



# replant

a new generation of botanical art

## *Replant: a new generation of botanical art*

The combination of a monsoonal climate and contrasting geography in the tropical north of Australia creates a unique environment for abundant and diverse plant life.

Many Aboriginal groups in the Top End recognise a calendar of six seasons from the monsoon time of flooding rains, lush vegetation and growth, through periods of flowering and fruiting to 'knock em down' storms and woodland grass fires. Later the floodplains become parched and waterholes disappear, the weather grows hotter and more humid and the landscape withers in the sun, awaiting the first rains to come again.

The landforms, plants and animals of the Top End have evolved over millions of years.

The different soils and geomorphology combine to provide a range of habitats that support the diverse flora and fauna. In recent times this complex mosaic has been overlain by another dimension, *Homo sapiens*. Aboriginal land custodians have populated the terrain for at least 50,000 years, in very recent times settler Australians have deepened the human dimension.

This setting was the backdrop for a unique art project in the Top End of the Northern Territory.

## *Replant - Science, stories and the mystery of plants*

In 2003, the idea for *Replant* germinated during a conversation with Dr Greg Leach, Director of Wildlife in the Northern Territory. Greg spoke about cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research being undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts. As the idea developed, it struck a chord with funding bodies, artists and researchers and in March 2006, an eclectic group of artists, an ethno-biologist, printmakers and a photographer came together to begin the project.

The artists were invited to participate in *Replant* on the basis of their individual art practice and come from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds across Australia. The group gathered for the first time in Darwin on 20th March 2006 at the Northern Territory Herbarium. Our host was a man that can be described as a Northern Territory living treasure. With 25 years experience as an ethno-biologist, Glenn Wightman was an informative guide through protocols and knowledge systems, which interweave cultural and geographical boundaries.

At the Herbarium Glenn and Greg explained the Western taxonomic system of formally naming plants, which includes the assignment of type specimens. This is strongly analogous to traditional Indigenous knowledge systems that connect specific names to specific sacred objects.

Keen to get into the bush, the group set off to Nauiyu, an Aboriginal community located on the banks of the mighty Daly River 230

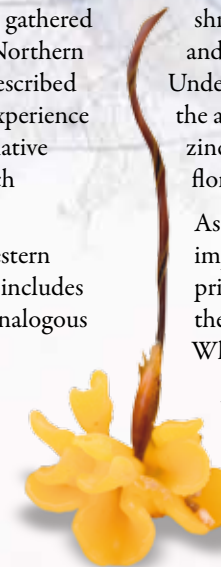
kilometres southeast of Darwin. At Nauiyu the artists were privileged to accompany traditional knowledge custodians Biddy Lindsay, Patricia Marrfurra and Marita Sambono into the bush to look at plants. The women shared information and stories as they ambled along quiet bush tracks observing the natural wonder of the bush. It was the height of the wet season and quietly exchanged words were masked by the rumble of thunder; umbrellas were shared as rain showers passed over.

The charm of *Replant* was a slow unveiling of the mystery of plants and stories as the artists negotiated their way through the complex world of trees, seeds, shrubs, creepers, palms and grasses. Cultural stories, plant use and scientific knowledge were shared between participants. Under the guidance of print makers Basil Hall and Jo Diggins the artists began to render drawings and impressions onto zinc plates. An acutely observed survey of Top End flora and environment soon emerged.

As the Daly River began to flood and the roads became impassable the artists returned to Darwin and to the printmaking studio of master printer Basil Hall where they set about resolving images and proofing the etchings. What follows is the result of their efforts.

Angus Cameron

*Project Director ~ Nomad Art Productions*







## Deborah Wurrkidj

Deborah Wurrkidj was born in 1971 at Maningrida in north-central Arnhem Land. Her language is Kuninjku and her moiety is Dhuwa. Deborah works at Maningrida Arts & Culture and is well known for her fibre weaving, woodcarving and printmaking.

Deborah is a versatile artist who has readily adapted to new art forms while retaining strong clan traditions. Her work is tactile and intricate and illustrates the artistic innovation that has occurred in Maningrida over the last 20 years.

Deborah has exhibited nationally including the 19th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2002 and is represented in a number of state collections

*I live at Maningrida Community in Arnhem Land. I am an artist and a weaver. I made these etchings about bush plants.*

*The first one is Black Plum. They grow in my grandfather's and my grandmother's country. My Grandmother taught me about weaving with Pandanus. She showed me how to make colours for the weavings from different roots. The pattern in the etching is that weaving.*

Deborah Wurrkidj

## Fiona Hall

Fiona Hall is an eclectic and highly regarded artist from Adelaide in South Australia. She began her career as a photographer in the 1970s but has expanded her practice to include such diverse media as knitting, beading, drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, installation and garden design.

Much of Fiona's work over the past fifteen years has focused on botanical themes. The nature of her enquiry is intense and far-reaching. Her work often incorporates metaphors, and symbols linked by insightful and unexpected connections between the human condition and natural history. Fiona Hall is recognised nationally and internationally for her work and is represented in collections Australia wide.

*Here at Daly River all of the requisites for survival and regeneration could be observed; if only we human species could all find a way to live in a similar state of biological equilibrium.*

Fiona Hall







## *Irene Mungatopi*

Irene Mungatopi is a Tiwi woman from Pirlangimpi on Melville Island, north of Darwin. Irene was born in Darwin in 1969. Her mother's country is Rangini and her father's country is Jurrupi. Her skin group is Yarrinapila, (red ochre), and her dreaming is Nyarringari, (Magpie Goose).

Irene is a painter, printmaker, textile artist and arts worker at Munupi Arts & Crafts on Melville Island. Irene incorporates traditional Tiwi ceremonial designs into her art emphasising their importance and strong cultural associations with the subject of her work. Irene has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1998.

*I liked coming to Darwin and Daly River to do the print workshop. It is interesting to meet new people and go out in the bush. I made this etching of the Green Plum. It is called **yankumwani** in my language. It grows in the bush on Tiwi Islands where I come from. We walk along the bush at the end of the dry season and we see those plums hanging down. We eat them straight from the tree. They taste lovely.*

*Irene Mungatopi*

## *Judy Watson*

Judy Watson is a prolific artist based in Queensland. Much of her art is concerned with tracing her ancestral roots and exploring the cultural, spiritual and historical heritage of her connection, through her grandmother and great grandmother, to Waanyi country in the Gulf on the Northern Territory and Queensland border. She also has deep and passionate interests in women's, political and environmental issues.

Judy Watson has gained national and international recognition for her art. She was one of three Aboriginal women artists chosen to represent Australia in the 1997 Venice Biennale and is one of eight Aboriginal artists featured in the Musee Du Quai Branly project which opened in Paris in 2006.

*I wish to acknowledge the information on plants, and their uses that I was given by Glenn Wightman and the Aboriginal women from the Daly River community. I also want to thank Dr Sue Jackson for the research notes, which accompanied my investigations into the plants of the region. It was a fantastic experience, a privilege, and really inspirational for my work.*

*Judy Watson*







## *Marita Sambono*

Marita Sambono was born in the old hospital at the Daly River Mission, also called Nauiyu, nestled on the banks of the Daly River, southwest of Darwin. Marita is part of a renowned family of Ngan'gikurunggurr artists and traditional knowledge custodians.

Marita is known for her paintings on canvas and silk, which are immersed in cultural and ecological processes of her country. She also paints religious themes. Marita has exhibited since 1987 and has been represented in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory seven times.

*I am from Nauiyu Community near the Daly River in the Northern Territory. MalakMalak people are the traditional owners but ten other language groups also live there. I have made three etchings about our Ngan'gikurunggurr country.*

*Marita Sambono*

## *Winsome Jobling*

Winsome Jobling was born in Sydney in 1957 and moved to Darwin in 1982 when she began experimenting with papermaking. Well known for paper installations and sculptural forms, which extend traditional notions of papermaking, Winsome has experimented with around 60 native and introduced plant species.

Winsome has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1981. Her practice is linked to the environment on both political and physical grounds. Winsome's art is tactile and sensual, often contrasting elements of texture, translucence, fragility and strength. A new development in her work incorporates watermarks in paper, which reference the sometimes hidden nature of knowledge, ownership, power and history.

*Working on the 'Replant' project offered the opportunity to work with Indigenous and non-indigenous artists who reference plants and the environment in different ways in their work. This dialogue offers a unique opportunity to discuss with other artists the role of plants in our differing cultural heritage.*

*Winsome Jobling*





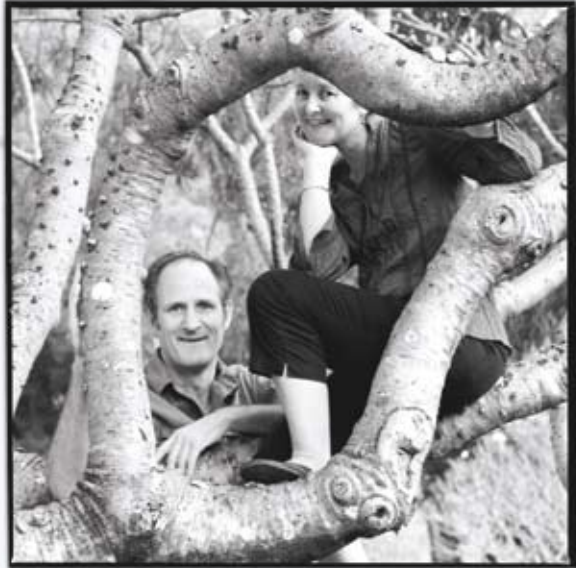
## *Peter Eve*

Peter Eve has been working as a freelance photographer and designer in Darwin since 2001. A constant traveler from Cairns to Kimberley and from Arnhem Land to the red centre, his photography celebrates Indigenous culture and the environment of remote Australia. His evocative images are regularly published in national editorial journals, newspapers, art magazines and shown in art galleries nationally. Well known for his versatile approach and fresh eye, Peter has a unique ability to capture community life and distinctive personalities in isolated and regional Australia, while his landscape images encapsulate the essence of wilderness and place.



## *Angus and Rose Cameron*

Angus and Rose Cameron have been living and working in Darwin since 1997. In 2005 they established *Nomad Art Productions*, an enterprise dedicated to the promotion and development of art in northern and central Australia. Together they have extensive experience in the visual arts including education, industry development and project management.



## *Basil Hall*

Basil Hall has been collaborating with artists as a printmaker since 1987. He has overseen the making of over 2500 editions (assisted by teams of printers), firstly at Studio One in Canberra, where he was Director and Editioning Manager from 1987 - 1996 and then at Northern Editions in Darwin until the end of 2001. In 2002 he established Basil Hall Editions in Darwin. Basil's work has become increasingly more focused on Aboriginal art in the last 10 years and his core team of Jo Diggins, Natasha Rowell, Monique Auricchio and Merran Sierakowski is one of Australia's three most important producers of Aboriginal prints.



## *Jo Diggins*

Jo Diggins has a wealth of experience as an editioning printmaker, having worked at Northern Editions and Basil Hall Editions since 1998. During this time Jo has run many workshops in Darwin and remote communities. She has collaborated sensitively and skilfully with a range of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists.

## *Glenn Wightman*

With 25 years experience working as an ethno-biologist, Glenn Wightman has developed a deep understanding of traditional plant and animal knowledge. Since graduating from Melbourne's Monash University in 1981, Glenn has been working closely with many Aboriginal communities in the *Top End* of the Northern Territory, to help them record traditional knowledge in a scientific and culturally sensitive manner. His books on the plants and animals of northern Australia are in some cases the last surviving record of knowledge that has been passed down through Aboriginal Australian generations over thousands of years. The books are always published in accordance with the wishes of the elders, who retain authorship and full copyright.





Deborah Wurrkidj

### Black Plum

The Black Plum, *Vitex glabrata*, is called **Man-kundalh** in Deborah's language (Kuninjku). It is one of the tastiest and easy to collect bush fruits that are produced in the late build-up season and early wet around November and December. Deborah's etching shows the outline and venation of the leaf in the background and the infructescence (fruit arrangement) in the foreground.

The bold interpretation of the fruiting structure highlights the importance of the sweet and tasty black fruit. This species has a number of other uses, including use as fire-sticks to create fire using the traditional drilling technique, the fruit are eaten by a number of animals, the leaves can be dried and used as bush tobacco and it is a good shade tree. However the fruit are the critically important factor and can be eaten fresh, sun-dried and stored for later use and in some areas the crushed fruit are used in certain ceremonies.

Glenn Wightman



Deborah Wurrkidj  
Black Plum  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm



Deborah Wurrkidj  
Pandanus Weaving  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm

### Pandanus Weaving

The Spring Pandanus (also sometimes referred to as the Screw Palm), *Pandanus spiralis*, is one of the most conspicuous and useful plants in north Australia.

Pandanus is an important food resource and provides different types of food from the seed, fruit, cabbage and peduncle. It is also used for a range of medicinal purposes including treating headaches, toothache, infected wounds, diarrhoea, mouth and throat sores, ulcers, back pain and many other afflictions. It is also used as fish poison, to make rafts, toys, didgeridoos, ropes, as a dye, to light fires, to carry fires, and as a totem for some clans.

However, this classical interpretation of Pandanus is based on its iconic use as a base for fibre crafts by an artist steeped in contemporary fibre craft expertise and coming from a line of famous fibre craft artists. Deborah's deceased grandfather was a renowned fish-trap artisan whose works are displayed in many museums and galleries in Australia and overseas.

Glenn Wightman



Fiona Hall

### Shrubby Dillenia Leaf and Wasp Nest

*Dillenia suffruticosa* occurs in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. It is cultivated widely in the tropics, including Darwin, and has recently begun to become naturalized in the Northern Territory. It has attractive yellow flowers and bright red bird-attracting fruit; birds distribute the seeds.

It is now known commonly as **simpoh air**, or **simpur bini** in Brunei, where the flowers are used extensively in traditional art.

It is widely used in countries where it is native. The large leaves are used to wrap food, such as tempe, or formed into shallow cones to carry food, such as rice. Their presence often indicates underground water, and wells are dug near them. The fruit pulp is used as a hair wash, and the leaves are also used to staunch blood flow from bad wounds.

In Brunei, it is illustrated on the dollar note and plays an important ecological role in stabilising white sand accumulations in coastal and riverine areas.

The wasp nest on the leaf is *Delta* sp. (*Vespidae*, *Eumeninae*); from the subfamily that includes Potter-wasps. The nest is built from mud and small hairless caterpillars are placed in each cell, (after being stung by the wasp to paralyse them), the wasp stores this food for future hatchlings to feed upon. The nests are built in dry, protected areas and the large leaf of the Shrubby Dillenia provides an excellent habitat.

Mud wasps are called **dumundurrk** in MalakMalak.

Glenn Wightman



Fiona Hall  
Shrubby Dillenia Leaf and Wasp Nest  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm



Fiona Hall  
Green Ant Nest  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm

### Green Ant Nest

The leaves of Ghost Gum, *Corymbia bella* (previously *Eucalyptus papuana*) have been formed into a Green Ant nest; this is unusual as larger, broader leaves are generally preferred by Green Ants.

The Ghost Gum is an important plant, it is called **yerrik** by MalakMalak speakers. It is used for firewood as it burns slowly and evenly, the bark is burnt and applied to swellings on knees and legs to reduce the swelling, **sugarbag** (native beehives) are often found in hollows and water can be found in swellings on the trunk. Many other Aboriginal groups use the burnt bark as an additive for chewing tobacco, where it improves the flavour and potentiates the tobacco.

Green Ants, *Oecophylla smaragdina*, are used as medicine by MalakMalak people and are called **pirrinykam**. The nest is crushed in the hands and the juice is rubbed over the skin; this also stops the skin from feeling itchy. The large mother or queen ants are eaten to treat colds and influenza; they have a sharp taste. Many other Aboriginal groups also use these ants as medicine and food. The green abdomen of workers can be eaten; it has a pleasant tangy taste caused by the formic acid they contain, which has medicinal properties as a mild expectorant and antimicrobial.

Glenn Wightman



*Irene Mungatopi*

### Green Plum Leaf

The Green Plum, *Buchanania obovata*, or **Yankumwani** in Irene's language, is a favoured bush tucker across the Top End. It is eaten when the fruit ripens in the late build-up or early wet season, usually just before Christmas. The fruits remain green but are soft to touch and have a tangy taste a little like ginger beer. They contain a large, dark seed.

Tiwi people use the Green Plum in several ways; the inner red bark is used as a dye for fibre-crafts; the flexible but strong young stems can be used as an aid when climbing tall trees; the new suckers that appear after a grass fire are red and fleshy and they can be eaten and the green sap of new growth is used as a glue to mix with paint to make it stay strong and vibrant.

In other parts of the Northern Territory this species is used as a powerful medicine to treat toothaches, headaches, ringworm, insect bites, fever, eczema, and other skin disorders. The fruit can also be sun-dried and rubbed with red ochre to use as a food resource during periods of extreme food shortage. In some areas Green Plum is a calendar plant and its flowering indicates the time when freshwater crocodiles are about to lay eggs.

The fruits resemble small mangoes in shape and the Green Plum and the mango are in the same family, Anacardiaceae, and indeed they fruit around the same time of year.

Glenn Wightman



Irene Mungatopi  
Green Plum Leaf  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm



Irene Mungatopi  
Pink Beach Apple  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm

### Pink Beach Apple

The Red Bush Apple, *Syzygium suborbiculare*, is a common and well known bush tucker in north Australia, however, a rare form occurs in coastal areas on the Tiwi Islands and some other coastal areas. It has pink fruit that are particularly tasty, it is called **pinyama**, the Pink Beach Apple. The fruit are produced during **Jamutakari**, the wet season, and sometimes they are produced in profusion. They are one of the most important Tiwi bush foods.

The shape of the **pinyama** fruit as interpreted by Irene are very similar to the shape of the traditional, uniquely Tiwi fighting clubs produced by senior Tiwi men. In the past these clubs were deadly weapons used in hand-to-hand combat by Tiwi warriors, but now they are mainly prepared for sale to tourists visiting the Tiwi Islands.

Glenn Wightman



Judy Watson

### sand palm, dodder laurel and flat-leaf plant

Three plants are presented in this print.

The dark grey, curved infructescence of the Sand Palm, *Livistona humilis*. The Sand Palm is called **merrepen** by several Aboriginal language groups; it is an incredibly important plant in the Daly River area, as indicated by the naming of the Merrepen Art Centre at Nauiyu and the Merrepen outstation between Nauiyu and Wadeye. The new leaves of the Sand Palm are extensively used by fibre-craft artists to make dillybags, fish nets and other products; the cabbage can also be eaten and is used as medicine as well as a dye, and the spiked leaf petioles can be used as a bush knife. The fruit can be eaten but they are not very tasty.

The orange, wispy stems of the Dodder Laurel, *Cassytha filiformis*. Dodder Laurel is a parasitic plant from the laurel family; it has small opaque, globular fruit that are sweet and tasty. Some Aboriginal groups use the twining stems with water as a hair darkener and restorer, while some people believe that spirits live in the dark area underneath its canopy.

The light grey, flattened stem of the Flat-leaf Plant, *Pachynema dilatata*. *Pachynema dilatatum* has no proper leaves however the flattened green stems carry out the photosynthetic activities of leaves. This is an adaptation to the annual period of aridity characteristic of the wet-dry tropics as it reduces water loss. Ngan'gikurunggurr speakers call this plant **yelmelpemadi** in reference to these flattened stems; the plant has no particular use.

The visual appearance of the stem in this print is highly evocative of the flooding Daly River that was uppermost in our minds as we undertook the *Replant* fieldwork. The intertwining stems of the Dodder Laurel are symbolic of the vastly different cultures of the six *Replant* artists as they became artistically intertwined over the duration of the project.

Glenn Wightman



Judy Watson  
sand palm, dodder laurel, flat-leaf plant  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm



Judy Watson  
bat-wing coral tree, red bean tree  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm

### bat-wing coral tree

The twin leaves depicted are from the normally trifoliate compound leaf of the Bat-wing Coral Tree, *Erythrina vespertilio*; however, in this case the third, terminal leaflet was missing. The leaf was from the tree growing near the entrance to the Merrepen Art Centre at Nauiyu. This tree produces red flowers and bright, hard, kidney-shaped, red seeds. These seeds are used in drier parts of Australia to make long, heavy necklaces; these have special significance for Aboriginal women. In the past the black fine ash from the burnt corky bark was rubbed onto the skin of pale-skinned babies to darken it, so that welfare officers would not take them away. This plant also has a number of other uses, including the wood for **woomera** shafts and the large taproot as food.

The scientific name *Erythrina* is derived from the Greek word **erythros**, and refers to the red flowers and seeds, which are so distinctive for this species.

The small dark round dots on the print are formed using the seed of the Red Bean Tree, *Adenanthera pavonina*. The hard, red seeds from this species are also used to make necklaces by some coastal Aboriginal groups in north Australia. The seed interior can be eaten, though the hard red shell is considered toxic and is difficult to break.

Glenn Wightman



## Marita Sambone

### Underwater Lilies

One of the most important aquatic plants for Aboriginal people in north Australia is depicted; the emergent leaves of the Red Lotus Lily, *Nelumbo nucifera*, and its distinctive fruiting head.

The Red Lotus Lily is called **miwulngini** in Marita's language, (**Ngen'giwumirri**); it has a number of uses. The large green 'seeds' (actually fruit) are eaten raw or lightly roasted; they are very good to eat and occur in large numbers in the mid dry season. The roots are also eaten after roasting and they are used as medicine to treat constipation. The new leaf shoots are eaten raw. The large concave leaves can be used as a hat, as camouflage when hunting in the billabong or to carry water and to wrap food when cooking.

Collecting **miwulngini** fruit is one of the favorite activities of senior women at the Daly River. The fruit are held above the water as it recedes with the progression of the dry season. The fruit heads are collected in large numbers, while keeping an eye out for crocodiles, leeches, snakes and mosquitoes, and of course freshwater turtles. The fruit are pulled open and the large green 'seeds' taken out and the skin carefully peeled off while sitting in groups discussing the outcomes of the hunting expedition. The inner seeds have a pleasant nutty taste and crunchy texture, they are good to eat.

The numbers of Red Lotus Lilies varies a lot from year to year, in some years there are many and billabongs will be covered with their leaves and flowers, other years there will be very few.

This species is considered sacred in India, Tibet and China being the padma devoted to Brahma (sacred red colour), cultivated throughout south east Asia for food; 'seeds' remain viable for several hundred years in river mud.

Glenn Wightman



Marita Sambono  
Underwater Lilies  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm



Marita Sambono  
Fog Dreaming  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm

### Fog Dreaming

**Dagum**, Fog dreaming sites are located on Ngen'giwumirri country between Peppimenarti and Nauiyu. They are small springs and holes in the ground where steam or fog come off the warm water below. They occur on the edge of floodplains and are surrounded by Spring Pandanus, **yerrgi**, and Pink Apple Trees, **yerrmanmanba**. The fog wafts around these trees and is conspicuous during the cold weather of the mid dry season, especially in the cool of the early morning.

These sites have special spiritual significance for Ngen'giwumirri people, especially for Marita as it was one of her deceased grandmother's dreamings, and they are found on her traditional country.

This image shows the warm water springs and holes that the fog comes from, it captures the movement of the fog and the spiritual danger associated with coming into physical contact with the fog.

Glenn Wightman



## Winsome Jobling

### Spear Grass and Fertile

Spear Grass or *Sarga intrans*, previously *Sorghum intrans*, is one of the most common and important grasses in the western Top End of the Northern Territory.

During the mid to late wet season Spear Grass is the characteristic feature of the savanna habitats, when its stems dominate the lower levels of the vegetation profile. In the later parts of the wet season, which coincided with our field trip to Nauiyu, the stems began to dry out and the colours and tones of the drying stems and leaves were stunning and inescapable; they are literally in your face whenever you walk through the bush.

For some Aboriginal groups, including the Ngan'gikurunggurr, Marita Sambono's countrymen who we spent time with around Nauiyu, the seasonal calendar names and timing are based upon Spear Grass growth and the seed formation, ripening and shedding.

Spear Grass is also critically important for Aboriginal people as the stems provide a large proportion of the annual fuel load of dry grass that is burnt early in the dry season. Burning grass is an essential element of land management for traditional custodians and is likened to 'cleaning up' or providing medicine or fertiliser for country after the heavy rains. Fire is seen as providing balance to savanna landscapes after the cloudiness, dampness and often floods of the wet season. Without the volume of fuel provided by the Spear Grass stems this fire cleansing would not be possible.

Spear Grass seeds and stems also provide a large amount of organic matter every season and it is one of the most efficient and important energy converters in the savanna habitat. The seeds and stems provide food and shelter for many animals, mainly invertebrates, in savanna habitats.



Winsome Jobling  
Spear Grass  
2006 etching on paper and chine colle on hand made paper  
(banana, cotton, sugar palm and gamba grass) 33 x 24.5 cm



Winsome Jobling  
Fertile  
2006 etching on paper 33 x 24.5 cm

As a plant it is incredibly well adapted to the wet-dry tropics annual period of aridity, when it survives as a seed bank on the ground. It then takes advantage of the pre-wet humidity build-up, which causes the seed awns to absorb moisture and twist. This drives the seeds into the ground so that they are ready to germinate with the first rains and not be washed away. Once germinated, the leaves are produced to begin photosynthesis, this powers the stems to elongate quickly and get the seeds as high as possible to aid dispersal.

Winsome has captured the essence of two of the principal characteristics of Spear Grass in her prints, the seeds and the stems.

Glenn Wightman



Peter Eve

### Hidden Currents

The Waterlily, *Nymphaea violacea*, is an important plant for all northern Aboriginal groups; it provides food and medicine.

The seeds can be eaten raw or ground in to flour and made into small dampers. These dampers were cooked and wrapped in paperbark to be store as back-up food for later in the season when foods were more difficult to find. It is one of the very few plant foods that can be stored for later use. The flower stems can also be eaten fresh and the tubers can be roasted and then eaten, they are also good medicine for treating diarrhoea. The leaves can be used as plates or to wrap food to keep it fresh and clean.

The image of Water-lily leaves being pulled underwater by the strong water current is powerfully indicative of the season when we undertook our fieldwork. Water levels in creeks and rivers were extremely high and flooding of all low-lying areas meant our ability to move around country was limited. Rain cells were moving around us as we looked at plants and animals, from our camp site we could see the Daly River slowly and steadily rising with the rain.

The combination of high humidity, rainfall and the clogging of the understorey by Spear Grass stems gives the bush a claustrophobic feel. Camping is difficult due to rainfall, flooding and bogginess. However, the traditional seasonal calendar dictates that the dry winds, open understoreys and hard soils of the dry are not far away.

Glenn Wightman



Peter Eve  
Hidden Currents  
2006 photograph on paper 32.5 x 21.5 cm



Peter Eve  
Ironwood Leaf  
2006 photograph on paper 32.5 x 21.5 cm

### Ironwood Leaf

Ironwood, *Erythrophleum chlorostachys*, is a common tree in the savannas of northern Australia. It has extremely dense and hard timber, is very slow growing and is one of the most useful plants for many Aboriginal groups.

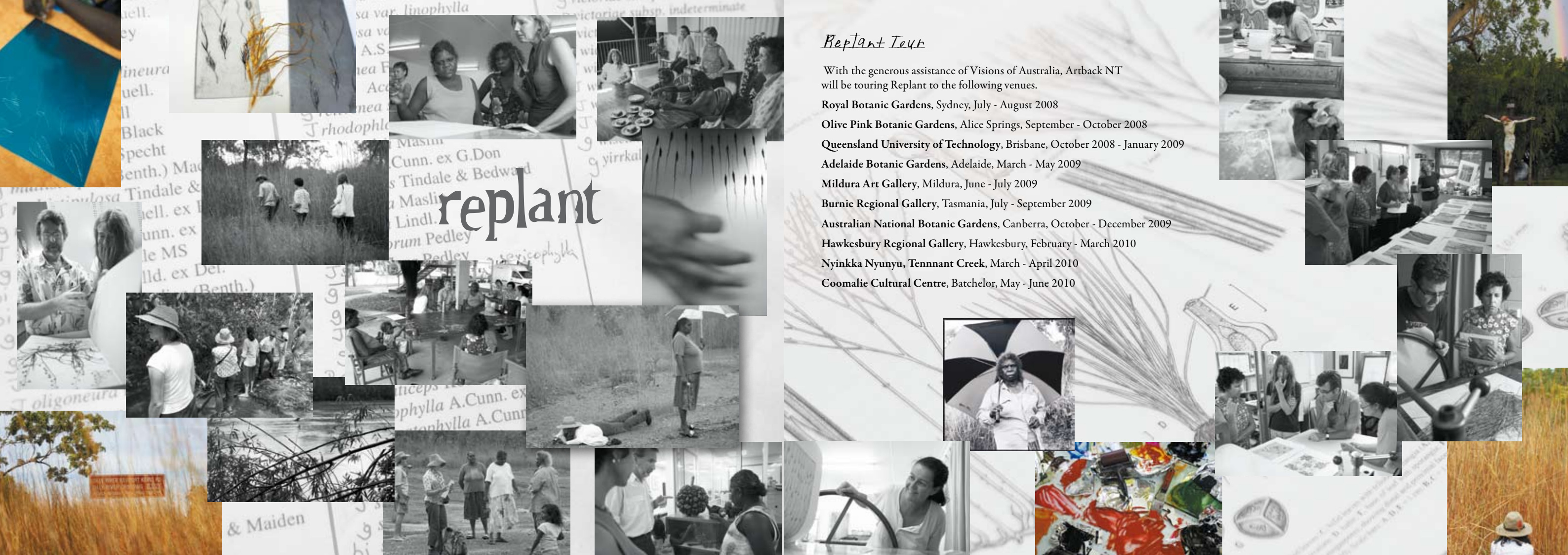
The timber is used for a variety of purposes, major uses include to make clap-sticks, digging-sticks, shields, spear-heads, fighting swords and clubs, boomerangs, woomera-pegs, throwing-sticks and even a septum drill. The timber is also used as firewood (though some people believe the wood is poisonous and will not use it in cooking fires) and for buildings and fence posts.

Ironwood is widely used for a variety of medicinal purposes including treating skin rashes, scabies, venereal disease, to prevent pregnancy, to reduce diarrhoea pain, to treat general aches and pains and to stop lactation. The dark red resin from burnt roots is used as glue to attach spear-heads and woomera-pegs to shafts.

However, the most important and widespread aspect of Ironwood is its use in the final cleansing stages of funeral ceremonies. Green leaves are placed over hot coals to produce dense grey smoke, this is used to cleanse spirits from areas and items associated with someone who has recently passed away.

Glenn Wightman





# replant

## Replant Tour

With the generous assistance of Visions of Australia, Artback NT will be touring Replant to the following venues.

**Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, July - August 2008**

**Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, Alice Springs, September - October 2008**

**Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, October 2008 - January 2009**

**Adelaide Botanic Gardens, Adelaide, March - May 2009**

**Mildura Art Gallery, Mildura, June - July 2009**

**Burnie Regional Gallery, Tasmania, July - September 2009**

**Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra, October - December 2009**

**Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Hawkesbury, February - March 2010**

**Nyinkka Nyunyu, Tennant Creek, March - April 2010**

**Coomalie Cultural Centre, Batchelor, May - June 2010**



## Acknowledgements

Congratulations to the artists for their enthusiastic participation in *Replant* and the outcome of the prints and photographs.

Thank you to Dr Greg Leach for his inspiration and support and to Glenn Wightman for his perception, botanical knowledge, flexibility, guidance and abundant supply of tea. Thank you also to Basil Hall, Jo Diggins and Natasha Rowell for their inspiration and hard work in facilitating the workshops, proofing and editing the prints and to Peter Eve for documenting the workshop and designing the catalogue.

On behalf of the *Replant* participants we acknowledge and thank the Traditional Owners of the Daly region, the MalakMalak people, Merrepen Arts, Maningrida Arts and Culture and Munupi Arts and Crafts for their generous support.

*Angus and Rose Cameron ~ Nomad Art Productions*

Artback NT: Arts Development and Touring is the Northern Territory's visual and performing arts touring agency. Artback NT provides communities with unique opportunities to participate in, experience, discover and engage with a diverse range of arts practice.

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To purchase prints or for further information contact:

**nomad art**

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Nomad Art Productions  
Phone & Fax 08 8981 6382  
1 Vickers Street Parap  
[www.nomadart.com.au](http://www.nomadart.com.au)  
[nomad@nomadart.com.au](mailto:nomad@nomadart.com.au)

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