

What led you to get involved with textiles, and especially printmaking?

I was teaching creative writing to Indigenous students at the Yurauna Centre, CIT, and some of them were also doing Indigenous Arts and Fashion Design - work to absolutely die for! So, having been an artist in another life, before writing, I decided I wanted to do that, too. I did the Cert IV in the same course the following year and have been addicted to textiles ever since.

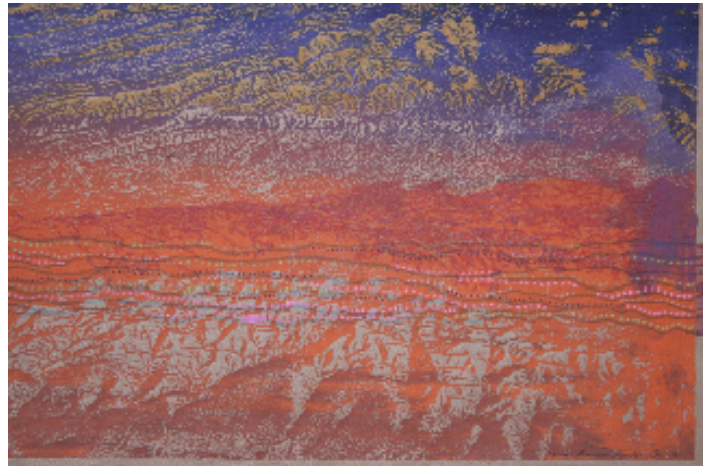
Your combination of printmaking and poetry seems an unlikely, but very interesting combination. How did this come about?

I am also a poet, writer and editor. It seemed very natural to bring the poetry into screen-printing and textiles, both are about giving extra-ordinary expression to the ordinary in our lives, things we take for granted. And both artistic forms of expression capture the most immediate, non-accessible or evasive, 'undistilled' of human responses. There is also something very seductive in reading and inscribing one's country, heritage, stories, thoughts in the parallels between the weaves and textures of land, life, words and textiles.

Where does your inspiration for subject come from? Does your indigenous background play an important role in your artworks?

My Arrernte cultural heritage is a large part of where my work comes from, my grandmother's and father's traditional countries in Central Australia, the land itself, the spiritual dimensions of belonging to, and being an expression of, place, tradition and heritage.

Much of it also comes from the experiences of being a contemporary urban Aboriginal woman, my role as daughter, granddaughter, mother and grandmother, my responsibilities to clan and extended family, and to the social justice dimensions of being all of those.



'Too Sacred to Radio-Active Waste', screen-printed aerial photograph of Arabana Country, far north South Australia, pigment inks, acrylics, text, on textured fabric, 2008

Apart from textile artworks, do you work in other mediums?

I am also a printmaker, working in screen-printing, relief printing and etching, as well as a photographer and glass artist. Just as in Indigenous ways of being and seeing, there are no separations between ancestors, human and animal life, and the natural environment - we are all part of one interconnected belonging, there are no separations between artistic mediums for me. I use screen-printing, etching, prose-poetry and painting in my glass works, photographic images in printmaking and glass, and combine textiles with all of them. I have also begun 'weaving country', combining found object with yarns, flame-worked glass beads, and fabrics to weave expressions of traditional lands inspired by my aerial photography.

Jenni Kemarre Martiniello, January 2009
Interviewed by Beverley Hocking - TAG Team