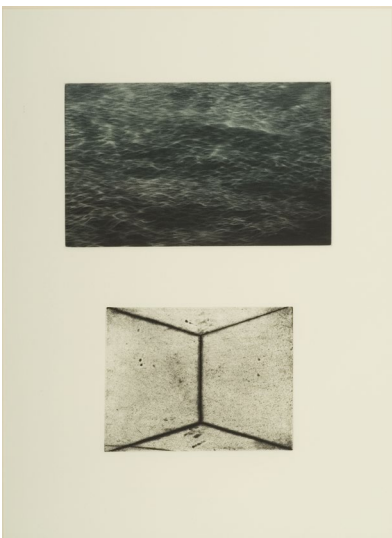


In Print: Charles Darwin University Art Collection





The story of prints is not ... that of a minor art form but that of a most powerful method of communication ... far from being merely minor works of art, prints are among the most important and powerful tools of modern life and thought.¹

Drawn from Charles Darwin University's permanent art collection, *In Print* traces a pictorial journey on paper through contemporary Northern Australia that first began in the nineteenth century. Advances in reproductive technologies and the advent of photography² coinciding with the settlement of the north coast, enabled the earliest visual renditions of a new land – its flora, fauna and peoples – to be captured and widely disseminated. Printed multiples, bound or loose, served many purposes as a means of mass-communication, ranging from mere entertainment to deliberate propaganda. Whether as pictorial narratives or decorated maps in illustrated atlases, visual supplements in explorers' journals and adventurers' diaries, engraved and coloured landscape and subject studies based on travelling artists' sketchbooks, scientific reproductions in naturalists' publications, individual art works collected by print connoisseurs and bibliophiles, or as a source of information in newspapers and posters, the graphic arts have contributed to the creation of a paper-based, visual iconography of the region. The Northern Territory – its land and Indigenous people – was first encountered by the vast majority of Europeans and Euro-Australians through word and image: *in print*.

Northern Territory art history is foremost a paper chase, one that begins in the pictorial and manuscript collections of libraries and archives rather than art galleries, located in Australia and throughout the world. There, a significant body of prints, as well as drawings, watercolours and photographs, generally considered of lesser importance than “finished” paintings, tells a significant story of its own that has shaped both our perceptions and expectations of the Far North. A transformation and recirculation of printed images – a journey from archive to art – has been as much the result of recent scholarly and art historical interest, as the steady introduction and expansion of practice-based printmaking itself – most notably in the late twentieth century, via printed images created on site in the Territory by resident and visiting artists and printers.

In Australia, as in the USA, Art Schools and Fine Arts Departments within tertiary institutions of learning have been the nurseries for a print workshop tradition since the 1950s, when the arrival of experienced European immigrant artist-printmakers also nurtured its development. Offering tuition, technical advice, special equipment and importantly, the expert guidance of a master printer, Art School print workshops have also been natural sites for artists' residencies (or long-term residence³), from time to time offering “open access” opportunities for visiting artists.

Printmaking is valued by artists who work principally in other media for its ability to provide “new insights into a known

Top: Ardiyanto Pranata, *Jendela dalam* 1997, lithograph, AP, 33 x 24.5cm [image], gifted by the artist & NTU Print Workshop, 1997; CDU Art Collection – NTU474

Centre: Eubena Nampitjin, *Winginba* 2002, etching with chine collé, WP edn 25, 48.5 x 24.5cm [image], gifted by the artist & Northern Editions Printmaking Workshop, 2002; CDU Art Collection – NTU1024

Bottom: Dian Darmansjah, *The Memory of Turbulence, East* 2004, mezzotint & drypoint etching, edn 1/4, 13 x 20cm [top image] & 11 x 14.5cm [bottom image], gifted by the artist, 2004; CDU Art Collection – NTU1076

practice”, testing different sensibilities, technical skills and creative adaptability. By nature of its alchemical processes and transformative properties, it may also lead to unexpected results. The shift into printmaking from other media entails “a degree of reinvention”, or the artist must already have developed a pictorial vocabulary that lends itself to certain “forms – such as dots, lines or contrasts” – which translate readily into “graphic simplification”. It is little wonder then that it has been observed that Aboriginal artists from remote communities have an affinity with the print medium.⁴ A social space where the co-operative efforts of many people are required, a print workshop can offer respite from the isolation of the studio for non-Indigenous artists, or replicate extended family or community networks for Indigenous artists. Moreover, the workshop can operate as “an ideas bank”, where the “relationship between an artist and an artist-printmaker is a mixture of tact, diplomacy, friendship – sometimes war and sometimes almost a love affair”.⁵

The creation of a university in the Northern Territory in 1989 mirrored the contemporary evolution of printmaking in the region and a growing appreciation of the graphic arts, fostered by the Art School’s teaching and exchange programs in the 1980s, and reflected in the first acquisitions of limited edition prints for what would become a University Art Collection. Established in the 1980s as an Art School teaching collection⁶ within the Darwin Community College (later the Darwin Institute of Technology), the Art Collection was managed by a Committee steered for more than two decades by Emeritus Chancellor Nan Giese.

The first vigorous period of collecting (1980-85) included acquisitions of prints by contemporary Australian artists such as Colin Lanceley, Roger Kemp, Jan Senbergs, Bea Maddock, John Cattapan, Sydney Ball, Alun Leach-Jones, Sandra Leveson and Robert Jacks, as well as eleven screenprint posters from Lucifoil Poster Collective (Tin Sheds Workshop) at Sydney University and Redback Graphix at Wollongong University. Significantly, they included Avril Quail’s now classic political poster of the era, *Trespassers Keep Out!* 1983: the first work by an Indigenous artist to enter the Art Collection in 1983.

A decade later, the Art School itself became the site for the production of prints by North Australian Indigenous artists, with the establishment of purpose-built printmaking facilities in April 1993. Its opening coincided with a significant conference held on campus entitled *Getting into Prints: A Symposium on Aboriginal Printmaking*, held during the International Year for the World’s Indigenous People and convened by the School with the Association of Northern and Central Australian Aboriginal Artists (now ANKAAA). The year was a turning point for Indigenous printmaking in Australia, in particular for artists from remote areas, whose involvement had been stimulated during the late 1970s and 1980s by visiting printmakers from the eastern seaboard and short-term residencies at other universities in southern states or metropolitan commercial print studios.

Between 1993 and 1996, the University Art School’s NTU Print Workshop (NTUPW) was founded and run by Lecturer in Remote Area Printmaking Leon Stainer, in collaboration with local artist-printers Franck Gohier and George Watts. Under Stainer’s stewardship, the NTUPW produced approximately 100 prints (stone and offset lithographs, etchings and linocuts) by artists from Munupi Art Centre (Melville Island), Ernabella Arts (SA), Tiwi Design (Bathurst Island), Injalak Arts and Crafts (Gunbalanya) and the East Kimberley (represented by Waringarri Arts in Kununurra, WA). A broad selection of these prints, many exhibited together here for the first time in almost a decade and a half,⁷ testify to the energy and immediacy of a period when two distinct aesthetic and artistic traditions – one Aboriginal, the other European in origin – met in concerted action and application in Northern Australia as a continuous activity, under the auspices of the University. Several prints by Stainer and Gohier – the former continuing his printmaking role today as an Art School lecturer, the latter as founder of the independent print and poster enterprise in Darwin, Red Hand Print Studio (1997-2002) and as a practising artist in the Northern Territory – are also included in this exhibition, alongside Aboriginal prints. Through the work of Darwin-based “alternative printmakers” such as Gohier, along with others including Chips Mackinolty and Therese Ritchie before him, two printmaking histories – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – may be understood as related rather than isolated phenomena.⁸

The University’s interest in Aboriginal printmaking from remote communities in fact predated the birth of the NTUPW. In 1992, the Art School mounted an exhibition of lithographs, linocuts and screenprints at the then NTU Gallery, featuring the work of renowned Bula’bula Aboriginal Corporation artists David Malangi, Charlie Djurritjini and Paddy Dhätangu, who had collaborated with visiting master printmaker Theo Tremblay. Two lithographs – Malangi’s *Ngatili – Black Cockatoos* 1990 and Djurritjini’s *Yolngu Houses* 1991 – both displayed in this exhibition, were subsequently acquired for the University Art Collection, purchased from the *New tracks old land: contemporary prints from Aboriginal Australia* exhibition, held at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory the following year.

According to Ian McLean, the founding of the NTUPW was a significant event in two ways. It reaffirmed the University's commitment to play an active, facilitative role in the Aboriginal art scene and in the reception of Aboriginal culture. It was also a turning point for two key visual art entities on campus, as "for the first time a direct link was established between the Art School, the Art Collection and the production of contemporary art ... of national and international impact".⁹ By this McLean referred to the three-way agreement that had been brokered in 1993, between the artists, the University's printmaking workshop, and the Art Collection, whereby a Workshop Proof of editioned prints be gifted to the University Art Collection on an on-going basis – a pact of joint benefaction and automatic acquisition that continues to this day.

A selection of prints in this exhibition, marking the second stage of printmaking at the University, dates to the period 1996-2002. In 1997 the NTUPW – still an entity within the Art School – was renamed Northern Editions Printmaking Workshop, under the stewardship of master printer, Editioning Manager and Art School Lecturer in Printmaking,¹⁰ Basil Hall. The staging of the *Kaltja Business* Conference by the Art School in August 1996, also proved a major catalyst in the expansion of printmaking in Indigenous communities in Northern Australia, attracting 83 artists from Aboriginal art centres in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, as well as more than 200 art world luminaries, gallery dealers, collectors and visitors. Hall and Stainer worked with 45 artists in five days, producing 60 aquatints, linocuts, lithographs, etchings and drypoints – including the exquisite suite of prints by artists from Fitzroy Crossing displayed in this exhibition – that have yet to be surpassed in strength of line and expressive purpose.

A broad selection of works, drawn from approximately 600 prints created during this buoyant period of activity until 2002, gifted as Workshop Proofs to the University Art Collection, are included in *In Print*. Culminating in the production of the monumental *Yuendumu Doors* 2000-2001, winner of the Works on Paper category of the 18th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2001, they confirmed Northern Editions' status as not only the longest running, but the largest, printmaking enterprise in Northern Australia. It was during this period the Art Collection was gifted its first graphic works by Southeast Asian artists and the Print Workshop following the Australasian Print Project in 1997 ("The Meeting of the Waters"), reflecting the University's community engagement objectives, its unique location in Northern Australia and on the lower rim of the Southeast Asian archipelago.

Shifts in Northern Editions' position within the University's organisational structure, its separation from the Art School and the creation of a retail gallery space, have marked the third phase of its evolution. From 2002 onwards, new Workshop Managers and printers, along with Stainer and other Art School staff, have continued to collaborate with and edition work by a range of the region's artists, including Indigenous artists from the first art centres to participate in printmaking ventures through the University in the early 1990s.¹¹ Gifted prints have continued to expand and enhance the Art Collection's holdings, as works on paper



Top: Neridah Stockley, *N'Dhala Gorge II* 2009, drypoint etching, edn 1/1 3rd State, 20 x 14.5cm [image], gifted by the artist, 2009; CDU Art Collection – CDU1818

Centre: Eubena Nampitjin, *Untitled* 2002, etching, WP edn 25, 49.5 x 36.5cm [image], gifted by the artist & Northern Editions Printmaking Workshop, 2002; CDU Art Collection – NTU1025

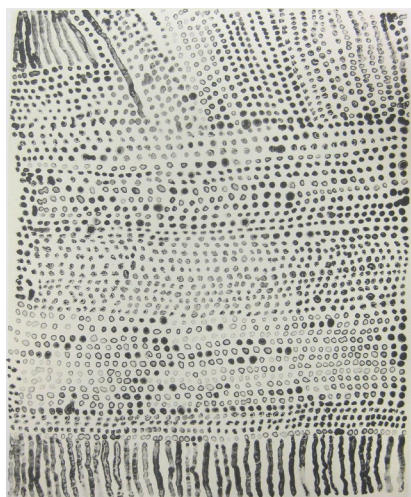
Bottom: Wayne Eager, *Build Up* 2007, lithograph & chine collé, WP edn 25, 50 x 36cm [image], gifted by the artist & Northern Editions, 2007; CDU Art Collection – CDU1557

by contemporary established and emerging artists inspired by, or with a connection to the region – a requirement of the Collection’s acquisition criteria. Acquisitions by purchase or gift of prints produced by other printmaking studios or local and visiting artist-printers have also been possible through the CDU Foundation, the University and individual benefaction. They have substantively and significantly enriched the Collection. More than half its holdings, approaching 2000 items, comprise graphic work relating to Northern Australia.

In 2009, with the opening of the new CDU Art Gallery, it has become possible for the first time to exhibit the University Art Collection’s limited edition prints in depth, and in a curatorially focused and systematic manner. *In Print* marks the first major survey show of many of the University’s historically and aesthetically significant works, collapsing the cartographic lines that divide the northern perimeter of the continent and acknowledging the unity of Northern Australia as a coastal and regional entity – visually and culturally. This exhibition amply demonstrates how Indigenous printmaking – rather than Indigenous people as the subjects of printed images – has developed and continued to flourish, representing a most vigorous facet of contemporary printmaking in Australia.¹² An art historical account of the collective legacy of printed images from the nineteenth century to the present, created by Indigenous, non-Indigenous and Southeast Asian artists inspired by or with a connection to the Far North, is yet to be written. In the interim, suffice to say that their visual power testifies to regional Australia’s ability to continue “to shape the aesthetic appreciation of our land” and “give us our historical memory, shape our ideology and our identity”.¹³

Anita Angel

Curator, Charles Darwin University Art Collection and Art Gallery
25 October 2010



Kitty Kantilla, *Untitled 2003-9*, lithograph, edn 3/30, 33 x 27cm [image], gifted by the CDU Foundation to the CDU Art Collection, 2010 – CDU1838



Peter Nabarlambarl, *Mimi spirit hunting Ngurrudu (Emu) 1998*, lithograph, WP edn 60, 43 x 43.5cm [image], gifted by the artist & Northern Editions Printmaking Workshop, 1999 – NTU555

- ¹ William M. Ivins Jnr (Emeritus Curator of Prints, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), *Prints and Visual Communication*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1953, pp.3 & 158.
- ² In the late 19th century, the introduction of photography in fact freed printmaking (such as the medium of lithography) from its purely reproductive role in the commercial sphere, where it was used for creating publishable copies of original art works in the mass-market. Photographic images proliferated from first settlement in the Northern Territory, at Port Darwin in 1869 and earlier.
- ³ For instance at The Tin Sheds, University of Sydney, where several Earthworks Poster Collective printmakers and arts workers squatted during the 1970s.
- ⁴ See: Adam Geczy, “Paper, paper everywhere, but prints don’t pack the power”, *The Australian*, 17 February 2004, p.10.
- ⁵ John Wolsley quoted in: Cathy Pryor, “Studio collaborations”, *The Australian*, Arts – 27 January 2004, p.13.
- ⁶ The first work acquired was by gift – a screenprint by David Middlebrook, a visiting American ceramicist and an original member of the Print Council of Australia, entitled *Study for a Good Morning* 1980.
- ⁷ The ArtbackNETS (now Artback NT) touring exhibition, *Printabout* (1996), was the first time prints from the University Art Collection, produced by the NTUPW, were seen together as a collection. It was also the first exhibition of Indigenous art produced in the NT (but including WA and SA artists) curated and toured by Artback.
- ⁸ In 1993 at the *Getting into Prints* symposium Roger Butler cautioned that political poster-making and its makers cannot be separated historically from the evolution of Indigenous prints. The latter should not be considered in isolation.
- ⁹ I. McLean, “The importance of university art collections”, *Art Monthly Australia*, No.119 (May), 1999, pp.22-23 at 23; *Art and Place: collecting contemporary art at the Northern Territory University*, Green Ant Research, Arts & Publishing, Darwin, 1999, pp.12-13.
- ¹⁰ Basil Hall has also referred to this role as “Lecturer in charge of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Printmaking Workshop” (1996-99).
- ¹¹ And see: A. Angel, “Frontier Collecting in the Twenty First Century: the Charles Darwin University Art Collection in Australia’s Northern Territory” in: B. Reid (ed), *Collectors & Museums: Two Centuries of Collecting in the Northern Territory*, Historical Society of the NT, Darwin, 2009, Chapter 3.
- ¹² Kirsty Grant (Curator, Prints and Drawings), *Proof: Contemporary Australian Printmaking* (room brochure), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2006, p.6.
- ¹³ Rupert Myer, “A Fount of Ideas: Regional Australia’s Turn”: Inaugural Fairley Lecture, La Trobe University, Shepparton, 15 July 2010, <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/shepparton/events/public-lectures> p. 7.



Above: Pinaree Sanpitak, *Womanly Body* 1999, lithograph & chine collé, WP edn 15, 41 x 38.5cm [image], gifted by the artist & Northern Editions Printmaking Workshop, 1999; CDU Art Collection – NTU773

Front: Lena Kuriniya, *Leaping Mimih* 2001, etching, WP edn 30, 49 x 24cm [image], gifted by the artist & Northern Editions Printmaking Workshop, 2002; CDU Art Collection – NTU951



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