

Ngura Wangkanyi (Talking about Country)

courtesy of Iwantja Arts, South Australia



View of Indulkana Community taken from the Indulkana Range.



Cut woodblocks (l-r): **Betty Muffler, Nellie Coulthard, Angkuna Baker, Emily Cullinan, Betty Muffler.**

Ngura Wangkanyi (Talking about Country) is being exhibited PG Printmaker Gallery, Fitzroy, until 12 June 2015.

In the remote north-eastern corner of South Australia, where the vast gibber desert plains have receded, and the dry but enduring gums and shrubs continue to flourish amongst the memories of river beds, there is a stoic and majestic ridge.

Embellished with red rocks, smoothed by ancient desert winds, this ridge is known as the Indulkana Range, and is home to Anangu who reside at the community of Indulkana. Jutting out from a flat horizon, the Indulkana Range emerges majestically, marking the most eastern gateway to the extensive Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.

The first settlement at the Indulkana community was along the banks of the Iwantja Creek – which flowed continuously via a complex of underground springs. Iwantja Arts takes its name from the creek; a large gnarled gum tree growing in the heart of the creek bed marks the resting place and dreaming site of the Tjurki (owl) and claims the story of his journey through country.

The art centre was established in the early 1980s when artists Alec Baker and Sadie Singer drove along the red dirt road to Adelaide and then across to Canberra, to advocate for the development and funding to establish a contemporary arts centre that would support a printmaking workshop and several painting studios.

Iwantja Arts has a rich history of printmaking. Artists regularly use the studio press to hand-print both relief and intaglio prints. Many of the first limited edition prints ever created at the art centre are now held in the collections of the South Australian Museum and National Gallery of Australia.

Printmaking continues to be a fundamental art form for artists at Iwantja Arts, with studio

artists working alongside technicians within the Iwantja Arts print studio, and also at external print workshops.

Recently, Iwantja Arts invited Basil Hall Editions to facilitate a woodblock-carving workshop and an investigation into relief printing techniques.

Throughout the woodblock printing workshop, artists worked intuitively, reflecting on cultural stories, memories and observations of country, and exploring the tactility of the woodblocks.

Strongly referencing the landscape of the Indulkana community and surrounding homelands, the twelve plates that have been hand carved and printed include works by artists Angkuna Baker, Betty Muffler, Emily Cullinan, Maisie King, Nellie Coulthard, Rene Sundown, Sally Cullinan, Tiger Yaltangki and Whiskey Tjukangku.

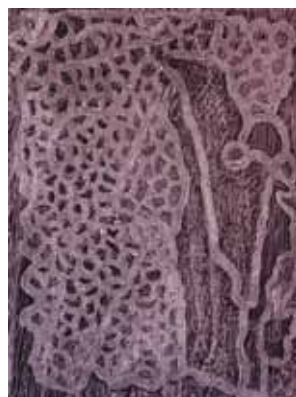
Each artist has approached the woodblock with reverence for both the medium and the subject. Present within the women's prints are depictions of tangled pathways and horse trails, sacred boulders, women's *inma* (cultural dance steps), rolling sandhills, dry creek beds, and quiet reflections on country. Tiger Yaltangki's works are filled with a lightness and sense of play, depicting his home under a hot desert

sun, and elongated snakes curved around eggs and rockholes. Senior artist Whiskey Tjukangku presents iconic motifs characteristic of his Arrernte Country – these are the final two works Tjukangku made before he passed away earlier this year.

Imagery and narrative within the prints develops strong form and shape through the carved and inked woodblock lines. Colour has been applied to the plates in various investigative methods, utilising techniques of multi-plate printing, hand colouring, and powdered pigments which shimmer behind overlaid Japanese papers.

The completed suite of limited edition prints presents a sensuous and quiet vigil for country. Similar to the desert landscape under the starkness of midday sun, the printed colours are striking yet gently muted. A hand-carved line against a block's discerning wood grain mimics the shapes of sandhills, rock holes and the spinifex decorated plains that are resilient in form, yet shaped by the natural elements.

Iwantja Arts is extremely pleased to present this group printmaking exhibition *Ngura Wangkanyi (Talking about Country)*, showcasing an intuitive understanding of relief block printing, and capturing a subtle yet stoic awareness for country and culture. •



l-r: **Betty Muffler**, *Rukuringanyi Ngura (Remembering Country)*, 2015, intaglio woodblock, 39.7 x 29.7 cm; **Whiskey Tjukangku**, *Arrernte Country*, 2014, intaglio woodblock, 38.8 x 29.4 cm; **Maisie King**, *Rukuringanyi Ngura (Remembering Country)*, 2015, woodblock with hand colouring, 40 x 29.8 cm.