



KAWING

24 HR ART
Northern Territory Centre for Contemporary Art



24HR Art is financially assisted by the NT Government through the Department of the Arts and Museums and the Australia Council, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body.

DENNIS BEZZANT

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Dennis Bezzant has been working as an artist in Darwin for several years. His art practice since he graduated from NTU has been based around the practice of weaving. Dennis first studied the traditional preparation and manipulation of plant fibres while working in Sarawak. His teacher was an Iban weaver who worked in a culture where weaving continues to contain many levels of meaning encompassing both secular and spiritual truths.¹

Over the subsequent years while living and studying in Darwin he has explored the boundaries of weaving and fibre arts through a wide variety of media including metal and natural fibres. In two exhibitions, *'Simply Baskets'* and *'indica'*, linked in style and material, Dennis created monumental sculptural forms based around baskets and other traditional woven forms. *'Simply Baskets'* is an ironic title, for the work is anything but simple. The title refers to the ubiquity and long history of weaving throughout the world; a history Bezzant is proud to be part of and continue as a male weaver in the West. Morag Fraser states: "Bezzant reads Baskets as a medium of adaption and change".²

Bezzant has sourced his materials in the most common of locations. *Flagellaria indica*, from which most of the sculpture is made, is a widespread plant in northern coastal Australia and even survives in suburban Darwin backyards.

These sculptural forms are suggestive on a subliminal level and represent a beautiful synergy between form and materiality. The elegant, minimal sensitivity of these works, coupled with their scale pushes notions of weaving to another dimension.

James Bennett, Curator of South East Asia Art and Material Culture at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory has written about Bezzant's work: "The search for clarification of individual identity and creative vision weaves each individual into the social fabric. For this artist it is through the ordinary and unassuming act of gathering and binding natural fibres. . . Dennis, has been a cultural broker in our perceptual re-positioning of much indigenous material culture, such as fibre items, from ethnography into art. . . These sculptures take on the rhythm of thought like the singing of traditional male weavers in other, more exotic contexts."³

For Bezzant weaving resonates both physically and metaphorically, as inter-cultural meshing. The act of making the sculptural forms is informed by a personal biography that binds together several cultural and social divergences.⁴ His interest in combining the traditions of Celtic weaving of his own ancestors with traditions of Malaysian and other indigenous practices conceptually underpins his work.

Cath Bowdler
October 2001

¹James Bennet, *Indica Catalogue*, 2000

²Morag Fraser, *Simply Baskets?*, *Art Monthly*, March 2000

³James Bennet, op cit.

⁴James Bennet, op.cit.

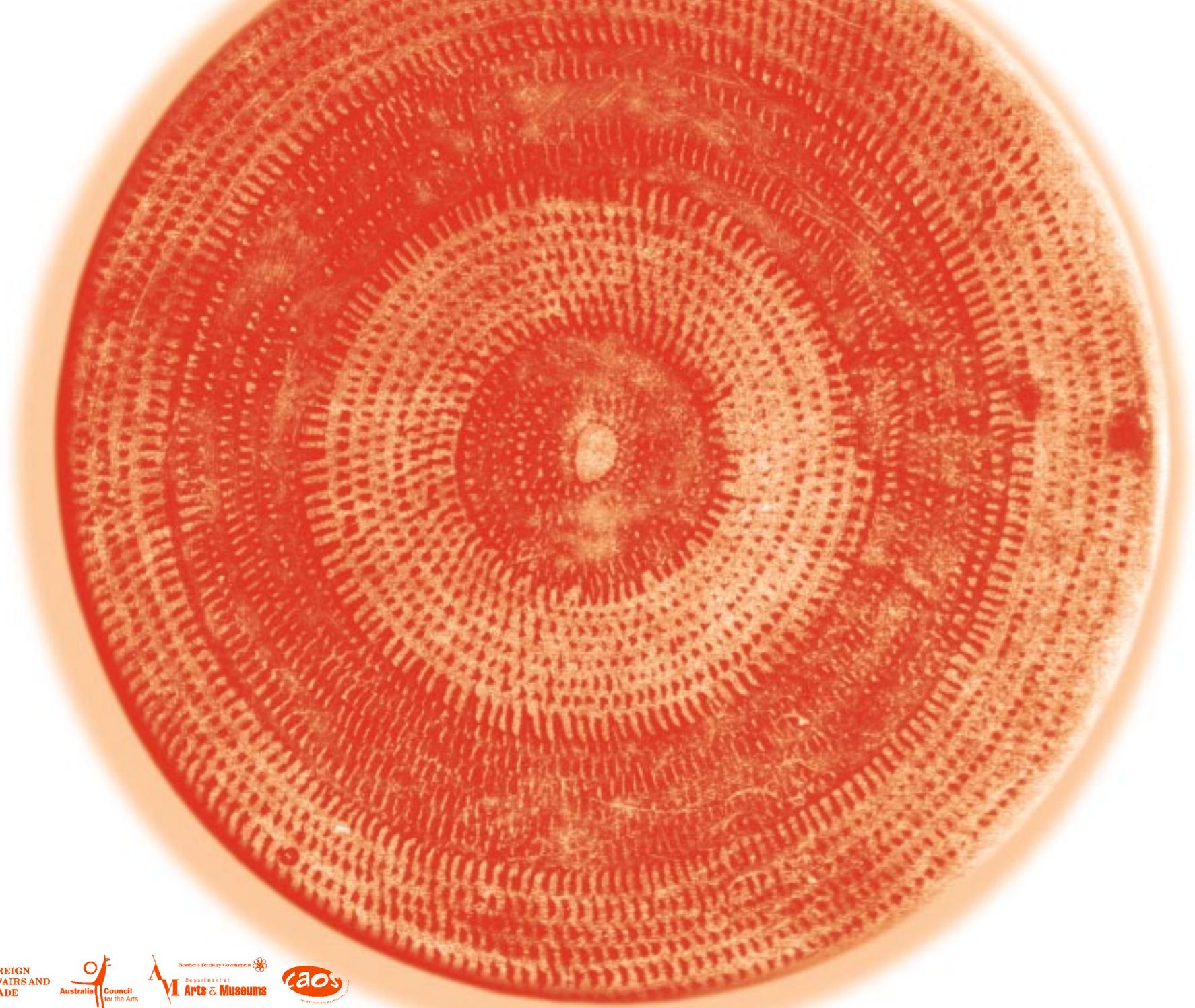


Artist's Statement

Weaving is a fundamental process of organic life. From the simplest of plant forms to the complexity of human relations, weaving speaks metaphorically of the interconnectedness of all things.

In my work, the weaving of objects such as baskets, and other more ambiguous forms, represents not only a personal journey into the historicity of Celtic weaving traditions but also acknowledges weaving as a universal activity practiced by many different cultures. In this sense my fibre installations establish the concept of unification, a meeting ground on which divergent cultures merge.

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JACKI FLEET

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Jacki is a well established Darwin painter, printmaker and sculptor who has engaged in a detailed investigation into the landscape of the Top End of Australia. Like many artists residing in the Northern Territory, Jacki has been drawn to sublime and spiritual qualities in the landscape. Her investigation has led her to depict not the outward signs of the land, the Western view of landscape, but the inner rhythm and pulse of the country.

Originally a figurative painter and printmaker, Fleet continues to paint in a combination of oil and acrylic on canvas. She has made many trips into the country, particularly the Kimberly region of North Western Australia. During this time she formed relationships with Aboriginal artists from the area and this 'other' world view has informed her work. Over time she has become drawn to the iconic presences of termite mounds and their inhabitants that proliferate in the Top End landscape. The termites become the metaphorical symbols of spirit in the land for Fleet. They play out their lives floating above the earth's surface and in the spaces below, responding to the rhythms of the seasons. They inhabit the soil and the earth, the air and the sky; the material and the ethereal.

Through several bodies of work that have explored the motif of the flying ant, Fleet has ever refined her vision. Her paintings have become more abstract as she comes closer to the subject, finally resulting in canvasses of pure shimmering energy and light in the *Pulse* series. The figures with diaphanous wings that fill the *Pulse* canvasses, create a luminosity that is intricate and subtle. They are like tiny charged particles flying into the chaos of space.

The prints are more earth-bound than the paintings yet they share a similar iconography. They are printed, using a photopolymer process on Japanese ogami paper, exploiting its translucency. By exploiting a combination of printing processes the images are layered with the spirit motifs, imposed over another image of a woven spiral background.

Daena Murray has written of Fleet's *Pulse* paintings: "In her work Fleet has drawn attention to the rhythms of nature as ciphers of the spiritual energy underpinning all life. In Fleet's worldscapes spirit and matter become fused in microcosms inhabited by creatures subject to elemental stimuli and cyclic existences. . . These are spiritual works not because they refer us to nature but because they refer us to sacred geometry, to the circle and the square of the mandala, the mystical emblem of Eastern religions. . .".¹

Fleet has honed her vision of the land and the sky and what she paints is the world in between. She has broken through the physical plane with the *Pulse* works into the metaphysical realm, the purely sensate realm of resonance and energy. These canvases are a meditation on the passing of life, its transience and transcendence and fragility.

Cath Bowdler
October 2001

¹Daena Murray, *Pulse Catalogue*, 1999



Artist's Statement

Essentially my work explores the phenomena of our existence, both physical and spiritual, and alludes to the mystery of the soul.

"flower and heart are equal, as one unfolds the other is closing, the fist of charm, the dance of fathoms, of voids, of veils, layer after layer, wall after wall, there is always more after. There is always more after. . ."¹

Jacki Fleet

¹Patti Smith – "*Easter (la Resurrection)*", *Easter*, Arista USA, 1978



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TECHY MASERO

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Techy Masero, of Chilean descent, has been living and working as an artist in Darwin for the last 16 years. Her installations have been instantly recognisable as an integral part of numerous festivals and community events in the Northern Territory over the last ten years. She works on a large scale creating structures out of natural materials drawing inspiration from the environment, traditions and her ancestral roots.

Her work, which celebrates cultural diversity rests mostly in the arena of public and community art. Masero has developed a longstanding relationship with Filipino community groups in Darwin, working closely with them on festival and numerous art projects including the Asia Pacific Cultural Village. This association with Asian and Indigenous cultural groups has formed the foundation for further development of the arts in the Territory.

Nearly all of Masero's work has been created site specifically in public spaces and much of it is ephemeral. Masero is interested in creating new spaces and in encouraging interaction with the physicality of the work through its placement in spectacular locations using familiar symbols such as birds, boats, fish, water and totemic figures. The finished structures form a delicate tracery of cane against the sky, like massive line drawings dominating the space for a moment yet occupy the mind of the viewer long after the original work has disintegrated and gone back into the ground. This delicacy belies the strength of the pieces that must withstand the elements and their effects.

Describing *Taking Off* - a large outdoor installation made in 1996, Suzanne Spinner wrote: "Techy Masero has made a reputation in Darwin for very ambitious projects involving large numbers of people. Her interest in rituals and the Asia Pacific has led her to explore a public celebratory kind of art. *Taking Off*, a huge Asian style boat carried on the back of a mystical bird, was ceremonially launched at Mindil beach. Masero says the structure symbolises Darwin with its cultural diversity and its needs for exploration and exchange".¹

Prophetic words indeed as Masero is now creating a large sculpture on a beach in the Philippines. Her work in Palawan will continue along the same trajectory of exploration and exchange. The Kamarikutan Gallery which is hosting Masero in the Philippines is also made entirely out of natural materials using indigenous construction methods; a fortuitous synergy between philosophy and actuality across different cultures.

Cath Bowdler.
October 2001

¹Suzanne Spinner, *Headland Headspace, Artlink vol 65*, 1966



Artist's Statement

My work explores the connections between natural and ancient cultural

forms and seeks to stimulate the unknown depths of the imagination to

evoke internal reflections of voyages.

Techy Masero



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WINSOME JOBLING

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Winsome Jobling has been experimenting with the art of paper making for over twenty years. She moved to Darwin in 1982 and has been investigating a range of natural fibres ever since as part of her response to her environment. When she moved to Darwin Jobling was taught by Aboriginal women about collecting plant fibres, using bush dyes and natural weaving techniques. She has made paper out of pandanus fibre, banana fibre, paw paw, sugar cane, pineapple fibre and local grasses a veritable tropical cornucopia – linking her art practice to the natural bounty of the tropical environment. Sourcing and almost nurturing the raw materials becomes part of the art making process.

Jobling is constantly pushing the boundaries of her craft. She has created her own home based technology to do this, creating single sheets of paper almost 2mx1m, a triumph of the art. She often works on a large scale and treats paper sculpturally, challenging traditional notions of paper as disposable and small in scale. Jobling often suspends these large works in three-dimensional space.

One well known body of work, *Dress Ups*, consisted of oversized dresses, patterned with watermarks and stencils, which were shown at 24 HR Art. Reminiscent of childhood when all clothes seemed oversized, Jobling's monumental garments dwarfed viewers yet remained fragile and translucent. The dresses were made from banana fibre that produces a rich creamy paper of great strength and translucency, but which also has a fragile and a sensuous quality. In more recent work Jobling has been further exploring translucency and watermarking where the image is inherent in the paper rather than applied to it.

Emma Davies wrote: "Jobling's paper works are a tangible expression of the environment. Her work has developed from depicting the landscape using paper, to letting the paper speak of the landscape from which it is drawn. She allows the distinct seasonal changes experienced in the Top End to determine the physical qualities of the paper produced".¹

Jobling's practice is strongly linked to the environment for both political and physical reasons. Her work is strongly located in this place but its concerns are universal. For Jobling, paper is a carrier of history and a form of tangible memory, something the rest of us take for granted.

Cath Bowdler
October 2001

¹ Footnote????



Artist's Statement

Paper is part of our history as a carrier of maps, research, texts and information yet it is also the great disposable of contemporary society.

In this work I am manipulating handmade paper, a product of the earth, part of my environment - as a reference to the manipulation of land, geography and ecology. Past histories (both European and Indigenous) are all part of this work.

Aboriginal people see the land as a record of all that has happened. It is their creation and ancestors, laws and ceremony and as a food source to harvest and nurture. Land is life, identity and culture.

To us it is a commodity to buy and sell, a resource, something we use. New developments replace our history — a palimpsest. Grids placed over the land; as the European way to 'understand' IT OR fencing it into defined areas, denying access or input - a superficial rather than a spiritual view.

Winsome Jobling

Thanks to

Cath Bowdler

John Gibson©

Santa Maria Madalena the papermakers patron saint