



CAIRNS  
INDIGENOUS  
ART FAIR  
2011

Teacher Resource

# WELCOME TO THE 2011 CIAF TEACHER RESOURCE

This resource has been developed by REACH (Regional Excellence in Arts and Culture Hubs) and CIAF (Cairns Indigenous Art Fair) to assist teachers and other educators support learning in the visual arts with an emphasis on contemporary Indigenous artist and their work.

## How to use this resource

The CIAF 2011 Teacher Resource defines three key phases for teachers - EARLY (P - 5), MIDDLE (6 - 9) and SENIOR (10 - 12). Each section is informed by and refers to *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools (EATSIPS)*. The DISCUSSION, LOOKING and ACTIVITY are to be seen as starting points and are not exclusive or finite. Please adopt, adapt, share and extend these ideas with your students and your peers.

**A better understanding of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures develops an enriched appreciation of Australia's cultural heritage, and can lead to reconciliation. This is essential to the maturity of Australia as a nation and fundamental to the development of an Australian identity.**

<http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/indigenous/>

The **early** years of education are a particularly important time for children to build strong foundations in learning and relationships with others. In the early years, children learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They engage with a variety of stories, languages, beliefs and cultural practices of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

## INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM

<http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/577.html>

In the **middle** phase of schooling, students develop an understanding of the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and how these are influenced by personal experiences, cultural backgrounds and knowledge. This understanding helps students gain a better appreciation of Australian history and contemporary issues.

In the **senior** phase, learners gain an awareness of the contributions of Indigenous Australians at local, regional, national and global levels. They engage with a variety of cultural protocols when working with Indigenous communities within their local area and in the sourcing of Indigenous knowledges. This helps them develop a greater understanding of their own country of origin and of the cultural, social and political beliefs that influence Australian identity and society.

**PROTOCOLS** Protocols outline the roles and relationships expected of teachers and students working with Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledges within an educational context.

<http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/3035.html> [accessed 4 August 2011]

Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Torres Strait Islander people

<http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/everybodys-business/protocols-torres-strait-islander/> [accessed 4 August 2011]

Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people

<http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/everybodys-business/protocols-aboriginal/> [accessed 4 August 2011]

## CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART IS THE ART OF TODAY

Contemporary Indigenous art is the art of today, produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists living in the in a range of urban and remote communities.

Contemporary Indigenous artists work in a globally influenced, culturally diverse, and technologically advancing world. Their art is a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that often challenge traditional boundaries of both Western and Indigenous art and defy easy definition. Diverse and eclectic, contemporary Indigenous art as a whole is distinguished by the very lack of a uniform, organising principle, ideology, or style.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CONTEMPORARY ART?

The integration of contemporary art into school and community learning enables educators to actively with engage with issues that affect our lives, provoking curiosity, encouraging dialogue, and igniting debate about the world around us.

Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists address both current historical events and policies. These references help educators and students make connections across the curriculum and support interdisciplinary thinking. As artists continue to explore new technologies and media, the work they create encourages critical thinking and visual literacy in our increasingly media-saturated society.

We want students to understand that contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is part of a cultural dialogue that concerns larger contextual frameworks, such as personal and cultural identity, family, community, and nationality. Curiosity, openness, and dialogue are important tools for engaging audiences in contemporary art. Instead of questioning whether a work of art is good or bad, the study of contemporary art requires an open-ended methodology and an inquiry-based approach. Asking questions that stimulate discussion is an integral step in the process towards appreciating contemporary art.

Looking at contemporary art is an investigation and an exploration; an opportunity to consider ideas and different perspectives, to learn something new, and eventually to create a personal sense of meaning and understanding.

## DISCUSSIONS AROUND CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART

- What makes a work of art a work of art? Is contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art defined by particular boundaries?
- Who decides what an artwork means? Is it the artist, the critic, the viewer, or history?
- Where do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists find their inspiration?
- What are the most important skills an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist working today can have?
- What materials and tools are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists using to create art?
- What is the difference between working alone and collaborating with fabricators, audiences, others?
- In addition to museums and galleries, what are other venues where art is exhibited?
- What subjects, issues, and themes are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists? What subjects, issues, and themes are important to you and what connections can you make between the two?
- Does a work of art need to be beautiful? Why or why not? Who defines beauty?
- Does contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art have a purpose, a role, a responsibility?

## DISCUSS HOW TO LOOK AT VISUAL ART

- Describe the artwork. What are the artworks formal qualities: colour, composition, style, mood, media and materials, etc.
- Consider the artist's concept. What is the artist thinking, what choices have they made, and what process have they used.
- Identify the context of the work. What are the circumstances in which an artwork is made, as well as when, where, and how the viewer sees a work of art.

## DISCUSS A SINGLE WORK OF ART

- What choices or decisions such as selection of materials, installation decisions, colour choices, etc. has the artist made? Why do you think the artist made those choices?
- What personal references do you make to this work? What does this work remind you of? Consider the relationship of this work of art to your own ideas, experiences, and opinions.
- What visual, literary, and/or historical references are made in the work? What prior knowledge does the viewer need?
- What can this work of art tell you about the artist, yourself, and/or the world around you?

(This text was paraphrased and developed with the support of Art21 <http://beta.art21.org/> [accessed 4 August 2011], a non-profit contemporary art organisation.)

## Bianca Beetson



**Bianca Beetson** *Run, Run Run, Run Catch me if you can, you can't catch me you can't catch me cos' I am the nigger breadman* 2010, Photograph – tryptich 100cm x 100cm.

The Chocolate Warriors and the Ginger Bread men photographs articulate my own personal struggles with Identity and authenticity in relation to skin colour. It critiques the notion of percentages, a question I often get asked being a fair skinned Aboriginal person. However, I tell those who ask "it doesn't matter if you are 70%, 40% or 15% as long as you are strong in your culture and proud to be an Aboriginal you are authentic". The Chocolate Warriors and Ginger bread men become a metaphor for the answer as they are still chocolate no matter the coca content or ginger bread men no matter what their flavour is. It's ironic that no one questions their authenticity. Just a spoon full of sugar helps the metaphor go down.



**Bianca Beetson** *Bloodlines* 2006

## Bianca Beetson



All text and images are courtesy of the artist.

Kabi Kabi & Wiradjuri people  
Born: Roma, Western Queensland  
Lives and works: Brisbane

Bianca Beetson is a Kabi Kabi (Sunshine Coast) & Wiradjuri (Central NSW) woman, born in Roma Western Qld. She studied a Bachelor of Arts, Visual Arts at the Queensland University of Technology from 1993 -95 and completed her Honors degree at the same University in 1998.

Beetson draws her inspiration from real life experience. Often many of her ideas being triggered by conversations

she has with people. Additionally, Beetson says many of her best ideas have come to her in dreams and whilst performing mundane activities such as vacuuming, although Beetson believes, she can't underestimate the power of Television and popular culture to bring ideas to fruition.

Beetson's work is concerned with her individual identity as an Indigenous Australian, as well as the identity of Australia as a nation in terms of its history and its concept of itself. Beetson's work is loaded with layers of meaning and numerous reference points. That is the co modification of Aboriginal Culture; the demarcation of Art, artifact and Kitsch; critique of the social structure; and the critique of the feminine. Reflected through the eclectic structure of the work are apparent reference to the dot paintings of the central desert artists, the stenciling technique of the Arnhem Land cave painters, blended with references to the work of twentieth century artists such as Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Lin Onus, Rover Thomas and Andy Warhol

The work falls between painting and sculpture, the performative and the static, the real and the fake; the finish is garish, slightly deranged, but always intense and alluring, a tension which functions as a metaphor for the work as a whole. A combination of elements are used within the work to suggest the interconnectedness of cultures, markets and the media. The work demands a constant process of the reinvention of self and place, as there is a cultural ambiguity surrounding the symbols used. The symbols function as vehicles for understanding the world, for reconstructing the ways in which cultures overlap, traditions are translated and meaning is recreated.

Furthermore the utilization of humour in the work Beetson sees as being a necessary tools for survival and self determination, the ability to laugh at ourselves, and to laugh at the times we find ourselves in, a spoonful of sugar makes the metaphor go down, an Ironic sensibility, and overall sense of the ridiculous and the absurd.

In 1997 Beetson was selected for the Primavera exhibition at the MCA in Sydney. She had work in Black Humor and Saltwater, Freshwater, Borewater and Transvisual national touring exhibitions. In April 1997 Bianca won her first art award; The Anglican Church Grammar school Old Boys Association Encouragement Award. As a member of the Campfire Group, Aboriginal Artist's Co-operation, she has had the opportunity to be involved in many projects based on cultural collaboration. Including All Stock Must Go which was a part of the second Asia Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery in 1997.

Beetson has had a number of solo exhibitions in Queensland and Brisbane, and her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions through out Australia and overseas. In 2002 Beetson was commissioned by Leah Purcell and QPAT to create an art work for the "Black Chic's Talking" project. She currently has a solo exhibition touring around Queensland titled "The other Arty Beetson and is a member of the prestigious ProppaNOW artist collective. Beetson has work in public and private collections around Australia and overseas including Queensland Art Gallery. In 2010 Beetson exhibited at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute as a part of ProppaNOW's Adelaide Festival Exhibition and was a finalist in the 2010 Telstra Art Awards in the New Media Category

### EARLY

#### DISCUSSION

What does the painting *Bloodlines* make you think of?

#### LOOKING

What are the ginger bread men dressed as?

#### ACTIVITY

Look closely at your skin. What colour is it really because it is not actually white or black. Try to mix your colour and paint a self portrait. (brown is made with yellow, red and blue, add white for tones)

### MIDDLE

#### DISCUSSION

Read the statement about the ginger bread warriors. Discuss those ideas.

#### LOOKING

Look at the artwork *Bloodlines*. Does it have a focal point? Where do your eyes travel when you look at it?

#### ACTIVITY

Create small clay flat figures of your family. Dress them in designs from your cultural past.

### SENIOR

#### DISCUSSION

Beetson comments that her work explores her own struggle with authenticity in relation to skin colour. What does she mean by that and how does the work communicate this to audiences?

#### LOOKING

Look at *Bloodlines*. What visual impact do the lines have? How does the use of colour affect the viewer?

#### ACTIVITY

Bake a cake or biscuit. Decorate it so that it takes something sweet and sugary and turns it in to an art work that comments on a social issue.

## Brian Robinson



**BRIAN ROBINSON** *Handline, Ngurupai Wharf* 2011, Lino print linocut printed in black ink from one block. 52U x 38Umm

A pivotal factor in the Islanders subsistent lifestyle was mastery at fishing using the various implements and tools on-hand. Hand-line Ngugupai wharf depicts one such method – the hand-line. Traditionally fishing was done from the shores or around the reefs either by the use of fishing lines made from vine or vegetable fibre, with hooks fashioned from turtle shell, or with spears. In the eastern islands, where large schools of sardine are found along the shoreline a bamboo scoop (weres) was used.

This print is one in a series of works that looks at the juxtaposition of Torres Strait lifestyle with motifs and mythology from classical Renaissance art.

## Brian Robinson



All text and images are courtesy of the artist and KickArts..

Born: 1973

Language: Kala Lagaw Ya / Wuthathi

Lives and works: Cairns

Brian Robinson's upbringing in the rich and diverse culture of the Torres Strait has given him a strong identity and essential knowledge that continues to inform his artistic practice today. His ease at translating the environment and ancestral stories into visual form in exciting, stimulating and creative media can be seen from his earliest linocut prints, through to his prints, paintings and sculptures today.

He commenced art studies in 1992 at the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE. After graduating he undertook numerous art residencies throughout the Pacific including printmaking workshops in the Solomon Islands [1995] and New Caledonia [1996]. He commenced work with Cairns Regional Gallery in 1997 as a trainee curator through the Museums Australia Curatorial Internship program, the first Torres Strait Islander to be appointed through the program. The result of this internship has been a major achievement: the co-curating and tour management of *ILAN PASIN: Torres Strait Art*, the first major touring exhibition and catalogue of the traditional and contemporary material culture of the Torres Strait Island people. Since then, he has worked on numerous exhibitions, locally, statewide and nationally.

In 2004, Robinson completed internships with both the National Museum of Australia and the National Gallery of Australia. In 2006 he was appointed Exhibitions Manager and Deputy Director of Cairns Regional Gallery. Despite the demands of these positions, he has continued to develop a strong arts practice. He is represented in numerous state, national, international and private collections.

Robinson is a multi-skilled contemporary artist, whose practice includes painting, printmaking, sculpture and design. The graphic style in his practice combines his Torres Strait Islander heritage with a strong passion for experimentation, both in theoretical approach and medium, as well as crossing the boundaries between reality and fantasy. The results combine styles as diverse as graffiti art through to intricate relief carvings and construction sculpture echoing images of Torres Strait cultural motifs, objects and activity. Robinson's art reflects the tropical marine environment surrounding Waiben and the inhabitants of that environment. It is an essential part of his life and culture, imbued with the customs, traditions and lifestyles of Torres Strait Island people. The animals from ancestral stories and their presence today are an integral feature of Robinson's work. The spirit and natural world are so intertwined that one influences the other, and is essential to the everyday existence of the Torres Strait Islander people, their culture and their beliefs.

Robinson's sculptural practice stems from the discipline of constructivism, a style of sculpture that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s based on carefully structured modules which allow for intricate and in some cases infinite patterns of repetition, sometimes used to create limitless, basically planar, screen-like formations, and sometimes employed to make more multidimensional structures. These designs have proved useful and attractive for use in eye-catching architectural walls and screens, often featuring complex patterns of undulating, tissue-like webbing, with apertures, which transmit and filter light, while generating delicate patterns of shadow.

His approach to printmaking in both etching and linocut is linear in composition and appearance. These prints illustrate Robinson's depth of connection to his heritage paired with his aesthetic and intellectual exploration of Western art iconography.

Robinson's work has contributed significantly to the environs of Cairns where he lives through a number of major public art installations, including the signature five stainless steel woven fish sculptures and fountain installed on the Cairns Esplanade in 2003. In September 2010 Robinson began a 12-month Artist in Residence at Djumbunji Press KickArts Fine Art Printmaking Studio located in Cairns.

### EARLY

#### DISCUSSION

What do you take fishing?  
What is on the fisherman's face?  
Why does he have a turtle shell on his head?

#### LOOKING

What fishing gear does the man have?

#### ACTIVITY

Draw yourself fishing. Include all the things you would take fishing with you.

### MIDDLE

#### DISCUSSION

Find images of Renaissance art.  
How is Robinson's work similar and how is it different?

#### LOOKING

Describe this artwork. What do you see? How is the artwork constructed? What method and materials has he used?

#### ACTIVITY

Trace around a figure from a Renaissance artwork and then add repetitive patterns to the background.

### SENIOR

#### DISCUSSION

What concepts could Robinson be exploring by combining Renaissance imagery and juxtaposing them with Islander motifs?

#### LOOKING

Robinson has used a classical pose. Research and gather together images depicting classical Renaissance body poses and hand gestures.

#### ACTIVITY

Use your research of classical poses to depict an everyday activity like riding a skateboard or texting, in order to heighten the prestige and acknowledge the skill and mastery of this activity.

## Shannon Brett



**SHANNON BRETT *Un-Titled*** Un-Titled 2011, Colour pigment photograph on paper. 82 x 65cm (From the series Celebration of a Nation), produced for NEWflames artist residency at Canopy Artspace, Cairns



**SHANNON BRETT *Mrs Jones*** 2011, Colour pigment photograph on paper. 82 x 65cm (From the series Celebration of a Nation), produced for NEWflames artist residency at Canopy Artspace, Cairns

## Shannon Brett

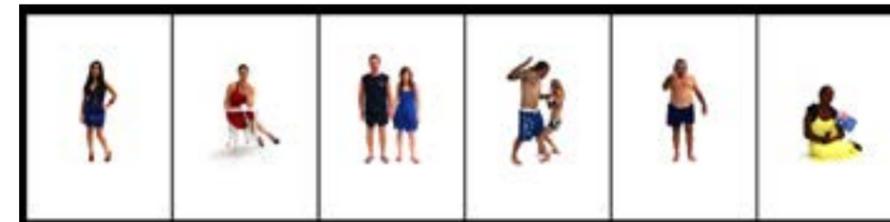


All text and images are courtesy of the artist.

Local to North Queensland, Brett is a multi-disciplinary artist, who is technically trained in fashion design, graphic and web design, music production, animation, theatre and film. Her practice has encompassed film, photography, painting, drawing and sculpture. Brett holds a Bachelor of Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art and is currently undertaking a Master of Arts Management.

### Celebration of a Nation

The six images exhibited via her recent NEWflames artist residency are a tongue in cheek gaze at society's ability to evolve and to recreate stereotypes as new culture. Each of the photographs forms a deliberately staged, cinematic scenario to illustrate these stereotypes and to reveal concerns of naivety and race-lessness. The works are purposefully emotional, forcefully creating a wondering by the onlooker. As the title of this series indicates *Celebration of a Nation* presumes the definition of the word Australian. The general consensus supplied by various dictionaries state that an Australian is either: Of or relating to Australia or its peoples, languages, or cultures. Or a member of any of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. The series provides a slap-in-the-face admittance of stereotypes who call themselves 'Australian' and seeks to reinforce respect for those who remain divided. While clearly exploring past and present events that have affected Indigenous people and culture, Brett's work engages with the universal issues of identity, power and history, transcending cultural and sequential boundaries.



**SHANNON BRETT *Celebration of a Nation*** 2011 Colour pigment photograph on paper 82 x 65cm (From the series Celebration of a Nation) produced for a artist residency at Canopy Artspace, Cairns

### EARLY

#### DISCUSSION

What is an emotion? How do we express emotions? Why is the girl with the flag sad?

#### LOOKING

Describe what you can see in each photo. What colour are the clothes? What else can you see?

#### ACTIVITY

We always say "smile" when we take a photo. Take photos of your class mates looking sad or angry or annoyed.

### MIDDLE

#### DISCUSSION

What do you think the woman at the table is thinking about?

#### LOOKING

Look at the clothes they are wearing. What could you say about these outfits?

#### ACTIVITY

Find images of stereotypes in magazines. Cut out and glue in the centre of white paper. Talk about these in class.

### SENIOR

#### DISCUSSION

How does the series title *Celebration of a Nation* play with ideas of stereotypes and being Australian?

#### LOOKING

What impact does the choice of background have on the subject matter?

#### ACTIVITY

Discuss stereotypes. Dress your friends up and photograph them in ways that either reinforce the stereotype or subvert it.

## Roderick Yunkaporta



**RODERICK YUKAPORTA** *Ku*, 2009 Natural Ochres and charcoals with acrylic binder on milkwood

**RODERICK YUKAPORTA** *Echidna* 2008 Natural Ochres and charcoals with acrylic binder on milkwood



## Roderick Yunkaporta



**Born:** 1948  
**Clan:** Mother - Apalech  
 Father - Apalech  
**Language:** Mother - Wik Mungkan  
 Father - Wik Mungkan  
**Homeland:** Mother - unknown  
 Father - Knox River  
**Totem:** Mother - unknown  
 Father - Brolga, Dog, mud shells

Roderick was born in the Presbyterian Mission of Aurukun and was separated from his family and raised in the dormitories. When he was a young man Roderick worked in labouring jobs around the State.

Carving has always been a part of Roderick's life, learning the traditional ways by watching the elders make carvings for ceremonies.

Roderick first started making his own carvings in the early 1990's and was one of the artists selected to work with Urban Art Project "Old Way - New Way", reworking the traditional ceremonial sculptures in bronze and aluminium.

Roderick has exhibited work nationally and internationally, France, Germany and the United States. His work is held in public and private collections including the National Gallery of Australia, The Brisbane Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Nick Harsch Collection and Aime Proust Collection.

### Artists Statement

"I was out there with the old people when they carving. I sat there with old people and took notice. I see all the old people to carving for the dance festival. Ready for the festival. They start teaching me. And painting it the proper way. The right paints on the carving. They told me to sit down I sit down with those old people. Don't just carve anything that doesn't belong to you. Do your own dogs or brolga my totem. And I start lean you know bit by bit each day everyday. Then I knew what to do what to carve what paints ochre. Use white paints. They even taught those other boys too."

### EARLY

#### DISCUSSION

What is a clan? What is a totem?

#### LOOKING

The colours Yunkaporta used are called 'ochres'. What colours are they? Where did he get those colours?

#### ACTIVITY

Make animals out of a clay (or dough). Use sticks, leaves and twigs for the details such as teeth, feathers, spines etc.

### MIDDLE

#### DISCUSSION

Yunkaporta was raised in a dormitory. What is a dormitory? How would your life be different if you lived in one?

#### LOOKING

Look at how Yunkaporta constructed his animals. How has he joined the materials? Where does he get his colours from?

#### ACTIVITY

Make small papier mache sculptures of dogs. Paint and create a class dog pack.

### SENIOR

#### DISCUSSION

Research the missions of Far North Queensland. Discuss the impact of this system on Aboriginal life, art and culture.

#### LOOKING

Are Roderick's animals realistic? What qualities do they possess that bring his animals to life?

#### ACTIVITY

Create sculptures of animals significant to you. Consider the qualities of the animal that you wish to highlight.

## Emily Ngarnal Evans



**EMILY NGARNAL EVANS** *Spotted Stingray* 2010, Ceramic. Courtesy the artist and Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne.



**EMILY NGARNAL EVANS** *Spotted Stingray* 2010, Synthetic polymer paint on linen ,121 x 121 cm. Courtesy the artist and Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne.

## Emily Ngarnal Evans



Photo courtesy of the artist

Born: 1975

Language: Lardil

Country: Dungurru

Emily Ngarnal Evans has lived all her life on Gununa, Mornington Island. Educated in her culture and heritage by her father, Kulthangarr Kenneth Jacobs, her grandfather, the late Lindsey Roughsey and great Uncle, the late Dick Roughsey; all senior men, accomplished artists and custodians of their traditional country on Mornington Island.

Evans spent her youth living and hunting with her parents on her traditional lands at Dungurru Outstation until she was old enough to attend school and gain a formal (western) education.

As a teenager Evans watched her parents' significant contribution in community performances and cultural ceremonies. Her mother Julianna Roughsey is a member of the Mornington Island Dance group and continues to tour. She is also a teacher of Lardil culture. Her father was one of the practicing songmen and custodians of traditional law and ceremony.

Evans father, Kenneth Jacob passed away in 2003. She began painting from traditional stories and body painting during workshops held at Mornington Island in February 2005. Her father's stories and mark making inspired her to paint. The workshops were designed for senior men of Mornington Island as a continuum of "Paint Up", a book on Mornington Island Dody Stripes and designs published in 2002, Evans asked to participate so her father's stories could also be painted. She produced a work of great detail by borrowing her father's delicate mark found inside the broad body marks of the Balibal, or spotted stingray.

Since these workshops Evans has dedicated herself to becoming a painter. Her intricate mark making abilities have developed into a language that binds her with her father's memory and represents the designs associated with the stories of the Balibal-spotted stingray and wurruku-brown shark.

This new mark, born of her father's wisdom coupled with her rich cultural heritage, has created a contemporary dialogue for her father's story. Evans work is both a personal metaphor of her everlasting relationship with her father and a contemporary expression of her traditional beliefs, culture and country.

### Artist Statement

"I've got four brothers and one sister and I'm the second eldest. We always used to go fishing and camping when I was growing up. Mum and Dad would take us out bush, out to our country. School was good when we were young, we learnt dancing in culture class and that was fun. I grew up watching old Goobala; that's short for Dick Roughsey. We used to watch him paint a lot, me, my brothers and sisters. My father used to paint and taught me a little bit. In 2003 he passed away, so that's why I started in the art centre following on from my father and keeping my family's stories alive in my painting. I like painting, it gives me peace. I've painted Balibal, the Spotted Stingray, Wurruku the Sharp Nose Brown Shark. I like to relax with painting, I enjoy the quiet time I get when I paint."

In 2005 Evans was selected as a finalist in the 22nd Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, held at the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin. This special award aims to showcase the very best Australian Indigenous art from around the country. Alcaston Gallery first exhibited Evan's work at the 2006 Melbourne Art Fair. Also in 2006 she was one of 10 finalists in the inaugural annual Xstrata Coal Emerging Indigenous Art Award, held at the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. The Xstrata Coal Emerging Indigenous Art Award Exhibition celebrates new work by emerging Indigenous Australian artists. Evans held her first solo exhibition, Balibal Country, at Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne in 2008. She has recently been featured in the All About Art Annual Collectors exhibition at Alcaston Gallery.

### EARLY

#### DISCUSSION

Where does this artist come from? What surrounds an island? What animals might you find there?

#### LOOKING

What colours has the artist used? Describe what you can see in each art work.

#### ACTIVITY

Splatter white paint onto a black background with a toothbrush. When dry, cut out the shape of an animal and create a class collage.

### MIDDLE

#### DISCUSSION

The artworks are both depicting the spotted stingray. How do they differ from each other and how are they the similar?

#### LOOKING

Look at how the shape of the painting reflects the shape of the ceramic stingray.

#### ACTIVITY

Find pictures of an animal. Create a realistic drawing of that animal and then select one feature such as fur or eyes to create an abstract work.

### SENIOR

#### DISCUSSION

Can viewers who do not have indigenous cultural knowledge fully appreciate and understand a work by an indigenous artist? How could they bridge this knowledge gap?

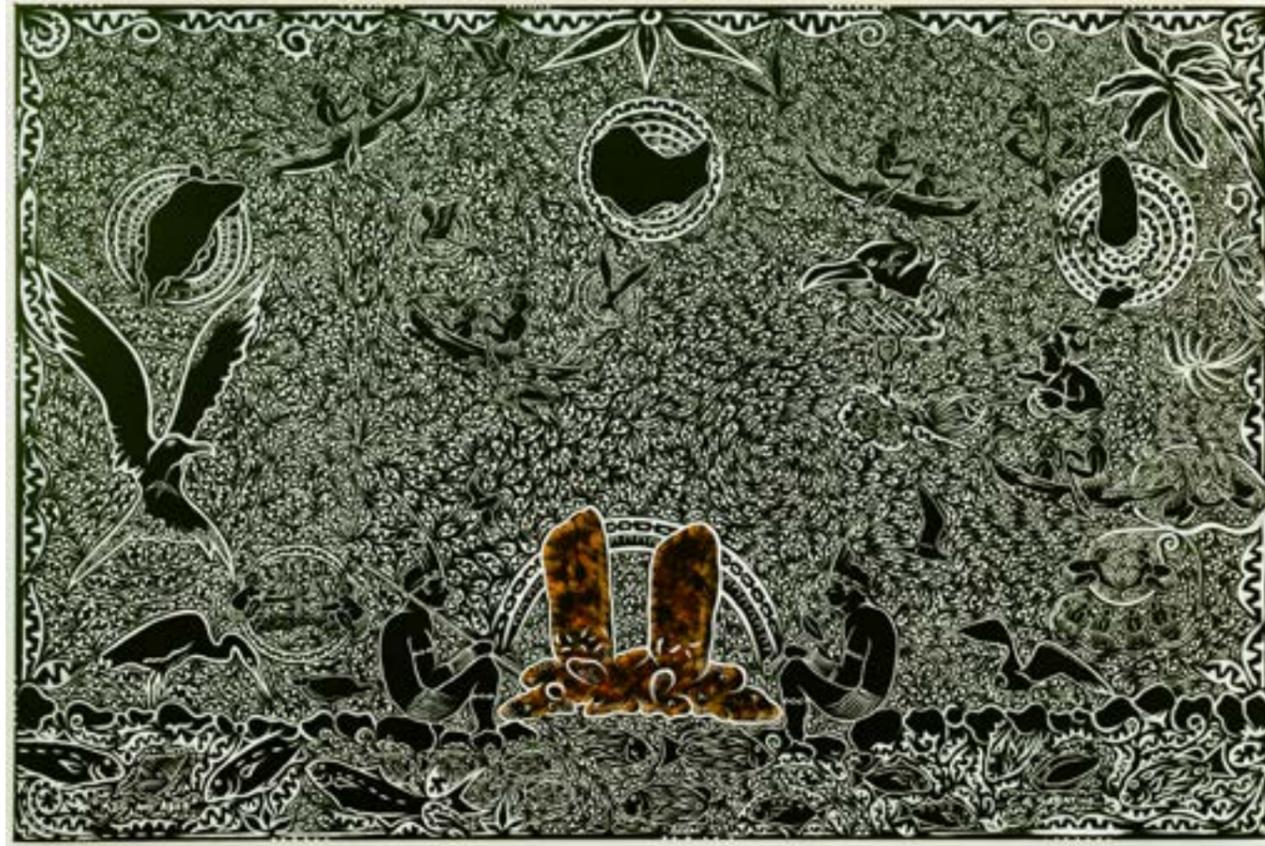
#### LOOKING

Compare and contrast these two artworks. How does the canvas still communicate her connection to her father's story?

#### ACTIVITY

Select an object of personal cultural significance and create a two dimensional and three dimensional representation of that object.

## Ceferino Garcia Sabatino



**CEFERINO GARCIA SABATINO** *Kos and Abob* 2011 Acrylic on canvas

Photo: George Serras, National Museum of Australia.

### Significant symbols of the Story:

- Islands of the Eastern Cluster – Ugar (Stephen), Erub (Darnley) and Mer (Murray)
- Kos, Abob and mother, Kudar were of Meriam descent
- Kos is sardine and Abob is blowfly
- Said – Papuan Puri Puri (Black magic) man
- Kudar – mother of Kos and Abob (a Meriam woman)
- Pekari (a young virgin girl from Las); Meriam meaning for virgin is Pakarar
- Said introduced plants to Mer: Kaplewer tree (species of palm or sago); Banana types – Neis Kerim kerim caba
- Waumer – the Frigate bird.
- Aum kep – reef between Mer and Erub
- Sirsir means glad/very happy in Meriam Mir
- Saisarem tribal clan of Erub
- Gou point – Said's fishing base. At the Gou (George) Sailor carries the name of this point. There is a rock at this location with a hole through it which Saisarem clansmen believe that Said tied his canoe there.
- Sadi – small village presently occupied by the Solomon family.
- Egru – village blo Gela, Baker, Solomon and Lui presently occupy
- Sadi is Erub pronunciation for Said
- Tag – meaning man's hand: this road construction at Ugar represent the doctrine of Kos and Abob
- Sai - Stone fish traps – traditional fishing techniques/practices [Significant land mark boundary used as traditional land boundary evidence in the Historic Mabo High Court Determination]

## Ceferino Garcia Sabatino



Born: 1975

Community: Ugar Am-Le, Ugar

Language: Meriam Mir

Lives and works: Hammond Island, TS

"I was born on Waiben (Thursday) Island in 1975. I have grown up and lived most of my life on Kiriri (Hammond) Island in the Torres Strait. I love using many different mediums, some of which include drawing, ceramics, linocuts and painting as well as hand crafts such as dhoeri making and carving. My artistic work is based mostly on the sea environment which plays an enormous part in my lifestyle and culture. I have an Associate Diploma of Art from the Thursday Island Campus of Tropical North Queensland Institution (TNQI) TAFE and a Diploma of Art from the Barrier Reef Institution of TAFE, Townsville.

I would like to share with people our culture and way of living in the Torres Strait Islands. I would also like to share my artistic skills with our youth in the Torres Strait so that our culture may be carried and preserved, especially our identity."

### Story Of Kos And Abob

*This story is told by Napau Pedro Stephen, a descendent from the Meriam Samsep, to his nephew, artist, Ceferino Garcia Sabatino. Characters and places are explained in Meriam Mir.*

This story begins with a Papuan traditional black magic man named Said who travelled throughout the Torres Strait and arrived at Mer. At Mer he planted Kaplewer tree (special type of palm from the sago family) and a banana species Neis Kerim Kerim Caba (this banana tree is able to throw 2 bunches at the same time).

One day whilst walking around, he noticed that the front village of Mer was deserted and he met a local man who told him that everyone had gone to Las (village at the back of the island) to witness the 'asking' of a young Las virgin girl named Pekari (Pakarar means virgin).

Said went with the local Mer man to Las. On the way they challenged each other's magic to win the young virgin from Las. Said's magic was too strong for the Mer man and he won Pekari. He spent the night with Pekari and the next morning decided to leave for Erub because Pekari was only another trophy for Said's magic.

As Said a descendent from the Meriam Samsep was about to leave Mer he saw a woman fishing off the reef named Kudar, she was the mother of Kos and Abob. Said grabbed Kudar and took her to Erub with him. Kos and Abob quickly learnt of their mother's abduction whilst building Sai (traditional fish traps) at Dauar and they pursued Said in their canoe. When Said saw Kos and Abob approaching he pulled out a Waumer (frigate bird) feather from his magic woven bag, stuck it in his hair, turned into a Waumer bird and flew with Kudar in his carry basket to Erub.

Kos and Abob had magical powers as well and were catching up with Said. Kudar peered through a hole in Said's woven basket and saw her sons. She decided to escape from Said and fell through the hole she made in his basket, landing in the sea. The location where she landed between Mer and Erub, became a reef called Aum Kep.

Said arrived at a place on Erub called Sirsir (means glad/ very happy), because he thought he had escaped Kos and Abob. The Saisarem clansman of Erub met Said and accepted him into their tribe. Said lived at a place called Sadi, which was named after him. Sadi is next to Egru village. Said used Gou point as his fishing base.

When Said learnt that Kos and Abob arrived at Erub he then fled to Ugar from Gou point, so the two sons followed him to Ugar. But before they could catch him on Ugar Said flew back to Papua New Guinea. Because Papua New Guinea was a taboo or sacred land the brothers remained on Ugar.

During their stay on Ugar they built the fish traps around the island as well a road along the beach front at Tag (man's hand). At the end of the road Kos and Abob placed two stones which are named after them to this day. After completing their work on Ugar they returned to Mer via Erub building the fish traps around both islands. These Sai fish traps are visible on the islands of Ugar, Erub and Mer to this day.

The fish traps on Mer were physical traditional land mark boundaries which were used as land ownership evidence in the 1992 Historic Australian Mabo High Court Native Title Decision for the people of Mer Island. This High Court decision set an unprecedented indigenous land claim for Traditional Owners both nationally and internationally.

### EARLY

#### DISCUSSION

Do you like reading and listening to stories or looking at pictures that tell the story?

#### LOOKING

What animals and people can you see in this art work?

#### ACTIVITY

Choose your favourite story and draw the whole story on one page.

### MIDDLE

#### DISCUSSION

Read the story of Kos and Abob. Discuss what is different from other stories you may be familiar with.

#### LOOKING

Can you recognise all the aspects of the story in Sabatino's art work? Look for parts of the story as you read.

#### ACTIVITY

Choose a story from your cultural background and create a black pen drawing that includes all the elements of that story.

### SENIOR

#### DISCUSSION

Discuss the significance of the story in the Mabo case. How does the story help overturn the notion of Australia as "Terra Nullius"?

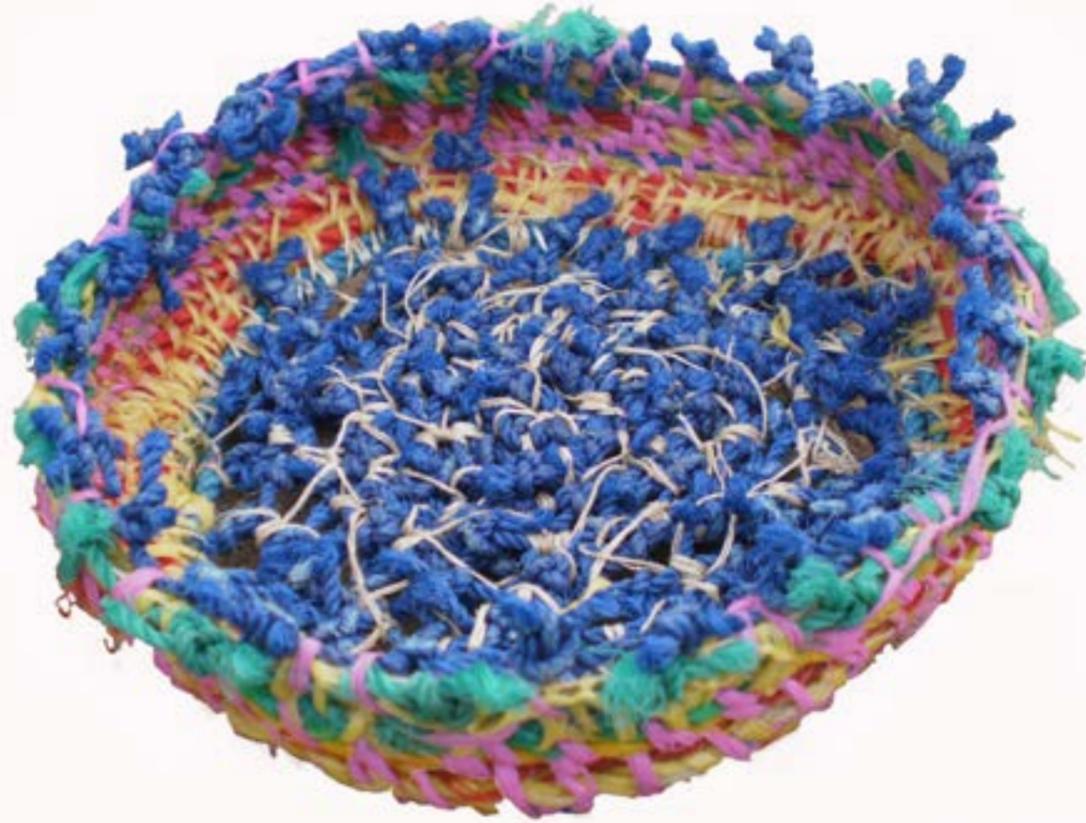
#### LOOKING

Look at how the story is composed visually. How are elements of the story placed? What information does the background hold?

#### ACTIVITY

This artwork could be seen as a map of family connections. Create your own family and friend map that symbolically tells of those connections.

## Angela Mahnah Torenbeek



**ANGELA MAHNAH TORENBEEK** Basket 2010, Ghost net, baling twine. Image courtesy of Sue Ryan.



**GHOST NET PROJECT, MUA ISLAND** 2010. Image courtesy of Dujion Newie.

## Angela Mahnah Torenbeek



Born: 1942

St Pauls, Mua Island, Torres Strait

Lives & works: St Pauls Community

"I was born on St Pauls, my Dad came from Poid at the back of Kubin but his father came from Niue in the South Pacific. My mother was a woman from Erub (Darnley) and her Dad came from Oveau in the New Hebrides.

St Paul's was settled predominately by South Pacific Islanders, my Dad came to St Pauls for a census of South Sea Islanders in the Torres Strait, my Mother came because her family was here.

Text and images are courtesy of the artist and Sue Ryan

I was born and raised on St Pauls, I had 7 brothers and sisters, our life was tough because we had to survive from day to day, no hot water. We started having our baths in the creek. We had no fridge or electricity, we fished everyday for food and grew food by the seasons, hauling water for the gardens.

I was 14 before I left, and we went to Thursday Island for the week. We went because I was in the choir. My mum had to cut my hair because I hadn't brushed it for ages. I thought T.I. was deadly, it had 4 or 5 cars and a couple of taxis, everybody used to walk. It was my first time to see shops, I didn't like icecream it was too cold.

My Mum used to weave, to maintain the houses which were woven coconut. I learnt from watching, sitting next to her and copying. When we had sports at school we used to weave balls to play with. I had to make my own baskets when I started fishing. The baskets were for food and for bringing home the fish.

I am one of the only women left on St Pauls who knows how to make our traditional baskets.

I see turtle caught in the nets when I go out in the dinghy. These are big turtles, not little ones, they need to come up for air and when they are caught in the nets they drown. Before we never had nets now I see many drowned turtles, if this many turtles drown just in my patch of sea how many are drowning everywhere else? I've seen sharks tangled in nets underwater. The turtles are attracted to small fish that hang around the nets, when the turtles get caught and drown they are washed up onto dry reefs.

I would like to know why the nets are floating around our sea? Are they washed over from other ships or is it rough weather that makes the nets come loose?

It is good that the things made from ghost nets are being exhibited. It will make people aware of what is happening in the oceans." (Angela Mahnah Torenbeek)

One of Torenbeek's ghost net baskets has recently been exhibited and purchased by the British Museum.

Follow the link to a ghost net puppet show made on Mua Island by the school students and community <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8F-jKlEvUw>

"Ghost nets are fishing nets which are accidentally lost, abandoned, or discarded at sea. They travel the oceans carried by currents and tides, fishing continuously as they go. They're called ghost nets because it is as if they fish from unseen hands. They entangle many types of marine life and fish until eventually they are washed up. They can lodge on the reef which kills the coral and other lifeforms. Sometimes when they wash up, a big tide picks them up and carries them back out to sea, and off they go again. Ghost nets are a huge problem across the top end of Australia and in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Not only do they have a devastating affect on marine life but they also affect Indigenous communities. The ocean is intrinsically and directly linked to the lives and culture of these communities; the saltwater people."

"Formerly known as the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme, GhostNets Australia is an alliance of 22 indigenous communities from coastal northern Australia across the three states of Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland."

Sue Ryan, Artistic Director for the GhostNets Australia <http://carightway.ning.com/> [http://www.craftaustralia.org.au/library/review.php?id=ghost\\_nets](http://www.craftaustralia.org.au/library/review.php?id=ghost_nets) (accessed 4 August 2011)

### EARLY

#### DISCUSSION

Brainstorm all the different things you could make out of ghost nets.

#### LOOKING

How has the artist made the basket? She has used baling twine to join the nets. Look at the knots she has used.

#### ACTIVITY

Cut out the shape of a sea animal. Use string to glue down in repetitive lines to create patterns and detail.

### MIDDLE

#### DISCUSSION

What rubbish is destroying your environment? Where does it come from and what creative solution can you think of to use it?

#### LOOKING

Look at the basket carefully. How do you think it was constructed? How long do you think it would take to make a basket like this?

#### ACTIVITY

Collect odd shoelaces, bits of string and ribbons or visit the beach to look for nets to make your own sculptures.

### SENIOR

#### DISCUSSION

What are the differences between art and craft and are these distinctions valid in a contemporary setting?

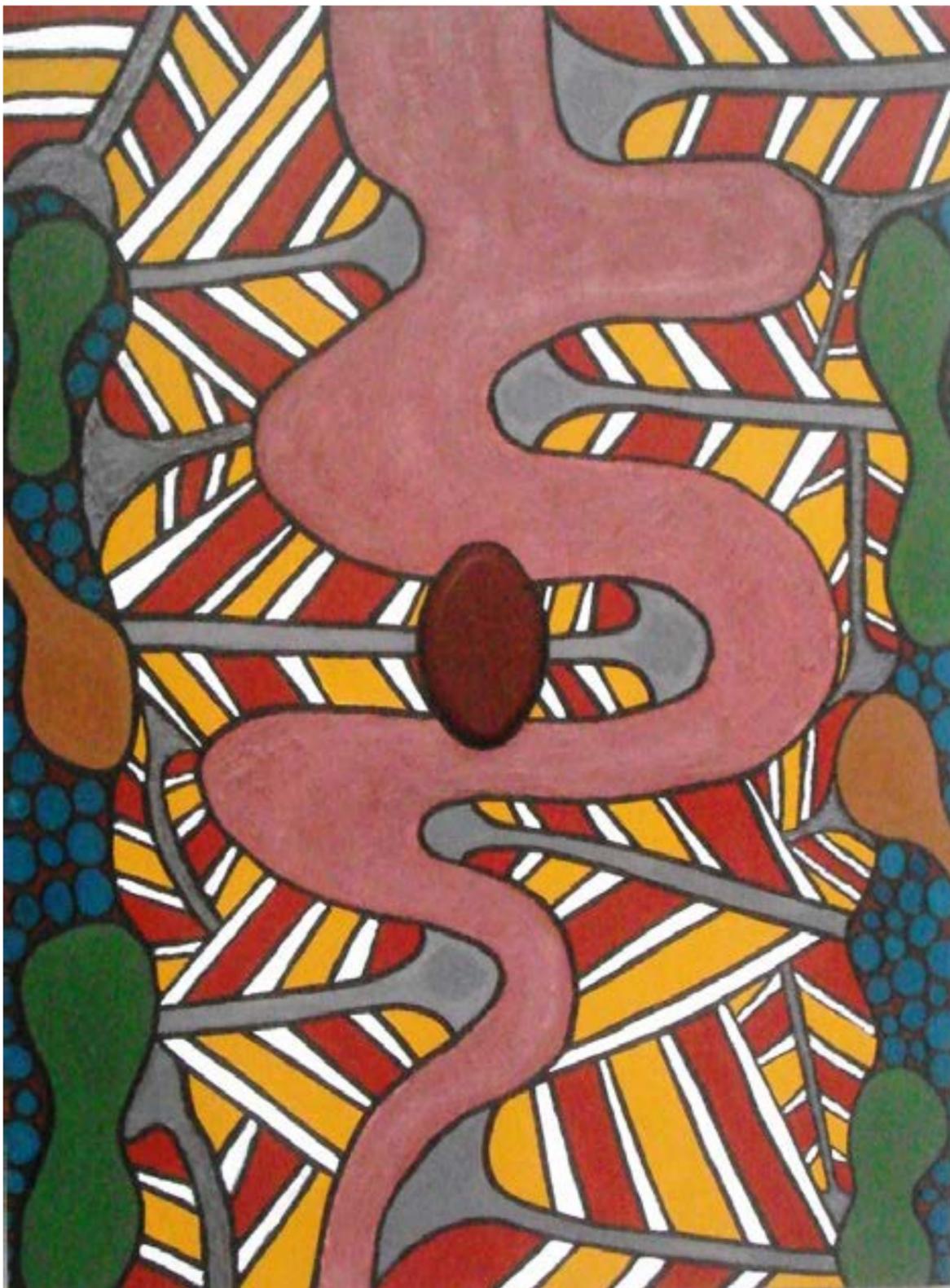
#### LOOKING

Consider what skills and artistic choices the artist has made to create the basket.

#### ACTIVITY

Create art works or craft objects out of discarded waste that you find around your school or home.

## Napolean Oui



**NAPOLEAN OUI** Yaln.giri (Crystal Cascades) 2011, Acrylic on canvas.

## Napolean Oui



All text and images are courtesy of the artist.

Born: 1972

Country: Djabuganydji

Language: Djabugay

Napolean Oui's country is Djabugay and his traditional name is Weika (quiet one). He has worked for over 14 years as a senior cultural performer, presenter, tour guide and educator at Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park in Cairns.

"It is my strong connection to the traditional culture that inspires my paintings." he says.

Through his art, Oui explores his connection to the rainforest and his culture. The paintings on canvas evoke, in an abstract style, art found on the ancient traditional rainforest shields. These shields are the largest found in Australia and traditionally provided a wide, flat 'canvas' for designs that were unique to the different groups. Historically the shields were valuable possessions and traded throughout the region. The art incorporates bold stylised shapes, strong ochre colours such as white, red and yellow with highlighted black outlines creating a style that is found only in the rainforest region of Far North Queensland. The shield designs are a direct inspiration for Oui's contemporary interpretations onto canvas.

Since his initial solo exhibition with UMI Arts in 2008 Oui has gone on to do a further six group and four solo exhibitions, in addition he has been selected into two artist in residency projects and a print workshop. Oui has also received a number of grants and commissions. In brief, Oui has come a long way in a short time and he is proving himself as one of the emerging artists practicing in the unique rainforest art movement.

### About Yaln.giri (Crystal Cascades)

Oui created this artwork reflecting the unique rainforest art style of his Far North Queensland ancestors. It depicts the Crystal Cascades (Yaln.giri) which are not only culturally significant to all Djabugay people, but also holds a very special personal connection to Oui as this was his grandmother's birthplace. His grandmother, whose birth name was Ngyul meaning *only one*, was born on the banks of the Crystal Cascades just metres away from the waterfall. Blue quondong, blackbean and fish are significant food sources from this area. These are represented in the painting. The fire sticks represent the camps and the people along the river.

### EARLY

#### DISCUSSION

What do you think the shields were used for?

#### LOOKING

What do you see when you look at the painting *Yaln.giri*?

#### ACTIVITY

Draw your backyard using a thick black outline and the three colours yellow, red and white.

### MIDDLE

#### DISCUSSION

How is Oui's style different from other forms of Aboriginal art that you know of?

#### LOOKING

When looking at Oui's work can you recognise elements of the landscape?

#### ACTIVITY

Create a weapon that will mesmerise your enemy with it's design.

### SENIOR

#### DISCUSSION

Discuss Oui's stylised designs and colour and how it relates to his rainforest environment. What elements create visual appeal?

#### LOOKING

Look at the way *Yaln.giri* is composed. What considerations has Oui made in regards to composition?

#### ACTIVITY

Design a repetitive leaf motif based on the rainforest. Use bold, stylised shapes, deep colours and black outlines.



CAIRNS  
INDIGENOUS  
ART FAIR  
2011



## What is REACH?

### Regional Excellence in Arts and Culture Hubs

REACH is an Arts (all strands: Visual Arts, Drama, Dance, Music and Media) strategy being implemented by Education Queensland to connect and bring together people at primary and secondary schools all over FNQ (local, rural and remote) to:

- **Improve** Arts teacher practice by identifying existing strengths and skills and sharing these curriculum and classroom practices
- **Identify** talented Arts students and improve their learning and career pathways
- **Develop** and run school-based excellence courses for students using Artists in Residence
- **Exhibit** and celebrate successful outcomes of Arts students
- **Build** up a range of resources to support practical implementation of Arts in schools throughout FNQ.

### The REACH Goal

Focus on improving consistency, balance and excellence in Arts Education delivery to Indigenous students, non-Indigenous students and teachers including all phases of learning in rural and remote contexts.

Resource:  
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[www.reacharts.com.au](http://www.reacharts.com.au)

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### Notes on the publication

The spelling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait words and names varies. They generally appear in the text according to the artists' text or the conventions of accepted usage. In most instances, artists' birth, language groups, clans and information has been supplied by the artists or their representative organisation.