the background colour first, then we put on the next plastic paper, then we draw a picture with black, then put more plastic paper, then add yellow, then plastic paper, then white, more plastic, then white again, ten put more plastic then red, then plastic then yellow colour, then more plastic and last white, the same way we build up the ochres and gapan (white clay) on bark for the paintings. (Coyne, C, 1998, p.78)

White considers printmaking a perfect medium for producing artwork in a community-based studio, provided the right administrative and technical support is there to keep them going. He describes a common scenario where many communities across the area have had the infrastructure delivered and it works for a few years, but when the people with the skills move on or pass on, the knowledge is lost and the facilities are
often left idle for years. White looks back on the Yirrkala projects with great satisfaction as ‘it is still happening with the artists doing fabulous things — the knowledge is being used and passed on’ (White, S, 2011). Until his return south in 2001, White had the opportunity to collaborate further with those Yirrkala artists who continued to visit Northern Editions.

**Yolngu Printmakers and Print Space Managers**

Marrnyula has played a pivotal role at the Print Space, since its inception in 1995 until her retirement in 2011. During this time she was manager and printmaker and responsible for training many of the other local printmakers. One of the first women she trained was Mundul (Dundiwuy, Nyalung) Wunungmurra-Mununggurr, who, after working as a schoolteacher for twenty-seven years came to work at the Print Space in 1996. Together these two women held the positions of Printer and Associate Printer, respectively, until Mundul retired from the Print Space in 2000 to return to teaching at the local school.

In 1998, Marrnyula and Mundul were involved in the creation of a unique pair of linocut panels (Figures 6.20 & 6.21, p.222), featuring the flora and fauna of the two local moiety groups, Yirritja and Dhuwa. The project was an initiative of Hall who, inspired by what the two moiety groups of artists working together had achieved with the Church Panels, thought it would be interesting to revisit this collaborative idea in print. In 1996 he took two large lino panels to Yirrkala and proposed the idea of a group project to create a pair of linocuts depicting the flora and fauna of each of the moieties.

The suggestion was not immediately taken up and the artists took time deciding whether to become involved (Hall, B, 2011). Some of the artists eventually started working on the lino panels but initially there seemed little enthusiasm for continuing and the work came to a standstill. As the panels were too large to leave lying around, they were stored away until the project was revisited a year later on 8 March, 1999, during the planned celebrations for International Women’s Day: in an attempt to engage people from town and get them to visit the Art Centre, a collaborative women’s day had been organised (Figure 6.18, p.221). Artwork created by balanda
women was displayed in a gallery along with that of the Yolngu women, some of whom were sitting around demonstrating their weaving and carving skills. Dianne Blake decided to bring the two large lino sheets out onto the verandah so that the women could demonstrate lino carving (Blake, D and Blake, A, 2015). Dhuwarrwarr started to work on the Dhuwa panel and gradually other women joined in each working on their respective moiety panel, (Figure 6.19).

Eventually sixteen artists became involved in carving the linoblocks. Dianne and Andrew Blake recall that Gawirrin Gumana was present overseeing the carving to ensure everything was done correctly. He was also to make his mark on the lino: in the centre left of the Yirritja panel, Andrew Blake identified Gawirrin’s hand in the image of a long necked freshwater tortoise (minhala) featuring Gawirrin’s Dhalwangu clan

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87 Artists listed on NGA website as involved in carving the Yirritja ga Dhuwa panels:

diamond pattern on its back. Considering his initial reaction to prints, this was noted by all as a significant moment in his acceptance of printmaking. Open sacred clan miny’tji was included in each of the panels (Figures 6.20 & 6.21): on the bottom left of the Yirritja panel is a representation of Manggalili’ Nyapilingu, and in the centre of the Dhuwa panel is the Rirratjingu sacred Milngurr miny’tji (Blake, D and Blake, A, 2015).

Fig. 6.20 Yirritja ga Dhuwa Ngatha 1. Dhuwa Panel, 1999
Linocut. Ed. unrecorded, 70x180cm. (Image courtesy NGA. NGA 2000.43.1)

Fig. 6.21 Yirritja Ga Dhuwa Ngatha 2. Yirritja Panel, 1999
Linocut, Ed. unrecorded, 74x187cm. (Image courtesy NGA. NGA 2000.43.2)

Each stage of the panel project — inception, creation, inking and realisation of the print — was a collaborative effort (Figure 6.22, p.223). Marrnyula and Mundul were directly involved in each stage with Hall, the Blakes and Stubbs facilitating. Measuring 1.8 metres, the size of the panels introduced challenges, as they were the largest lino panels ever printed at the Print Space. Four or five people were required to assist with the inking. To accommodate the length of the panels during printing, the bed of the press table had to be taken out and replaced with a long sheet of formply cut to fit and supported by a desk. Because of the challenges associated with the printing the edition
was kept small. The number printed is unrecorded but Hall believes that no more than 10 of each panel were printed. (Hall, B, 2011).

A pair of the panels was purchased by the National Gallery of Australia, who describe them as representing ‘the Yirritja and Dhuwa perspective of the interplay between people, ancestors, seasons, and hunting cycles in North East Arnhem Land’ (National Gallery of Australia, 2012, p.12, Annual Report, 1999–2000). Images of the plates were reproduced in the Northern Editions, 2000 publication *LandMark : MirrorMark* accompanied by the following statement from Marrnyula and Mundul, in which they define the status of printmaking at Yirrkala at that time and the observance of the appropriate use of miny’tji:

Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka has been doing lino print workshops with artists from this community — Yirrkala — and the homelands of the Miwatj region since 1995, together with Basil Hall. When we first started working on lino prints we thought it was very exciting and something new for our community to learn. Every print has to be the design of the artist’s own clan or connecting clans. The design has to be done very carefully so as not to mix them up, and to understand their story. We have to talk about it with other people in that clan, so when the design is printed there is no problem. It’s a similar idea to the traditional designs used in the bark paintings and the wood carving, but in printmaking we get the direction from our elders to design the image of the outside story only. In the workshop a lot of Yolngu come and watch what we do in the print shop so they can understand the process. Marrnyula Mununggurr and Mundul Wunungmurra Mununggurr. (Hall, B, Cameron, R and Stainer, L, 2000)
The printmaker’s comments attest to the popularity of printmaking at Yirrkala and reflect their willingness to try something new, while maintaining respect for Yolngu law and concern for compliance with traditional teachings, particularly with regard to the use of clan designs. Although no longer directly involved at the Print Space, Mundul continues to produce artwork and her prints are regularly selected for inclusion in exhibitions.

While Marrnyula had most of her training onsite, Naminapu Maymuru White and Gaymala Yunupingu had attended external workshops. As described in Chapter 3, Naminapu had worked with printmakers Tremblay and Hall in 1989–1990 at Studio One in Canberra to produce the black and white version of Nyapilingu wapitja (Figure 3.17, p.139). Gaymala had been introduced to printmaking through the lithography workshop she had attended at Studio One in 1992. The two lithographs she produced there in collaboration with printmakers Jan Hogan and Judy Watson (Figures, 3.19 & 3.20, p.142), were editioned in Canberra and then sold through the Yirrkala Art Centre. The achievements of these artists, their involvement with external institutions and Naminapu’s long-standing involvement at the Art Centre and the exposure gained from her winning the Telstra Best work on Paper Award in 1996, all played a part in the Print Space being recognised as a producer of innovative and aesthetically appreciated, limited edition fine art prints.

**Araluen (Naminapu#2) Maymuru Print Space Manager, 2000–2008**

Araluen (Naminapu#2) Maymuru is part of a family steeped in artistic tradition. Her grandfathers were Narritjin and Nanyin and she was taught to paint by her father, Yikaki and her aunt, Naminapu#1. In 1999 Araluen commenced employment at the Art Centre, initially working as a restorer of artwork. In 2000 she moved across to the Print Space to address a staff shortage. There she began training as a printmaker with Marrnyula and Dianne Blake and was mentored to take over as an advisor in Dianne’s absence.

Araluen had attended school at Yirrkala and interstate but had also spent long periods of time in her family’s homeland of Djarrakpi, where she recalls being surrounded by family members painting and telling their stories (Maymuru, A, 2011). Her first
experience of printmaking was at the homeland school workshops and she then attended the batik tie-dying classes run by Joan Wearne at Yirrkala School. From the start, Araluen felt comfortable working at the Print Space as she was working with her aunt and other family members. She found the experience very rewarding and had great respect for the artwork they were producing:

It is not work for me. I don't see coming here as work. I love being here. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else... being around art... who doesn't want to work where you are around art all day. [For our people] it is a way of making a living, how people survive, especially for the Homelands — as it has always been. (Maymuru, A, 2011)

She has played a vital role at the Print Space as artist, printmaker, manager and mentor. When Dianne took indefinite leave from the Print Space in 2001, Araluen took over her position as advisor and printmaker and co-managed with Marrnyula. Most of her ongoing training in printing on paper was at onsite workshops with Basil Hall, who she acknowledges as influencing not only her manner of working but also the way she ran the workshop. Dianne Blake likened her abilities to those of Marrnyula, in that Araluen was attuned to the technical side of printing and able to see a work through from creation to the final print.

For subject matter Araluen looks to her Manggalili’ clan stories and miny’tji, often influenced by her aunt Naminapu#1, (Figure 6.23, and Figure 3.21, p. 144). However, Araluen has established her own innovative style, combining mythological stories with
elements of Yolngu traditional lifestyle such as *bathi* (baskets) and the *wapitja* (digging stick) and adapting them to give a modern appearance to her work.

Araluen also introduced a completely new colour palette as seen with her use of silver in the *Djarrakpi wanga* screenprint (Figure 6.24, p.225). With this print she introduced a further innovation by printing one edition on white paper and, for a totally different effect, printed a second edition on black paper. The print, which presents as modern and abstract, is based on the traditional Manggalili’ clan patterns that represent her family homeland of Djarrakpi:

| This design was inspired by an old bark painting that my grandfather Narritjin Maymuru did in the late 60’s early 70’s. The triangle designs are the sand dunes that surround the billabong at Djarrakpi (Cape Shield). The cross hatching designs are the salt water on the other side of the sand dunes. These waters are called *Mungurru*. (Print Space, 2012b) |

When asked about the subject matter of her prints and the importance of telling their stories and continuing to relate history and culture through art, Araluen offered the following explanation:

| It is and always has been. That’s why the artworks are still going and generations are still doing it and passing it on, as it has always been done. Being the younger generation I would find difficulty in connecting with my homeland without knowing my paintings. I just wouldn’t have that connection because in the painting for us is the power, and [the knowledge of] how Djarrapki was founded, how and by what animals. (Maymuru, A, 2011) |

She was however, troubled by the apparent indifference of some of the younger artists to the significance of art in their culture:

| It frustrated me … Being taught as a kid by dad and his brothers and all my aunties and everyone in my family who does artwork. Them telling story as they were painting and us sitting there, watching them, them telling us of the importance of it being our history. Just everything about it — every stroke of the paintbrush on the bark — everything. I just grew up respecting it and loving it. I didn’t understand why these kids didn’t seem to care. I feel it has to do with [my] having grown up away from this community life and being taught out bush where things are actually being passed on [where] kids are engrossed in what is being passed on and spoken about and done. It’s the communal thing out there. I went through a stage of thinking these kids don’t care – they don’t care about the importance of all this. This place is a huge gold mine and they have no |
idea... that was my thinking: that they just didn’t care. But I suppose it’s like anything with kids... they take things for granted. So a goal of mine is to get this across. (Maymuru, A, 2011)

Araluen has been a role model for the younger members of the Yirrkala community. Her presence and position at the Print Space made it less intimidating for students from the local school who were encouraged to attend for work experience.

When questioned about the concerns of the Artists’ committee regarding the amount of detail that a machine should be permitted to reproduce, Araluen commented:

It doesn’t have the whole story as you would on a bark in the different layers. The real inside story no-one would really paint, because you can’t paint it. So it is like skimming the outskirts of the whole story but still actually telling the story without revealing too much. (Maymuru, A, 2011)

With the restrictions imposed on the use of sacred designs, Araluen perceives printing as giving the freedom to tell the story in a totally different way: especially with the new palette of colours now available. In her opinion, printmaking provided an opportunity that some might otherwise not have to produce art. When questioned about her perception of the influence of the art co-ordinators, Araluen acknowledged that throughout the Art Centre everyone had a part to play and had an input in what was produced. It was always a group effort — a focus for ongoing social and cultural interactions. Conversations are had with people wandering in and out and everyone having an opportunity to put forward their opinion (Maymuru, A, 2011).

As has come to be anticipated with staff at the Art Centre, there is movement around the different departments. After eight years, and becoming increasingly frustrated at teaching when it appeared that some of the participants did not appreciate her attention to quality control, Araluen decided it was time for a change – even if only to the other side of the building. In 2010 she retired as Print Space Manager and took a break from printmaking, transferring to the Mulka Centre to work on the archives.

In 2011, Marrnyula also chose to move across to the Mulka centre to work as a cultural advisor for the archiving of repatriated material. She maintains a strong presence in the print space as an advisor and as a prolific creator of prints, continuing to be one of the first to try out new techniques that are introduced.
Change in Management and the Next Generation of Printmakers

The Blakes retired from the Art Centre in 2010. Their sixteen years had been interrupted by a period of leave from 2001 to 2006 during which time they returned regularly to assist with special projects, including preparations for the exhibitions associated with the annual Garma Festival. During this period, Andrew would return to his previous role of Art Centre co-ordinator and Dianne to the Print Space as advisor and printmaker. In their absence Will Stubbs took over Andrew’s duties as Art Centre co-ordinator and Araluen took over Dianne’s role in the Print Space.

In 2011, Kade McDonald was appointed Art Centre Manager and his partner, Annie Studd, replaced Araluen and Dianne Blake as print advisor in the Print Space. Like Dianne and Andrew before them, McDonald and Studd came with no formal art training and no previous knowledge of running an art centre. They benefited from the knowledge and experience that the Blakes and Stubbs had attained over their combined years at the Art Centre, as well as from Stubbs’ deeper understanding of Yolngu culture acquired through his Yolngu family.

In the Print Space, Studd inherited a new team of young artists who were at the time undergoing training. She was fortunate that amongst them was Ruby Dijikarra Alderton who had previous experience of printmaking from having watched and assisted her mother, Banduk, with her printmaking. Alderton had for some years lived with her father away from Yirrkala but chose to return to complete her education at the Yirrkala School. As part of the requirements for her final year art subject, Alderton undertook work experience at the Print Space. She proved a valuable asset to Studd, who had no previous training in printmaking. Studd described Alderton as a great problem solver, an attribute considered desirable if not essential in printmaking.

As part of the Marika family, Alderton had a rich Indigenous artistic heritage. When Alderton was questioned about the impact of her Yolngu heritage on her talent for printmaking, she was quick to acknowledge not only the influence on her art of her Yolngu family, but also the Western influence of her balanda father, Greg Alderton (Alderton, R, 2012b). He, too, was an artist and had instilled in her an appreciation of his Western approach to art-making. Alderton was very conscious of the restrictions associated with reproducing sacred miny’jji and the consequences of inappropriate...
use of clan designs. She was diligent in discussing her creations with her aunts before realising a print, in order to ensure the imagery was acceptable. As had Araluen before her, Alderton expressed disappointment that many of the other young members of the community often displayed a lack of concern for traditional values when reproducing clan designs, and did not seem to appreciate why they should seek ratification of their work from their elders.

Stubbs confirmed that there were occasions when the younger artists inappropriately mixed miny’tji from each of the moieties. He considered it part of his role as art co-ordinator to alert the young artists to the unacceptability of doing so (Stubbs, W, 2011a). Andrew Blake was supportive of this intervention, stating that he would do the same as he saw it not as a white person’s interference, but good management. Also, as employees of the Art Centre, the co-ordinators are compelled to uphold the rulings of the Board of directors, especially in relation to what is considered appropriate use of clan specific miny’tji (Blake, A and Blake, D, 2013).

In the short time she has been a part of the Print Space team, Alderton has attended workshops in Darwin and Melbourne and has been responsible for overseeing print projects involving young members of the community. Her role in instigating these projects and her personal art production are discussed in Chapter 9.

**Marketing and diversification**

While working in the Print Space the artists/printmakers are trained in office and computer skills. One of their responsibilities is data base entry, requiring them to compile the artists’ profiles, and collate and translate the print stories provided by the artists: a task made more challenging by the fact that English is not their first language. Since its inception in 1995, the Print Space has also been responsible for the marketing of the prints they produce. Andrew Blake believes the extensive marketing and branding carried out by the Yirrkala Art Centre, has contributed to the prominent reputation that Yirrkala has in Indigenous printmaking (Blake, A, 2011b).

The Mulka Project multi-media centre was established in 2007 to provide training in new digital products and to archive and display a collection of historical images, film and written records relevant to Yolngu history. In greatly expanded premises on the
same site, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre now consists of two divisions: the Yirrkala Art Centre which represents Yolngu artists exhibiting and selling contemporary art; and The Mulka Project which acts as a digital production studio and archiving centre incorporating the Museum (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 2013). The artwork being produced through the Print Space is continually diversifying with many print projects now incorporating digital technologies. This requires the artists to further expand their technical skills and knowledge base.

**Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the evolution of the Yirrkala Print Space, over the past twenty years, into a unique remote facility that employs locally trained printmakers in the continual production of acclaimed limited edition prints. The establishment of a dedicated Print Space has provided a setting that has further encouraged the involvement of the whole community in art production and has introduced an art form that has been particularly accessible to the female and younger members of the community. The ongoing success of the facility has been achieved by the local artists and community working collaboratively with the art centre management, art coordinators, and printmakers. Particularly relevant to its success is the role played by women in initiating and promoting printmaking. Their enthusiastic embracing of the technique has ensured its popularity and viability as an art form within the community. The Print Space has contributed to the Art Centre’s ability to fulfil the objectives of a remote art centre: it has supported and assisted in broadening the range of local Indigenous art production to ensure cultural and economic survival, and it has fulfilled a vital role within the community in providing a facility where artists can develop skills and express their individual creativity. The following three chapters consider the manner in which these objectives continue to be achieved through innovative cross-cultural collaborative interactions and print projects.
This chapter focuses on a selection of print projects in which Yolngu artists were engaged in inter- and intra-cultural collaborative exchanges while being introduced to new techniques in print workshops. For the Yolngu each of the projects involved some connection with their history: with Japanese woodblock, being introduced to a print technique reminiscent of their traditional carving; in the After Berndt project being exposed to and inspired by the innovative first works on paper created by their forefathers; in the Seven Sisters project a family group recounted, through the print medium, part of their mythology relating to the Seven Sisters constellation; and, reviving and reproducing in a completely new form, the traditional hand-craft practice of string figure making in The String Figures project.

The projects described include three that were initiated by the Print Space and two initiated from outside: The Seven Sisters Project was initiated by curators, Rose & Angus Cameron of Nomad Art, and the String Figure Project evolved out of post-graduate research being undertaken at Yirrkala by anthropologist Robyn McKenzie. The projects all exemplified the concept of ‘both ways’ learning: while visiting printmakers introduced the artists to new techniques, the artists were sharing knowledge of their stories, history, country and culture.

Since 2003 the Print Space has had the opportunity to exhibit works created during such projects, at an outdoor gallery, The Gapan Gallery, at the Annual Garma Festival held at the Gulkula site 25 kilometres from Yirrkala. This Indigenous cultural festival is an example of cross-cultural ‘both-ways’ learning on a grand scale, with the objective of ‘sharing of knowledge and culture; to learn from and listen to one another’ (Yothu Yindi Foundation, 2014).

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88 That year 23 Northeast Arnhem Land artists were also involved in the creation of the 2003 Garma commemorative Panel commissioned by the Yothu Yindi Foundation. The panel was the initiative of Trevor van Weeren with Basil Hall facilitating the workshop and editioning the prints at BHE with printmaker, Natasha Rowell. This unique consultative and collaborative work comprises 80 etched panels created by urban and remote Indigenous artists from around Australia. It was envisaged as a bringing together of different Aboriginal nations to create a visual statement about Reconciliation. The individual prints measuring 22.5x14.5cm were printed in editions of 20. Black and white editions were assembled to from 12 panels of 230 x128cm, and the remaining eight editions were printed in colours chosen by the artists (Hall, B, 2003, 2004, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, 2011, van Weeren, T, 2003).
Fig. 7.1 Opening night of Gapaŋ Gallery at Garma Festival, August 2014 (Photographer D Salvestro)

Fig. 7.2 Viewing at night Gapan Gallery at Garma Festival, August 2014 (Photographer D Salvestro)

**Gapan Gallery**

The concept for an outdoor art gallery was the inspiration of Will Stubbs and Araluen Maymuru. It was called the Gapan Gallery after the white clay, *gapan*, which is painted onto the trunks of the trees on which the prints are hung for display, (Figures 7.1 & 7.2 and Fig.7.3, p.233). Now established as a popular feature of the Garma Festival, the Gapan Gallery is the biggest annual promotional activity for the Print Space and is responsible for the bulk of annual sales of prints.
Japanese woodblock prints 2007

The 2007 Gapan Gallery exhibition featured Japanese woodblock prints produced during a workshop facilitated by Basil Hall Editions and overseen by printmaker Jacqueline Gribben. After training in England and Japan Gribben had come to work in Australia and her association with Basil Hall Editions provided her first experience of working with remote Indigenous artists in the Central Desert. This proved to be ‘a huge cultural shock’ which forced Gribben to consider and question boundaries that had not been an issue when working with Western or Japanese artists (Gribben, J, 2010). She found that the problematic practical issues associated with providing a service in a remote location were compounded by cultural and communication issues, which meant that the artists often took time to get to know and accept the visiting printmakers. She was to experience something similar on her first visit to Yirrkala in May 2007:

With that first woodblock workshop with Basil at Yirrkala, the first day there I was in shock ... it was a huge cultural shock... [for instance]—Dindirrk — I could not get a single word out of her for three or four days, then on the fourth or fifth day she was just there standing next to me and asked me where I was from. I said I was from England and then the questions kept coming...’ (Gribben, J, 2010)
Overall, Gribben found the Yolngu artists more communicative than the Central Desert artists. She attributes this to the fact that having an airport close by made Yirrkala relatively accessible, and so the local artists had more opportunity to interact with outsiders. Consequently they were more comfortable with communicating in English. She also found the Yolngu artists quick to pick up the woodcut technique as they were already working in a printmaking environment and familiar with carving (Gribben, J, 2010). Twenty artists attended the workshop at Yirrkala in May, 2007. The artists appreciated the directness of the technique, which did not involve any complex procedures or machinery: it was simply carving the woodblock, inking and then printing onto the paper by rubbing. The only complaint from the artists was getting cramps, as they found the wood harder to carve than the linoblocks.

Gribben commented that it was not necessary for her to suggest subject matter to the Yolngu artists, as the Yolngu culture, stories and images are ‘so strong, so embedded’ that ‘they already have it in their heads’ (Gribben, J, 2010). Gribben was particularly impressed with the Yolngu artists’ carving skill, claiming she had not seen such skill other than with a few artists on the Tiwi Islands:

They are such great carvers — Djalinda did hers with a razor blade. She did not use a cutting tool. She just sat there for a couple of days and used a razor blade and it was phenomenal how she cut. Then, there are artists like Barrupu who absolutely hacked away at the block and yet came up with one of the most fantastic prints... she did those two little birds [Figure 7.4] and they sold out just like that. (Gribben, J, 2010)
Djalinda’s print, *Yathiny* (Figure 7.5, p.234), also sold out. An impressive outcome considering it was her first foray into printmaking at the Print Space. Gribben returned for a week before the Garma Festival to teach the printers how to print the woodblocks. Many of the artists attended and printed their own work. Sixteen of the twenty-five editions printed were exhibited at the Gapan Gallery.

**The After Berndt Project 2008**

The subject matter for the 2008 Gapaŋ Gallery was inspired by the Berndt Drawings — the series of 365 Drawings created for the anthropologist Ronald Berndt when he visited Yirrkala in 1946–47. (Their historical significance was discussed in Chapter 1). The drawings had not been seen by the descendants of the artists who had created them until 1995, when a group from Yirrkala were invited to the opening of the *Djalkiri Wänga: The land is my foundation* Exhibition at the University of Western Australia. The director of the Berndt Museum, John Stanton, had invited anthropologist Gillian Hutcherson to co-curate an exhibition of early works from Yirrkala. The exhibition included early prints produced by the Yirrkala women that had been purchased for the Berndt Museum by Hutcherson while carrying out anthropological field work at Yirrkala in the early 1990s. When she first saw the drawings, Hutcherson was struck by the similarity of subject matter between the 1947 drawings and the 1990s works she had purchased, and suggested hanging some of the women’s work alongside the works their fathers had created nearly fifty years earlier. This was the first time any of the drawings were publicly exhibited along with other works from past and present Yirrkala artists (Hutcherson, G, 1995, pp.4, 5).

The installation included eighteen of the drawings, a selection of eighteen barks created between 1946 and 1995, two ochres on board and two contemporary prints by Gaymala Yunupingu. Naminapu Maymuru White’s 1990 black and white linocut triptych, *Nyapilingu wapitja* was hung beside two works by Narritjin Maymuru: a 1946 bark *Nyapilingu at Djarrakpi*; and a 1947 crayon drawing *Nighbird and possum at Djarrakpi* (Figures 7.6, 7.7 & 7.8, p.236). Banduk Marika’s 1990 *Minyapa ga Dhanggatjiyana* linocut diptych was hung with a crayon drawing *Myth-map of Dhambaliya* (Figures 7.17 & 7.18, p.242), by her father Mawalan (Hutcherson, G, 1995, pp.22-23 and 38-39).
Mowarra Ganambarr (c1917–2005) the remaining living artist who had created drawings for Berndt, travelled to Perth for the exhibition opening accompanied by Laklak Marika-Yunupingu, Naminapu and his daughter Maybarr Ganambarr. Eighteen years later, in December 2013, Naminapu attended the opening of the Yirrkala Drawings exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, where on this occasion eighty-one of the drawings were on display. At the launch Naminapu recalled her reaction, and that of the other Yolngu, on first sighting the drawings at the University of Western Australia at the 1995 exhibition:

We flew over there and stayed at Gillian’s place. Next day we all got dressed up and went to the gallery. Soon as we walked in we could feel the presence of all the artists welcoming us and we all burst out crying. That was the first time we had seen our people’s work — what they had done for us to see and to continue doing. We all went ... oh, you know what everyone is going to know now? ... open their eyes and their heart for what we had seen down in Western Australia. That something has been left behind for us to see —for the new generations.

(Maymuru White, N, 2013)
In 2007, Marrnyula and Araluen went to Perth to see the drawings as part of a program to archive historically relevant material through the Mulka Project. This would be the first time, since they had been created, that Yolngu had seen the collection of drawings in their entirety. Araluen described how she cried when she first saw the drawings created by her grandfathers, Narritjin and Nanyin. The size and the colours were so vibrant after so many years ‘looking as though they had been done yesterday’ (Maymuru, A, 2011). She and Marrnyula selected one hundred of the works to be photographed and archived at the Mulka Centre. For the Yolngu, the relevance of the drawings was not the medium but the content – the stories told by their forefathers.

To allow the community the opportunity of seeing the drawings in their original dimensions, facsimiles were reproduced and presented on a wood backing. The current Yirrkala artists were inspired to create a series of artworks as their forefathers had done sixty years before — telling their stories, sharing their knowledge and enlivening their law through an introduced medium (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 2013).

Basil Hall was called on to facilitate a workshop for the twenty-seven artists who had come forward to contribute to the After Berndt print project. With support from the Northern Territory DEET Flexible Response Fund, Hall and fellow Darwin-based printmaker, Merran Sierakowski, went to Yirrkala in 2008 to provide training in the soft-ground etching technique (see Addendum: Print Techniques) which Hall had suggested in order to try and reproduce the soft line created by crayon on paper. As the local printmakers had to date not editioned etchings on such a scale, Sierakowski returned for a second week to assist with the editioning (Yirrkala Art, 2011).

When interviewed about the experience of the After Berndt Project Sierakowski, commented that if she were asked what project she would consider the highlight of her teaching career, it would be the After Berndt project. With the Yolngu artists incorporating their concept of ‘both ways’ learning into the workshops, there were positive outcomes—professionally and personally — for all involved (Sierakowski, M, 2012). Sierakowski found it a particularly rewarding experience professionally, as it was unusual for an editioning artist to be involved in a project from start to finish — from teaching the technique and assisting with editioning, to seeing the prints on

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89 DEET: Department of Education, Employment and Training, of the Northern Territory Government.
exhibition and being sold. It was especially satisfying to be there to see the reaction of the public to the works of art.

Sierakowski considered this a project that achieved all it had set out to do—train people in a new technique to produce their own work, in their own community, on their own terms. Seeing the creation of an exceptional body of work was a positive outcome for everyone involved. Sierakowski was impressed with the capacity of the local printmakers who, by the end of the workshop, were able to edition the majority of the three-plate etchings. Only a few of the more complex plates were sent back to Darwin for printing. This was seen by all as quite an achievement, considering the deadline, the number of plates involved, their technical difficulty and the size of the editions (thirty). Hall considered it one of the most successful series he has worked on at Yirrkala and Blake referred to it as ‘the best body of work to come out of the Print Space to date’ (Blake, A, 2011b).

Sierakowski described a similar experience to that which Gribben had described from the Japanese woodblock workshop — the Yolngu were very receptive and eager to learn and more interactive than the desert people:

I always feel like an outsider in a desert community. But not with the Yolngu at Yirrkala... they accepted you...especially if you kept coming back. That is why I went back the second time — it was really nice — you actually feel like you have made friends. The Yolngu are very receptive to people and to new ideas. (Sierakowski, M, 2012)

Sierakowski speculated whether this might be explained by the fact that the Yolngu had initiated the project and were the ones to invite the printmakers there to teach them something new, rather than the balanda being the instigators. She also considered that this project played a part in changing the perception of the Print Space to many in the community — in particular, the male artists, who suddenly became interested and involved (Sierakowski, M, 2012). Sierakowski observed that although the Print Space was functioning successfully before the After Berndt project, this particular project seemed to re-ignite interest in the Print Space and in printing.
Many of those men, who had considered it the domain of the women artists and had never done any printing, were now approaching the Print Space and expressing an interest in the medium. The After Berndt project turned out to be a catalyst, opening up the Print Space to all. Naminapu’s son Patrick White was one whose interest in printmaking was regenerated by the Berndt Project (Figures 7.9 & 7.10). He had not done any printing since being involved in linocut projects while attending the local school.

Araluen was excited by the prospect of doing an artwork that would be displayed alongside the drawings but was daunted by the idea of recreating ‘something so close and yet so different’. She described the experience of learning the soft ground etching
technique as, ‘the absolute! [It was] Like gold for me to learn how to do that — how it sat on the paper, how it looked when printed onto paper, recreating the look of crayon’ (Maymuru, A, 2011). Araluen created a topographical image based on her homeland of Djarrakpi, featuring the rocks, water and sand. Her aunt, Naminapu#1 also created an image representing Djarrakpi but featuring the ceremonial yingapungapu story of the crab and fish (Figures 7.11 & 712, p.239). In the accompanying story Naminapu reveals her inspiration:

When I was shown the Berndt crayon drawings done by the old people I straight away recognised that the design came from my father’s hand. I knew the image was based on gapu (water) and the rangi (beach) at Djarrakpi, my homeland. I knew what I had to draw. When I saw the miny’tji (design) I straight away knew it came from the rangi side at Djarrakpi. I knew I would do this design with the crabs and guya (fish). In the design you can see the guya. (Naminapu Maymuru White in Print Space, 2012b)

Naminapu points out that there is a deep story within the miny’tji associated with the image. It is the same story that is the subject of her Gunyan print of 2010 (Figure 3.22, p.145).

The Berndt drawings encouraged most of the artists to create a work that was the product of their individual creativity and not necessarily a reproduction of what they saw in the forefathers’ works. The reaction of Napuwarri Marawili, grandson of Mundukul, reflected that of many of the other artists involved:

I enjoyed doing this kind of work, after seeing my grandfather’s work it showed me that I too can do something different to what I am used to doing’. (Napuwarri Marawili in Print Space, 2012b)

Napuwarri also chose to recreate the Yirritja moiety ceremonial ground, yingapungapu, associated with mortuary ritual. In his image the yingapungapu is shown situated near garrangali, the nesting place of his totemic Ancestral being, baru (crocodile), in his homeland of Yilpara, (Figures 7.13 & 7.14, p.241).
The story associated with the nesting ground of the Ancestral crocodile is a subject that Djambawa Marawili has often recreated, since his first linocut, *Garrangali*, produced in 1996. Djambawa had a similar reaction to the Berndt drawings:

"When I saw the Berndt crayon drawings, I saw clear patterns of the country and the stories. That made me think about doing this new way of drawing but still with old story’. (Djambawa Marawili in Print Space, 2012b)"
For his *After Berndt* etching entitled *Madarrpa*, Djambawa chose the story of *baru* associated with the creation of fire and of the Madarrpa clan. The flames of the fire are represented by the red Madarrpa diamond pattern (Figure 7.15, p.241).

Dhuwarrwarr Marika chose to create a version of the myth-map of her homeland Dhambaliya, inspired by a drawing of the same subject by her father and brother.

![Image of Dhuwarrwarr Marika's Dhambaliya](image1)

*Fig. 7.16 Dhuwarrwarr Marika, *Dhambaliya*
Soft ground etching, 25x50cm. Ed. 40, 2008
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 2V)*

![Image of Mawalan and Wandjuk Marika's Myth Map Dhambaliya](image2)

*Fig. 7.17 Mawalan and Wandjuk Marika, *Myth Map Dhambaliya*
Crayon on paper, 115x74cm, 1947
(Image courtesy Berndt Museum, UWA. Acc. No. WU6889)*

![Image of Banduk Marika's Minyapa ga Dhanggatjiya](image3)

*Fig. 7.18 Banduk Marika, *Minyapa ga Dhanggatjiya*
Linocut Diptych on one piece of paper. Image size: 61x117cm. Ed.30, 1990
(Image courtesy National Museum Australia. IR 4527.0063)*
Created for Berndt by Mawalan and Wandjuk this drawing was hung in the 1995 exhibition with a diptych linocut, by her sister Banduk, featuring another story associated with their island homeland, *Minyapa ga Dhanggatjiya* (Figures 7.16, 7.17 & 7.18, p.242).

The historical significance of the subject matter of the diptych and the relevance of this work in her oeuvre is revealed in the story Banduk provided to accompany the image:

> My father Mawalan during his life relived Wangarr law assiduously following daily its customs. He too was a great turtle hunter, going out in pursuit of them in his canoe (Galnayalma) which he fashioned by hand from a giant melaleuca tree. In his bark painting of *Minyapa* and *Dhanggatjiya* done in the 1950’s Mawalan showed them hunting turtle. As he painted my father would retell the stories relating to Minyapa and Dhanggatjiya from the Wangarr to those gathered around him. I have chosen this subject and followed very closely Mawalan’s composition in the hope that this important story, which linked my people to place in the past, will continue in the future to maintain this relationship. (Print Space, 2012b)

For both Banduk and Dhuwarrwarr it was important that they do as their father Mawalan and brother Wandjuk had taught them:

> … to carry on and teach my grandchildren. What is important — painting the story and the knowledge and also [what is] in the heart. What it means, water, sea, ocean and what it means the land. What is on the land is important — our story and our songline, our belief — where we belong. (Marika, D, 2011)

Some of the artists, although inspired by their forefathers’ works, chose subject matter that they felt more comfortable replicating. Rather than reproduce any of the subject matter in the drawings of father Gumuk Gumana, for her first endeavour in printmaking, Malaluba Gumana chose a subject that she usually painted — the *dhatham* lily — her mother’s story. *Garrimala* is a billabong in her mother’s Dhalwangu clan homeland at Gangan and it is important for Malaluba to tell her mother’s story to ensure its continuity (Figure 7.19, p.244).

> This is *Garrimala*, my nandi wanga (mother’s place). It is Galpu clan design. Only *dhatham* is all I can paint, I’m not allowed to make the deep story *miny’tji* (design), this is only for the men. I’m not allowed because this is important *miny’tji*. When I saw the Berndt crayon drawings of my fathers
I wanted to do something for my nandi (mother), to keep the design for my mother. (Malaluba Gumana in Print Space, 2012b)

Barrupu Yunupingu (1948–2012), came late to printing but soon became known for her use of bright coloured figurative imagery and for reproducing, in a variety of techniques, variations of her Gumatj clan diamond miny’tji representing fire (gurtha).

It was the imagery she chose for her first print, Gurtha I (Figure 7.20), a screenprint done in 2001, and for her After Berndt print, (Figure 7.21). Inspired by her father’s drawing, she labelled this reproduction of the Gumatj gurtha miny’tji, Yothu Yindi, signifying the important ‘mother child’ relationship between moieties.
In this design the red represents *gurtha* (fire), the blue (mother) and the yellow (child). *Yothu Yindi* (mother and child) The Berndt collection of crayon drawings were *manymak* to see. The children like me could see my father’s (Mungurrawuy Yunupingu) drawings in crayon. I only ever saw him do work on bark. This was the first time he used crayon so I copied from his design to make my own one. (Print Space, 2012b)

The majority of the twenty-seven prints were editioned at the Yirrkala Print Space by local printmakers, under the guidance of Araluen Maymuru, Marrnyula Mununggurr and Dianne Blake. A few of the more complex prints were editioned in Darwin at Basil Hall Editions Studio (Yirrkala Art, 2011). The full suite of prints was exhibited at the Gapaṉ Gallery in August 2008, with the photographic reproductions of the 1947 Berndt Drawings displayed on the trees along the pathway leading to the exhibition space. This allowed the prints to be appreciated alongside the drawings created sixty years earlier, reflecting Hutcherson’s concept for the hang of the *Djalkiri Wänga* exhibition in 1995 (Figure 7.22).

![Berndt Drawings hung on trees along pathway to Gapaṉ Gallery with Berndt series of soft ground etchings on display. Garma Festival, 2008 (Photographer D Salvestro)](image)

Following the Garma Festival the *After Berndt* etchings were exhibited during the Darwin Festival at Nomad Art. Rose and Angus Cameron, the directors of Nomad Art,

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90 Dindirrk Mununggurr, Whaiora Tukaki, Djuwakang Marika, Barayuwa Mununggurr, Rosie Ngyilipa Pearson and Ruby Djikarra Alderton assisted with the printing.
have been constant advocates for the Yirrkala Art Centre. For several years the Gapaṉ
Gallery was mirrored at the Darwin Festival, with the prints exhibited in the Botanic
Gardens in an open air gallery called The Galuku Gallery, in reference to the coconut
palm trees on which the prints were hung.

The Seven Sisters Project

Angus Cameron was passionate about promoting Indigenous culture through their art
and had fostered many educational projects involving Indigenous artists. One of the
projects he instigated in 2011, involved the Yunupingu women from Yirrkala.
Considering their strong input in printmaking and in art production in general Cameron
approached the Art Centre management with a suggestion that seven of the
Yunupingu sisters be invited to create seven individual prints and one collaborative
print celebrating the ancestry of the Yunupingu through the Yolngu myth associated
with the Seven Sisters (Pleiades) constellation. Gulumbu, Barrupu, Nyapanyapa,
Dhopiya, Dorothy Djakanngu, Djerrkngu and Ranydjupi Yunupingu expressed interest
in participating in the project. Each sister was assigned a part of the myth to relate in
their individual print. The sisters worked on the large, 50x100cm zinc etching plates on
the verandah at the Art Centre (Figure 7.23, p.247).

In addition to the large individual plates, they each created a single star on small plates
which were combined to create the large 100x50cm collaborative plate (Figure 7.24,
p.247). The proofs were printed at Yirrkala by Annie Studd, Ruby Alderton and
Dhapanbal Yunupingu, in collaboration with Basil Hall. Considering the size of the
plates, most of the editioning was carried out at Basil Hall Editions (BHE) in Darwin.
Hall completed the editioning following his relocation to Braidwood in NSW. As his
new studio in Braidwood was not completely set up, Hall accessed the large press at
Megalo Access Workshop in Canberra to finalise the printing.

91 The Pleiades and Orion constellations are associated with the Seven Sisters story in Aboriginal
mythology throughout Australia and other cultures around the world. The stories vary from region to
region, but all celebrate the myth in song, dance and their art. The Anungu senior desert dancers
of Kungkarangkalpa: the Seven Sisters, from the APY Lands of the Western Desert in Central Australia
performed at the National Museum of Australia in March 2013 as part of the Centenary of Canberra
The *Seven Sisters* suite was exhibited under the stars in the Ganyu Gallery at Festival Park as one of the highlights of the 2012 Darwin Festival (Nomad Art, 2012). This was the culmination of a wide-reaching collaborative exercise involving the instigators of the project, a family of Yolngu artists, local and other printmakers, outside print studios and a city gallery. Nomad Gallery has initiated and supported other significant collaborative Print projects involving Yolngu and non-Yolngu artists and printmakers, including the 2010 *Djalkiri* cross-cultural collaborative project which is described in the following Chapter.

**String Figure Prints**

In 2010, a unique and historically significant cross-cultural print project was inspired by the 192 Yirrkala string figures collected by anthropologist Frederick McCarthy, during the 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land. McCarthy had spent nine months in Arnhem Land and during the few weeks he was in Yirrkala he studied the construction and meaning of the Yirrkala string figures and created a collection. The figures, mounted on cardboard, are held in the Australian Museum in Sydney. Robyn McKenzie, a PhD research candidate at ANU, while in the process of researching the figures, discovered that string figure construction was not practised by
the Yolngu as it had been in the past. With the objective of reconnecting the Yolngu with the archived figures and the practice of creating them, McKenzie visited Yirrkala in 2008, accompanied by photographs of the collection and images of Yolngu creating the figures taken by McCarthy in 1948. Most interest was expressed by the older women, some of whom were young children at the time of the AASEAL Expedition visit. They had memories of the practice which had almost died out following the changes to their lifestyle with the coming of the bauxite mine (McKenzie, R, 2016).

As some of the women were practising artists, McKenzie suggested the idea of recording in print, the figures that the women were recreating, as this would then provide them with something of economic value. On her return to Canberra, she met printmaker Heather Burness and discussed what might be a suitable technique for reproducing the string figures. McKenzie & Burness created a prototype by transferring the string figures onto an etching place using the soft-ground etching technique to capture the fine texture of the bush string. With McKenzie providing advice as to correct orientation, an initial series of five was editioned by Burness in her Canberra studio, using an ochre colour on white paper (Figure 7.25). These were exhibited at the 2010 Garma Festival.

In 2012, curator Glenn Blakely approached the Art Centre, requesting Yirrkala artists provide a string installation and a selection of twelve string figure prints for the String Theory: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art exhibition to be held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney. Another seven figures were made by the ladies, pressed
onto paper, and sent to Basil Hall for editioning. This series was starkly different to the first group, as Hall used a different etching technique and printed the string figures white on a black background (Figure 7.26, p. 248). Following the Sydney exhibition the string figure prints were included in the national tour.92

McKenzie envisaged the project as potentially reviving a skill no longer commonly practised and offering the current generation another connection to their past. The making of string figures and transposing them into the more accessible art form of prints also gave the figures another public face and the artists another source of income (McKenzie, R, 2016). This print series resulted from a connection between cross-cultural projects spanning sixty-two years. A collaborative interaction that took place between a Western anthropologist and Yolnu at Yirrkala in 1948 has been linked with Yolnu living in Yirrkala today collaborating in a project with a university doctoral research candidate, a printmaker in Canberra, a printmaker in NSW, and a museum archive.

With the increasing popularity of printmaking at Yirrkala, regular onsite workshops are held to introduce the Yolnu artists to different techniques. Hall continues to play an important support role, visiting Yirrkala regularly to run workshops or acting in an advisory capacity on projects such as Djalkiri — the subject of the following chapter. He reflected on working with Yolnu artists:

> Of all people the Yolnu are most curious about what we do. They are willing to learn. The whole each way learning thing is so strong over there. It's the best place to go in that sense because they do have a genuine interest in all things outside their country and the have a genuine interest in teaching you about theirs and what they know... or at least some of it... (Hall, B, 2011)

Hall describes the print space at Yirrkala as a ‘unique printmaking workshop in Aboriginal communities’, becoming more self-contained with the trained Yolnu printmakers ‘now running the show.’

Conclusion

This Chapter described significant print projects that demonstrated the innovation that resulted from intra and inter-cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge. The works created were an important addition to the body of works on paper from Yirrkala that contribute to the dissemination of knowledge about Yolngu art and culture. In each project the local artists were introduced to a new print technique by an invited printmaker with whom they shared their clan stories and knowledge of their culture. Each of the projects in some way reunited the artists with their ancestors and their past histories. The Japanese woodblock, After Berndt and the String Figures projects re-united the artists with their past through the art and craft practices of their fathers and grandfathers. The Seven Sisters reconnected them with important clan mythology. The current artists were inspired by the work and knowledge of their forebears to create their own innovative works of art using techniques new to them. Those non-Yolngu involved were impacted both personally and professionally by the knowledge shared about Yolngu culture, history and traditional art practice.

The following chapter is devoted to a single cross-cultural collaborative project, *Djalkiri*. This project was wide-ranging, innovative and of considerable significance. In a sense it was the culmination of years of collaborative process and unique in its conception, scope, the cross-section of individuals involved and the outcomes realised.
8. *Djalkiri*: A Cross–Cultural Collaborative Print Project

Since their introduction to printmaking Yolngu artists have been involved in many significant cross-cultural collaborative projects. During these projects the Yolngu concept of ‘both ways,’ or reciprocal learning, is evident in the exchanges between the non-Indigenous and Indigenous artists. This sharing of knowledge, integral to their interaction with others, has been evident in the projects described throughout this thesis. The 1997 *Australasian Print Project* described in Chapter 4 was an example of an inter-cultural collaboration that explored the concept of identity and place through printmaking. This chapter focuses on a more recent collaborative project that involved Yolngu and non-Yolngu in an exploration of identity and place through the print medium. The *Djalkiri Project*\(^{93}\) took place in the remote homeland of Yilpara on Blue Mud Bay in Arnhem Land, over a ten day period in October 2009. It proved to be professionally and personally enriching for Yolngu and non-Yolngu alike, with positive outcomes including ongoing cross-cultural collaborative projects and the increased exposure of Yolngu art and culture to the outside world through a touring exhibition of the prints created.

*Djalkiri*

The Yolngu word *Djalkiri*, relates to the spiritual foundation of the Yolngu world and acknowledges cultural inheritance. The significance of this Yolngu law has been alluded to in earlier chapters. Chapter 3 described the endeavours of Yolngu elders to ensure that the local school students who were about to embark on printmaking, were aware of their *Djalkiri*. It was the central theme of the 1995 University of Western Australia’s exhibition, *Djalkiri Wànga. The land is my foundation* and it became the inspiration for the 2009 project, *Djalkiri. We are walking on their names*. This project, instigated by Rose and Angus Cameron of Nomad Galleries in Darwin, was hosted in the homeland

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\(^{93}\) The information relating to this project came primarily from personal interviews with Rose and Angus Cameron, directors of Nomad Art, and from extracts from associated exhibition Catalogues and videos (Cameron, R and Cameron, A, 2011) (Nomad Art, 2008) (Nomad Art, 2010b) (Nomad Art, 2010a).
of Yilpara by the traditional land owner and Madarrpa clan leader Djambawa Marawili, and his family.

The idea of juxtaposing Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution and the western understanding of the diversity of life with the Yolngu perspective of cosmology came to Angus Cameron following the celebrations that took place in Darwin for the 150th Anniversary of the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*. He saw the potential for fostering cultural awareness, mutual understanding and respect.

The objective of this project was to bring a group of artists, scientists and print makers together in a cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, creative exchange: to juxtapose Western scientific viewpoints and knowledge with the holistic perspective of Yolngu people. (Cameron, A, 2010, p.5)

Nomad Art projects are very much focused on the natural and cultural environment of the Northern Territory. The first collaborative cross-cultural project, *Replant: A new generation of botanical art*, which took place in 2006, focused on identifying the cultural uses of the plant species in the Top End. Printmaking was chosen as the artistic medium for exploring plants from different cultural perspectives. Six artists from various geographical areas and with a diverse range of cultural and stylistic backgrounds were invited to meet and share observations, knowledge, ideas and culture — and to make art. The participants included Top End Indigenous artists from Tiwi Islands, Maningrida and Daly River; Indigenous artist Judy Watson from Brisbane; and non-Indigenous artists, Fiona Hall from Adelaide and Winsome Jobling from Darwin. Hall and Watson were to come together again in 2009 for Nomad’s second collaborative bio-cultural project, *Djalkiri*, in which Jobling came to play an ancillary role by virtue of her papermaking skills.

Held in the remote homeland community of Yilpara (also known as Baniyala) on Blue Mud Bay in Northeast Arnhem Land, *Djalkiri* proved a more difficult project to coordinate than *Replant*. So broad was the scope that the Camerons spent two years preparing for the project and sought essential funding from various sources. Grants were received from: the Australian Government through the Australia Council and National Science Week; the Northern Territory Government; The Myer Foundation,

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94 The idea had gained momentum as a result of a conversation with Rose Cameron’s brother, Dr. Greg Leach, a botanist with more than thirty years’ experience in exploring the native plants of the Top End.
and The Gordon Darling Foundation. Further support was provided by The Research School of Humanities and the Arts, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences.

Having long wanted to work on a collaborative print project with the artists from Northeast Arnhem Land, the Camerons looked to that region for a location for the project. They had already formed a working relationship with the Yirrkala Art Centre, so there was the added appeal of working with, and relying on advice from the now well-established Print Space. In order for the project to gain the approval of the Art Centre and the traditional owners of the region they had to ensure that what they were proposing had sound cultural protocols. At that stage the Camerons had limited knowledge of the local culture, so for the administrative and technical side of the project they looked to involve those who had a history of working with Yolngu.

Considering his long association with the Yolngu dating from the early 1970s, anthropologist Howard Morphy was invited to facilitate the project. Darwin-based printmaker Basil Hall, who had worked with Yolngu artists since the 1980s and helped set up the Yirrkala Print Space, was another obvious choice. Ethnobotanist Glen Wightmen had worked with Nomad on the Replant project and was involved in ethnobotanical projects with the Marika family from Yirrkala. Photographer Peter Eve, who was recruited to provide a photographic record of the project, was also a regular visitor to the region.

The Camerons then presented the idea to the traditional owners and local artists for their consideration. Getting the balance right proved challenging as in proposing the idea to do something on country they had to avoid appearing as though they were presuming to have the right to visit before being formally invited.

The remote Madarrpa clan homeland of Yilpara, home to several family groups, was considered a desirable location for a combination of factors: Djambawa was an artist and a leader who was proactive and always interested in involving his community in projects that would promote their culture and art and benefit the community; this proposal happened to follow closely on the successful application by Djambawa and his Madarrpa clan for recognition of sea rights in the Blue Mud bay area. A High Court Decision on 30 July 2008, known as the Blue Mud Bay decision, gave traditional Aboriginal owners native title rights along the coastline of north eastern Arnhem Land. The decision acknowledged that Aboriginal Freehold titles extend down to the low water mark to include the intertidal zone and parts of rivers and estuaries affected by the ebb and flow of the tides. Anyone with a
Morphy, who had a long-standing close relationship with Djambawa, had assisted in the Sea Rights case. The Camerons considered that this project would provide the Yolngu with another opportunity to reassert title to country through their art as they had done with the 1995 *Djalkiri Wänga* exhibition and the 2008 *After Berndt* series of etchings. Also relevant was the presence of facilities that would be beneficial to the visiting group. The Sydney Cove Rotary Club had recently assisted the community in building a visitors’ accommodation centre, a Women’s Centre and a building dedicated to art production.

The Camerons had to ensure that everyone involved was comfortable with the concept and that it would happen in a way that was culturally appropriate and economically viable (Cameron, R and Cameron, A, 2011). Djambawa was enthusiastic about hosting a cross-cultural dialogue that involved art and invited them to come to his country for the project. The facilitators were then confronted with the complex array of logistic challenges posed by the remoteness of the community. The project was timed to avoid the Wet season so that the visiting artists, their materials and all their personal effects could travel in a convoy of four-wheel drive vehicles via the unsealed roads and dirt tracks from Nhulunbuy to Yilpara.

A fundamental consideration in selecting the Yolngu participants was the ownership of the country on which the project was to be held. Will Stubbs had been asked to suggest artists who could be involved and who he thought might be interested. Consequently, all the Yolngu artists who were invited to participate had some relationship with Yilpara: Djambawa Marawili was the community leader; Marrirra (Gumbaniya) Marawili, was another Madarrpa clan leader; Mulkun Wirrpanda was of the Dhudi Djapu clan who for generations have intermarried with the Madarrpa clan; fishing licence wishing to fish in those areas had to get permission from the Northern Land Council (National Native Title Tribunal, 2008).

In 2005, at the invitation of the community elders, nine members of the Sydney Cove Rotary Club (SCRC) led by retired engineers Andy Butfield and Robert Bradshaw, visited Yilpara (Baniyala) and devised a support program for the community. In 2006 they designed and supervised the young men of the community in the building of a Women’s Centre and an Art Centre to increase the community’s income earning capacity. In 2007 an accommodation centre for teachers and other visitors was constructed. In 2010 the community became independent of the SCRC and formally incorporated the Indigenous Benevolent Community Fund, to receive and manage donor funds.

[http://www.sydneycoverotary.com/projects/indigenous/case-study-baniyala/]
and Djapu artist and printmaker Marrnyula Mununggurr, was associated as it was the country of her mother Nonggirrnga Marawili. Djambawa’s wife Liyawaday Wirrpanda, an artist in her own right, was not in the original invited group of Yolngu artists but became involved in the printmaking as she was present in the community during the period of the project.

The non-Yolngu print artists chosen to participate came from around Australia and all had previous experience of working with Indigenous artists: Brisbane-based Waanyi artist Judy Watson had worked with the Camerons on their Replant project; Fiona Hall from Adelaide had also worked with the Camerons on the Replant project; Jörg Schmeisser was very ‘place-focused’ in his work and while Head of Printmaking at the Canberra School of Art had worked with many Aboriginal artists including Narritjin and Naminapu Maymur from Yirrkala; John Wolseley from Victoria had been invited but was unavailable for the Replant project and so was anxious to participate in this project. Wolseley also had a keen interest in the Australian environment and since the late 1970s had worked with Aboriginal artists in Central Desert communities.

![Fig. 8.1 Djambawa and Marrirra Marawili explaining the djalkiri landmarks Yilpara October 2009 (Photographer P Eve, 2009)](image)

97 From here-on to avoid confusion between Basil Hall and Fiona Hall rather than using only their family I will resort to either using their first name or their full name.
Djambawa and the community provided a traditional welcome for the visiting group who were settled into a campsite in a clearing in the bush that was the shape of the Ancestral stingray (gurrtjpi) who had created that land. The following morning Djambawa showed them landmarks that represented the djalkiri and the knowledge of their ancestors and explained: ‘we are standing on their names’ (Figure 8.1, p.255). This phrase resurfaced when toward the end of the project the group discussed a suitable name for the project. They agreed that Djalkiri would be appropriate as it reflected the spiritual and historical significance of both the experience and the resultant artworks (Figure 8.2).

In the following days the Yolngu artists got on with creating their artworks while the visiting artists explored their new surroundings to get inspiration for their artwork (Figure 8.3, p.257). The Camerons, who were present as facilitators and observers for the entire period, described what took place:

While the visitors were out bush, printmaker Basil Hall set up a temporary print workshop at the community visitor centre. The Yolngu artists began working directly onto zinc plates with bitumen and painting onto acetate. After two days of talks and exploration, the visiting artists also began to draw, first onto paper then onto plate. The artists interacted closely together as they camped, cooked, ate, walked the country, shared stories and created art. At night they watched archival films depicting Yolngu culture and showed images of each other’s work. Around the campfire they discussed culture, history, sea rights and the events of the day (Nomad Art, 2010b).
The Yolngu Prints

Basil Hall had suggested the etching technique as a common medium for all the works. The visiting artists limited their output to etchings while the Yolngu artists also created screenprints and experimented with a combination of techniques. Angus Cameron noted that, as in the Replant project, most of the local Indigenous artists started with iconic works associated with their clan groups, but following a period of group interaction and observing the manner in which the visiting artists went around exploring, gathering things and doing sketches, the local artists began to reveal the capacity they have for innovation in their work. The screenprint Marrirra created, Gurrtjpi has the figurative representation of his totemic stingray superimposed on a background of his Madarrpa clan miny’tji (Figure 8.4, p.258). Of the two etchings Marrnyula created, the first, Dhangi, refers to a particular ceremony that takes place in her homeland of Wandawuy. The Djapu cross hatched grid pattern represents the freshwater at her homeland which is inland from Blue Mud Bay (Figure 8.5, p.258). Marrnyula’s innovative interpretation of a design she often replicates in her artwork is described in the print story provided by the Art Centre: ‘the artist is playing with the sacred design to create a completely new pattern suggested by the swirling combinations of different elements of this water’ (Print Space, 2012b).
Mulkun’s etching, *Yalata*, depicts events that occurred during creation time at this sacred site in her Dhudi-Djapu homeland. Footprints represent the two *Djan’kawu* Sister Creator beings and the brolga that they sang as they walked through the land, creating sacred waterholes with their digging sticks (Figure 8.6). The background is composed of the classic representation of Mulkun’s Dhudi-Djapu clan *miny’tji*.

Djambawa’s wife Liyawaday, although not officially part of the project, had become involved and created a print in which she also replicated a Dhudi Djapu clan design that tells a creation story associated with the same Yalata site as Mulkun had chosen.
However, Liyawaday has protected the underlying sacred clan *miny’tji* by overlaying the surface of the image with free flowing lines representing the flood-waters that flow through the grasses of the plains country of Yalata. Interspersed amongst the patterns are the footprints of the *Djan’kawu* creator spirits and brolga. These motifs have become recognised as her personal style (Figure.8.7, p.258).

The greatest degree of innovation was seen in works produced by Marrnyula and Djambawa. According to Basil Hall, Djambawa waited until all the others had started before suddenly creating an image of *baru*, his back covered with the Madarrpa clan diamond *miny’tji*, emerging from an abstract background of the same pattern (Figure 8.8).

![Figure 8.8](image)

Djambawa has twisted the *miny’tji* to create the outline of the figure. The subject and the patterning fuse together in such a way that it achieves the *buwayak* (invisibility)\(^98\) effect that is achieved in some of his bark painting. Djambawa impressed on Hall that he wanted his print, *Garrangali*, to reflect the manner in which a bark is painted, with

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98 *Buwayak* (invisibility) was the title of an exhibition of barks by three Yolngu artists, Djambawa Marawili, Wanyubi Marika and Galuma Maymuru, held at Annandale Galleries March 2003. In a catalogue essay, Will Stubbs, Art Co-ordinator Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Arts, relates that Wanyubi Marika chose the word *Buwayak* which means invisibility...’to describe the work from Yilpara in which the figurative cover has begun to disappear from view’. Morphy describes this feature of the artwork in more detail in his catalogue essay: ‘Yolngu art involves the complex interplay of geometric and figurative forms, with one often merging into the other. Two techniques in particular give dynamism to the surface form and create the impression of movement. One is the use of cross hatching to create a surface of shimmering brilliance (*bir’yun*), with vibrant yet clear designs. The other can be referred to as emergent iconicity (*buwayak*)’ (Morphy, H, 2003).
the white colour being added last, contrary to the printmaking process where a print usually starts with white and colour added later.

Basil was determined to accommodate Djambawa’s wish to reproduce miny’tji as closely as possible to how it is painted onto bark, and to have it work as well as it does on bark in creating the visual effect the Yolngu describe as bir’yun — the ‘brilliance’ or the visual effect produced by the fine cross-hatched lines that cover the surface of Yolngu paintings and create a feeling of Ancestral presence (Morphy, H, 1989, p.28).

Basil experimented with Djambawa’s etching until he succeeded in achieving this effect of bir’yun by screenprinting the white lines Djambawa had created, onto the original etching. He commented on the outcome:

For a change the print came into its own as a work of art — it wasn’t just a little copy of a bark painting. So often prints are just seen as a second rate way of reproducing what people do in their painting, but exhibited there next to the bark the print looked as powerful as the bark. (Hall, B, 2011)

Djambawa impressed Basil with his ability to conceptualise achieving this in a medium that was not so familiar to him. This was not a copy of any existing bark but an image that Djambawa created especially for the occasion, painting directly onto the plates in the same way he would have painted onto a bark and using colours similar to the ochres used on a bark. According to Basil, Djambawa deliberately chose not to accurately represent the traditional miny’tji colours in his print, but chose red and yellow inks that, although similar, did not exactly mimic the traditional red and yellow ochres. The story that accompanied the print describes the location and provides a caution in relation to the significance of the miny’tji replicating the Ancestral fire.

Båru the Ancestral crocodile ventures here from Yathikpa, bringing the power and authority of the Ancestral Fire with him ... The sacred clan design of cross hatched ribbon swirling flame-like indeed denote this fertile mix of waters and fire in this sacred area. Garrangali is revered as a reservoir of Madarrpa soul. To venture into these parts is for those with

99 The bir’yun created by the fine cross-hatching, which is considered a manifestation of Ancestral power, was first noted by Donald Thomson in his unpublished notes. (Field notes 5.8.37). Morphy elaborates on the definition: ‘Thus bir’yun is the shimmering effect of finely cross-hatched paintings which project a brightness that is seen as emanating from the wangarr (Ancestral) beings themselves—this brightness is one of the things that endows the painting with Ancestral power. In the past, paintings with fine cross-hatching were, in an unmodified form, restricted to closed contexts’ (Morphy, H, 1989, p.28).
appropriate knowledge and the preparedness for the intense heat of fire and the ire of the crocodile. (Print Space, 2012b)

Basil commented that there was an obvious relaxation in the regulations regarding the use of miny’tji in print as there was no debate regarding the subject matter and content of the first images Marrnyula and Mulkun produced. The only debate arose in relation to whether Marrnyula would be permitted to paint her mother’s country for the first time. Prior to this project Marrnyula had always painted her father’s Djapu clan designs as she did for her first Djalkiri print, Dhangi. The idea for her second print was to feature the blue flag which had been planted out in Blue Mud Bay as a symbol of both the recent court challenge for recognition of title to sea country as well as representing the sails of the Macassans who long ago visited and interacted with the Madarrpa people. Marrnyula consulted with Marrirra and Djambawa and after much discussion to ensure she understood the relevance of the stories; they gave their permission and assisted her with the design. Marrnyula related how this came about:

They asked us what to draw — what we see at Yilpara, my mother’s country. Djambawa is my ngapipi [uncle]. We learnt since the first time sitting there. Djambawa was telling the story for us, like for balanda — dhawu. I was looking at the plate and thinking what can I paint. Next day I went and asked the old men. It’s all right for us to do, but I had to ask them, get permission from those two — Djambawa ga Marrirra. They just draw on a piece of paper for me … Gave me an idea and I start to paint on that … nhāwuy …that’s my hand. (Mununggurr, M, 2011)

Basil described this as another ‘magic moment’ with really important interactions taking place between the family members, regarding what was about to be created.
The design for Marrnyula’s print, *Bawu* (Figure 8.9, p.261) was originally worked out by Marrirra and Djambawa on a sheet of paper. Basil described the final image as a beautiful, understated print which was widely considered the best of the works in the subsequent exhibition (Hall, B, 2011). Marrnyula explained how the idea came to her after having listened to Djambawa telling the story of Yilpara, the significance of the flag and the ceremony that followed the sea rights victory:

That night I dreamt about the *Bawu* (the sails of the Macassan ships) and then asked Marrirra and Djambawa if I could paint my mother’s design. I got the permission from them and this is the story for my print. *Bawu* represents the sailing cloth. It is the Madarrpa and Manggali clan design. The design in the middle is *Bawu*. On the top the white represents the clouds and the blue represents the water. The lines around *Bawu* represent the saltwater—*Mungurru* connected to Yilpara and Djarrakpi homelands. This is my first painting from my mother’s clan. It tells the story of sea rights. The ceremony for sea rights at Yilpara had this flag situated in the sea connecting clouds and water. (Mununggurr, M, 2010)

Following discussion with Hall it was decided to use a chine collé technique (see Addendum: Print Techniques) to include blue paper in the etched print. Hall approached Darwin-based printer and papermaker, Winsome Jobling, who had worked on the Nomad *Replant* project, to assist in the fabrication of the paper. When interviewed in her studio in Darwin (Jobling, W, 2014), Jobling demonstrated the challenges associated with producing paper suitable for printing that would also fulfil Marrnyula’s list of requirements. Coincidently Jobling had recently found some old discarded jute rope at the Darwin Sailing Club and decided to incorporate this in the papermaking, as it seemed a fitting link with the sea-related subject of Marrnyula’s print. Marrnyula wanted the blue and white flag to be central in her image and the blue had to be just the right colour — reflecting the blue of the sea and the colour of the sea treaty flag out in the middle of the bay.

Three colour samples were done before Marrnyula accepted a colour which Jobling came to refer to as ‘Baniyala blue’. Then Jobling had to work out how to join blue and white paper into one piece to represent the flag in the middle of the image. After much experimentation she finally succeeded in using one sheet of paper with a divider to keep the two halves separated while dipping into first white and then the blue colour wash. Marrnyula resolved the problem of the presence of a blurred line across the middle of the paper where the divider had been, by masking the blurred area with
a black line which was in keeping with the black outlines in the remainder of the work. The blue and white paper representing the flag was then chine colléd onto the etching.

Basil commented that challenges such as those presented to Jobling were not unusual on this project with almost every artist presenting the printmakers with challenges in realising their prints. The etchings of Fiona Hall, Wolseley, and Schmeisser exhibit intricate detail while Djambawa and Marrnyula posed technical challenges that required the development of innovative techniques. In Basil’s opinion this made the project that much more rewarding. During an interview in 2011 he described the Djalkiri project as one of the highlights of his career:

It was a fantastic experience — you couldn't get a better experience in terms of the people who took part and what was produced. For me the highlight was getting a print out of Djambawa which was as good and as powerful as a bark. He did a beautiful job of painting the image as he would have done for a bark and we came up with a technique that allowed it to shimmer as a bark does. (Hall, B, 2011)

**The balanda experience**

The Yilpara locals were intrigued by the visitors’ behaviour on the first few days — wandering about the beach and the bush collecting and photographing things. Djambawa described it as the balanda working on the surface while the Yolngu worked beneath the surface. Fiona Hall, Schmeisser and Wolseley were all to later reflect on this different approach to producing artwork, with the Westerners tending to be superficial while the Yolngu art possessed deeper meanings within the layers. Fiona Hall acknowledged this in her artist’s talk at the opening of the Djalkiri exhibition (Hall, F, 2010). Before going out to the homeland she had spent a day preparing by going through the bark paintings at the Art Centre, gathering a body of work to reference. She was overwhelmed by the knowledge and information contained within the Yolngu paintings and this impacted on what she would create during the project. The overall experience heightened her awareness of the fact that she came from a different culture and that her work came from a western tradition of superficially representing landscape and perspective compared to the spiritual layers within Yolngu artwork.
While at Yilpara, Fiona Hall was made aware of how significant every element of their homeland was to the Yolngu, and how the land harbourd ‘sacred places where past and present manifest perpetually’ (Hall in Cameron, A, 2010, p.18). This self-acknowledged heightened awareness of the surrounding environment is reflected in the attention to detail in the foliage and insect life of the local plants which Hall featured in each of the six etchings she created (Figure 8.10, p.265).

Wolseley commented that the initial impact of his interaction with the Yolngu was that he had not experienced the same level of dialogue in his interactions with Central Desert Aborigines. (This reflected the impression of their initial experiences related by Gribben and Sierakowski in Chapter 7). He was appreciative of the Yolngu sharing knowledge of their culture and country with all its associated spiritual and intellectual history and having the opportunity to witness how they incorporated all this into their painting (Wolseley, J, 2013). The images Wolseley created revealed an empathy with Yolngu philosophy and art in his alluding to the cyclical nature of life and the cosmos. His images reflected time and rhythms, referencing the tide, the cycles of the days and the seasons (Figure 8.11, p.265).

In his exploration of country, Wolseley would gather ‘bits of the natural world’ to feature in his artwork. As evidence of the knowledge of the environment he had acquired during this project, he kept records of the descriptions of the objects — the traditional given to him by Djambawa and the scientific from Wightman — which he would later reference in his work (Wolseley, J, 2013).

Jörg Schmeisser commented that although it was usual to feel like a stranger in a new place, this was not his experience at Yilpara: ‘I found the welcome that I had in Blue Mud Bay overwhelming — almost too good to be true. I have been in many places where there is discord at some stage — but I did not find that here’ (Schmeisser, J, 2010). Like Wolseley, Schmeisser incorporated notes in his images, describing the elements he had depicted (Figure 9.12, p.265). The experience and the interaction with the Yolngu and their art had given him an appreciation of how within many layers there can be revealed — ‘more and more and deeper meanings’ (Schmeisser, J, 2010).
Judy Watson also incorporated many layers of meaning in the six etchings she created during the project. Watson had sourced documents describing the history of the Blue Mud Bay area and incorporated fragments of these in her images, alternating them with figurative representations of elements of the country.

It was a wonderful thing that we were taken into their country and community and taken around and shown everything — allowed to forage but shown where the boundaries were. That's what I was trying to respond to with these — the importance of sea rights. Winsome Jobling has made this beautiful handmade paper out of rope which in itself brings another special meaning as it did in Marrnyula's print. Everything that went in and was fed to us and given to us we were very grateful for. We tried to pull that out again through the paper and out through the press. We tried to give back what we had been given. (Watson, J, 2010)
Watson picked up the thread of the symbolism of the flag and the colour blue in her work. In one of her prints, *baniyala, blue mud bay*, which features details of local plants superimposed on a map of the bay, she incorporated offcuts of the blue paper that Winsome Jobling had made for Marrnyula (Figure 8.13, p.265).

**Editioning Djalkiri prints**

As the project printmaker, Basil Hall editioned all the Yolngu plates and the majority of the visiting artists plates at his studio in Darwin with the assistance of Matts Unden. The visiting artists had done all their preliminary sketches on site at Baniyala and, considering the volume of work required to produce six plates, took the unfinished plates with them to finish the plate work in their own studios. They were all involved in the final resolution and editioning of their own plates.

**The Djalkiri Exhibition**

An exhibition of the works created during this project was held in August 2010 at 24HR ART NT, Centre for Contemporary Art, during the Darwin Festival. All the visiting artists and most of the Yolngu artists were present on the opening night. They were each invited to comment on their experience and the resultant artwork. Without exception, the artists described the experience as a worthwhile and deeply rewarding one, which had a profound effect on them personally and on their approach to their artwork. A selection of the works was exhibited at the Yirrkala Art Centre in 2011 – the first occasion that prints by non-local artists were displayed along with prints by local artists. With the support of Artback NT Arts Development and Touring, the exhibition, with an accompanying comprehensive educational kit compiled by Angus Cameron, toured nationally until 2013 to widespread critical acclaim. One of the many positive outcomes of the project was this increased exposure of Yolngu art and culture to the outside world.

**Reflections on the Djalkiri Experience**

Rose and Angus Cameron considered there were many factors which resulted in the project progressing successfully: subject matter, medium, format, and the collaborative manner in which it was approached with the exchange of knowledge as the starting point. The combined experiences of the Indigenous artists and the visiting
artists generated a knowledge base which they could draw on and transfer into visual art – in this instance printmaking (Cameron, R and Cameron, A, 2011). The Camerons considered the ultimate measure of its success was the fact that all the artists acknowledged having gained from the experience, both personally and professionally.

In an essay in the Djalkiri catalogue, Djambawa acknowledged the significance of the experience, pointing out that it was an example of a successful ‘two-way’ sharing of knowledge:

I want to talk about that day when the artists got together. Manymak, it was good. It was really good for us the Yolngu people. We learned very much from them. The techniques they were using to show us, and the Balanda (white persons) way of doing art. For us we were learning from them. And the others, those people who were working with us, the ngapaki (foreigners) have learned from us, how we make the patterns, careful and tight. We told them and we showed them that this country has the stories. And those stories were there from beyond, from our ancestors to us, our grandfathers to our fathers and to us. (Marawili, D, 2010)

Marrnyula also emphasised the reciprocal learning aspect of the project, as well as the experience having provided the opportunity for her to incorporate new subject matter into her artwork:

I don’t know how to do my mother painting. This is the first time I do the mother painting and first time worked with group of other artists. First time been with a group of artists — they come and we talk about it — sharing about art. It’s different to see what balanda are doing about art. That's why we work together. Get more knowledge from balanda and they get knowledge from us. Working together I enjoyed, and it’s for me to learn both this art both balanda ga Yolngu. Manymak experience… That's the other… balanda art… Dhiyangu… And they collect all the pieces from the beach, like leaves, anything they can see they just kept it and put it there. That’s their art. For Yolngu it’s here… [indicating her heart and head] (Mununggurr, M, 2011)

Although Basil Hall has had extensive experience of collaborative projects involving remote and established artists, the Djalkiri project made a particular impression on him:

It was successful in ways we don’t even know… so many different angles. There was always going to be different bits of that project that worked for different people. Most obvious one that worked with all of us was the fact that the work did jell so beautifully. From a fantastic idea from Angus and
Rose came some amazing work from all those people. And the consistency and mutual respect that happened as a result of us being privy to their country and them coming over to ours and the willingness to learn from each other. Djambawa was an amazing host welcoming us to his country and so generous with his time. Yes it is a highlight — I’d happily retire after that experience. To be involved in something as wonderful as that — you couldn’t get a better experience in terms of people who took part and what was produced. You can’t top that — that’s as good as it’s going to get. (Hall, B, 2011)

When asked for his opinion on the project, Wolseley concluded:

The actual format of whole project was incredibly good. It enabled balanda and Yolngu artists to do their thing and gently relate to each other with Judy Watson in between. It was a wonderful model of how this should happen. I can only say what I got from them — by my trying to investigate what was out there in the natural world and them telling me about how they saw it was a wonderful unforced way of learning. (Wolseley, J, 2013)

A review in Artlink Magazine echoed the sentiments of the participants in describing the works that had resulted from the creative exchange as ground breaking: ‘And so it seems like the inscriptions etched into each plate, and the enduring imagery of Ancestral presence, this exhibition will itself make an indelible mark’ (Rannersberger, C, 2010).

For the manner in which it was conceived and implemented, the Djalkiri project could be considered as a model for cross-cultural interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. Angus and Rose Cameron approached it sensitively and logically, with attention given to every possible eventuality — cultural, administrative and logistic. Participants were chosen with consideration given to their manner of working, their involvement in printmaking and their attitude toward culture and environment. Ultimately the success of the Djalkiri Project was due to the participants having embraced the project with enthusiasm and creating exceptional art.

There were other positive outcomes from the project. All artists benefited professionally and financially from the successful marketing of the project and artworks. John Wolseley’s interest in exploring how man co-existed with his environment led him to return on an annual basis to Arnhem Land to collaborate with Mulkun Wirrpanda, on a series of prints recording the native plants and their uses (Cameron, R and Cameron, A, 2011).
Ongoing Collaborations – The *Miḏawarr Suite*

During their time at Yilpara, Wolseley had spent time with Mulkun Wirrpanda learning about native plants and how they were traditionally used by the Yolngu. At this time, Mulkun was involved in exploring and painting the lesser known plant species that she feared would be forgotten by the younger generations. Mulkun had already produced a series of artworks that catalogued the native plants and their traditional uses in order to renew the knowledge of these plants and to preserve it for the future generations. These plants were part of the diet that had sustained her people in the days when old people ‘lived a long time without illness’ (Print Space, 2013).

The ground was set for an ongoing relationship during the Djalkiri project, when Mulkun adopted Wolseley as her *wawa* (brother) in recognition of his shared interest in the environment. Wolseley has since returned to Yirrkala each *Miḏawarr* (harvest) season to join Mulkun in hunting for rare species, sampling the local plants and tubers, and painting them. This led to a collaborative print project which resulted in a series of prints entitled The *Miḏawarr Suite*.

As Wolseley was leaving Yirrkala at the end of 2012, Stubbs mentioned that Mulkun would next be working with woodblock carving. On his return to Victoria, Wolseley sent Mulkun a slab of Huon pine\(^\text{100}\) that he had used for woodblock printing imagining that Mulkun would appreciate the grain effects the wood created on paper. A few months later, Wolseley heard that Mulkun had started working with the slab and decided to return to Yirrkala to work with her on printing the first series of woodblocks from the slab (Figures 8.14, 8.15, p.270).

A second series worked on by Mulkun was printed in 2013 at Wolseley’s print workshop in Victoria, with the assistance of Cassandra Gill and Caitlin Gibson two young printmakers who had done a work placement at Yirrkala in 2012 while students at RMIT in Melbourne (Figure 8.16, p.271). The second series of smaller prints were richer in texture than the first as they were printed on Stringybark fibre paper made by Winsome Jobling at Mulkun’s request (Figures 8.17, 8.18, p.271).

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100 Huon Pine, a slow growing conifer endemic to Tasmania, is considered to be one of the oldest living trees on earth. In the final product of woodblock printing the texture of the wood plays an important part and Wolseley in particular appreciated the texture created by the grain of the Huon pine. (Wolseley, J, 2014b)
Mulkun and Wolseley were excited about the idea of working with paper made from raw materials from the land. Wolseley described these as ‘incredibly special — something about the physicality of that paper combined with the tactile wood, engraved so energetically by Mulkun, means that the prints have quite a seductive aura’ (Wolseley, J, 2014b).
Fig. 8.16 Cassandra Gill and Caitlin Gibson, printing *Rakay#2*, (15P) at Wolseley’s home studio in Victoria, November 2013 (Image Courtesy J Wolseley)

Fig. 8.17 Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Rakay #2* Woodblock on handmade stringybark paper, 54.5x28.5cm. Ed.30, 2013 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 15P)

Fig. 8.18 Handmade Stringybark paper made by Winsome Jobling (Courtesy Winsome Jobling, Darwin, 2014) (Photographer D Salvestro)
Jobling found papermaking with Stringybark a challenging experience. Problems were encountered with the paper in the initial testing, but Jobling persevered to improve the handling properties. She was to be challenged further by a request from Wolseley and Mulkun to make paper using a combination of paperbark and the fibres of the banyan and räkay — the plants that were the subject of Mulkun’s work. Jobling was surprised to find that including the longer fibres from the yams actually added strength to the short fibres of the paperbark. The resultant paper retained its texture and had the improved handling properties that the artists were seeking (Jobling, W, 2014).

Wolseley’s cross-cultural collaborative experience with Yirrkala artists was to continue to evolve. During a visit in 2013, Stubbs introduced Wolseley to a young man who had presented at the Art Centre asking if he could do a linocut. Rrawuṉ Maymuru, grandson of Narritjin Maymuru, had been one of the first young men to experiment with printmaking in the early days of the Print Space. The first print he designed as an eighteen year old was a linocut done in collaboration with Ningiyama Maymuru. The black and white linoprint, Yingapungapu (Figure 8.19, 273), was included in one of the first exhibitions featuring prints made at Yirrkala, the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Printmakers (1996–1998) exhibition held at the Northern Territory University in 1998. The print was also featured in an exhibition of contemporary Australian Aboriginal art, The Dreamtime, held in 2003 in Ljubljana, Slovenija. Following his initial experience in printmaking Rrawuṉ had elected to pursue his interest in music, becoming the lead singer in a popular Yolngu rock band, East Journey, and was now enquiring at the Print Space at his mother’s suggestion to try his hand again.

While Stubbs went off to find a piece of lino for Rrawuṉ to experiment with, Wolseley offered Rrawuṉ an offcut of the Huon pine woodblock. Stubbs queried the gesture, suggesting it unwise to give such a valued piece of woodblock to a novice. He was pleasantly surprised the next day when Rrawuṉ returned with a fine drawing of the sacred yoku — the corm of the waterlily — on a background of cross-hatched Manggalili clan miny’tji. Rrawuṉ impressed them further when he proceeded to carve the drawing onto the Huon pine woodblock with what Wolseley described as ‘quite

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unbelievable precision, as though he was a born printmaker’ (Wolseley, J, 2014b).

When it came to the colour selection for the print, Rrawuŋ began to work with traditional colours but Stubbs intervened, suggested he may be getting too close to the secret sacred for printmaking. Wolseley observed that Rrawuŋ diplomatically resolved the issue by avoiding the complex colour patterns and restricting his palette to brown and black (Figure 7.20, p.273).

Stubbs described the encounter:

It was against my instructions for Wolseley to give it to him — and I love my wrongness. How John, an artist at the pinnacle of his fame is so generous with such a special piece of timber — to trust a young guy and that that guy would deliver something way beyond expectations rewards John’s faith and the respect he showed him. I love the fact that I would never have done that. It was wrong to do that in managerial terms — in managing the resources available to the community. That was a satisfaction — to be wrong. Wolseley and I and everyone should be happy that if you trust someone with something special that even something better will result. You have a perfectly resolved art piece. It is ridiculous for someone to do that for the first time. It is difficult to carve. It is hard … yes, he wanted colour, but it is not about the colour, it is about the line, the hand (Stubbs, W, 2014).

According to Wolseley, Rrawuŋ continued to display intuitive skill at each stage of the print process and Wolseley was pleased that Rrawuŋ expressed interest in continuing with printmaking (Wolseley, J, 2014a).

Fig. 8.19 Rrawuŋ Maymuru, *Yingapungapu* Linocut, 37x26cm. Ed.50, 1998  
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 25A)

Fig. 8.20 Rrawuŋ Maymuru, *Yoku* Woodblock, 31x25cm. Ed.30, 2014  
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 25B)
In August 2014, Rrawuñ’s woodblock print, *Yoku*, was exhibited in the Gapan Gallery at the Garma Festival, while Mulkun’s *Miŋawarr Suite* of woodblocks were exhibited in the Top Gallery at the Yirrkala Art Centre along with a selection of her barks and *larrakitj* featuring the same theme of edible food plants from her homeland.

Mulkun’s barks and *larrakitj* and the *Miŋawarr Suite* of prints, were exhibited with paintings, drawings and prints by Wolseley in an exhibition, ‘*Marrma dilakmala lurruma gurra nthawu* — Two Old Artists Looking for Food’ — held at the Roslyn Oxley Gallery in Sydney in November 2015. The works reflected their mutual belief in the primary importance of the plants, animals and ecosystems of the natural world. Through these works they hoped to heighten awareness of the damage done by loss of connection to country (Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, 2015).

**Conclusion**

The focus of this chapter has been the *Djalkiri* cross-cultural collaborative print project involving Yolngu and non-Yolngu artists. As with the *Australasian Print Project* held in 1996, the *Djalkiri* project demonstrated a reciprocal sharing of knowledge which impacted on the work of all the participants and led to further collaborations and increased exposure of Yolngu art and artists to the outside world. In each of these projects art was being used to investigate the concepts of place and identity from both a Yolngu and a Western perspective. The Yolngu artists replicated their clan designs and creation stories to affirm their relationship with their homelands. The works created by the non-Yolngu participants were influenced by the Yolngu having shared knowledge of their environment and culture, and their cosmological view of the world.

During the project, collaborative experimentation with techniques produced innovative results. Basil Hall worked with Djambawa to find a technique that would accurately reproduce Djambawa’s clan *miny’tji* and replicate the shimmering brilliance — the *bir’yun* — achieved in bark painting. Winsome Jobling collaborated with Marrnyula to create paper that enabled the artist to achieve the colour effect she sought in her print.

As a result of the location of the project and the ‘both ways’ sharing of knowledge, the project impacted on all involved in the manner in which they approached their own art
practice. Relationships that formed have led to the initiation of further collaborative projects involved in preserving knowledge of culture and the natural environment.

The following chapter describes and assesses the outcomes of collaborative print projects that were instigated by the Yolngu to address specific environmental, political, social and health issues within their community.
9. Saving Culture, Saving Lives

The preceding chapter provided an example of a cross-cultural collaborative print project that demonstrated reciprocal learning, promoted Yolngu art and culture and knowledge of the environment, and resulted in positive outcomes. As has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation, Yolngu artists at Yirrkala have made use of the attributes of the alternative medium of printmaking—its multiplicity, accessibility and affordability—to assist in fulfilling the customary purpose of educating by passing on knowledge to the younger generations as well as to disseminate information about their culture and country and as an important source of income. These attributes of printmaking have also been used by Yirrkala artists to propagate life-style and health messages. This chapter describes projects which successfully employed printmaking for the purpose of increasing awareness of local social and health issues.

Gaymala Yunupingu and Marrnyula Mununggurr are recognised for their effective use of printmaking to highlight environmental and social concerns. Marrnyula has been commissioned by government agencies to produce artwork to assist in increasing the awareness of the local people to health and environmental issues. Gaymala was motivated to alert her people and the outside world to the deleterious impact of the bauxite mine and related infrastructure, on their land, the environment and the local people.

A range of ongoing cross-cultural collaborative print projects which targeted the ‘at-risk’ young members of the Yirrkala community are then described. The projects were instigated in an attempt to address the lack of motivation, low self-esteem and risk of suicide amongst the ‘disengaged youth,’ who were invited to partake in printmaking workshops co-ordinated by the local school and the Art Centre in collaboration with visiting printmakers.

Environment and Health

The establishment of the bauxite mine on the Gove Peninsula had a major impact on Yolngu people living in the region. The infrastructure and related activities resulted in general destruction of the environment, sacred sites and totemic flora and fauna. The
influx of outsiders also had a major impact on the Yolngu lifestyle by introducing diseases and consumer goods which had a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of the Yolngu. Introduced species of plants and animals posed a threat to the ecosystem of the region. In an attempt to address some of the health and environmental issues, local representatives of the relevant Government departments sought the assistance of Yolngu artists in order to use their art to inform and to engender awareness. Once again Yolngu resorted to printmaking to assist in alerting the community, the authorities and the outside world, to the threats posed to their well-being and their land.

The Feral Pig Project

In 1989, in their efforts to eradicate the wild pigs that were destroying the local waterholes, the Nhulunbuy-based representatives of The Northern Territory Bureau of Rural Resources and Conservation Commission, sought the assistance of Yolngu artists. They appreciated that the most effective way of alerting the locals to the damage the wild pigs were doing to the environment was to create awareness through their art.

The Yirrkala Art Centre Manager, Steve Fox, was approached to recommend an artist to create an image for a poster that would be circulated around the communities. The obvious choice for Fox was Marrnyula Mununggurr, much of whose innovative work depicted everyday life in the community. Marrnyula created a bark painting on which a Feral Pig Poster would be based (Fox, S, 2011a). Marrnyula’s design comprised a series of images surrounded by a message she had composed for her people: ‘We belong to the land along with the plants and the animals. Pigs do not belong here. These animals can ruin our home and our food’. Fox described the image:

Marrnyula did this wonderful painting showing everyone happy at the time — the sun is rising, the waterhole is full of birds and fish and everything. Everyone’s happy. Then the pigs come in and start messing up the waterhole. Then the fish and birds die... (Fox, S, 2011a)

As this was pre-Print Space days and there were no facilities on site, Fox approached Alison Alder at the poster-making collective, Redback Graphix in Wollongong, NSW, to collaborate in the production of a four-colour screenprint in a limited edition run of 300 (Figure 9.1, p.278). The screenprint poster proved effective in spreading the message throughout the scattered communities and increasing awareness of the pig
problem. A similar approach was employed four years later by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services (NTDH&CS), for a health awareness project.

If you love me love me safely

In 1993, as a means of addressing the increasing incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and to make the local population aware of the risk of AIDS being introduced into the region, an AIDS Awareness campaign was undertaken by the Northern Territory Department of Health & Community Services (DHCS), through the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) at Nhulunbuy. Fox’s wife Lillian was the Health educator at CDC and she suggested the commissioning of artwork for a poster that could be distributed throughout the Aboriginal communities as had been done with the Feral Pig campaign. Once again the Yirrkala Art Centre was approached, this time with the request for a bark painting with a culturally appropriate image and message for promoting condom use and safe sex (Alexander, I, 2012, Fox, S, 2011b). Considering her creativity and the success of her earlier endeavour, Fox again recommended Marrnyula Mununggurr.
In search of an appropriate slogan for the proposed AIDS poster, Fox contacted Alice Springs-based radio station, CAAMA (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association). The station had been running an AIDS Awareness community service announcement using the catchphrase: *If you love me, love me safely*. Fox requested and received authorization from CAAMA, for Marrnyula to incorporate the phrase in her image. In concept and design the painting was similar to the Feral Pig painting, with positive scenes under the heading ‘safe sex’ on one side, and images of unacceptable and risky behaviour on the other, accompanied by the words, ‘sad way’ (Figures 9.3 & 9.4, p.280). Fox described the images:

This side is all about travelling to a motel and using condoms, and you live happily ever after and then on this other side it is people going into the mining town and f...... around in the long grass without protection. (Fox, S, 2011a)

As far as Fox was aware this was one of the rare instances of Yolngu artwork explicitly representing sexual acts and created by a female. Earlier examples were crayon drawings depicting family groups and coitus (Figure 9.2, p.280) done by Wandjuk Marika for Ronald Berndt in 1947 and reproduced in the publications, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land* (1976) and *Three Faces of Love* (1976)\(^\text{102}\). Andrew Blake suggests it is highly unlikely that Marrnyula would have seen Wandjuk’s drawings, as Berndt took the drawings with him to Western Australia and the Yolngu did not have access to them again until the mid–1990s. In Yolngu society the sexual act is considered a natural urge with the sexual union being ‘an eternal law of nature which is reflected in universal fertility and natural continuity’ (Berndt, R M, 1976, p.xi). Nonetheless, associated sacred connotations and taboos exist, so that when Marrnyula’s *Love me safely* image became public, it caused controversy in relation to the scenes depicting couples having ‘free sex’ in the bush (Fox, S, 2011b).

\(^{102}\) Berndt drawings; Object No.WU7250, #362 D/B, created on 28 June 1947, 61x99cm, depicting social aspects of sexual relations and WU7251, #364, created 6 July 1947, 61x64cm, depicting Family Groups and coitus. Each Lumber crayon (red, green, blue and black) on Brown paper. Images of the latter reproduced in Three Faces of Love, Traditional Aboriginal song-poetry, R.M. Berndt, 1976. p.30, Plate 3 with detail of Plate 3 on p.34 (Berndt, R M, 1976).
When the *Love me safely* project was discussed with Marrnyula (Mununggurr, M, 2011), she commented that the imagery was her idea and her design and that she had discussed it with her mother, Nonggirrnga Marawili. Appreciative of the objective of the campaign and how it would benefit her people, Nonggirrnga, an established senior artist and elder, gave her approval for the project to the extent of assisting Marrnyula.
by going out bush with her to select and then prepare a suitable bark. However, when the rest of her family realised that the posters would be so widely disseminated, they reacted negatively, causing shame to Marrnyula. Her brothers went to Fox to find out why their sister was doing this. Fox alleviated the situation by stressing the importance of the message the poster would be conveying and explaining that considering the subject matter was of such a sensitive nature Marrnyula had been unable to discuss it with the male members of her family, but had approached her mother to ensure that the subject matter she was considering was appropriate for her to paint (Fox, S, 2011b).

Ivor Alexander, the Communicable Disease Officer at CDC, described Nonggirrnga as a strong woman who stood her ground against the detractors (Alexander, I, 2012). The censure was not restricted to the Yolngu. When the bark was exhibited that year at the Gove Health Fair, disparaging comments about the bark’s imagery were made by balanda who accused it of denigrating Indigenous art. According to Alexander these critics were silenced when told that it was a health message created by an Indigenous artist and if they had any complaints they should speak to the artist. Alexander confirmed that the DH&CS had merely given Marrnyula the slogan to work with, the rest was entirely Marrnyula’s idea: ‘It was exciting that it was not our idea — us outsiders usually coming in and telling them what to do — this was all her idea’ (Alexander, I, 2012). The bark was subsequently photographed and reproduced as a screenprinted poster to be distributed around the communities (Figure 9.4, p.280).

Fox believed that these projects were beneficial in endorsing printmaking — they had sown a seed and instigated new ideas about the role printmaking could play. Naminapu, who was working at the Art Centre, was also promoting the practice by working on her linocuts, which at that time were being editioned elsewhere due to lack of facilities within the community. Fox sensed the mind-set was different to when he had first worked at the Art Centre in the early 1980s and felt that the time was now right to organise a printmaking workshop. He discussed this at length with Naminapu, Marrnyula and other senior artists, who agreed that they should start actively promoting printmaking at the Art Centre (Fox, S, 2011b).

Following on the success of the original poster, the Northern Territory Aids and Hepatitis Council commissioned Marrnyula, in 2000, to paint another bark with the
same message. This was to be sold to raise funds for the Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander AIDS and Hepatitis awareness project involving retreats and health clinics on the Tiwi Islands. The 2000 bark is now in the collection of the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The ‘Statement of Significance’ provided by the Museum indicates the import of Marrnyula’s image.

This is an extraordinary explicit piece of work that has been produced from within a culture that holds taboos about references to sexual practice. The bark painting refers to serious contemporary health issues faced by Indigenous communities and to initiatives that have been taken by various health organisations in the Northern Territory. The painting also refers to issues of displacement and loss of access to traditional lands. (Mununggurr, M, 2000)

The Love me Safely bark was selected for inclusion in two major national exhibitions: Don’t Leave Me This Way: Art in the Age of AIDS, at the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) in Canberra in 1994–1995; and Making it New: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Sydney in 2009. At the National Gallery it was part of an exhibition of contemporary art depicting the tragic effects of AIDS. The exhibition was sponsored by the Federal Government as a means of reaching a wider audience with messages about AIDS, and highlighted the effectiveness of visual art as a means of raising awareness about health issues. In the publication that accompanied the exhibition, the curator, Ted Gott, referred to Marrnyula’s bark having been reproduced in poster form for educative purposes and credits its effectiveness to the manner in which Marrnyula paints, in ‘a simple and warm vernacular, which can be read alike by her own people and non-Indigenous’ (Gott, T, 1994, p.12).

In 2009 Glenn Barkley, curator at the MCA in Sydney, selected the bark along with other barks, larritji and three screenprints by Marrnyula for hanging in an exhibition that featured works by prominent Australian contemporary artists. Barkley was already familiar with Marrnyula’s work as a printmaker from his time as art curator (1996–2007) at the University of Wollongong, where the archives included a collection of the prints created by the Yolngu artists during the 1995–1996 exchange programs. Barkley considered Marrnyula and her work fitted into the concept of the MCA exhibition:
Materially and conceptually diverse in their approaches, the participating artists are linked by their continuity, focus and commitment to a singular practice over one or more decades... The exhibition [brings] together artists whose work is anchored in some sense of tradition, possessing a link back to art history through either a particular regional or national history, or through a medium. There is also an engagement with the political and social world, either gentle or abrasive, in the works and through the artist’s position within his or her own social community as teacher, supporter or advocate. Many of the artists are involved in areas of social justice and cultural access, working with communities beyond their immediate artistic peers and support networks...’ (De Zegher, C and McMaster, G, 2012)

In the catalogue essay Barkley described how Marrnyula fulfilled these roles within her remote community. The works by Marrnyula selected for inclusion in the exhibition provided a cross-section of Marrnyula’s work ranging from her more traditional representation of Djapu miny’tji on bark and larrakitj, to secular subjects as depicted in the Love me Safely bark and in the screenprints.

![Fig. 9.5 Marrnyula Mununggurr, Indigenous jobs in Remote Areas Screenprint, 32x44cm, Ed.10 2000 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 3M)](image1)

![Fig. 9.6 Marrnyula Mununggurr, Garma (Gapan Gallery) Screenprint, 49x59cm, Ed. 30, 2003 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 3U)](image2)

The three screenprints exhibited show scenes of contemporary community life: *Indigenous jobs in remote communities* (Figure 9.5) was an entry in a competition run by Centrelink to promote employment in remote communities and portrays Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together in an office; *Garma Gapan Gallery* (Figure 9.6) is a scene from the open-air exhibition space at the annual Garma

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| 103 Centrelink is a Federal Government program established in 1997 and managed by the Department of Human Services. It delivers a number of payments and services to Indigenous people, unemployed, retirees and other disadvantaged Australians. |
Festival; AIDS is an adaptation of the original Love me Safely bark reworked by Marrnyula in 2005 as a colour screenprint (Figure 9.7).

The Love me Safely screenprint poster was to be revisited in yet another form several years later. While on a field trip to Yirrkala early in 2012, I contacted Ivor Alexander to arrange a visit to the CDC office in Nhulunbuy to photograph the original 1993 bark. Other than when travelling for exhibitions, the 1993 bark has been proudly displayed in the CDC reception area. During the visit I noticed on a shelf in Alexander’s office, some small PVC tubes featuring the Love me safely poster, which had been wrapped around and glued onto the tubes (Figure 9.8). I enquired as to the purpose of these tubes and Alexander replied: ‘They are condom dispensers!’ (Alexander, I, 2012) He explained that, as part of the STD prevention program, these Love me safely condom dispensers were to be distributed around the local communities. Marrnyula had been approached for permission to use the poster for this purpose. Once again she had consulted with her mother to ensure that the artwork could be used in this way. In various formats, the image Marrnyula conceived more than two decades ago continues to play a vital and effective role in community health education.
Gaymala (Nancy) Yunupingu and the Nabalco suite

By the time Dianne and Andrew Blake arrived at Yirrkala in 1995, Gaymala Yunupingu had long been recognised as an innovative and prolific artist. Gaymala seemed compelled to create art and would paint on any material available to her, so it was inevitable that she would be interested in working with the print medium. According to Andrew Blake, Gaymala would come along with her own squares of lino which she herself had sourced and would happily carve on the verandah. Others were soon influenced to join her, including her sisters, Barrupu and Nyapanyapa who had initially sold their carved sticks, necklaces and other artefacts to the Art Centre. The Yunupingu sisters, each displaying their own distinctive style, were all to achieve recognition as producers of limited edition prints.

Gaymala continually demonstrated innovation in the depiction of traditional themes in her work, often referencing her Gumatj clan totems, crocodile (baru), quail (djirikitj), (Figure 9.10), bandicoot (wan’kurra) and dugong (djununggayangu). Along with her sisters, Gaymala had learnt her clan stories from her father, and the Gumatj diamond pattern representing fire (gurtha) featured regularly in her work (Figure 9.9).

Printmaking afforded her the opportunity to be particularly expressive and she developed a reputation for her exuberant colour combinations. She enjoyed
experimenting with the new colour palette that was now available to her and which allowed her to use colours that reflected the true colours of the land and sea.

Gaymala particularly enjoyed working with the collograph technique and used the technique to produce two suites of prints with contemporary themes: The Nabalco suite and the Garma suite. The first print in The Nabalco suite, Baybaymi, produced in 1999, was the result of a commission from the Nabalco Mining Company for a design for their company Christmas card. Gaymala combined introduced objects relating to the mine with traditional iconographic elements belonging to country to create an image which could be interpreted as a well-known biblical scene, while making a strong statement regarding the desecration of her clan land. Dominating the centre of the image is a building inspired by the mine crushing plant. In the sky above are birds and a small aeroplane symbolising a star. In order to recreate the nativity scene Gaymala has represented a part of the Nabalco mine site with the Christmas star, in the shape of a plane, shining onto the biblical stables. A further three plates were created to make up the Nabalco suite. Each show an aspect of the physical presence of the mine and its plant, superimposed on a landscape with traditional sacred landmarks and totems, suggestive of the negative impact of the mine on the natural environment (Figures 9.11, 9.12, 9.13, 9.14, p.288). Gaymala’s own words best describe the relevance of each of the images:

**Nabalco Suite #1, Baybaymi:** (Figure 9.11)

That place where the big machine is, (crushing plant) and all around the airport is called Ngulpun Rrumiyala. Ngulngulyun is all the noise coming from the crushing plant, all the Gunda(stone) are going down the big hole, and getting crushed up. All the Gunda are going along the moving road, (conveyor belt) on the right coming from Galkila area and the left going to Galupa area. (Print Space, 2013)

Gaymala used a metaphor of a crab (djinydjalma) moving around scooping up food (ngåtha) and crunching it with its teeth (lirra). The Christmas Star is seen in the night sky. The second print, Ngulpan to Galupa, shows the bauxite passing from the crushing plant along the conveyor belt to the processing plant at Galupa where the bauxite is turned into the white aluminium oxide powder.
**Nabalco Suite #2, Ngulpan to Galupa:** (Figure 9.12). This image begins at Ngulpan, the area around the airport and crushing plant. Others names for this place is Ngulgulyun, Rrumiyala and Baybaymi.

The bauxite goes into the machines as *bathala gunda* (big rocks) and then it is crushed and travels along the conveyor belt to be washed then on to Galupa where the crushed bauxite goes into the machine and becomes a powder, turning from red to white. It (white powder) comes shooting out — *larrwang*. A man always sits here to operate the machine. There is always someone looking after the conveyor belt to see if the bauxite gets stuck. They can blow a whistle if it does. (Print Space, 2013)

Above the mounds of bauxite at the base of the image, Gaymala has depicted the new moon (*Ngalindi Yutha*), the evening star (*Djulpan*), the sun (*Walu*) and the morning star (*Banumbirr*).

**Nabalco Suite #3, Galupa:** (Figure 9.13). The site of the Nabalco plant office is *Dhanburama* (spirit place). Within the grounds of the plant is a sacred banyan (*dawu*) tree, considered by the Gumatj as a tree of knowledge.

This is a special tree for mokuy (spirit people), *Dhanburama, Ganbudal, Lawirrlawirr*. It is the only tree left there. That tree represents all the Gumatj people. Behind the *Dhanburama* office is where the tanks are (top). It gets hot here. Next (under this) is a *wayin* (bird) whose name is *Wayathul* (jungle fowl) standing next to the *Dawu* tree, alongside the tree is a *Balanda* (non Aboriginal) who works at Nabalco with a motor bike and a car then another *dharpa* (tree). In this area along time ago there were lots of jungle fowl who would make their nests in the bush. Before the clearing for the mine, it’s been all damaged by the machine *bathala* (big bulldozer). It used to be a good hunting place. Yolngu would hunt for *ganguri* (yams), *guya* (fish), *maypal* (oysters), *miyapunu* (turtle), *burum* (fruit). Yolngu would camp here but the only thing left from that long time ago is the *Dawu* tree, all the *Wayathul* are all gone. There (at the bottom) is the *Balanda wanga* (house) at a place called *Wartjapa/Birrtjimi* (Wallaby Beach). The men come home from the mine with all the red dirt and dust all over them, red face, red hair, red on their clothes, *Muymi* (coming home dirty). Then they have a nice hot shower, to clean themselves, the car is parked outside. (Print Space, 2013)

The Yunupingu clan fought to save the sacred *dawu* tree from being destroyed during the construction of the plant. It held special significance, being on sacred land and the birthplace of many of the Yunupingu clan leaders.
Nabalco Suite #4, *Wangarpanda*: (Figure 9.14)

Here is a bauxite boat with *luku* (anchor) at the wharf at a place called Wangarpanda. The design across the top is the bauxite, travelling along onto the boat and going into the bottom of the tank on the boat. It travels along the conveyer belt and sprinkles out at the end. Besides the big boat are little boats. They are sailing boats which have a calico (sail), which symbolises the Macassan fishermen that used to be here in this water with the Yolngu. The *gunda* (rocks) are called Nalila, they are found in the water off Gunyungara (Ski Beach). In this *gunda* lies all the knowledge for the
Gumatj clan. The bird above Nalila is Ngurula (sea gull). Gumatj people are that *gunda* — we are Nalila. Another name for the anchor *luku* is *Djalkiri* and can be that rock. When we travel to other places we carry that strength from the rock and feel connected to the country. (Print Space, 2013)

In the final image, Gaymala has depicted the anchor and the rock representing *djalkiri* — the foundation of her people embedded in their land — resisting the influences of the intruders of the recent past and the present.

Until her death in 2005, Gaymala continued to produce prints based on clan totems using the broad range of print techniques in which she was equally proficient. As did those of her sister Gulumbu, Gaymala’s prints, affirm identity and association with country and reflect their shared passion for protecting country and their desire for all people, Yolngu and non-Yolngu, to live in harmony with each other and the land.

**Youth at Risk – YYDU Projects**

Since 2010, printmaking has been employed at Yirrkala in a number of projects instigated for the purpose of engaging the local ‘disengaged youth’. With the growing influence of western society, disenfranchisement, and the lack of education and job opportunities, many of the youth in remote communities in Arnhem Land are forsaking mainstream education and turning to substance abuse with an associated increase in youth suicide. The *Yambirrpa* Youth Development Unit (YYDU) attached to the Yirrkala Community Education Centre (the Yirrkala School) had funding from the Remote Learning Partnership Agreement (RLPA) to deliver alternative programs for young members of the community who were not participating in mainstream schooling and were at risk from substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, lack of motivation, diminished self-confidence, violence and suicide. ‘Without providing specific statistics suicide is not rare and the other syndromes are the norm’ (Stubbs, W, 2011b). The grant funded two positions. The School’s Assistant Principal, Marian Devitt, was appointed YYDU coordinator and, Andrea Kingston, in her capacity as Workplace and Training Co-ordinator at the Yirrkala School, took on the role of Vocational Education and Training (VET) co-ordinator for the project. The position was funded for a three year period and was initially planned to finish mid–2012 (Kingston, A, 2011).
The word *Yambirrpa*, referring to a stone fish trap, has particular significance for the Yolngu. This was explained by the late Dr. Marika in a proposed abstract for a lecture which her untimely death prevented her from presenting on 9 July, 2008 in Alice Springs, at the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), *Keeping Language Diversity Alive*, Symposium. The title of the presentation was: *Keeping Culture and Language Strong Using Ancient Yambirrpa Fishtrap Metaphors:*

In 2005, we rebuilt the *Yambirrpa* (stone fish trap) as an education workshop. This involved consulting and negotiating permission with the right people in the lead up to the workshop. All the students heard the *Dhâwu* (story) about the fisherman and the ancestors from the elders. I will talk about how the *Yambirrpa* story is used as a philosophy of shaping Yolngu knowledge. It has powerful imagery and analogies that help shape the visions of the elders in everyday life, through reliving the culture of the past. *Yambirrpa* is also used as a metaphor of giving, sharing, and building strong relationships in the community and school. The fish trap is secure and sound so no fish can escape, like keeping the kids in the school together. The rocks can be seen as the foundation and the elders sitting there who hold that place together and look after the education interests of the school. This helps the school council and the teachers maintain and deliver strong Yolngu and *ngâpaki* (non-Yolngu) education. We want our children to think cognitively and be prepared for the challenges they have to face in the future, to make future pathways under the guidance of those elders. (Marika, R, 2008)

Guided by these principles the YYDU sought projects targeting young people not engaged in school or work and identified as ‘at risk’. They were mainly of school age, but included older members of the community, with ages ranging between fourteen and twenty-five. The Art Centre was approached to see if they would collaborate to support and deliver programs in printmaking and film that would engage the young people and help to restore self-esteem and self-confidence.

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104 The late Dr. Marika, a Rirratjingu woman, and daughter of Roy Dadaynga Marika, worked with academic and government institutions, was 2007 Territorian of the Year, a council member of the AIATSIS, and was on the board of directors of Reconciliation Australia. She led the development of curriculum for the education of Yolngu youth as well as the teaching of Yolngu languages and culture at CDU where she was awarded an honorary doctorate. At the time of her untimely death, Dr. Marika was Co-Director of the Mulka Project at the Yirrkala Art Centre, the aim of which was to introduce meaningful employment and empowerment to the Yirrkala community through use of digital media. A great role model for the youth she worked closely with the young employees to help their literacy skills, working on translation and documentation projects, and representing the community’s interests to outside institutions... (Marika, R, 2008).
The Art Centre already had a history of involvement in art-related projects with young members of the community: records confirm that at a meeting in 1996 the Artist Committee had agreed to participate in a project at the School and had endorsed artist Dhula Ngurruwuthun, to train the students at the Art Centre — ‘for rrupiya’ [money] (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 1996a). In 2015 the Mulka Centre was involved in successful projects which provided opportunities for training in media and information technologies and cultural awareness.

However, the Art Centre was cautious about taking on a project that involved more than creative or cultural training and that came with the risk of negative repercussions. Furthermore, staff members were not trained for mentoring troubled teenagers. Stubbs, in particular, was anxious to ensure that the senior artists and Art Centre management were fully aware of the added responsibilities that came with this project. To his surprise, the general consensus was that they were happy to accept the undertaking of dealing with the ‘problem teenagers’ as, they were after all, family (Rothwell, N, 2011). Ruby Djikarra Alderton, who would play a vital role in the implementation of the project, knew all the young people and was aware of some of the dissent, but was enthusiastic about being involved with what she considered was a worthwhile project:

We got a lot of criticism for looking after kids that are a bit of a wreck, but that was the whole idea — to give them something else. (Alderton, R, 2012a)

Extra funding was sought from the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET). However, the operational component was limited and only allowed for Dianne Blake to be employed on the project for four hours per week. This restricted the number of workshops that could be scheduled and resulted in periods of inactivity (Kingston, A, 2011).

**The Collograph Project**

The first *Yambirrpa* project was carried out from May to June 2010. A group of six young women participated in a printing workshop at the Art Centre where they learnt various types of printing techniques under the guidance of Dianne Blake and some of
the senior artists. The original six participants were: Munuy’ngu Marika, Gunariny Wanambi, Gudili Marika, Mamburra#2 Marika, Gurmarrwuy Yunupingu and Gulurunga Manala Marika. Their participation had been bolstered by the knowledge that their friend, Ruby Djikarra Alderton, was now employed full-time as a printmaker at the Print Space. Alderton was to play a pivotal role in the overseeing of the Yambirrpa projects.

![Image of Dianne Blake overseeing the Young Ones workshop at the Print Space with Langani#2 Raymond, Multhara#2 Mununggiritj, Gunariny Wanambi and Gudili Marika, 2010 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka)](image)

The workshops coincided with the Print Space planning the production of prints for exhibition at the Gapan Gallery at the 2010 Garma Festival. They had chosen to feature collography, a technique which was popular with the older print artists, but which they had not worked with for some time. The group of young women were invited to participate and learnt to produce the collographs from conception and creation of the plates, to the actual printing (Figure 9.15).

Although given total freedom in what they could create, this new generation of artists chose to replicate their clan stories or include some elements of country in their images, reflecting the young artists’ consciousness of kinship and attachment to country. This was not a mandatory requirement of the project but was in keeping with the philosophy of Yambirrpa. The young participants worked alongside the older more established artists who were on hand to give instruction in technique as well as ensuring accuracy with regard to clan stories. Kingston noted that Alderton had a talent for talking to the other girls about cultural miny’tji and was impressed with the
depth of her knowledge about the different clans, allowing her to talk confidently about the designs and their associated stories (Kingston, A, 2011).

The descriptions the young women provided for their artwork revealed what had motivated their choice of subject matter. Mamburra #2 Marika (Rirratjingu Clan, Dhuwa Moiety) created images of a sea anemone Yäthiny (Figure 9.16), found in the waters surrounding her Rirratjingu country. It is a source of food vital for the survival of the green turtle (dhalwatpu), which is an important Rirratjingu totem. Yäthiny features regularly in the work of Rirratjingu artists including that of Mamburra’s mother Djalinda, who had learnt the stories and designs from her grandfather, Mawalan Marika.

![Fig. 9.16 Mamburra #2 Marika, Yäthiny Collograph, 40x30cm, monoprint, 2010 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 90A)](image1)

![Fig. 9.17 Gurmarrwuy Yunupingu, Wanga Collograph, 36x25cm, monoprint, 2010 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 92A)](image2)

Gurmarrwuy Yunupingu, (Gumatj Clan, Yirritja Moiety) was inspired by her homeland of BlranyBirany in the creation of her image, Wanga [home] (Figure 9.17). Using a non-traditional palette of pink, purple and blues she depicts a storm with lightning, maykarrak’, over her homeland.

The print workshops were temporarily suspended when the project encountered complications with the funding requirements. During that period, unable to involve them in activities at the Print Space, Kingston and the other tutors made an effort to maintain the connection with what was now a growing group of participants. With regular attendance at weekly meetings, the students became comfortable with their mentors and were able to discuss school issues and other work options. The success of
the project was confirmed when the original group of six who had worked on the Collograph Project, returned to school. Their final assignment for their Year 11 art subject was based on the community art project in which they had participated. Further work experience was undertaken at the Print Space, during which time the students worked with Dianne Blake on creating prints for submission as part of their assignment.

![Fig. 9.18 Collographs from Yambirrpa Project exhibited at Gapan Gallery Garma Festival, August 2010 (Photographer D Salvestro)](image)

The artworks produced by the original six young women involved in the Collograph Project were exhibited and sold along with the works of the established artists, at the open air Gapan Gallery at the Garma Festival in August 2010, (Figure 9.18). They attended the opening night and over the period of the exhibition were there to discuss their prints and the project with visitors. The young women were able to witness first-hand the positive response to their artwork, and were excited that people were interested in learning about, and purchasing their artwork. The sale of over forty prints from the six editions exhibited at the Garma festival was instrumental in providing motivation and increased self-confidence. An important part of the project was to further enhance their printing training by requiring them to return to the Print Space to produce the prints to fill the orders. In this way, the project was effective in supporting them back into the workplace and providing them with an income. The young women had found it such a rewarding experience that they kept returning, with
some expressing interest in seeking permanent employment at the Print Space (Figure 9.19).

The participants were invited to attend an exhibition of the works in Darwin at Nomad Galleries in April 2011. The funding available only allowed for three to travel — Munuy’ngu Marika, Manala Marika and Gurmarrwuy Yunupingu. This experience proved another important milestone, as it exposed them to a city commercial gallery and had them interact with a wider art marketplace. Kingston reported that although it was daunting for the young women who had spent little time away from family and community, they did themselves and their communities proud. At the end of the project they all displayed increased self-confidence and improved self-esteem (Kingston, A, 2011).

This first workshop had succeeded in empowering the young participants, giving them the confidence to engage more fully in community life. Others who had subsequently joined the project were motivated to return to school or find employment within the community, or chose to return to their remote communities to participate in other types of work experience. The project was so successful in terms of morale and
engagement that the School and Art Centre considered the possibility of running another print workshop (Kingston, A, 2011).

The Young Ones Ngarra Project

Toward the end of 2010 local artist and printmaker Alicia Scobie was engaged to facilitate a workshop that would involve photography — chosen to appeal to the young participants as most of them possessed mobile phones with cameras. Scobie initiated the project by suggesting they take photographs of themselves from which selected photographs would then be combined with the established printmaking techniques of linocut and chine collé. The resultant self-portraits were referred to as *ngarra* (I or me) images. The young people enjoyed having their photographs taken, but when Scobie explained that she wanted them to focus on themselves in the images, an issue arose that was related to cultural differences. There was initial reticence because of risk of shame associated with focusing on themselves as individuals.

Kinship is central to Yolngu society and it is through knowledge of their relationships to others that an individual is able to answer the question ‘Who am I?’ (Berndt, C H and Berndt, R M, 1978, p.27), Morphy makes the point that an individual’s Ancestral identity and personal identity are intertwined through kinship and that Yolngu do not have a concept of portraiture as it is generally understood in western society (Morphy, H, 2009c, p.19). The human figure was rarely portrayed in Yolngu paintings and the human face was rarer still. Morphy describes portraits in Yolngu art as representations of a ‘sense of the presence of a person and attributes of a person’s biography and identity’ (Morphy, H, 2009c, p.1–27). An individual’s sense of identity is defined by their clan imagery and patterns which describe the important elements of their Ancestral biography.105 Aboriginal art curator Wally Caruana reinforced this concept in a presentation at a major exhibition of Australian Aboriginal, art, *Ancestral Modern*, held at the Seattle Art Museum in USA in 2012. He explained the difference between the European notion of portraiture and that of the Australian Aboriginal by describing

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105 Morphy describes a painting by Mawalan Marika featuring a story about the Djan’kawu sisters in which he has incorporated a figure of himself, ‘as well as being a portrait of the Djan’kawu, the image is self-referential as far as the artist is concerned - it represents the artist reflecting on himself’ (Morphy, H, 2009c, p.25).
European portraiture as identity based on physical features, while the Aboriginal concept of identity is cultural connectedness expressed by incorporating clan designs or a representation of an animal totem in the portrait (Caruana, W, 2012).

This cultural connectedness became evident in the works produced by the young participants. In creating self-portraits with no reliance on any sacred knowledge or previous art production experience, the young people were veering away from the established Yirrkala art styles and authority. However, they all incorporated some element of clan identity into their work. The printed images revealed the central subject of self, surrounded by identifiable elements of family, clan or country. The young artists either replicated clan designs in background patterns, included images of family members or referenced hunting and other cultural practices – all indicative of the fact that family and culture continue to be relevant to their perception of self.

In an essay written in 1989, Lendon referred to the emergence of self-portraiture in Aboriginal art, identifying *Self-Portrait, Owl Man*, created by Tiwi artist, Bede Tungutalum in 1989, as the first recognised Aboriginal self-portrait in the print medium (Lendon, N, 1989). The linocut was produced at the Canberra School of Art under the guidance of collaborator and printmaker Theo Tremblay. Apropos the historical relevance of this work, Lendon made the following statement: ‘...the use of new media has resulted not simply in a translation of traditional forms to new media, but also in the genuinely innovative acceptance of new conventions... and subjects (the self-portrait...’) (Lendon, N, 1989). This observation can be applied to the portraits produced by the emergent artists at the Yirrkala Print Space as well as to the work of established Yirrkala artists. The new convention of printmaking has been accepted by Yolngu artists, to a great extent as a result of the initiative of female artists. Through this medium, the Yolngu have been able to introduce new subject matter, including self-portraiture, into their compositions.

In producing these contemporary works of art, the young artists employed a range of old, new and evolving technology, combining digital photography and photocopying with chine collé and linocut printing. Their familiarity with computers facilitated the use of the Photoshop program to manipulate, contrast and crop the photographic image. The final image was then photocopied and transferred onto a linocut using the chine collé technique.
The enthusiasm for the Ngarra project evolved as the young artists witnessed the final results. They liked the idea of faces — it made them laugh — and they enjoyed seeing themselves in print. Scobie also saw this acceptance as a generational thing. The new generation of Yolngu artists were less conscious of cultural constraints than the older artists and more familiar with seeing their faces — their ‘portraits’ — on their mobile phone cameras:

In the print space ... the kids can let go and print what they want to. It doesn’t have to have a story. They can just have fun, make art and express themselves that way — making art for art’s sake. As they are classified as disengaged youth, getting them into any art making is a good thing. (Scobie, A, 2011)

The Print Space provided a degree of freedom in that it allowed experimentation with introduced techniques, and the accessibility of cameras made photographic “selfie” images more commonplace. Of relevance to their output was the fact that the young participants were working in a nurturing environment, where they were surrounded by older artists who could keep them in touch with their clan stories and history. In execution and subject matter the artworks were a total departure from the traditional but, as was the case in the previous project, each of the young artists consciously incorporated in their image, something that reflected their cultural identity. This served to reinforce their inherent connection to family and country. Scobie commented that although it started as portraiture they all wanted to put designs or images behind their portraits, as though they were creating family portraits which they could put on walls (Scobie, A, 2011). Considering the digital medium employed in this project was something that all the young people were very familiar with, Will Stubbs gave it a modern twist by christening it ‘The Facebook’ project:

An environment exists where they feel comfortable, listening to music, chatting and experimenting with different printing media whilst working with digital technology that they embrace wholeheartedly. A photographic medium combined with new printing techniques which portrays themselves as contemporary, seems to allow these young people the confidence to tackle issues concerning their remote community and life. (Stubbs, W, 2011b)

The pool of involved young people swelled weekly. As Stubbs had observed, they had found in the Art Centre a positive environment where they were able to benefit from
working with some of the established artists and printmakers, learning conventional printing techniques, as well as applying the digital technology familiar to all of them. As curiosity about the workshop spread, young men and older women started to come in to the print space, eager to get involved (Figure 9.20).

The enthusiasm for this project attracted not only those new to printmaking, but also many of the older artists who were curious to try out the new technique and create their own portraits. This was further evidence of a change in direction of Yolngu art, in form, concept and subject matter. The young emerging artists were at the forefront of these changes, experimenting with and creating innovative works in new media. With the production of self-portraits they were breaking new ground in Yolngu art.

By the end of the workshop, twenty-eight participants had created thirty-six images, with each involved in printing their own photographic linocut images (Figures 9.21 to 9.26, p.300). Scobie deliberately kept the edition sizes small in consideration of the steep learning curve presented by the mastering of the precise task of editioning. She described the outcomes and what the young artists managed to achieve as ‘amazing’, especially when taking into account they had no formal training and that during this time there were unsettling issues they were forced to deal with, including the trauma of a friend’s suicide (Scobie, A, 2011).
Figures 8.21 to 8.26: A selection of the thirty-seven Ngarra Portraits produced at Yirrkala, 2010. (Images courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka)
On 25 September 2010, an exhibition of the prints produced during the *Djalkiri* project was opened at the Art Centre. The thirty seven *Ngarra* prints were exhibited outside in the courtyard (Figure 9.27). Kingston recalled the surprised reaction of the enthusiastic local audience when they saw the images showing the girls smiling: ‘often people didn’t recognise them because they didn’t normally smile’ (Kingston, A, 2011). The project had achieved another objective in improving the self-esteem and morale of these previously ‘disengaged’ young members of the community.

A selection of the works was then included in an exhibition, *The Young Ones*, held at Nomad Galleries in Darwin from 6th – 28th May 2011. The works were well received by an audience that recognised they were witnessing the emergence of a new aesthetic (Nomad Art, 2011). The outgoing Art Centre manager, Andrew Blake, referred to the photographic chine collé linocuts as ‘monoprints’ considering the subtle differences in each print resulting from the combination of techniques used in their production. He described the prints:

> Phase one of the project produced portraits of today’s youth in the best way a portrait can be read — you can see a lot in these portraits created by kids who have very little opportunity to express their creative side. The portraits are very contemporary and real — they are portraying themselves as they are today. (Blake, A, 2012)
Blake saw in the works an immediacy displaying more energy than finesse in their production. In creating such works, some of the participants went against the grain of what printmakers, both visiting and local, had instilled at the Art Centre with regard to quality control in print production. Lacking in formal training the young participants were not aware of the liberties they were taking and so worked with total freedom of expression, without the constraints of conventional approaches to printmaking. The end result was a group of works with an appealing spontaneity and freshness (Blake, A, 2012).

![Fig. 9.28 Dhapanbal and Bulmirri Yunupingu. Photographic screenprint, 2011 25x30cm. Winning entry for NT Centenary of International women’s Day Poster competition. (Courtesy BLM and NT Department of Children & Families)](image)

Two of the current generation of artists have incorporated portraiture in an artwork created to demonstrate the relevance of the past and the future, to them and their people. In 2011, Dhapanbal and Bulmirri Yunupingu looked to the work of their aunt Gulumbu for inspiration from the past in creating a photographic screenprint which was the winning entry in a competition in the Northern Territory for a poster to celebrate the Centenary of International Women’s Day. In collaboration the sisters composed an image depicting themselves looking to the future standing before a background containing a portrait of their aunt surrounded by *gan’yu ga garak* (stars and the universe) symbolic of the imagery in Gulumbu’s artwork. In this composite print the two young women have created an image which shows the past inspiring the current generation who are looking optimistically toward the future, (Figure 9.28).
The Yuta Project

Yuta 1

Encouraged by the fact that these workshops had so successfully engaged the young participants, the Yirrkala School and the Art Centre decided to apply for funding for another print project. An Australia Council grant enabled them to run another workshop in February 2012. The prime objective of this new initiative was to target those young members of the community who had dropped out of school and were involved in petrol sniffing. The concept for The Yuta (new) Project was suggested by Alderton, who had assisted in the Collography and the Ngarra projects and was now employed full-time at the Print Space as a printmaker. She was to oversee the project with guidance and support provided by the new print space advisor, Annie Studd.

Melbourne printmaker, Sean Smith, who had previous experience of working with Yolngu artists on print projects with Basil Hall Editions and on Elcho Island, was invited to collaborate with Alderton and Studd in running a two week screenprint workshop.

Having spent much of her youth away from Yirrkala with her balanda father, Alderton was drawn back to Yirrkala by the pull of her Yolngu heritage and family (Alderton, R, 2012a). She voiced great concern at the fact that many of the young people were losing contact with their culture and the traditional beliefs and saw the Yambirrpapa projects as a vital opportunity for the young people to work with their elders and be exposed to their knowledge and stories. They would then be able to play their part in keeping their culture alive and strong by reproducing this knowledge through their artwork. Alderton also wanted to challenge the youth by introducing screenprinting, a technique which was also new to her. In her printmaking Alderton epitomised the dynamism of Yolngu art – while respectful of traditional values she was constantly experimenting with techniques and exploring ways of utilising the medium to benefit her people and her community. Not to be overlooked was the influence of her balanda father Mark Alderton who had always encouraged her to be adventurous and experiment with different art forms. Although the imagery she used in her work related to her mother’s moiety and clan group, Alderton acknowledge her father’s western influence in her approach to her work.
Initially there were concerns that the project might not attract the young people and they would not turn up, let alone keep coming back. But these fears were soon allayed. In order to appeal to the young they had, as with the previous project, promoted a medium that the young people used regularly – the cameras on their mobile phones. As with the previous project the photographs would then be integrated with a conventional printmaking technique – on this occasion, screenprinting. The subject matter proposed by Alderton also immediately appealed to the participants: they were invited to go around the community and photograph things that were meaningful to them and that they would like others to see of their community, its people and their lifestyle.

Something to do with their community from their own eyes and not that of an outsider – what they wanted people to see. We were surprised to get some pretty political prints. (Alderton, R, 2012a)

Smith modelled this project on the Ngarra project in making use of the photographic process in the production of the prints with the Photoshop program employed to manipulate the images.

All I knew was that it was an extension of the Young Ones, which I had been told was a photographic process and I assumed it was screenprinting. I also assumed the kids knew how to use squeegees and mix colour, so I arrived and set everything up and threw the kids in at the deep end. They didn’t say they couldn’t do it — they just did it. Half way through Annie Studd came in and commented at how amazing it was especially as they had not done screenprinting before! (Smith, S, 2012)

Smith was impressed at the young participants’ adeptness at dealing with the technical processes and found it interesting to see their point of view through the subject matter they were tackling. He considered the manner in which they approached the project as brave, direct and very refreshing. Although some images boldly showed the negative side of issues pertaining to the disengaged youth, Smith considered that the works were not produced with a negative outlook, but rather with a sense of optimism. Some of the stories accompanying the images were quite poignant. They showed the petrol sniffing (Figure 9.29, p.305) but provided commentary that suggested they were very aware of the negative repercussions and were sending out ‘wake-up calls’ to those involved. It was obvious the youth were aware of what was happening and didn’t want to go that way, as is indicated in the description
accompanying the print produced by Bawu Gurruwiwi (Galpu clan, Dhuwa moiety). The screenprint, entitled, *Blood and Bones* (Figure 9.30), began with a photo taken down at ‘The Tunnel’, an area where petrol sniffing was known to take place.

On the first day when we came into the arts centre to do this project we all went for a drive around the community to take photos. We drove down to the small creek, the tunnel, while we were there we found these three boys sniffing in the morning. So we took photos of them. On the tree above them someone had graffitied ‘bloods’ which is a gang name. I drew the bones, like blood and bones. Those boys’ brains are melting away too. (Print Space, 2012b)

Over the two week period, participants between 12 and 22 years of age created complex artworks by using digital images of photos they had taken around their community, and overlaying or combining them with other imagery. The youngest participant, at twelve years of age, was Bawu’s brother, Gadaman Gurruwiwi (Galpu clan, Dhuwa moiety), who had often accompanied his sister to the Art Centre. He soon showed interest and involved himself in all aspects of the artistic process, from taking a photo of a girl on the beach (*rangī*), creating the story in a hand illustration based on the photo, choosing the colours and realising the final print, *Rangi*. Studd and Smith regarded the final print as an impressive achievement for someone so young with no previous printmaking experience (Figures 9.31 and 9.32, p.305).
At the end of the workshop, the overall result was a selection of sophisticated contemporary artworks, embodying what these young people found important in their daily lives. The prints provided a powerful insight into issues facing Indigenous youth in Yirrkala and were a testament to the potential of the emerging generation of artists (Smith, S, 2012). The success of these projects can be measured in part by the fact that the young people enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to try something different. Boredom was a prime catalyst for petrol sniffing and here was the opportunity to do something they enjoyed and that was already proving to have a positive impact on their morale. According to Studd, four of the nine participants from the February instalment of the Yuta Project were hard core sniffers. Three moved away from the habit, with one returning to school while the other two went to their homeland on Bremer Island, where they also started attending school again. Of those that occasionally still indulged, Studd observed that their involvement in sniffing and illicit drug taking appeared to be related to either peer pressure or when they were dealing with negative family issues. Of the nine original participants, four returned to take part in the following print workshop, the Yuta 2 Project.
When the *Yuta* 1 project was completed, Smith arranged for an exhibition of the works to be held in Melbourne at The Ownership Project (TOP) Gallery, which he had founded in 2011. Smith had been inspired to set up this not-for-profit studio and art gallery following his own personal experience of the positive impact that art-making can have on isolated individuals and communities. Modelled loosely on remote Indigenous art centres, TOP was set up to create and promote the artwork of artists from local refugee, migrant and Indigenous Australian communities. The objectives of the *Yuta* Project — empowering the individual within their community without boundaries or judgment, and providing a safe space where they can involve themselves artistically — reflected those of Smith and the TOP Gallery (The Ownership Project, 2011).

The Melbourne audience’s reaction to the *Yuta* prints was very positive, with the exhibition almost selling out on the opening night (Smith, S, 2012). Smith was pleasantly surprised to see the prints being so well-received, as he considered such bold designs, in fresh fluoro colours, very ‘un-Melbourne’. Those present loved them even more on hearing their background story and that they were a product of an engagement workshop. Smith commented that the young artists involved can officially say they are now in a major national collection, as the Yarra Council purchased a full suite for its Contemporary Fine Arts Collection. As he pointed out — this would be considered quite an achievement for any artist let alone a first-time exhibitor.

The Yarra Council had purchased the works as part of an acquisition drive. The Council wrote a letter to Smith stating that the panel of experts on their selection committee considered that the prints were the strongest body of work amongst all they had assessed (Smith, S, 2012). They satisfied aspects of the Yarra Aboriginal Partnership Plan, which included the objective: *Promoting Culture — Strengthen and enrich local culture by promoting a greater understanding of and respect for Aboriginal*.

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106 The Arts and Cultural Development Officer at the Yarra Council, Louise Marks, explained that the Yarra Council Curatorial process for 2012 had been strongly influenced by a community survey which resulted in a recommendation to strengthen and develop the collection in the area of Indigenous and young emerging artists. Marks considered this a plus for the Council in that very few other Government agencies are collecting such works or looking at young and emerging artists. Their policy states that artworks purchased for their collection should have some reference to the Yarra area and although these artworks were not local they were deemed to qualify by virtue of the fact that the project had a direct involvement with Smith and his TOP Gallery which was located in the Yarra district (Marks, L, 2012).
people, culture, traditions and history (Yarra Council, 2001). The Yuta works were shown at an Acquisitions launch in July, 2012. The Yarra Council Arts and Cultural Development Officer, Louise Marks, commented that they looked ‘spectacular’ and the Council was very excited to have them (Marks, L, 2012). The Committee made the prediction that those of this new generation of artists producing the works of a higher standard could have a bright future with their art. They further requested to be shown any new works produced through these workshops as they were interested in adding to their Collection. Soon after this, the Yarra Council purchased a triptych by Ruby Djikarra Alderton. All the participants had succeeded in producing works that promoted their people and culture and the overall experience had achieved the objective of increasing their self-esteem.

**Ruby Djikarra Alderton Melbourne Residencies**

Whilst in Melbourne for the TOP exhibition opening, Alderton undertook a two week artist's residency at TOP. She worked at the Fitzroy studio with Smith, who introduced her to the technique of colour reduction woodblock (Figure.9.33). The three prints she created, *Rulyapa 1, 2 & 3*, were based on Alderton’s Rirratjingu clan water design, depicting the waters that flow between the Yirrkala mainland and Gutjangan (Bremer Island) —a body of water which holds great meaning to the artist and her family (Smith, S, 2012).

![Fig. 9.33 Sean Smith and Ruby Djikarra Alderton, TOP Gallery, Melbourne, 2012 (Image Courtesy TOP Gallery)](image1)

![Fig. 9.34 Ruby Djikarra Alderton, *Yathiny* Screenprint, 51x36cm. Ed.4. 2012 (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 115N)](image2)
Two Rirratjingu themes that recur in her work, *Rulyapa* and *Yathiny* (Figure 9.34, p.308) are ones that her mother, Banduk, often repeats in her work. The importance of her Yolngu heritage was once again manifesting itself through her art. While the other young artists were creating prints which were secular in nature, with some reference to clan and country, Alderton was continuing to create images that related closely to her clan and country.

Alderton’s artist residency at TOP was complemented by a professional internship at Alcaston Gallery, where Alderton assisted the curatorial staff and gained an insight into commercial gallery practice including administration, client relations and documenting and cataloguing artwork. The performance report provided by the Gallery commended Alderton on the exceptional computer skills and attention to detail demonstrated in the preparation of an electronic exhibition catalogue, and in the photographic documentation and cataloguing of artworks for the Gallery’s digital database. Alderton also visited the collections at the Museum of Victoria, where she experienced the difference between the commercial art world and the museum sector (Alcaston Gallery, 2012).

Like Araluen Maymuru before her, Alderton has proven to be an effective role model for the young people at Yirrkala. She has contributed a great deal to the art scene of her community through the work she produces as well as through her mentoring of young artists, and acting as an ambassador for the Art Centre. In recognition of her achievements, in 2011 Alderton received the Telstra Remote Indigenous Student of the Year Award and was invited to participate in a Wesfarmers Leadership Program in Canberra. In 2012, she was a finalist in the Telstra NATSIA Awards and was invited by the Print Council of Australia to produce a print for their Annual Print Commission. Her range of expertise expanded to include film making and curating. She was the winner of the Best Documentary category at the 2012 Fist Full of Films Short Film Festival, NT and was selected as one of three guest curators for an exhibition, *THREE*, held at the Chan Contemporary Art Space in Darwin in July/August 2012. At just nineteen, Alderton was the youngest of three Aboriginal curators from different regions in Australia who were offered the opportunity to curate an exhibition of contemporary
artworks of their choice from their respective regions\textsuperscript{107}. Alderton was singled out for the great insight and maturity revealed in her selection of works and the manner in which she curated her part of the exhibition. In 2013 Alderton took maternity leave from the Print Space.

\textbf{Yuta 2}

Having established a close relationship with many of the young artists during the \textit{Yuta 1} workshop, Sean Smith was invited to return to Yirrkala to run another workshop in June 2012. Aware that an invitation to work in Aboriginal communities was dependent on the existence of a mutually respectful working relationship, Smith appreciated having another opportunity to work with remote artists and assist in their artistic development. These projects were usually reliant on dedicated funding, and with the current financial constraints and the logistic challenges associated with running workshops in remote communities, such opportunities did not often arise (Smith, S, 2012).

The young artists had worked so successfully with screenprinting in the \textit{Yuta 1} workshop during the two weeks in February 2012 that Smith decided to work on developing the technique of combining photography with screenprinting. On this occasion, the participants were given complete freedom in choice of subject matter. Smith compared the new works to those produced in the first workshop, where the final outcome reflected the artists’ inexperience. He observed that as they came to understand what they were doing the works became more complex. Smith was impressed with the manner in which they dealt with the technical challenges of editioning the works (Smith, S, 2012).

As in the earlier series, the final image often included a reference to family, clan designs, or an element of country. Twenty-two year old Djuwakan#2 (DJ) Marika took a photograph of himself in a pose modelled on that of his grandfather (\textit{mari}) Wandjuk

\textsuperscript{107} Curated by Indigenous curators, Ruby Alderton, Jenny Fraser and Shauna Tilmouth, \textit{THREE} was held at Chan Gallery Darwin, 19 July – 26 August 2012. It presented a selected range of works including painting, sculpture, printmaking, animation and digital media from local, national and international contemporary Indigenous artists. THREE provided practical experience and training in the Territory’s Indigenous visual arts industry <http://www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/chan-contemporary-art-space/eventsprogram>
Marika, in an old photograph he had sourced from the Mulka archives (Figure 9.35). Djuwakan then manipulated the two photographs onto a screenprinted background featuring a bright orange pattern based on his Rirratjingu clan miny’oji. In the composite image, he has connected himself to his grandfather across time by making it appear as though the handmade string (raki) his grandfather is holding is linked to Djuwakan’s headphones.

This is a print of me and my mari (grandfather). The photo of him is from the Mulka archive and I took a photo of myself looking like he does in this old photo. In his photo he is holding raki (string) and in my photo I am listening to my music. It looks like he is holding my music. I drew the background design. I chose the colours and printed it myself. I like how the raki links my mari and me together even though he lived in the past and I am in the present. (Print Space, 2013)

The print was exhibited as part of the Sydney Museum of Contemporary Art Exhibition, String Theory: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art, which toured Australia in 2013–2014. Djuwakan also proudly displayed it in an ABC TV documentary, The Lost Boys108, 

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108 ABC Documentary, The Lost Boys, Episode 5 of a program Head First, presented by Sabour Bradley, first aired on ABC Television in 2013. Five years after the Government Intervention was imposed on the community, Bradley spent two weeks filming at Yirrkala to explore how living under the Intervention had impacted on the young male members of the community. <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/documentaries/downloads/HeadFirst_EP5.pdf>
which highlighted issues confronting Indigenous men in remote Aboriginal communities. When the presenter enquires about life in the community and the personal issues Djuwakan is dealing with, Djuwakan replies very candidly, revealing his battle with alcohol and his determination to lead a productive and happy life free of the negative consequences of substance abuse. When asked what he aspires to in the future, Djuwakan replies: ‘I want to be a leader like my grandfather’ (Marika, D, 2013), and he takes the presenter to the Art Centre to proudly show him his Mari print.

Following this project, Djuwakan began permanent employment at the Art Centre. In 2014 he was the recipient of an ANKAAA Art Workers Extension Program internship. Designed for high achieving Indigenous arts workers, the internship consisted of an intensive nine month professional development program providing mentorship, regional exchanges and an industry placement. For his placement Djuwakan travelled to Canberra to participate in a residency at the National Gallery of Australia. His involvement in the program would assist Djuwakan in achieving his ambition of following in his grandfather’s footsteps as an artist and productive member of his community.

Following the success of the TOP exhibition in Melbourne, the Yuta series of prints continued to attract acclaim. A screenprint, Sunset Tower (Figure. 9.37), by Ishmael Marika (Dhuwa, Rirratjingu clan), was selected for exhibition in the works on paper section of the 2012 Telstra Art Award. Ishmael has featured a prominent landmark, a
telecommunication tower, against a backdrop of his clan design for water, which he has represented in a bright orange colour to portray clouds reflecting the sunset. Hidden in the cloud shapes are two of his mother’s Madarrpa clan totems, *baru* (crocodile) and *gatapanga* (buffalo).

Gurmarrwuy #2 Yunupingu (Yirritja, Gumatj clan) had participated in all YYDU projects since the first collography project. Her regular attendance was rewarded when the screenprint she produced during the Yuta 2 workshop, *Maŋtpana* (tree), won Best Indigenous Artwork prize at the 2012 Gove Festival Art Award (Figure 9.36, p.312). Gurmarrwuy had photographed a tree in the Yirrkala oval that was a favourite ‘hang out’ for the young members of the community. She used the image to create a night scene with stars (*gan’yu*) in the background, reflecting a theme in her aunt Gulumbu’s work. The award confirmed the potential that Studd saw in this emerging artist.

![Fig. 9.38 Dhalmula Burarrwanga, with award winning screenprint, *Milkarri* Gove Art Fair, 2011. (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka)](image)

Dhalmula Burarrwanga (Yirritja, Gumatj clan) was awarded Best Artwork in the Entire Exhibition with her innovative, multi-layered screenprint *Milkarri (tear)* (Figure 9.38). Dhalmula’s description of her artwork reveals the sensitivity portrayed in the image of her face in this technically complex print. The sentiments expressed reveal an optimistic outlook:
This is a self-portrait but there are many layers behind my face. There is the saltwater on the rocks at low tide. There is [sic] the bubbles in the saltwater that are made as the waves crash and roll over the rocks, and behind the foam is Yäthin. Yäthin are small jelly fish like creatures which float along the top of the water. Turtles eat them. My face is made of small dots, like the bubbles of the ocean, like the oxygen in the water. There is a collection of bubbles right below my eye, it looks like a tear. Perhaps I am crying, perhaps it is because I am sad, but maybe I am happy, happy to see the beauty in nature and to be a part of nature. (Print Space, 2012b)

Winning these awards went further to increasing the young artists’ self-confidence and self-esteem as reported by Studd:

Despite it only being a local competition at the Gove Festival, the Awards made the girls’ day and they got to wear a dress and feel special and for my part I got to feel like a proud printmaker. It was very cool! (Studd, A, 2012)

The Yuta artists were then presented with the opportunity of international exposure when invited to exhibit in the USA through The Harvey Art Project,\(^{109}\) 391 Gallery in Ketchum, Sun Valley, Idaho. A selection of works was chosen to feature in Yuta Print Project — Yirrkala Young Artists in May/June 2013 (Studd, A, 2013). As Studd remarked, exhibiting internationally is a significant stimulus for any artist and quite an achievement for a young artist from a remote Aboriginal community with little or no formal training and only limited access to facilities.

**Outcomes**

Following the Yuta workshops, several of the young participants approached the Art Centre asking if they could work permanently at the Print Space. With two printmakers, Annie Studd and Paula Gumana, employed at the Print Space, the Art Centre was not in a position to accommodate all of those who applied. There was no hesitation in offering Godut Ganambarr an apprenticeship. Godut had capably undertaken work experience at the Print Space during Year 12 and at the time had asked if she could return to work there on completion of her schooling. Four others were selected: Bawu Gurruwiwi, Munuy’ngu Marika, Burrthi Marika and Dhalmula#2 Burarrwanga.

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\(^{109}\) The Harvey Art Project Gallery promotes Australian Indigenous art throughout America.
Annie Studd and the Art Centre management have been impressed with the artistic ability, and enthusiasm displayed by all five young apprentices. They were presented with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment when, within six months of starting their employment, Studd took a week’s leave. At the time they were preparing to edition three series of Mulkun Wirrpanda’s linocuts for the upcoming Garma festival. Studd left the group with a list of tasks including instructions for editioning one of Mulkun’s series. Without supervision, Studd was not expecting the inexperienced group to complete much of the printing but, on her return, was surprised to find that they had completed not just the one series, but the editioning of all three series. Studd commented that editioning ninety prints in one week would have been quite an achievement for an experienced printmaker and so was all the more impressive an accomplishment for young trainees (Studd, A, 2014).

They did them all on their own. They figured out the pressure of the press, the paper, the colour — all on their own. Then I thought ... I should just go on holidays more often! (Printmakers at Yirrkala Print Space, 2014)

Fig. 9.39 Art Forum, Gapan Gallery, Garma, 2014
Dhalmula#2 Burarrwanga, Godut Ganambarr, Burrthi Marika, Annie Studd, Bawu Gurruwiwi. (Godut in front of her screenprint Basket Shell, 132A).
(Photographer D Salvestro)
As part of the 2014 Garma Festival program an art forum was held at the Gapan Gallery. The young printmakers were in attendance to answer questions from the audience (Figure 9.39, p.315). Initially they were shy and quite reticent to speak but with the support and encouragement of Studd and other Gapan Gallery staff, and the warmth of the receptive audience, they soon felt confident enough to participate. When asked to introduce themselves, twenty year old Burrthi Marika proudly announced:

My name is Burrthi Marika and I’m a printmaker. (Printmakers at Yirrkala Print Space, 2014)

Annie announced highlights achieved by the young printmakers in their first eight months working at the Print Space: they were now printing all their own works and that of other artists; a linocut by Burrthi, Ngarrpiya (Ancestral octopus), was accepted into the works on paper section of the 2014 Telstra Art Award; Dhalmula had won a NAIDOC Week competition sponsored by the Cotton on Foundation and her winning image, Bunggul, was printed onto tote bags for the Cotton On label; a screenprint by Munuy’ngu, Dhapirrk Girri, featuring a girl in a brightly coloured skirt walking along the beach, was reproduced on that year’s Garma merchandise.

It’s been a really wonderful year for me to work with these guys to watch them learn and grow and to be able to provide a space for them to feel welcome and feel comfortable and to make their own work. In that regard everything we have done together has been a real joy. (Studd at Printmakers at Yirrkala Print Space, 2014)

When asked whether the young apprentices tended to stay long and whether other young people had the opportunity to work at the Print Space, Annie explained that they tended to drift in and out — when something else happened in their life they might move somewhere else and then there would be space for more people to come in (Studd at Printmakers at Yirrkala Print Space, 2014). The Art Centre is accustomed to inconstant attendance. There are some families for whom Yirrkala is a permanent base but others tend to move to their homelands or neighbouring communities, either

110 The Cotton On Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the Cotton On Group. It funds projects in Australia and overseas. The Foundation partners with communities to provide long term opportunities across education, health, sustainability and infrastructure. They support programs that empower youth to lead the way through education and opportunity <http://www.cottononfoundation.org/our-story/our-mission>. 
seasonally or for ceremony or other family commitments. That the Print Space remains continually productive while dealing with such challenges is a testament to the commitment of the artists, the local members of staff and the advisors at the Print Space.

The projects carried out at the Yirrkala Art Centre Print Space involving the youth of the community have to date fulfilled the objectives of the Yambirrpa education program as described by Dr. Marika, through ‘giving, sharing, and building strong relationships in the community and school’ (Marika, R, 2008). They have upheld the philosophy of Yambirrpa of communicating the visions of the elders in everyday life, through reliving the culture of the past. The project had great success in re-engaging the youth, restoring their self-confidence and providing them with training for gainful employment. The central role the Art Centre plays in achieving these outcomes also sees it fulfilling the objectives of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc., by working for the good of the whole community and providing opportunities for employment and economic and social development in a culturally appropriate environment.

**Conclusion**

Printmaking is proving to be a constructive avenue for engaging people and disseminating life-style messages in the Yirrkala community: Marrnyula Mununggurr’s collaborative print projects promoting community health and well-being; Gaymala Yunupingu’s warnings about the risk of losing country and culture; and the youth-oriented projects aimed at re-engaging and restoring self-esteem, have all achieved positive outcomes with ongoing benefits. These projects demonstrate the willingness of the Yolngu to explore new opportunities in art production and highlight the Yolngu artists’ innovative use of introduced media. Printmaking has provided a positive stimulus in the lives of the disengaged younger members of the community, helping to disassociate them from the negative influences in their lives and offering opportunities for the future. The successful outcomes of these projects both artistically and in purpose, support the argument that the introduced technique of printmaking has been used to great effect by Yolngu artists and their community. Through these initiatives, the Print Space has played a part in the Art Centre achieving the objectives of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc — to resist the disintegration of Yolngu culture by providing
opportunities for employment and artistic, economic, and social development, in a culturally appropriate environment. The Print Space has contributed in providing facilities and training for new art forms to assist the community in achieving self-sufficiency and economical sustainability through the production of art. The final chapter provides an appraisal of the current rationale regarding the reproduction of sacred *miny'tji* in print and reviews the innovative work of selected artists that reflect the ongoing dynamic nature of art production by Yolngu artists at the Yirrkala Print Space.
10. **New Directions**

The previous chapter focused on the individual innovation displayed through printmaking at Yirrkala, and the print work of the new generation of print artists, as it is they who will determine the future of the Print Space. However, as this research has found, many of the more established artists and those older artists who ‘emerged’ in their senior years, continue to inspire with their original approach to printmaking. As the older generation of artists are so often at the vanguard of innovation both in subject matter, style and technique, this chapter reviews a selection of recent contributions to printmaking. It begins with a recurrent theme in this thesis — the appropriate use of *miny’tji* in print making, and explores the current parameters in place at the Print Space. Chapters 3 and 6 reviewed the protocols observed with the instigation of print production at the Yirrkala Art Centre when the senior artists were resolved that the traditional connection between artwork, hand and land should be maintained. They voiced their concern that mechanical reproduction interrupted that historic link, facilitated misappropriation of sacred clan designs and increased the possibility of infringement of intellectual property. These concerns were gradually allayed as the senior artists became more familiar with the process and with the awareness of having recourse to copyright law. The concern that restricted meanings would be revealed to the uninitiated was also alleviated with the recognition that only those with the requisite knowledge could read the sacred meanings hidden deep within the *miny’tji*. To demonstrate the gradual acceptance of *miny’tji* in print, this chapter references the work of two senior artists and clan leaders who have both been involved in art production and in the governance of the Yirrkala Art Centre since the inception of the Print Space: Gawirrin Gumana, the most senior artist working in the region and one of the early critics of printmaking; and Dhuwarrwarr Marika who created the first linocut to be printed on site at the Print Space. Both were on the original Artists Committee and have been members of the Art Centre Board since incorporation.

This chapter then focuses on the work of two artists whose work has been recognised as challenging the boundaries of traditional art and breaking new ground: senior artist Nyapanyapa Yunupingu who has been experimenting with printmaking since the
instigation of the Print Space; and Gunybi Ganambarr, an artist who has only recently come to printmaking. Nyapanyapa and Gunybi are recognised as taking Yolngu art in new directions. Working collaboratively with art advisors and printmakers, Nyapanyapa has been involved in the creation of ‘new’ art forms. Along with her distinctive mark making, her unique style and personalised subject matter have been combined with computer technology to create a range of hybrid techniques. Gunybi, nationally renowned as one of the most inventive of contemporary Australian Aboriginal artists, is continually experimenting with new materials and techniques. Although he has only included printmaking in his repertoire since 2009, this chapter demonstrates that the creativity Gunybi has shown in his other art production is reflected in his printmaking.

Miny’tji in Print — the current perspective

From its inception, the Print Space has been perceived as that part of the Art Centre where individual creativity could be expressed more freely than when creating art with traditional materials where historical restrictions continue to be observed. Despite this there are those artists who, in expressing their individuality, have often chosen to work independently of the Print Space. This research revealed that these tend to be artists with past experience of working with non-Indigenous artists and printmakers at outside studios. Such is the case with Dhuwarrrwarr Marika who has had a long association with printmaker Basil Hall having produced a number of works in collaboration with Hall when his eponymous studio was located in Darwin. During an interview at her home in Yirrkala, Dhuwarrrwarr explained that she enjoyed working with Hall because ‘he understands me’ and because there were times that she was anxious to express her own creativity without a sense of there being some restriction on what she was permitted to produce:

How I feel, what I want to do is my choice. What I want to do sometimes is to bring the art out a little bit ... stand out... I don't like people to control me and tell me what to do. ... If I want to change the colour then I have to change the colour of the animals, what's in the sea...That is my choice... I always tell them don't tell me what to do, I am the artist. I was taught by my parents. You come from other part of the world. Don't tell me what to do... (Marika, D, 2011)
Having personally observed the interactions at the Print Space and the manner in which the advisors offered guidance, Dhuwarrwarr’s perception of the intent could be explained as an example of cultural and artistic differences. The advice being given by a printmaker with respect to colour combinations as approached from a western art perspective, may have been misconstrued by Dhuwarrwarr as interference and being ‘told what to do’. Despite this personal frustration Dhuwarrwarr maintains a strong presence at the Print Space as a prolific producer of prints and a mentor to the younger artists, including her niece Ruby Alderton. She continues to assert her right as an elder to choose what she replicates in her art. Amongst the prints she has recently created are several series featuring her Rirratjingu clan sacred miny’tji representing milngurr — the sacred well and waters of the Rirratjingu creation site at Yalangbara. In each of the editions the total surface of the image is composed of the swirling pattern of the miny’tji representing milngurr (Figures, 10.1 & 10.2).

The design is the same ‘age-old’ design that her brother Wandjuk reproduced in his contribution to the 1962–1963 Church Panels (Print Space, 2012b). However the colours Dhuwarrwarr chooses to use are often not traditional and can vary in each addition. As with Djambawa and his Djet print in 1996, Dhuwarrwarr is upholding her right to reproduce clan miny’tji which establishes her association with her clan land. The Print Story that accompanies each of the images supports this and acknowledges that there is hidden deeper meaning within the sacred design:
A further stamp of clan ownership to Yalangbara is the use of the Rirratjingu clan crosshatched design. For those with the appropriate secret/sacred knowledge, the inner sanctums of Rirratjingu knowledge of ritual associated with the events of the Djang’kawu can be read. (Print Space, 2013)

The explicit reference to the ‘secret/sacred’ nature of the imagery is evidence that the Print Space is recognising the entitlement of artists with seniority and authority to reproduce their clan secret/sacred miny’tji as they see fit. As it is implicit that restricted or secret/sacred (inside) miny’tji can only be reproduced by those with the authority to do so, the focus has been on ensuring that the miny’tji is used appropriately and that those replicating the outside or non-secret/sacred miny’tji do not mix clan patterns and designs. As revealed in Chapters 3 and 9, this was perceived as an issue with many of the younger members of the community who lacked a thorough understanding of the relevance of the miny’tji. The enforcement of the rules pertaining to the use of miny’tji is the responsibility of the elders, the more senior artists and the management at the Art Centre. The younger artists are aware that they are required to seek permission to replicate particular designs and to ensure that the final image they create is appropriate and sanctioned by the elders.

The ultimate endorsement of printmaking as an acceptable art form is revealed in the objects of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Incorporated (2008):

2.1 Objects of Association (a) The principal objects for which the Association is established is to create or establish and maintain a centre for the promotion of Yolngu arts and without limitation the promotion and preservation of any and all aspects of Yolngu culture including; art, performing art, visual art, craft, community arts, any other movable cultural heritage, literature, music, design, electronic records, film, video, television and radio of whatever nature. (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc, 2008)

Item 2.1(a) confirms that the centre is committed to the promotion of Yolngu art ‘without limitation’. That one of the most outspoken of the detractors, Gawirrin Gumana, came to accept printmaking as an alternative and effective art form for passing on knowledge and affirming identity and title to land, is supported by the fact that it is now a part of his art production. Since the first figurative screenprint with elements of his Dhalwangu clan diamond pattern, produced at the Northern Editions workshop in 1999 (Figure 6.14, p.217), he has produced three etchings at Yirrkala all
depicting ‘patterns on the land’ and elements of his country expressed in a spontaneous manner (Figure 10.3).

In 2008, Gawirrin produced a screenprint, *Baraltja* (Figure 10.4), for the Nomad Gallery collaborative project, *Custodians*. In the exhibition catalogue, art curator Margie West made the following observation about Gawirrin and his print:

> And while these artists obviously create in order to sell their work, they also want to present and communicate something about their cultural realities to the outside world. Art has become one of the most successful ways of doing this. Selling their art is therefore a cultural as well as an economic transaction that seeks recognition and some sort of rapprochement with the broader society. Gawirrin emphasises this in relation to his *Baraltja* print, ‘We will always draw that snake this way thinking that’s the way we show ourselves to the Yolngu (Aboriginal) and to the *Ngāpaki* (non-Indigenous)’ (West, M, 2008).

Gawirrin is recreating in print the art he created in traditional modes in order to enlighten and educate and the multiplicity of the print medium has afforded the added benefit of increased exposure. In the catalogue, Gawirrin explains his work and reaffirms his authority by stating that ‘only my children can paint like this. I am custodian’ (Gumana, G, 2008). Here he is using ‘children’ in a broad sense, referring to the time-honoured tradition of elders passing their knowledge on to the next
generation so that they in turn can pass it on to future generations and in so doing ensure that the stories are not lost and their culture endures.

In a paper presented in 2004 at a workshop on *Culture, Economy and Governance in Aboriginal Australia*, Morphy explained how the Yolngu adapted to changing social conditions and how this was reflected in their art.

Any restricted object sold unconditionally in a free market is in effect likely to become a public object... Since many Aboriginal artworks that Europeans desire, or that are marketable commodities, derive from sacred and restricted designs, the decision to continue producing them for sale to outsiders, once the risks are known, requires people to make the decision to open up works concerned to wider publics or develop strategies that preserve the restricted art while at the same time satisfying market demands — for example by creating art that mimics restricted forms without actually replicating them (Morphy, H, 2005a, p.24).

As described in Chapter 3 Naminapu Maymuru White was another of the protagonists endeavouring to reproduce *miny’tji* in the appropriate traditional colours. Having had some of her most significant works printed at offsite studios, she continues to articulate the sentiments expressed in the speech she gave twenty-five years ago at the opening of the Art Centre Museum (Chapter 2, p.95). On that occasion, Naminapu had championed the acceptance of change as necessary to ensure the survival of Yolngu art and culture. Her commitment to this belief is evident in her effort to ensure that her *Gunyan* print was an accurate representation of her clan *miny’tji*, to the extent of using a *marwat* to apply colours that were comparable to the ochre colours associated with that particular sacred clan design (Figure 3.22, p.145).

When questioned about the Print Space having finalised the printing and editioning of Naminapu’s etching, Stubbs stated that in his opinion this was only possible because the print was created away from Yirrkala (Naminapu had worked on the plates in Canberra where Burness printed the initial proofs). As far as Stubbs was concerned the Art Centre ruling regarding the use of sacred *miny’tji* in print continues to be enforced and he went on to suggest that it is only those artists who have worked offsite with non-Yolngu printmakers who tend to include ceremonial *miny’tji* in their images (Stubbs, W, 2015).
Initially the use of non-traditional colours played a part in the acceptance of sacred *miny’tji* in print. This was facilitated by the new colour palette that became available with the introduction of new techniques. However, artists are now endeavouring to replicate the traditional ochre colours in an effort to give true representation of their *miny’tji*. That artists circumvent the issue of revealing the secret-sacred in the designs by avoiding reproduction of those deeper layers of *miny’tji* containing the ‘inside’ or sacred meaning is supported by a declaration on the Art Centre website:

> Following the discipline of *miny’tji* (sacred design) the designs used in making these works on paper with ‘foreign’ media are decorative only and not permitted to extend into ceremonial patterns. This allows artists expressive freedom and the opportunity to use bright colours and ‘play’ with imagery without compromising their spiritual identity. (Yirrkala Art, 2012)

This thesis proposes that this freedom of individual expression has affected art production in other sectors of the Art Centre where traditional rules have long been upheld. Much of the art marketed through the Yirrkala Art Centre is now regarded as contemporary art that is inspired by the traditional. This is seen in the works of Djambawa Marawili and Gunybi Ganambarr. As with his printmaking, Djambawa was one of first to display aesthetic innovation in the interpretation of *miny’tji* in his bark painting. A distinctive feature of Gunybi’s work is that while using ‘foreign’ and found materials, he continues to reference his Ancestral designs in the patterns he cuts into these matrices. Nyapanyapa Yunupingu is constantly breaking new ground and producing innovative works that are setting a new standard in Indigenous printmaking. Her work is easily identifiable by her open and spontaneous use of cross hatching and the distinctive manner she relates personal narratives.

**Nyapanyapa Yunupingu**

Amongst the first of the women to produce a print onsite at the Print Space, Nyapanyapa has been inspirational from the beginning. She exhibits the same prodigious urge to create, as did her late sister Gaymala. Initially she visited the Art Centre whenever she had carved artefacts to sell, but since her introduction to printmaking Nyapanyapa now presents at the Art Centre on an almost daily basis. She was regularly accompanied by her equally prolific sister Barrapu until Barrupu’s death
in 2013. So prolific was her output that Nyapanyapa’s range of work soon expanded from printmaking to recreating her well-recognised marks and figures on bark and other media. Andrew Blake described Nyapanyapa as ‘the most prolific artist we have here... simply on the grounds that she is here every day — making marks’ (Blake, A, 2011a).

Along with her painting on bark and her wood carving Nyapanyapa has produced prints using all available techniques, and has been a part of the evolution of new multi-media works involving digital technology. From her first linocut Gunbirrbirr, created in 1996, depicting fish from her homeland Biranybirany (Figure 10.5, p.327) Nyapanyapa revealed what was to become her recognisable style: naïve figures, and the loose and open manner in which she replicates the cross-hatching of her clan miny’tji. Her early works were easily identifiable by the innovative expressions of contemporary themes and the bright coloured, often luminous figures that featured in her prints (Figure 10.6, p.327). The instinctive manner in which she drew her ‘creatures’ — far removed from the real thing — drew laughter from the other artists (Blake, D, 2011). Nyapanyapa’s work became more abstract as she gradually eliminated the figurative elements from her images until her creations became composed entirely of free flowing ‘marks’ that had evolved from her clan patterns. Figures 10.5 to 10.10 on page 327 reveal the progression from figuration with loose background hatching, through to images totally devoid of figuration and composed entirely of Nyapanyapa’s ‘marks’. Of the latter Nyapanyapa has created a number of series in which she has described her marks as either bukmak mulmu — all grass, or birrka’mirri — marks made at random (Figures 10.9 & 10.10, p.327).

Nyapanyapa broke new ground again when she produced artwork that drew entirely on her personal experiences, highlighting the individual rather than reproducing Ancestral stories or stories relating to community daily life. The Art Centre described the significance of the progression:

In early 2008 Nyapanyapa made a dramatic departure from the previous conventions of Yolngu art.... and unleashed a unique set of personal narrative paintings revolving around her own experiences. This subjective, individualistic and linear narrative construction was totally out of step with all previous Yolngu art. (Print Space, 2012b)
Fig. 10.5 Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, *Gunbirrbirr*  
Linocut, 26x38cm, Ed. 50, 1996  
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 4A)

Fig. 10.6 Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, *Hunting dhäwu*  
Screenprint, 47x39cm, Ed.21, 2001  
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 4G)

Fig. 10.7 Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, *Miyapunu*  
Japanese woodblock, 15x30cm, Ed.10, 2007  
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 4AA)

Fig. 10.8 Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, *Galurra/Mumbi*  
Etching, 25x49cm, Ed. 20, March 2009  
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 4EE)

Fig. 10.9 Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, *Bukmak Mulmu*  
Etching, 25x50cm, Ed.20, December 2009  
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 4FF)

Fig. 10.10 Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, *Birrka’mirri*  
Linocut, 39x39cm, Ed.30, 2011  
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 4MM)
The first of Nyapanyapa’s personal narratives was part of a multimedia installation, which won the 3D Category in the 2008 Telstra Art Award. A video recording of Nyapanyapa telling her story was shown with a bark painting of the same story. That year she also produced a print version of the story as her contribution to the After Berndt Series of soft ground etchings (Figure 10.11).

Fig. 10.11 Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, Buffalo Story
Soft Ground etching, 25x50cm Ed. 30, 2008
(Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 4CC)

This story starts when I went to Buymarr. Mutpi was the name of the beach. I went walking and saw footprints looking like piggy piggy. I was looking for Larraŋi (bush apple). I went along and saw Yolngu telling a story about old people, I looked around again, Hey where have them old people gone? They went up the tree. Then there was just a little girl standing there with dharpâ (stick) and that was me. I looked around, I started praying, I saw a buffalo eating gumbu (white berry). So I bent down hiding from the buffalo through the bushes but that buffalo came towards me. I was scared and weak with fear. That buffalo kept coming and I turned around and ran away the buffalo charged me and put his horn in my back the buffalo was angry and it speared me. The pain was bad. I was hurt. My two sisters came down looking for me. I was sick and laying in the grass. We walked to Garrthalala. The hospital plane came and took me to Nhulunbuy and then flew me to Darwin hospital. I survived to tell the story. In this story is my watu (dog), my two sisters, the Madakarritj (angry) buffalo and me. (Print Space, 2012b)

Nyapanyapa’s latest works, in a range of media, have been described by the Art Centre as Birrka’mirri — ‘abstract expressions of the artist’s hand’. Overall they have been referred to as mayilimiriw, which translates as ‘having no meaning’, referring to the fact that the cross-hatching created by Nyapanyapa bears no sacred meaning (Figures
This researcher contends that describing them as such infers that there is a total absence of meaning in this series of work by Nyapanyapa when in fact they have a personal meaning to Nyapanyapa in that they describe what is meaningful to her in her country. When this was put to Stubbs and he was questioned about the implications of referring to them as ‘having no meaning’, Stubbs responded by providing details of an interaction he had with Nyapanyapa in the process of labelling some of her works for an exhibition:

For at least half she said, “I don’t know”. I then prompted her if there was a figurative element to describe what that was, and use it as a name if she was comfortable. Where she said, “I don’t know”, I recorded ‘untitled’. On one occasion she said: “Birka’mirri wulanha? … Whatever, maybe, what? … I work, I work, I work [indicating brush strokes], I don’t think. I don’t think like that [of names for works]. And then I work again, get another bark. I don’t think about what it is, I just work — like that. This is just ‘whatever’ or something. It is not anything.” (Stubbs, W, 2012)

In an essay about the bark paintings by Nyapanyapa being exhibited in the 2nd National Indigenous Art Triennial at National Gallery of Australia, curator Franchesca Cubillo suggests that the works would have meaning for the artist:

The literal translation of ‘mayilimiriw’ is ‘meaningless’; that is, they have no Dreaming narrative; however, they are not devoid of substance. … they are unpretentious intuitive white waves of free-flowing crosshatching. … She does not paint ancient Dreaming narratives, she does not paint clan designs, she does not paint in conventional north-east Arnhem Land styles; she paints her stories of her life and she paints spontaneously. (Cubillo, F, 2012)

The Gapan gallery exhibition in 2012 included the birrka’mirri works by Nyapanyapa. When an opportunity arose to ask Nyapanyapa about her art works, Araluen Maymuru translated the words Nyapanyapa used to describe her images: wänga (home or country), dharpa (trees), marwat (leaves), mulmu (grass), dharyun (rain). These are all elements of her country — things that are ‘meaningful’ to Nyapanyapa.

Nyapanyapa’s work is not the first Yolngu artwork to be an abstraction of clan miny’tji described as having ‘no meaning’. Banduk Marika had set a precedent in 2006 when she created the first of a series of three innovative screenprints (Figures. 10.12, 10.13, 10.14, p.330) and became one of the first Yolngu to produce artwork that referenced traditional patterns but were described as having no sacred meaning.
Banduk referred to the first of these prints as *Miny’tjinharra*. (*Nharrra* translating as ‘nothing’ or ‘no,’ as in, ‘lacking’). Banduk literally is saying that this image has ‘no miny’tji’, that is, it does not contain any of the traditional clan knowledge. Although
these prints are recognisably based on the Rirratjingu pattern for the sacred site of Yalangbara, the design does not conform to the strict time-honoured arrangement of patterns and colours as can be seen in a bark painted by her father Mawalan in 1959 (Figure 10.15, p.330). Consequently it does not contain any of the conventional meanings and so, as Banduk stated, ‘it has no meaning behind it’ (Print Space, 2012b).

In Barawanthu and Miny’tjinharra II (Figures 10.13 & 10.14, p.330), Banduk has introduced a different range of colours each inspired ‘by colours she sees when flying over her country at sunset’ (Print Space, 2013). The geometric alignment of the design in the prints is again based on her clan design, but the colours Banduk has used are a ‘combination of traditional colour plus vibrant hues seen in the evening sky’ (Print Space, 2012b).

In 2011, in collaboration with Art Centre art co-ordinators Stubbs and Dianne and Andrew Blake, and employing the computer programming skills of those working at the Mulka multi-media centre, Nyapanyapa was involved in creating an intermedia artwork described as a ‘light painting’. This unique multi-media artwork came about on one particular occasion when there was no bark available for Nyapanyapa to paint and no workshop taking place in the Print Space. Eager to continue creating artwork, Nyapanyapa was given some screenprinting acetate sheets and a paint pen with which she proceeded to produce one hundred and ten drawings. In deciding how these could be used the art co-ordinators consulted with the computer programmers in the Mulka centre. Lacking computer skills and any knowledge of electronic devices, Nyapanyapa could not have conceived this composition without the involvement of the art coordinators and the programmers working in the Mulka multi-media centre. This collaborative exchange of skills resulted in the devising of a special computer program that projected the images onto a screen in an infinite combination of sequences. The installation was exhibited in 2012 at the 18th Biennale of Sydney, all our relations. Nyapanyapa was one of ‘twenty leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in Australian contemporary art’ selected because they explored new fields of practice and ‘redefined contemporary Indigenous art’ (De Zegher, C and McMaster, G, 2012). Quentin Sprague describes the work as ‘largely unique within the canon of Aboriginal contemporary art in Australia’ (Sprague, Q, 2012 p.67) premising a categorical shift beyond bark painting. But in describing it as such, Sprague questions the authenticity
of the singular authorship, considering the intercultural collaborative nature of its genesis. This question can be applied to all of Nyapanyapa’s work that is created in the Art Centre. Sprague suggests that in view of the environment in which Nyapanyapa works, cultural exchange is a key factor in her output and that the process ‘can be seen as a translation, by way of collaborative intervention, from one material and cultural domain to another’ (Sprague, Q, 2012, p.67). The resolution of the Light Painting required the intervention of others with particular skills, as is the case with printmaking, but in essence the work is Nyapanyapa’s — the imagery is her creation and the intervention of others facilitated the form in which it was realised. Lendon had queried the notion of ‘individual creativity’ in an essay written in 2001, in relation to collaborative processes, describing the product of an artist’s engagement with the skills and knowledge of others as ‘art of constant translation’ (Lendon, N, 2001, p.59).

Nyapanyapa’s printmaking and her work in general, can be considered as such. It has been able to evolve because of the involvement of others. Her work is created in an environment where those from other cultures regularly provide input. They provide the introduced materials for Nyapanyapa’s experimentation and mark making and they provide the knowledge and expertise for the inclusion of multi-media technologies in her ‘art of constant translation.’

Another opportunity for an innovative cross-cultural collaboration was presented to Nyapanyapa when Canadian printmaker, Paul Machnik, visited Yirrkala. Machnik facilitated a workshop at which he introduced the locals to a new technique of his own devising. A white ground medium is used to create imprints on aluminium etching plates which are then etched in a copper sulphate bath. Nyapanyapa immediately embraced the technique, creating images using her handprint and footprints to make marks directly onto the plates, as seen in Gong mala (Figure 10.16, p.333) which translates as ‘fingerprints.’ The Print Space describes the works she created at the workshop as ‘an exact example of her freedom and demonstrates the reason for Nyapanyapa’s great appeal’ (Print Space, 2013). Nyapanyapa’s prints were exhibited, along with others from the Workshop including drypoint etchings by Gunybi Ganambarr, at that year’s Gapan Gallery.

111 Paul Macknik, a Canadian artist/printmaker has devoted his skill and talent to the promotion of Indigenous art. He is the founder of Montreal’s Studio PM, well known for its many professional and creative workshops throughout the world.
Gunybi Ganambarr

Gunybi (Ngaymil clan, Dhuwa moiety) is a multi-media artist working primarily as a painter and sculpture. He first came to the notice of the staff at the Art Centre with a carved and painted ironwood sculpture of a wurran (cormorant), a totemic species of his mother’s clan. With this work of art he introduced painted ironwood sculpture as a new art form in Northeast Arnhem Land. The Art Centre and elders recognised and accepted Gunybi’s unique talent and flair for innovation:

This began a consistent theme of Gunybi following his own inclinations in expressing his vision. He has combined that with a startling innovative flair to produce ground breaking sacred art that is at once novel and still entirely consistent with Yolngu maḏayin (law). ... Gunybi has had the instinct to introduce radical new forms without offending community tolerance. (Print Space, 2012b)

From his background as a builder, Gunybi was comfortable working with different materials and tools. His next innovation was to carve or ‘etch’ into material discarded by the mining company that he had ‘found’ lying around country. Gunybi displays this innovation in printmaking. The first print he produced in 2009, was an etching depicting the location in his country where freshwater meets saltwater, Baraltja (Figure 10.17, p.334). With this work Gunybi has conceived an image that appears incomplete — cut off on each side by the confines of the plate and challenging the viewer to imagine the complete image extending beyond the edges of the plate. This
etching and his second print, *Balawurru Ngalkanbuy*, a linocut created in 2011 (Figure 10.18), reflect the imagery and the unusual form of the works Gunybi creates in bark, rubber and metal.

Gunybi participated in the Machnik workshops, producing two drypoint etchings that feature idealised portraits of a male and a female. Displaying his characteristic innovative flair, Gunybi has created confronting images by incising clan *miny’tji* over the faces of his Yirritja woman and a Dhuwa man, as identifying features (Figures 10.19 & 10.20, p.339).

![Figure 10.17 Gunybi Ganambarr, *Baraltja* Etching, 50x25cm. Ed.30, 2009 (Image Courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 80A)](#)

![Figure 10.18 Gunybi Ganambarr, *Balawurru Ngalkanbuy* Etching, 60x57cm, Ed.30, 2011 (Image Courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka. 80B)](#)

![Figure 10.19 Gunybi Ganambarr, with Drypoint etching, Machnik Workshop, Yirrkala. (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 2013)](#)

![Figure 10.20 Gunybi Ganambarr, printing Drypoint etching, Machnik workshop, Yirrkala. (Image courtesy Buku-Larrnggay Mulka, 2013)](#)
A selection of Gunybi’s work has recently been exhibited in the 2016, 8th Asia Pacific Triennial, in Brisbane. There is a perceptible correlation between his printmaking and the range of works in the works exhibited. An incised work on a metal plate, described as ‘etched’, resembles an etching plate, and the carved blocks of conveyor belt rubber are reminiscent of linoblocks, albeit oversized ones. These works are treated as art objects in their own right, rather than a matrix from which another artwork is produced, as is the case with etching and incising of matrices in printmaking. Gunybi’s unconventional and innovative works have had considerable impact and attract critical acclaim. The limited works he has produced in print to date suggest that Gunybi is exploring all the possibilities this medium provides for innovation.

Dhuwarrrwarr, Gawirrin, Banduk, Nyapanyapa and Gunybi are representative of those senior artists working in print at Yirrkala who are expressing individual creativity in their work and challenging traditional boundaries. The work of Dhuwarrrwarr, Gawirrin, Banduk and Gunybi continue to reference the historical Ancestral stories in the replication of clan miny’tji, but do so in an innovative manner. Nyapanyapa has gone beyond referencing the historical and is creating her own personal narratives in her unconventional style. However, the intervention of others cannot be overlooked and although independent and innovative, when working with print technology through a print workshop their works are by necessity a product of a collaborative interaction.
Conclusion

The objective of this thesis has been to provide an historical narrative that records the history of printmaking by Yolngu artists of North East Arnhem Land and in the process to demonstrate that in the relatively short time they have been exposed to print technology the Yolngu artists have successfully incorporated it into the scope of their art production. The research undertaken reveals that since the 1980s the Yolngu have proceeded to employ the print medium to great effect for educational, political and social purposes, referring to their traditional stories and replicating their clan specific miny’tji, while introducing new subject matter and new styles. Those Yolngu interviewed during this research perceived printmaking as ‘another way of telling our stories’ — another way of asserting their ownership of country, establishing their identity and ensuring the survival of their culture. This thesis has demonstrated that the degree of freedom that accompanies the use of this non-traditional art form has allowed for greater innovation and expression of individual creativity than was sanctioned in the historically more regulated traditional painting. Through this research insight was also gained into the influence this introduced art form has had on their approach to the use of their traditional media.

There are many individuals, Yolngu and balanda, who have played a role in the progress of the Art Centre at Yirrkala. This dissertation has acknowledged those who were instrumental in the foundation and evolution of the Print Space, in particular those female artists who were at the forefront in promoting the use of the print medium as an alternate art form for passing on knowledge and sustaining their culture and community.

As described in the opening chapter, with the incursion of Western civilization the Yolngu were forced to make adjustments to their lifestyle. The impact of outside influences on their social and religious structure has been reflected in their artistic practice. Along with changes to their traditional art forms the Yolngu readily adopted introduced art forms to assist them in educating outsiders about their cosmological view of the world and their culture in general, and in performing the customary practice of passing on knowledge to the younger generations. From the beginning of
the mission stations in the 1920s and 30s they used the medium of bark painting to produce portable works of art for sale to outsiders. In the late 1940s further adaptability was displayed when visiting anthropologists introduced them to drawing with ‘new materials’ — crayon on paper. From the 1980s Yolngu artists began to incorporate the print medium into their art practice as another way of disseminating knowledge of their culture, beliefs and laws to the outside world. The willingness to accept change in order to achieve these ends, exemplifies the potential for innovation in Yolngu culture and art.

In the 1960s, Yolngu leaders became concerned that the negative impact of Western society, especially on young men, would lead to a loss of much cultural knowledge. As a result clan leaders including Mawalan Marika, Munggurrawuy Yunupingu and Narritjin Maymuru, began to teach their daughters to paint to ensure the stories and knowledge would be passed on so that their culture would endure. This thesis has argued that this momentous break with time-honoured practice opened the way for other adjustments to their art practice. The changing role of women in art production and their increased independence was relevant to the introduction and acceptance of printmaking. As a consequence of women being given more authority and freedom to paint they became the chief proponents in making printmaking an integral part of Yolngu art practice. This research has shown that those women who were taught to paint by their fathers have played central roles in the advancement of printmaking within the community, in particular Dhuwarrwarr and Banduk Marika, Naminapu Maymuru White, Marrnyula Mununggurr, and Gaymala and Gulumbu Yunupingu.

Printmaking relies on specialised equipment and knowledge of technical processes. In order to develop printmaking at Yirrkala the artists required access to facilities and input of teachers. Assistance to this end was facilitated by a Government initiative implemented during the 1970s when the Federal Government of the day adopted a policy of supporting and developing remote Aboriginal art centres in order to partly address the logistical, social and economic challenges posed by remote communities. The remote art centre initiative provided an avenue for communities to apply for essential funding, as did the Yirrkala Art Centre in order to establish a dedicated print facility in the early 1990s. In addition to this factor, this research has shown that the establishment, diversification in art production and the sustainability of the Print Space
at Yirrkala could not have been attained without the community, the artists, the non-Yolngu teachers and Art Centre management, working collaboratively and engaging in reciprocal or ‘both ways’ knowledge exchanges. The commitment and determination of all involved resulted in printmaking being accepted as an appropriate art form and becoming popular with and economically viable for Yolngu artists. The positive outcomes resulting from printmaking as an alternative means of art production have contributed to the Art Centre fulfilling the raison d’être of a remote community art centre, and realising the objectives of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Inc in providing the opportunity for creative and economic development, and ensuring the survival of Yolngu culture.

This research has shown that the respect for Yolngu self-determination, culture and laws demonstrated by Yirrkala Art Centre non-Indigenous management and art advisors in all their interactions within the Art Centre and in the community, has been vital to the acceptance of introduced art forms. I have described the central roles played by Stephen Fox, Dianne and Andrew Blake, Will Stubbs, Annie Studd and Kade McDonald in facilitating the development of printmaking at Yirrkala, while actively promoting Yolngu art and culture. The co-ordinators recognised that their role was primarily advisory in nature. They assisted with technical advice and ensured that the artists were aware of current art market trends and expectations. When invited, the management worked collaboratively with the artists, appreciating the independence of the artist and allowing complete artistic freedom in the production of their artwork. The mutual respect that exists between management and artists has been a significant contributing factor to the success and sustainability of the Print Space and the Art Centre as a whole.

The integration of printmaking into Yolngu art practice has involved many institutions and individuals. The teachers at the Yirrkala School, who first taught basic printing on fabric and then simple linocut to their students, were responsible for first introducing the technique to many of the women who came to play a role in establishing printmaking at Yirrkala: Naminapu Maymuru White and Dhuwarrwarr Marika, taught by Joan Wearne and Trevor van Weeren, were amongst the most prominent printmakers at Yirrkala. These women along with Marrnyula and Rerrkiwanga Mununggurr were the first to use the onsite facility to produce prints, with
Dhuwarrwarr being the first to have a series editioned onsite. Naminapu played an early administrative role at the Art Centre and has been one of the most outspoken in encouraging innovation in art production. Marrnyula was the first onsite trained printmaker and first Yolngu manager of the Print Space. All of these women continue to be at the vanguard of printmaking at Yirrkala — prolific in output, mentoring younger artists and often the ones to challenge the boundaries in Yolngu art production. Their creativity is reflected in their endeavours to develop methods of recreating miny’tji as they appear in bark and body painting. Naminapu has adapted a customary method of using the marwat (handmade hairbrush) to transfer the effect of cross-hatching in traditional painting to an introduced medium.

Research was undertaken to establish the ongoing role institutions and printmakers play in providing training through workshops and Artist in Residency programs, and in organising symposia that focused on issues relevant to printmaking by remote artists. Access to records of symposia and workshops, and interviews with those printmakers, artists and administrators directly involved in the workshops, revealed that through cross-cultural reciprocal — ‘both ways’ — interactions, Yolngu artists learnt the intricacies of print technology while exchanging knowledge about their culture and the philosophy of Yolngu artistic practice. In 1978 Jörg Schmeisser Head of Printmaking at the Canberra School of Art introduced Narritjin Maymuru to etching. In the mid–1980s Banduk Marika and Naminapu Maymuru White, were the first of the Yirrkala female artists to attended artist residencies at tertiary institutions. They were introduced to reduction linocut and lithography techniques by Theo Tremblay at the Canberra School of Art. During this time Naminapu Maymuru White and Gaymala Yunupingu met Basil Hall and other printmakers at the open access printmaking facility Studio One, in Canberra. It was here that Naminapu worked with Tremblay on the black and white version of the Nyapilingu triptych which was later reproduced as a three colour reduction linocut in collaboration with Hall. The coloured version went on to win the inaugural Works on Paper Award at the 1996 Telstra Art Award.

Banduk attended residencies at the Canberra School of Art, Flinders University and other workshops throughout the 1980s, before instigating a collaborative print project with the University of Wollongong in 1995–1996. Interviews with University academics, and Faculty of Arts staff members in particular Diana Wood Conroy, Sharon
Bell and Leonie Molloy, revealed that this project was pioneering with its focus on cross-cultural exchange through art practice, and by incorporating reciprocal visits between the institution and the community. Seen as a potential model for future institutional cross-cultural exchanges, the project, as originally conceived, was suspended due to lack of funding but the core of the project has been ongoing with Yolngu artists continuing to visit the University of Wollongong Arts Faculty to participate in workshops and exhibitions.

The Northern Territory University, now Charles Darwin University, has been at the forefront in promoting remote Aboriginal printmaking. The University was responsible for staging two ground-breaking conferences highlighting and addressing issues specific to printmaking by remote Indigenous artists: The Getting into Prints Symposium in 1993, and the 1996 Kaltja Business conference. The latter was followed by another ground breaking printmaking initiative, the ‘Australasian Print Project’. This project instigated by art faculty members, Jan Hogan and Basil Hall, brought together Yolngu artist Djalu Gurruwiwi and Dhopia Yunupingu Gurruwiwi with artists from Southeast Asia and Darwin, to explore the sense of place and identity through the medium of printmaking. The resultant series of individual and collaborative prints were featured in an exhibition, The Meeting of Waters. Selected works were later included in the cultural program that preceded the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Through projects such as these Yolngu artists have come to see their art located in a national and international context.

Printmaker Basil Hall has played a particularly significant role in establishing printmaking as a popular and viable art form at Yirrkala. Having assisted in setting up the dedicated Print Space in 1995–1996 he has had a constant presence, initiating projects, running workshops and introducing new techniques. Through his eponymous print workshop Basil Hall Editions, he has facilitated onsite collaborative workshops at the Print Space providing the opportunity for other printmakers to work with Yolngu artists in their own community. These printmakers engage in ‘both ways’ learning when introducing new techniques to Yolngu artists who in turn share knowledge of culture and their unique approach to art production.
This thesis has argued that in the relatively short period of time that they have been creating prints, the Yolngu have done so innovatively and to great effect. Initially their preferred imagery, reproduced in black and white using woodblock or linocut techniques, related to their clan stories or aspects of traditional life. Then, as they were exposed to a new array of colours with the techniques of reduction linocut, collography, screenprinting and Japanese woodblock, they made use of the expanded palette of colour to produce images that were more secular in subject matter and incorporated more figurative elements.

Although the Yolngu readily adopted a new way of ‘telling their stories’ the issue of reproduction of their miny’tji — their clan specific patterns and designs — was a constant source of contention. Considering the intricate, time-honoured connection between their ancestors, the land and their art, the senior artists did not at first approve of the mechanical reproduction of miny’tji and ruled that ‘to paint the land you must use the land.’ Those in authority were committed to ensuring that the painting of restricted miny’tji remained with the artists who had the authority to do so and those painting non-restricted designs used them appropriately and did not ‘mix up’ miny’tji from different clan groups. There was also concern that mechanical reproduction of multiples would put the clan miny’tji at risk of being misappropriated and subject to infringement of intellectual property rights. Today Yolngu artists strive to produce prints that reflect the geometric intricacy of the clan patterns and designs, while taking care to protect the secret-sacred deeper meanings from being exposed to outsiders.

As printmaking became more accessible, the Yolngu began to use the technique for other than the traditional purpose of passing on knowledge to future generations. This research has investigated how it has been employed to draw attention to the negative impact that colonisation has had on their culture and lifestyle. In 1989, in collaboration with the Northern Territory Government, Marrnyula Mununggurr created art works that were reproduced and employed to alert the population to environmental and health issues: The Feral Pig Poster warned of the environmental damage being done by the feral pigs in the region; the Love me Safely project alerted the population to the risk of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; In 1999, Gaymala Yunupingu used the collograph technique to great effect in creating several series of prints, including
the Nabalco suite, which highlighted the damage that the newly established bauxite mine was doing to their land, their traditional sacred sites and the environment in general. With these works the artists introduced other dimensions — political, social and environmental — to their aesthetic.

More recently the print medium has been used to ‘re-engage’ the ‘disengaged’ young members of the community who were dropping out of school and at risk from boredom, low self-esteem and substance abuse. Modern technologies were incorporated to attract younger members of the community to printmaking and to encourage participation in special projects. The Print Space collaborated with the local School and visiting printmakers to run workshops for the ‘disengaged youth’ as part of the local school’s *Yambirrpa Youth Development program*. The first workshop held in 2010, involved six young women who produced a series of works using the collograph technique. It proved so successful in motivating and restoring confidence and self-esteem that two further programs were instigated. Established techniques such as linocut and screenprinting were combined with new digital technologies — photography and computer enhancing — to appeal to younger members of the community. The second workshop, the *Young Ones* project, was facilitated by local artist and printmaker Alicia Scobie who suggested the use of photography — a medium familiar to the young participants who regularly used their mobile phones to take ‘selfies.’ The images that the young folk had taken of themselves were incorporated with linocut to produce the *Ngarra* (I) prints, which were essentially, self-portraits. This was ground breaking art production in a society based on a collective culture where family and kinship supersede the individual and where the notion of a self-portrait was not common in their imagery. This workshop proved popular in attracting new people from all age groups to the Print Space.

The *Yuta* projects 1 and 2 followed in 2012 with photography again being the main medium, this time incorporating screenprinting. Printmaker Sean Smith from Melbourne facilitated both *Yuta* workshops with Print Space advisor Annie Studd and local printmaker Ruby Djikarra Alderton. The subject matter for this series was based on the participants’ perception of their community and their everyday life at Yirrkala. Prints produced during the workshop won prizes in art shows, were selected for major art prizes including the Telstra Art Awards, and were exhibited nationally and
internationally. Following this positive experience four of the young participants were permanently employed at the Print Space. The projects had achieved their objectives of re-engaging many of the younger members of the community and reconnecting them with their culture.

As revealed by this research, the young female artists are tending to follow in the footsteps of their mothers and aunts and are taking over managerial and mentoring roles at the Print Space. Araluen (Naminapu #2) Maymuru who had been taught to paint by her father and by her aunt Naminapu Maymuru White, acted as Print Space manager from 2001 to 2010. In her role as a mentor to the young members of the community she endeavoured to ensure they valued their artistic heritage and inspired all with the innovative features she introduced into her printmaking. Ruby Djikarra Alderton has been taught linocut and other printmaking techniques by her mother, Banduk Marika. She also came to mentor the new generation of print artists while continuing her training at the Print Space. Alderton played a vital role in instigating the innovative Yambirrpa projects involving the younger members of community.

Since 2003, the Print Space has exhibited each year’s print production at the annual Garma Festival. This celebration of Aboriginal culture provides an opportunity to showcase the Print Space and the creativity of Yolngu print artists at the unique open air Gapan Gallery located on an escarpment in the bush, twenty-five kilometres from Yirrkala. New techniques are often introduced by visiting printmakers through themed, cross-cultural collaborative projects. The soft ground etching technique was introduced for the After Berndt series (2008) and later used for the String Figures series (2010–2013). Each of these projects had historical significance and reconnected the Yolngu with their past. The After Berndt series was inspired when the current generation of artists viewed reproductions of the crayon drawings created by their forefathers in 1947, for the anthropologist Ronald Berndt. The After Berndt Series project had many positive outcomes. The significance of the Berndt drawings attracted many of those artists who practised the more traditional forms of art production and had to date not been interested in printmaking. In particular many of the men, who had long considered the Print Space the women’s domain, began to participate. This project also resulted in some of the younger male artists seeking training and employment as printmakers at the Print Space.
As this research has shown, the cross-cultural collaborations have not been limited to printmakers and artists. Since establishing their art consultancy in 2005, Angus and Rose Cameron of Nomad Art in Darwin have instigated a number of print projects which capitalise on the cross-cultural collaborative nature of printmaking to explore cultural and environmental issues in the Top End of Australia. Of particular significance was the Djalkiri project which took place in 2009 in the Madarrpa clan homeland of Djambawa Marawili at Yilpara on Blue Mud Bay. Anxious to promote cross-cultural understanding between Yolngu and non-Yolngu, the Camerons instigated this unique project that involved Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, printmaker Basil Hall, an anthropologist, an ethnobotanist and a photographer. The project involved the exploration of the sense of place and identity through the print medium as had the Australasian Print Project, which had taken place a decade earlier at the Northern Territory University. The Djalkiri project resulted in successful inter-cultural exchanges of knowledge that impacted on the work of all involved. The innovative prints that were created toured nationally accompanied by an educational program that alerted the rest of Australia to Yolngu culture. Other positive outcomes included further exchanges between the participating artists. A collaboration between Mulkun Wirrpanda, a senior female artist of the Dhuŋi-Djapu clan and Victorian artist John Wolseley, resulted in the creation of a series of prints, the Midawarr Suite (2013), that drew attention to, and provided a record of, the endangered species of plants that were once a primary food source for the Yolngu.

This research has also revealed that innovation in print production at the Print Space has not been confined to the younger generation. Many of the senior artists continue to inspire the younger artists through the expression of their individual creativity. Nyapanyapa Yunupingu stands out as an artist who is continually ‘reinventing herself’ through her artwork. This thesis considers her contribution as one of the earliest Yolngu printmakers to produce work with a secular and very personal content rather than traditional narrative. Since the first prints she produced in 1996 Nyapanyapa has been known for her quirky figuration and more lately her spontaneous ‘mark making’. This research explored the ongoing progression in her work from referencing traditional miny’tji in the background of her figurative secular narratives, to works composed entirely of multiple ‘marks’ that bear little or no reference to the traditional
patterns. Nyapanyapa’s multi-media works have been put forward as examples of successful cross-cultural collaborations. The Art Centre co-ordinators worked with her in expanding her work practice to include computer and other digital technologies. Collaboration with advisors and staff at the Mulka multi-media Centre resulted in the incorporation of digital elements into Nyapanyapa’s original works. Examples of these multimedia artworks, such as the 2012 Light Painting, have been exhibited in major public art exhibitions, nationally and internationally,

Other artists have challenged printmakers to accommodate their innovative style of painting. Djambawa Marawili collaborated with printmaker Basil Hall to find an effective combination of techniques to recreate his Madarrpa diamond pattern in such a way that it achieves the bir’yun (shimmer or ‘brilliance’) produced by cross-hatching in bark painting. Recognised as a ‘source of creative and political energy in Northeast Arnhem Land’ (Stubbs, W, 2005), Djambawa was amongst the first to reproduce sacred clan miny’tji in print. The innovation he has shown in his printmaking is reflected in the works Djambawa creates in ochres on bark. This thesis has argued that the shift toward less formal rendering of sacred clan patterns now evidenced in the works of Yolngu artists using traditional materials has been facilitated by the freedom of expression that is experienced in art production at the Print Space.

In 2015 the Print Space at Yirrkala celebrated twenty years of employing locally trained artists and printmakers in the continuous production of limited edition prints. In that time it has achieved a national and international reputation for fine art production. This unique achievement by an Indigenous owned and run, remote community print workshop has been realised through the creativity and determination of the Yolngu with their willingness to accept change, facilitated by cross-cultural collaborative exchanges of knowledge.

Yolngu artists at Yirrkala have successfully incorporated printmaking into their art production and have used it to great effect in performing traditional as well as new functions. The Yolngu belief system considers that the past, the present and the future co-exist and that when they paint their miny’tji this invokes the presence of their wangarr – their creator Ancestors. Traditional Yolngu art represented this and printmaking now affords another means of doing so. The print medium has provided
an avenue for incorporating the old with the new and has offered an alternative art form to the Yolngu for educating and passing on knowledge and affirming Yolngu identity and connection to country in order to sustain their people and their culture. The freedom that printmaking has afforded Yolngu artists in the expression of individual creativity exists in dialogue with more traditional methods of art production and in so doing has expanded the opportunities available to the Yolngu for artistic expression.
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Addendum: Print Techniques and Terminology

**Aquatint** – produces a soft finish appearing like a wash hence ‘aqua’. The plate is covered with a fine grained coating, usually a resin in powder form, which is not fully protective so that when etched it results in a grainy appearance. The longer the plate is immersed in the acid the deeper the bite and the darker the print. Biting can be further controlled by covering areas with varnish to prevent further biting. The plate is finally cleaned, inked and printed.

**Baren** – a burnishing tool consisting of a flat bottomed disc with a handle used in printmaking processes such as woodcut or linocut (linoleum). It is used to burnish the paper to pick up ink that has been rolled onto a woodblock or linoleum with a hand roller. A large spoon can also be used as a burnishing tool in printmaking.

**Block or Plate** – the cut piece of material onto which the image is created.

**Chine-collé** – a special technique used to create finer detail or to introduce another colour, without having to print another plate. Glue is painted onto fine textured paper, such as Japanese paper, cut to the required shape. When dry this is then passed through the press at the same time as the image is being transferred onto the wetted heavier paper, so that the finer paper actually bonds to the heavier paper. The term derives from the French ‘colle’ for glue and ‘chine’ referring to the fine tissue paper.

**Collograph/Collagraph** – the word collography is derived from the Greek word for glue, *kolla*. The technique involves gluing or collaging textured materials, such as sand, leaves, grass, onto a plate in order to create different textures in relief. The plate is then hand-inked for printing. The highly textured surface results in the possibility of varying colour tones in each print, so that collographs are often referred to as monoprints.

**Colour Reduction linocut** – An alternative to cutting a different plate for each colour in colour printing. The one plate is re-used and recut and re-inked for each colour. The disadvantage of this technique is that at each stage the previous image is destroyed making the process an irreversible one.
**Drypoint** – a type of engraving where a special sharp tool is used to cut directly into the plate. This throws up a burr on the edge of the line which imparts a rich texture to the printed line. A softer line is created compared to the sharper edge of an etched or engraved line.

**Engraving** – The artist incises directly onto a metal plate with an engraving tool called a burin to create the image. The plate can be copper, iron, steel or zinc and is usually a couple of millimetres thick. There are various techniques available for making the incisions into the plates, including direct engraving and etching. The incised plate is inked and then wiped clean so that, contrary to relief printing, the ink is left in the incised areas. The design is then transferred to the paper by applying pressure which forces the paper into the grooves to pull out the ink. With this technique the role of the printer is particularly important especially with more densely worked plates which require more complex inking.

**Etching** – differs from engraving in that the artist does not work directly onto the plate instead the artist covers the plate with an acid resistant substance such as wax or varnish and then draws the design into the wax with an etching needle or burin, leaving the plate exposed beneath the lines created. The plate is then submerged in an acid bath for varying lengths of time depending on the desired depth of etch (the greater the depth the darker the line). When removed from the bath the plate is wiped leaving ink in the bitten areas. Prepared paper is placed on the plate and passed through a press so that the ink is absorbed into the paper creating a reverse image of the design. Etching allows the artists to work more freely enabling them to create a sketchier image. (Other types of etching where an acid is used to bite the design into the plate include mezzotint, Aquatint and sugar lift.)

(Definition taken from NTU Workshop, Getting into Prints catalogue, 1993)

**Hatching** – series of parallel or cross-hatching of lines used to create shading in a print. The looseness or tightness of hatching creates variations in shading.

**Intaglio or Incised Printing** – includes engraving and etching.

**Japanese Woodblock** – The image is carved into a wooden block. A separate block is cut for each colour used in the image. The use of water-based pigments (powder
pigment, ochre or gouache) eliminates the need for solvents, and no printing press is necessary, as the print is made by burnishing the back of the paper with a baren. Once the block has been carved, registration marks are also cut into the corner and one edge to aid in the accurate positioning of the light Japanese Kozo paper. Pigment and a small quantity of rice glue are then brushed onto the areas of the block which are to be printed. Pre-dampened paper is carefully placed in the registration marks and the flat baren is used to coax the pigment into the paper from the block.

(Taken from brochure printed by Buku Larrnggay Mulka to accompany Japanese woodblock exhibition, 2007)

Linocut – following its invention in 1860, linoleum has been used as an inexpensive, and easier to cut, alternative to wood, becoming popular with European artists at the beginning of the 20th century.

Lithography – a method of printing that relies on the principle of water and oil not mixing. An image is drawn on the prepared surface of a block of special limestone (lithographic stone), or sometimes metal, with a special waxy lithographic crayon, pencil or pen. When the stone is inked in preparation for printing the ink sticks to the wax and not the stone. The unwaxed areas of stone are wiped clean and the image is printed using a special lithographic press. A lithographic print can then be coloured by hand or by reprinting with different coloured inks.

‘Photoshop’ – An image editing software developed and manufactured by Adobe Systems Inc. Photoshop is considered one of the leaders in photo editing software. The software allows users to manipulate, crop, resize, and correct colour on digital photos. Definition from: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/Photoshop.html>

Printing Press – the prepared plate is placed on a table with paper aligned on top of it. The assemblage is then rolled under a heavy drum so that the pressure transfers the ink from the plate onto the paper. The plate also makes an impression that is a useful indicator for confirming authenticity.

Relief Printing – Where the area to be printed stands in relief from the rest of the block of material which has been cut away. The block is then inked and the image transferred onto paper by applying pressure either by hand-stamping, or using a
mechanical press. The most common types of relief printing are **woodcut**, **linocut** and **wood-engraving**.

**Roller** – device used to hold ink and roll onto the plate

**Screenprint** – The artists draws or paints the image onto acetate sheets, using a separate sheet for each colour in the image. The acetate sheets are then placed onto a screen of very fine fabric (when silk is used it is referred to as silkscreen printing), tightly supported by a frame. The image is photochemically or manually transferred onto the screen which acts as a stencil. The non-printing areas are blocked off so that when ink is wiped across the screen using a ‘squeegee’ or blade, it passes through the unblocked area onto the art paper below. A separate screen has to be prepared for each colour being used in the image, so registering the position of each image is vital to ensure accurate duplication of the image.

**Sugar lift** – the image is drawn onto the plate using a mix of sugar and black ink. The plate is then coated with quick-drying varnish or ground and placed into a bath of warm water. The water penetrates the area where there is sugar, the sugar swells and lifts away the varnish leaving the plate exposed in those area. The plate can then be aquatinted or etched directly through open biting in an acid bath. It is then inked and printed.

**Woodcut** – a seasoned block of soft wood is cut into the required size along the grain of the wood. The surface is planed smooth in preparation for carving. The artist either draws the design directly onto the block or onto a piece of paper glued to the wood. A cutting tool is used to cut the wood. Hatching is incorporated to create degrees of shading. The carved surface is then inked with a roller soaked with an ink that is stiff enough to not flow into the recessed areas. The inked block is then either used to stamp the design onto prepared paper or the design can be burnished onto the paper using a burnishing tool, or transferred using a mechanical press.

**Wood-engraving** – uses a hardwood cut across the grain rather than along the grain. Due to the increased hardness of the wood an engraving tool — a graver — is used for cutting. Much greater detail can be achieved than with woodcut due to the close grain of the end-block.
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