



# Botánica 2

**3 July – 27 July**

Presented by Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre

[www.gyracc.org.au](http://www.gyracc.org.au)

Image: Winsome Jobling, *Primordial*, 2011. Two plate mono print drypoint on Thai Sa paper, chine-collé onto blue abaca and cotton backing. Image courtesy of Nomad Art, Darwin.

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Wendy Daylight  
Bush Tucker and Mangarrayi plants, (from field trips 2010–2012)  
Acrylic on canvas

*Botanica 2* showcases work by a selection of emerging and established Northern Territory artists from Darwin, Alice Springs and the wider Katherine region. The exhibition presents the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women artists whose imagery focuses on plant forms, native flora and their immediate environment. *Botanica*, in its first iteration, was shown at Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre in April–May 2014. That exhibition featured 19 artists who used a range of materials, including printmaking, painting, watercolour, ceramics and sculpture to investigate the botanical world.

The exhibition took a broad interpretation of the term 'botanical', which usually refers to the close study of plants and flowers. In visual art botanical drawing refers to the art of depicting the form, colour and details of plant species in a descriptive, almost scientific context. Only the work of Ann Hand, a Katherine-based artist, could be truly viewed in this light. The work of the other artists in *Botanica* is not illustrative in any descriptive sense but rather can be seen as using the motifs of plants and flora to reflect the artists' personal concerns and relationships to their environment. Alice Springs-based artist Marina Strocchi's paintings are highly narrative and deploy symbols as a personal language, often filling the entire space with reiterated motifs of plant forms and other imagery. Neridah Stockley's minimally formal and impressionistic renderings of Kurrajong pods, are almost the

opposite of botanical drawings. They convey the artist's interest in plant forms as motifs for expression rather than descriptive observation.

Pip McManus' leaf-etched earthenware hands are individual components of a larger work, *The Poisoned Well*, which was first exhibited in 1999. That work comprised one hundred ceramic hands, which as a whole, acted as a memorial to and record of one hundred twentieth century genocides. In *Botanica* the work is re-imagined as a forest comprising twenty hands. This edited version, serene and formally beautiful, still carries echoes of the ideas behind the original installation – that humans, like a multitude of plant species – exist in an often dangerous and uncertain environment.

Darwin based paper-maker, printmaker and sculptor, Winsome Jobling creates works with a



Pip McManus  
*a forest*, 1999  
ceramic

strong environmental sensibility. Jobling makes the paper she prints on from plant fibres. Her works in *Botanica* are drawn from the exhibition *Mesozoic – The Age of the Cycads* shown at Nomad Art in 2011. Cycads are the world's oldest living seed plants and are often seen as iconic symbols of the Top End landscape. The works here are one-off prints on papers made from plants 'pigmented with bush charcoal and phosphorescent materials, alluding to the effects of fire'.<sup>1</sup>



Anna Reynolds  
*Old Stella Maris – Darwin*, 2011  
Digital photograph (1/10)  
Courtesy of Nomad Art, Darwin

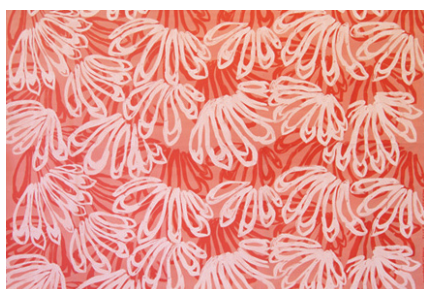
Anna Reynold's digital print, *Old Stella Maris – Darwin*, also presents an iconic Darwin image, where the very fabric of the built environment seems to be overtaken by the rampant fecundity of wet season growth. This work is complemented by Sarah Pirrie's sculptural agglomerations of detritus and plant forms referencing an unseen world in the tidal zone. Other works in *Botanica* are from the *Replant* series, a cross-cultural art project undertaken by Nomad Art, where non-Indigenous artists worked with an ethnobotanist and Indigenous artists from the Daly region, including Patricia Marrfurra McTaggart and Marita Sambono, to make imagery about the plants from the region.

1 <http://www.nomadart.com.au/?m=2011>





Gracie Kumbi  
*Merrepen*, 2014  
Screen print on linen



Marita Sambono  
*Large Leaf*, 2014  
Screen print on cotton drill

These artists, among others, are also represented in *Botanica 2*, which has been augmented by the work of Indigenous artists from the wider Katherine area, including the Roper Gulf and Victoria Daly regions. For Aboriginal people the country itself is the font of social institutions and is viewed as active, alive and intrinsically powerful. Everything has a story including all the plants that people depend on for bush tucker, medicine and the production of implements. Plants can be part of ceremony and law and there is a deep knowledge of their spiritual and practical applications.

Merrepen artists at Nauiyu are renowned for their stylised designs, which have traditional associations to the wetlands, plants and animals of the Daly River region. Many of the magnificent screen-printed fabrics produced by artists from that community represent plants and bush medicine from their region, including those by Gracie Kumbi, and Kieren Karritypul. These fabrics are now prized as wearable art by fashionistas across the country.

Wendy Daylight has produced a magnificent compendium, in over fifty small canvases, of the medicinal and bush tucker plants from the Elsey region. Wendy, who is based at the Jilkminggan community, produced the works as part of a cultural mapping project undertaken by Traditional Owners from the region and the Roper River Land Care Group between 2010–2012.

*Botanica 2* also presents the work of two formidable Indigenous artists, Gertie Huddleston (1935–2013) and Lorna Fencer Napurrula (c.1920–2006). Gertie's paintings are representations of country around Ngukurr in the Roper region

and reference plants, country and stories from her life experience and her Mara and Wandarang heritage. Gertie's paintings represent an Aboriginal world view as well as a Christian one. She depicts 'country' along side the productive mission gardens she tended in her youth, as both a 'Garden of Eden' as well as an abundant source of bush tucker and medicine.

Lorna Fencer Napurrula was a Warlpiri woman from Lajamanu, who lived on and off in Katherine, especially in her later years. Her major subject – the dreaming she illustrated over and over again – is the Yam complex: three interrelated



Gertie Huddleston  
*Painting the Country*, 1998  
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
Karen Brown Collection





Mandy Edge Tootell  
*Boab*, 2011  
 Etching and aquatint on map paper



Marina Strocchi  
*Three Boabs*, 2010  
 Acrylic on linen

elements of the ecosystem from her country Yumpurrpa in the Tanami desert – the bush potato, the pencil yam and the caterpillars that feed on them. She uses strong colour combinations and expressive brushwork to create works that vibrate with energy and power.

Many Aboriginal women also use the *pandanus spiralis* plant to make fibre for weaving baskets, mats and other objects. The roots of other plants are used to make the bush dyes that colour the objects. The exhibition showcases a selection of fibre mats and baskets from Numbulwar in south-east Arnhem Land.

*Botanica 2* presents a small snapshot of the work of some of the Northern Territory artists who represent the 'botanical world' in their work. The exhibition displays a diverse cross section of artists with a breadth of styles and perspectives, who explore the theme of plants, flowers and the environment, a compelling theme for many artists in this part of the world.

Cath Bowdler  
 Director, GYRACC – June 2014



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