

Chatter

by Winsome Jobling, 2018





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All around us invisible matter forms the visible. Whirling and colliding atoms, electrons, quarks and magnetic fields are the building blocks of everything.

Nothing is still. Local air currents are linked to global air streams which are in-turn connected to the warm and cold currents in the oceans. The Earth's tectonic plates move under our feet. Our past, present and future.

I often think of the spaces between things; the humming transfer of invisible matter; energy released by plants, the thick unseen net of communication like the chatter of text messages!

This chatter may begin in a patch of bushland like the one I visit in Berrimah on the edge of the Darwin sprawl. Its voice will be carried on currents of energy into larger interconnected systems that circle the globe and interact with other ecosystems, chatting, messaging... adjusting.... flowing.... dynamic.... passing around and through us. Our porous, granular world solid, but fragile and easily fragmented.

Over two thousand years ago the Greek philosopher Democritus formulated an atomic theory of the universe. His idea was that everything is made up of tiny, indivisible particles, elementary grains of reality which cannot be further subdivided.

Democritus's theory celebrated poetically by Lucretius in *De Rerum Natura* (The Nature of Things) eloquently describes the profound unity of the whole; that we are all made from the same substance 'as the stars and the sea'. There is no separation of the earth and heavens, no fear

of God, no fear of death. In this world of Democritus (as sung by Lucretius) there is a deep love of nature, a serene immersion with it; a recognition that we are profoundly part of a natural order connected by organic threads.

Plants exchange information through airborne chemicals and soluble compounds exchanged by roots and networks of symbiotic fungi, and perhaps even ultrasonic sounds. Plants have a social life that scientists are just beginning to explore. Peter Wohlleben views trees as parents living together with their children, communicating and supporting them as they grow, sharing nutrients with those who are sick or struggling and warning each other of impending dangers.

Dr Monica Gagliano from The University of Western Australia studies plant communication and has recorded plant roots 'crackling' quietly at 220 hertz and noting that others nearby are bending to 'listen'.

The six hectares of bushland at Berrimah that I visit lies between Charles Darwin National Park and the Darwin Speedway and is a microcosm of the whole Top End landscape. The savannah forest slides into mangrove on one side and into a low wet pandanus swamp on the other. There are magical places; a small rocky escarpment, a small bowl-shaped valley – cool and quiet and a circle of cycads on a little hill.

For the past 15 years it has been a place to think, research and to collect dyes pigments and plant fibres. It is a place to re-seed and regenerate, but also despair as the invasive weed Gamba grass (*Andropogon gayanus*) extends further or another fridge or pile of building material is dumped.

This remnant of bushland has colonies of Sand Palm (*Livistona humilis*) and age-old cycads that grow under a canopy of mainly Stringy Bark trees (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*). They hustle together in groups or colonies like families, from first born to elders – strength in numbers!

Anchored in ancient, lateritic and nutrient poor soils both species have spindly, scaly trunks, tough water conserving leaves, and scratchy prickly souls.

The Sand Palm (*Livistona humilis*) is endemic to the Top End of the Northern Territory and was named by Robert Brown, who sailed with Matthew Flinders in 1810.

I love Sand Palms! Their leaves in the Dry Season crackle and cackle. After being denuded to a singed trunk by fire in the Dry they manage to send up a new fan burst of leaves. They are normally fire resistant but not from the intense Gamba Grass fuelled fires that can kill even adult trees.

Cycas armstrongii (small) and *Cycas macdonochiei* (large) are iconic to the savannah woodlands around Darwin. Cycads originated 200 million years ago and have changed little since – they are the oldest living seed plants and have survived three mass extinction events in the earth's history.

Male cycads develop central cones and the females' large dangling seeds. After they drop their leaves (or after a fire) cycads produce a bright green, vase-shaped head of new leaves in verdant contrast to the surrounding char.

The Northern Territory legislated *Threatened Species Network* lists *Cycas armstrongii* as vulnerable in the Top End as the few remaining colonies are in conservation

reserves and are threatened by the hot and high fires of introduced Gamba and Mission Grass (*Cenchrus spp.*).

By respecting the natural world with a greater empathy, our interactions might be tempered by a deeper understanding rather than viewing the world as an exploitable object.

The fibres I use to make paper are mainly sourced locally from both native and exotic plants. The Chatter papers are primarily made from local natives; Spear Grass (*Sorghum intrans*), Stringy Bark, Banyan (*Ficus virens*), Kapok (*Cochlospermum fraseri*) and the introduced Gamba Grass. I have also used Abaca (*Musa textilis*), and Devils Ivy (*Epipremnum aureum*).

The earth pigments I use are sourced from all over the Northern Territory:

- Red sand from Titjikala (south of Alice Springs),
- Grey mud from Cahills Crossing (Arnhem Land),
- Purple/brown from an old mine near Tennant Creek.

All are the worn-down grains from ancient geology. The charcoal is from bushfires, the 'bones' of bushland.

My work is both a collaboration with the natural world and a haptic response to our impact on it. My ideas, imagery and materials search for the internal energy and rhythms of the landscape of the Top End.

Winsome Jobling 2018



Chatter 1

Handmade papers with watermarks and stencilled pulps, 200 x 50cm x 4.





Chatter 2

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 200 x 53cm.



Chatter 3

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 200 x 55cm.



Chatter 4

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 200 x 60cm.



Chatter 4 (detail)

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitchings, 200 x 60cm.



Chatter 5 (detail)

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 200 x 40cm.



Chatter 5

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 200 x 40cm.



Chatter 6

Handmade papers with drypoint, earth pigments, photocopy toner and stitching,
80 x 27 cm, 130 x 34cm, 85 x 43cm.



Chatter 7

Handmade papers with earth pigments, drypoint, photocopy toner and stitching, 87 x 43cm.



Chatter 8

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 137 x 60cm.



Chatter 8 (detail)

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 137 x 60cm.



Chatter 9 (detail)

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 100 x 42 cm.



Chatter 9

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 100 x 42 cm.



Chatter 10 (detail)

Handmade papers with earth pigments, drypoint and stitching, 110 x 44cm.



Chatter 10

Handmade papers with earth pigments, drypoint and stitching, 110 x 44cm.



Chatter 11

Handmade papers with drypoint, earth pigments and stitching, 153 x 67cm.



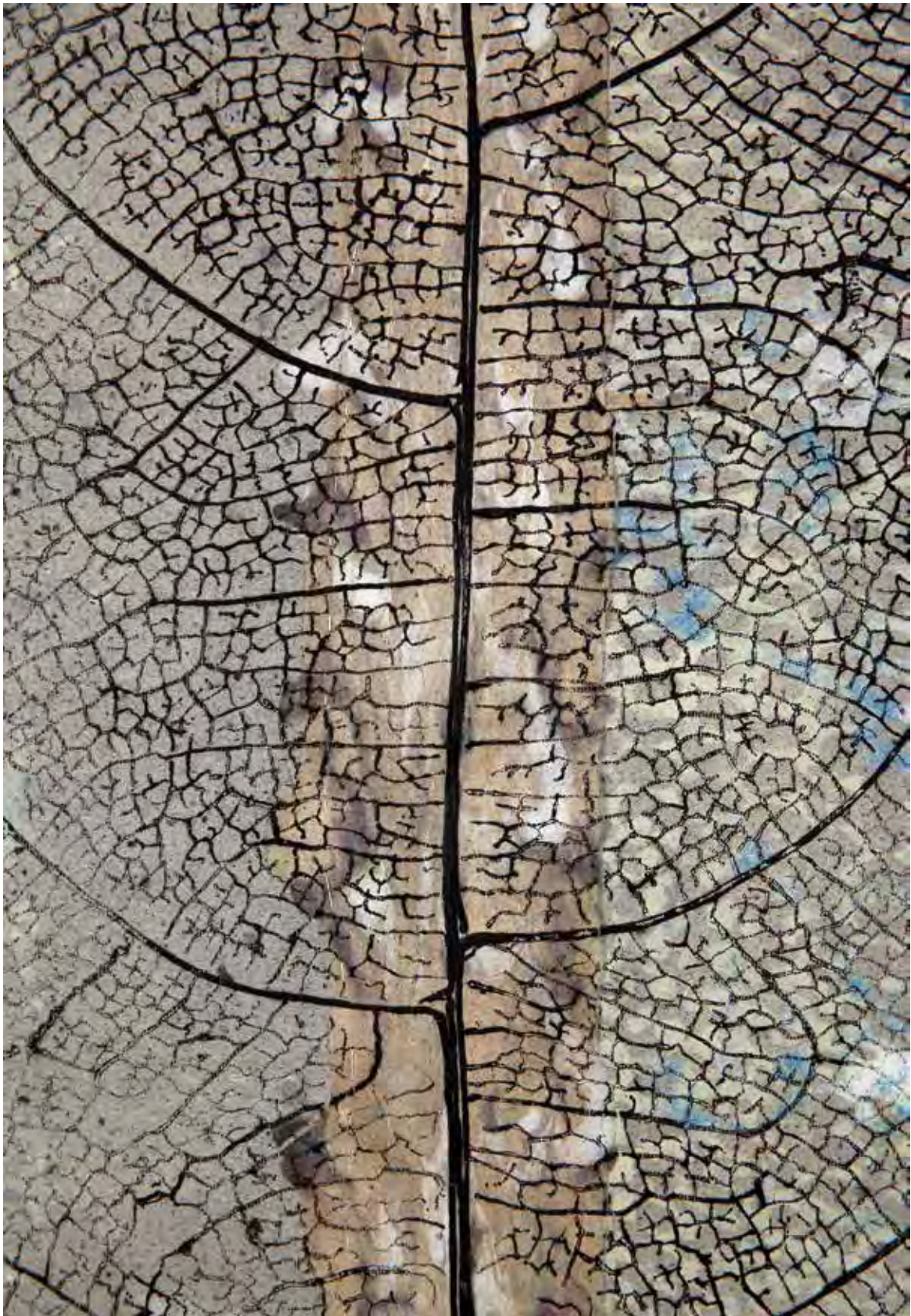
Chatter 11 (detail)

Handmade papers with drypoint, earth pigments and stitching, 153 x 67cm.



Chatter 12

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 124 x 56cm.



Chatter 12 (detail)

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 124 x 56cm.



Chatter 13 (detail)

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 124 x 56cm.



Chatter 13

Handmade papers with watermarks drypoints, bush charcoal and stitching, 120 x 62cm.



Chatter 14 (detail)

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 120 x 48cm.



Chatter 14

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 120 x 48cm.



Chatter 15

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 93 x 42cm, 125 x 62cm.



Chatter 16

Handmade papers with watermarks, drypoint and stitching, 80 x 70, 124 x 52 cm.



Sand Palm (*Livistona humilis*). Image: Winsome Jobling.



Cycas maconochiei. Image: Winsome Jobling.



Cycas armstrongii. Image: Winsome Jobling.



Cycas maconochiei. Image: Winsome Jobling.

Darwin artist Winsome Jobling was born in Oberon, NSW in 1957. In 1982 she moved to the Northern Territory after completing art training in Sydney and began teaching at Belyuen Aboriginal community on the Cox Peninsular near Darwin. The experience was a life changing event; there she learned to make dilly bags, baskets and natural dyes, went hunting and fishing with the local women and attended ceremonial events.

Jobling is indebted to the Belyuen community for her experience and acknowledges this cultural awakening as an important point in her art career.

This seminal experience at Belyuen has informed Jobling's unique and insightful art practice. It marks the beginning of a lifetime of exploration combining elements of cultural awareness, history, natural science, observation, philosophy, skill and creativity.

Although she had begun studying papermaking at art school in Sydney, it was at Belyuen that Jobling first started experimenting with making paper from plants. The first papers were created from species used for making dilly bags and baskets, these included sisal, sand palm, banyan, coastal hibiscus and sedge.

Now with 30 years experience Jobling has experimented with around 60 local plant varieties both native and exotic. She has developed unique systems of papermaking and ranks highly amongst artisan paper-makers worldwide. She has presented at international forums and workshops including the Watermarks conference in Cleveland USA in 2012 (International Association of Hand Papermakers). Through these presentations Jobling has demonstrated distinctive techniques she has developed such as layering of paper pulp, use of phosphorescent materials and watermarks in paper.

For Jobling the papermaking process is all encompassing. The methodology involves historical, environmental and cultural research, sourcing, harvesting and even nurturing plants. Each plant produces a certain quality of paper with different properties and can be blended to achieve a specific result.

The combined disciplines of papermaking and art convey insights into northern Australian life and culture. Collecting and incorporating material for fibre-based production involves an intimate knowledge of the environment, political perception and cultural awareness.

Jobling's work is informed by her considerable botanical and technical knowledge, which is complemented by an enquiring and creative process of thought and action. Her practice is intrinsically linked to the environment on intellectual, aesthetic and physical levels.

Her knowledge about plants is extensive not only in terms of species, habitats and ecosystems, but also historical and economic links to objects made from plants. The basis of Jobling's philosophy is that human beings are part of the natural environment and therefore have a responsibility to treat all things with respect and to hold them in the same regard as we do ourselves. With the natural environment under increasing pressure Jobling believes the relationship between people and their environment and the existence of concurrent knowledge systems is fundamental to human existence.

Jobling is a prolific and engaging artist. Her participation in exhibitions and art events are always wholehearted and noteworthy. Her practice extends from teaching spinifex papermaking across the Barkly to developing papermaking as an alternative income in West Timor.

Jobling has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1981. Her printed works on paper, paper installations and sculptural forms extend traditional notions of papermaking and have attracted an enthusiastic and appreciative audience. Her art is tactile and sensual, often contrasting elements of texture, translucence, fragility and strength.

Jobling engages with the big subjects, she is a deep thinking artist who is continually moving into new spheres of artistic activity, breaking into new ground and exploring new ideas, ever moving and never stagnant.

Jobling exhibited annually at Nomad Art Gallery in Darwin from 2010 - 2018 and was a finalist in the Northern Territory *TogArt Contemporary Art Award* four times. In 2016 the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory held a survey exhibition of her work entitled *Winsome Jobling; the nature of paper*. In 2008 she won a Churchill Fellowship to study innovative paper making and was the winner of *Sculpture in the Park* in Darwin, 2006. In 1998 she was one of five artists selected for *Contemporary Territory* at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, curated by Daena Murray, and in 1996 exhibited *Dress-ups* at 24 HR Art and Adelaide Fringe Festival. Over the years she has exhibited in Melbourne, Sydney, Fremantle, the Queensland Museum and in the Philippines.

Angus Cameron, Director, Nomad Art, 2018

Winsome Jobling

Born 1957, Oberon NSW

Lives and works Darwin, Northern Territory

Selected solo exhibitions

- 2018 *Instability*, Nomad Gallery, Darwin
- 2017 *Humilis*, Nomad Gallery, Darwin
- 2016 *Winsome Jobling; the nature of paper*,
Museum & Art Gallery NT
Ground, Nomad Gallery, Darwin
- 2015 *Earthworks*, Nomad Gallery, Darwin
- 2014 *Earth*, Nomad Gallery, Darwin
- 2013 *Build-Up*, Nomad Gallery, Darwin
- 2012 *Breathe*, Nomad Gallery, Darwin
- 2011 *Mesozoic*, Nomad Gallery, Darwin
Bush Vanitas, 24HR Art, Darwin
- 2005 *Liquid Paper* Raft Gallery, Darwin
- 2002 *Kawing* project exhibitions
National University Manila and Baguio, Philippines

Selected group exhibitions

- 2017 *Australia Now*, Brunswick St gallery, Melbourne
- 2015 *Sofia International Paper Art Biennial*, Bulgaria
- 2014 *Watermarks*, IAPMA Conference Exhibition,
Fabriano, Italy
Botanica 1&2, Godinymayin Yijard centre,
Katherine and Chan Contemporary, Darwin
Made to Last, Charles Darwin University, Darwin
- 2013 *Togart Contemporary Art Award*, Darwin
- 2012 *Colossal Paper*, Morgan Conservatory, Cleveland, USA
IAPMA juried exhibition Morgan Conservatory,
Cleveland USA
- 2011 *Togart Contemporary Art Award*, Darwin
Fibre Face 3, Jogjakarta, Indonesia
- 2010 *Togart Contemporary Art Award*, Darwin
- 2009 *Mapping the Island*, 10 Days on the Island
Festival, Hobart
- 2006 *Sculpture in the Park*, Darwin, overall winner
My print my paper, Noosa Regional Gallery, Qld
- 2002 *Book Arts Show*, Lutz Gallery, Makati City, Philippines
Kawing, 24HR Art, Darwin
- 2001 *Paper as Object*, National Touring Exhibition
Contemporary Territory, Museum & Art Gallery N.T.

Selected residencies and workshops

- 2012 *Watermarks Conference*, workshop presenter,
Watermarking found objects
- 2008 *Churchill Fellowship* 'Handmade Paper for
Printmaking' USA, UK and Singapore.

- Residency and workshop at Pyramid Atlantic, USA
- 2007 *Ta Teut Amarasi*, papermaking workshop, Baun,
West Timor. (Darwin Exhibition 2008).
- 2006 *Replant* artist project, Daly River, NT
- 2005-06 *My print my paper*, spinifex paper workshop,
Barkly Arts; Alpurururulun, Canteen
Creek, Ali Curung & Tennant Creek
- 2005 Queensland Craft mentorship grant to mentor
emerging paper artist Melissa Harvey
- 2001-02 Kawing Project: 24HR ART & Asia Link; 6 weeks
residency in the Philippines.
- 2001 New Possibilities for Paper International Conference
Artist in Residence, Noosa Regional Gallery

Selected Bibliography

- 2016 'Winsome Jobling: the nature of paper solo,
survey exhibition' Anita Angel, Darwin.
Art Monthly Issue 290/June-July 2016
- 2013 Winsome Jobling Recognising Indigenous knowledge
when sourcing plant fibres for papermaking
Hand Papermaking International Vol 28 #2
IAPMA Paper Art, 261 International Artists
- 2012 ABC News, N.T. Breathing New Life into Paper
Looking at Art Charles Darwin University art
collection page 70
IAPMA Bulletin #52 pages 44-45
- 2011 Sarah Scott Impending Encounter Artlink Vol 31 #4
- 2010 Daena Murray, Hot Springs, Pages 205-207
- 2009 Winsome Jobling Creative papermaking for
editioned prints. Inprint' Magazine vol 45 #3
IAPMA Bulletin #46 pages 10-11
- 2006 Rosalie Higson Native plants drawn into a
cultural landscape. The Australian 21-04
- 2002 Mutable Reflections: Historic and Contemporary
Paper garments. Prof. Erica Spitzer Rasmussen,
lecture Textile Centre of Minnesota

Public collections

National Gallery of Australia
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
Charles Darwin University
Darwin International Airport

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Acknowledgements

Chatter by Winsome Jobling is proudly sponsored by the Northern Territory Government and supported by the following:

John Gibson

Ray Cadona - Cadlec

Fiona Morrison - photography

Sarah Pirrie - Pirrie Space, Darwin

Inside cover photograph by Peter Eve

Penny-Rose Wiggins - Don Whyte Framing

Angus & Rose Cameron - Nomad Art Productions

