



Samantha Hobson *Bust 'im Up Again* 2001
Synthetic polymer paint and glaze on canvas 125 x 171cm Private collection

OUR WAY CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL ART FROM LOCKHART RIVER

EDUCATION RESOURCE KIT FOR TEACHERS

The University of Queensland Art Museum

The James and Mary Emelia Mayne Centre
A cultural initiative of The University of Queensland
St Lucia, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Open 10am – 4pm Tuesday to Sunday, Admission free
Enquiries 07 3365 3046 www.maynecentre.uq.edu.au

OUR WAY

CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL ART FROM LOCKHART RIVER

This education resource has been prepared to accompany the exhibition *Our Way, Contemporary Art from Lockhart River*, presented by The University of Queensland. It aims to assist teachers and students to interpret and understand works in the exhibition, and place them in a broader cultural context.

An activity sheet is available for upper Primary School/lower Secondary School students. Additional questions are provided for senior students. These resources include pre- and post-visit activities.

Curriculum Relevance

The material in this kit is of particular relevance to the Visual Arts curriculum, and is also of relevance to other curriculum areas.

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Perspectives in Schools

The Queensland Government Department of Education and the Arts' guidelines for 'Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Perspectives in Schools' encourage a holistic approach to the teaching of Indigenous perspectives. This exhibition offers a range of curriculum opportunities in that the art can be approached within the context of Indigenous culture, history, environmental studies and the visual arts.

Children P–4

Experience basic elements and concepts of the visual arts, compare and contrast visual concepts and processes, identify and interpret symbols and images (especially coastal and marine creatures), communicate feelings and observations, and introduce elements of Indigenous culture (importance of 'country', Indigenous words in artwork titles, etc.).

The Arts 1–7

Experience basic elements of the visual arts, compare and contrast visual processes and concepts such as abstraction, representation and symbolism, analyse images, and consider audience.

The Arts: Visual Art 8–10

Research, analyse and evaluate aspects of the exhibition, artworks and artists in terms of visual arts and Indigenous culture.

The Arts: Senior Visual Art 11–12

Analyse and evaluate aspects of the exhibition, artworks and artists in terms of visual arts and Indigenous culture; explore and develop ideas about contemporary Indigenous art and its relationship to traditional and global culture; consider the critical reception of Indigenous art.

Aboriginal Studies 7–10

Examine Indigenous perspectives on 'country' and their relation to culture and visual art; examine food sources for Sandbeach people and sustainable use of the marine environment; links between contemporary art, continuing traditions and ancestral stories.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 11–12

Research and examine Indigenous culture post-contact, impact of missions and dispossession, mixing of different language groups; contemporary use of 'Creole' language and language revival; importance of 'country', role of art and education; food sources and relationship with environment; links between contemporary art, continuing traditions and ancestral stories.

Studies of Society and Environment 1-10

Research and examine the changing human-environment relationship for this Indigenous community; the importance of 'country' and the construction of 'identity'; examine traditional food sources in the coastal and sea environment and aspects of heritage, stewardship, cultural change, sustainable practices, and participation in decision making.

Marine Studies 11-12

Research and examine the changing human-environment relationship for this Indigenous community; the importance of links between 'country' and culture; traditional food sources in the coastal and sea environment; and aspects of heritage, stewardship, cultural change, sustainable practices, participation in decision making; investigate how Indigenous people are responding to species which are under threat in the Great Barrier Reef region [teacher/research to augment exhibition resources].

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Pre-visit activities:

■ Virtual tour!

Take a virtual tour of *Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River*. This tour of the exhibition has been prepared by Ortelia, which designs virtual gallery and theatre venues. Ortelia is Associate Professor Joanne Tompkins, School of English, Media Studies and Art History, The University of Queensland, and Lazaros Kastanis, Lecturer in Creative Industries, QUT. Go to the Schools page on the Mayne Centre website: www.maynecentre.uq.edu.au.

■ Introduction to Lockhart River Aboriginal community, culture, geographical location and environment

We recommend teachers familiarise students with the geographical location of the Lockhart River Aboriginal community, and important features of Sandbeach culture, history, society and environment. The recommended text is Dr Sally Butler's richly illustrated publication, *Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2007.

■ A fun and easy introduction to printmaking techniques

Introduce students to the Museum of Modern Art (New York) website 'What is a print?' at <http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint/flash.html>.

■ Engage with a local Indigenous person

We encourage you to engage local Indigenous elders and workers from the school and local community in learning experiences and activities. Having learnt about their local Indigenous community, students will have a greater connection with learning about 'Sandbeach country'. Students should be encouraged to welcome and respect this member of the Indigenous community, and be ready for their visit with a number of prepared questions.

■ Protocols and contemporary approaches to Indigenous culture

When accessing the human resources of Aboriginal communities and Torres Strait Island communities, it is important to follow protocols. Online references: *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Perspectives in Schools*, P-12 School Guidelines for Administrators and Educators, Queensland Government, Department of Education and the Arts, 2006, http://education.qld.gov.au/students/jnt-venture/atasi/success/pdfs/indig_persp.pdf, and Cultural Protocol Site, ABC Message Stick, <http://www.abc.net.au/message/proper/default.htm>.

■ Ethical dimensions

Teachers should inform students that Indigenous people and communities are the custodians of knowledge and culture. Indigenous individuals and communities need to give permission before such knowledge can be shared. For instance, a particular story (or image) pertaining to 'country' may be inherited and belong to a particular person or family. It would be inappropriate for another person to tell that story. Moreover, some stories may be more sacred and secret than other stories, even within the Aboriginal community.

■ Intellectual property and copyright

Indigenous individuals and communities may own the intellectual property and copyright of knowledge, stories and images. Use of such knowledge, stories and images needs to be negotiated with their rightful owners. Students should also be aware that copyright on individual images and artworks remains with the artist. Reproduction of the artworks in the exhibition is not permitted without the consent of the artist and, in some cases, the institution (public gallery) that loaned the work. Except for the educational purposes stated on the 'Acknowledgements' page of this education resource kit, no illustration may be reproduced without the permission of the copyright owners.

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Introduction

Contemporary art from the remote North Queensland Aboriginal community of Lockhart River is a youth-driven art initiative unlike any other in Australia. In this eclectic selection of art, a group of young people present a perspective of life that they describe as uniquely 'our way'.

All of their art is deeply traditional in that it is exclusively about their community. However, their mode of expressing cultural traditions and contemporary community life in visual art represents a radical departure from conventional community-based Australian Indigenous art. Their art celebrates how the individual inhabits a community identity in the modern world. Lockhart River art is deeply anchored in the cultural traditions of community life at the same time as it is inherently worldly.

'Our Way' pays tribute to an exciting new chapter in Australian art and tells an inspirational story about the profound cultural strength of Australian Indigenous peoples.

Exhibition themes

The exhibition is organised around three areas of significance:

Sandbeach Country

- **Sandbeach Country** represents the geo-cultural context of the art. Different language groups belonging to country in the Lockhart River region refer to themselves as 'Sandbeach people'. This distinguishes them in terms of the coastal region of their homelands and their way of life. Art in this section of the exhibition celebrates this context and presents features of its unique value and beauty.

The Art Gang

- **The Art Gang**, profiles examples of fine art printmaking by the group. Collaboration between Lockhart River community leaders and Queensland Government institutions and agencies led to the development of the Lockhart River Art Gang. A dove-tailed program of educational and vocational learning encouraged the community's youth to study art as both personal expression and a potential profession. Fine art printmaking was a key process in pursuing these goals, and is the medium for which Lockhart River artists first gained recognition.

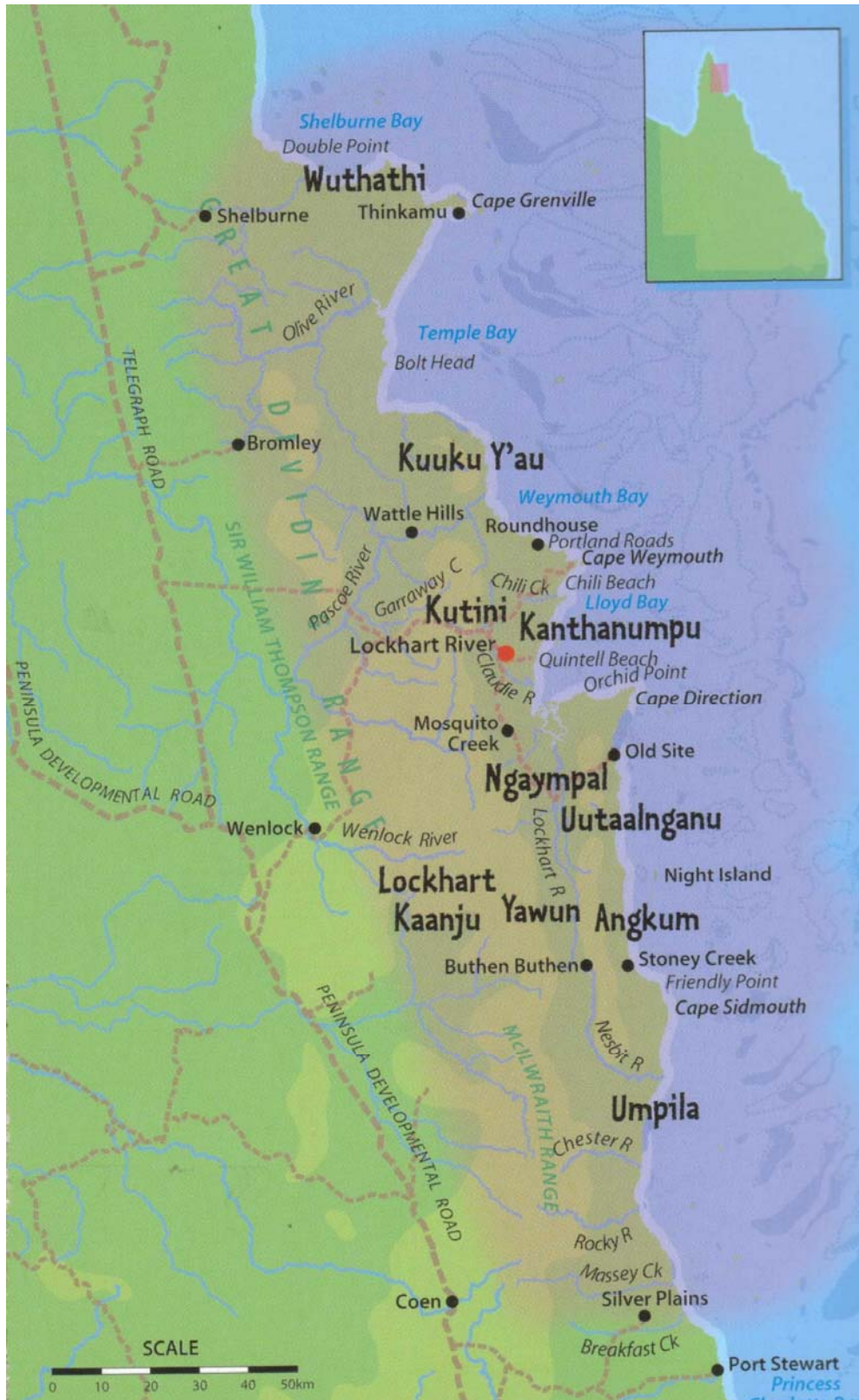
Painting Solo

- **Painting Solo** presents the work of five Lockhart River artists who have had solo exhibitions and established themselves as recognised individual artists both in Australia and internationally. These artists are Rosella Namok, Samantha Hobson, Fiona Omeenyo, Adrian King and Silas Hobson.

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Map of the Lockhart River region



Lockhart River region

(Map reproduced courtesy of the Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council)

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Sandbeach Country

'Pama Malnkana' – 'people of the sand beach'



Samantha Hobson *Flying over the Reef*
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 183 x 285cm Private collection

One of the cleanest and most pristine areas of the Great Barrier Reef lies just off the coast of the Lockhart River community. The isolated and often inaccessible location of the community means that residents often travel by small aircraft to and from regional centres. Hobson's painting captures the intense beauty of looking over the Reef in one of these small aircraft and the glistening effect of sand and coral in the shallow aquamarine waters.

Aspects of the spectacular tropical environment of Cape York Peninsula feature in Lockhart River's contemporary art. Located approximately 850 kilometres north of Cairns (a 12-hour drive by four-wheel-drive vehicle), Lockhart River is in the heart of the one of the world's great wilderness areas. The Lockhart River community is located two kilometres inland from Quintel Beach, one of the many white sandy beaches that run along the coast of Lloyd Bay. Traditional homelands include islands and marine areas of the Great Barrier Reef.

Aboriginal people living in this mixed coastal ecosystem call themselves 'Sandbeach' people and their art and culture reflect a deep understanding of the geophysical environment and its seasonal moods. Lockhart River artists document a landscape made up of white sandy beaches, mangrove habitats, dense forest growth, and bushy to sparse woodland plains. Vivid colour and bold formal expression in the art register the artists' intense experience of the natural environment. Their art confirms in contemporary terms a sense of identity that Australian Indigenous people call 'country', in which society, culture and self are essentially linked to land.

A Sandbeach way of life anchors the way in which Lockhart River artists characterise place. In addition to everyday events of community and outstation life, the knowledge passed down by elders through storytelling, body painting, and sand illustrations provides an ongoing theme. The prevailing I'wai Hero Cult myth featuring a crocodile with human characteristics, together with Quinkan figures from rock art galleries to the south of Lockhart River, define the community's ancient sense of spirituality.

Different language groups

In 1924 the separated lifestyles of various groups changed when the Lockhart River Anglican Mission was established. A new form of community developed where people from different language and kinship groups lived together in the one settlement. The five main language groups in Sandbeach country are Wuthathi, Kuuku Ya'u, Uutaalnganu, Kaanju and Umpila. Artists in the Lockhart River Art Gang are from different language groups and therefore belong to different areas of country and their stories.

- **Patrick Butcher** (b. 1977) – Language group Umpila
- **Sammy Clarmont** (b. 1972) – Language group Lama Lama
- **Samantha Hobson** (b. 1981) – Language group Kuuku Ya'u (Samantha Hobson's country is north of Lockhart River, near Chili Beach and Pascoe Farm, beyond Coen.)
- **Silas Hobson** (b. 1979) – Language group Kuuku Ya'u / Wuthathi
- **Adrian King** (b. 1974) – Language group Lama Lama (Adrian King is from the outstation Wenlock Outstation at Port Stewart, near Coen. His mother's father is from Port Stewart.)
- **Rosella Namok's** (b. 1979) – Language group Aangkum (Rosella Namok's father is half Kuuku Ya'u and half Aangkum, and is from south of Lockhart River. Rosella's mother is from the Torres Strait.)
- **Fiona Omeenyo** (b. 1981) – Language group Umpila (Fiona Omeenyo's family come from a small area beyond Coen called Chester River, where they have a land claim.)
- **Leroy Platt** (b. 1977) – Language group Kuuku Ya'u
- **Terry Platt** (b. 1972) – Language group Kuuku Ya'u / Lama Lama
- **Evelyn Sandy** (b. 1978) – Language group Lama Lama

Rosella Namok, in *Yarning Circle* reproduced in the *Our Way* publication, describes the difficulty she faced in learning about her father's country, and therefore in knowing what country and stories belonged to her:

Because all that time when I was a little girl I always thought that my grandmother on my father's side was from Torres Strait Islands. Because my father was adopted and Old Man Jack Powloo grew up my dad. He told me my dad's mother is Uutaalnganu, so that means my dad is half Kuuku Ya'u and half Aangkum. So I didn't know what country I belonged to because I wasn't sure about my dad. But when I grew up, I asked the old people and they told me what country, because they know about my dad and where he came from. ... Because I know from my mum's side, she is from Torres Strait, but I really wanted to know about my dad. They told me he is from Aangkum. He is from country down south that way.*

Today, younger people in the Lockhart River community are not necessarily fluent in their original language or dialect. Instead, they are likely to speak Lockhart Creole – a mix of local languages and English.

*Excerpt from Rosella Namok, Samantha Hobson and Fiona Omeenyo yarning with Dr Sally Butler, full text reproduced in *Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River* publication (UQP, 2007).

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Sandbeach country and the environment



Samantha Hobson *Bush Fire* 2002

Synthetic polymer paint and glaze on canvas 174 x 170cm Collection: Vivien Anderson & Gilles Terrier

Bushfires are a spectacular and frequent event in the Lockhart River region, particularly in hinterland areas where vegetation is dry. Samantha Hobson's landscapes are always passionate interpretations of the environment and depict the emotive sense of power and intensity created by uncontrollable fires in the Australian bush.

Aspects of the environment are central to the work of the Lockhart River Art Gang.

The twenty-one major wild-river systems that pattern the coastal region are one of the most distinctive features of the region, and are depicted from an aerial perspective in Fiona Omeenyo's artwork *Many Rivers to the Sea*.

During the dry-season months of late May to late October, bushfires occur throughout the region. Some of these are controlled, some are spontaneous and others are the product of bored young boys looking for excitement. Samantha Hobson's *Bushfire* of 2000 is one of this artist's spectacular fire paintings.

Offshore areas of Sandbeach country are the cleanest and healthiest sections of the Great Barrier Reef, and their rich marine life is a mainstay of the community's food supply. The Ten Islands group off Cape Grenville in Wuthathi country is a huge coral reef habitat for reef fish, crayfish, dugong and turtles. Marine life feature in many of the fine art prints of the Lockhart River Art Gang.

Rain is one of the most outstanding features of a tropical climate. Rosella Namok's so-called rain paintings explore different moods of rain in the tropical north.

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I'wai and the Hero Cult Saga

'Before time' refers to an ancestral past. The degree of contemporary artists' knowledge of, or belief in, events and figures of the 'Before time' period is a matter of some conjecture, and ultimately today is an issue of personal spirituality and significance. Nevertheless, with regard to art produced today, there is a recurring reference to this period and its traditional significance.

I'wai (pronounced 'ee'way') is the leading figure of the Hero Cult Saga, one of the creation myths supporting a mode of common identity across the different language groups of Sandbeach country. I'wai is often portrayed as the figure of a crocodile, who walks as a man. A ceremonial drum similar to those used in Torres Strait Island cultures features a distinctive dove-tail-shaped base that is painted to represent the mouth of I'wai with a fine set of teeth.

When a number of the male artists of the Art Gang worked together on an art project, they selected the drum as their subject. It was one of the few subjects that all artists could 'speak for' across their different kinship identities.

Silas Hobson's sculpture *Crocodile Man* (2003) features a crocodile's head on a (almost life-size) human body and pays heed to this mythic figure. Like I'wai, Hobson's crocodile sculpture stands upright like a human.

The Quinkans



Fiona Omeenyo *Mother and Child* 2004
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 115 x 81cm Private collection

Fiona Omeenyo's figures derive from the Quinkan spirit figures found in rock art in the Laura region to the south of the artist's Umpila country. The artist became a mother at a very young age and now has three children. The family bond between different generations of family is a particular preoccupation with the artist and this image we see different ways that the artist depicts connections between mother and child. The artist often depicts lines of connection between parents and children, and runs these lines through to ancestral generations of the family.

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The Quinkans are a recurring visual motif in Lockhart River contemporary art. These spirit figures are a distinctive feature of rock-art sites located south of Sandbeach country. Numerous rock-art galleries occur on a plateau running south from Princess Charlotte Bay to south-west of the township of Laura. The sandstone escarpment here is known as Quinkan country after the unique style of imagery found in rock shelters, possibly from a period of around 4000-5000 BP*.

These anthropomorphous figures have generalised bodies and unusual head forms lacking any features except for eyes. Some figures have a ray-haired effect, with animals, birds, fish and artefacts also depicted. The Quinkan rock art galleries were viewed by Art Gang members in 1997. A number of students from the Lockhart River Art Gang visited these rock-art sites with archaeologist Percy Trezise (1923-2005) as part of the visual arts program, and the figures appear in much of their early print work.

Fiona Omeenyo's Umpila country lies close to this region, suggesting why stylistic conventions of Quinkan figures dominate her art. Omeenyo's inverted figures denote the spiritual realm or previous generations of her family. She also uses a superimposition technique, encouraging figures from 'Before time' to emerge through the transparent screen of time enveloping them. Her titles do not invoke these figures by name, but instead invoke a cultural tradition that exists today in a transformed state.

*When a period of time is expressed as BP (before present), the year AD 1950 is used as the 'present'; this system is used for dates determined by radiocarbon dating.

Miiku, the Parrot Sisters and Kuchuutu

An important theme in Fiona Omeenyo's early work involves a traditional story told by her uncle, Blade Omeenyo. Different parts of this story evolved into a body of work spanning three exhibitions. Omeenyo was inspired toward treating the story as a series of visual episodes when viewing Sidney Nolan's 'Ned Kelly' series at the National Gallery of Australia.

Omeenyo recalls:

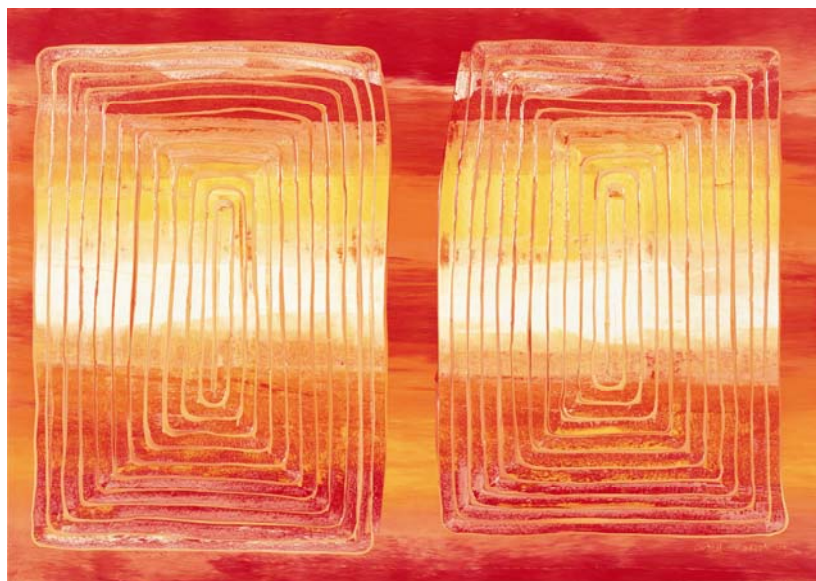
*When I was in Canberra I saw Sidney Nolan's 'Ned Kelly' series. And I got the idea about how there are ... a series of stories behind his paintings. I thought about how my paintings could be a series of paintings, like in a book ... Then I did a series of paintings about Miiku and the Parrot Sisters. It was like how the paintings were each part of the Ned Kelly story, and I did the same with my story. So there were the Parrot Sisters and the wedding, and the corroboree, and then the flood. Other parts of the series were Miiku on the island, the Parrot Sisters in the grass hut, and the Sea Eagle Kuchuutu. All of the series went into three exhibitions that I had.**

*Excerpt from Fiona Omeenyo, Rosella Namok and Samantha Hobson yarning with Dr Sally Butler, full text reproduced in *Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River* publication (UQP, 2007); For a transcription of Fiona Omeenyo's story of 'My Story: Miiku, Parrot Sisters and Kuchuutu', go to <http://www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/library/pdf/fionaomeenyo.pdf>; also reproduced in the publication *Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River* (UQP, 2007).

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Moiety and traditional law



Rosella Namok, *Waterhole, Lockhart Canteen* 2004
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 120 x 171cm Private collection

Rosella Namok, in this image, superimposes two of her typical geometric figures (representing the Canteen where people gather to socialise) over the yellow area representing the waterhole. Places where the community socialise are a common feature of Namok's art, with her use of colour depicting the mood of activities and events.

The concept of moiety is one of determining essential differences between people across different language groups, and is an important factor in the life of Cape York people. Moieties regulate proper activity with regards to marriages and genealogical relationships, among other things. Kaapay and Kuyan are the two different moieties pertaining to Sandbeach people. They form the basic concepts of social organisation and it is their essential opposition that is crucial.

Rosella Namok's series of paintings dealing with the theme of Kaapay and Kuyan are efforts to express this opposition. Hence they are conceived with the most elemental of forms – ovals, squares and rectangles. Two like forms are paired to express how moiety differentiates people. The nature of the shape or form is not significant; however, the relationship between the two forms is. Kaapay and Kuyan are one of her most frequently used motifs and something that the artist often paints in large scale.

The concept of social difference is worked through in Namok's prints and paintings in terms of young couples and old couples, right-way and wrong-way couples, and also in terms of *para* way (meaning 'whitefella' way) and *pama* way (meaning 'Sandbeach' or 'our' way). The simplicity of her approach creates the essence and depth of moiety. Any more detail would confuse the message, and any less would fail to communicate it. Namok's use of line and circle is unlike other use of these simple elements in contemporary Aboriginal art.

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The Lockhart River Art Gang

Developments in Lockhart River's contemporary art grew out of the community's priority to implement educational and vocational programs enabling students to remain in the community while they prepared for employment. Lacking educational facilities beyond a primary school, the Lockhart River Aboriginal Council and Queensland's Department of Education initiated a post-primary program, whereby students learnt professional skills in a number of fields including the visual arts. Students participating in the visual arts program became known as the Lockhart River Art Gang.

The visual arts program involved a wide range of techniques taught by specialist art teachers, and workshops conducted by some of Australia's leading artists. Such artists included the printmakers Basil Hall, Theo Tremblay and Yvonne Boag. Other artists to work with the Lockhart River community were Guy Warren, Gary Shead, Tom Risley, Mike Nichols and Michael Leunig. The program emphasised a keen understanding of the intrinsic expression of different media and awareness for professional standards in the visual arts industry.

Fine art printmaking was the mainstay of early art production and the area in which Lockhart River artists were first recognised. Print techniques included linocut, screen print, etching, collagraph and waxprint. The Art Gang's first interstate recognition was for their print work in The National Indigenous Art of Place Award in Old Parliament House, Canberra, in 1998, where they won The Community Endeavour Award.

Fine art printmaking



Terry Platt *Before Time* 2002
Linocut 61x 43cm Courtesy of the Artist and Lockhart River Art & Cultural Centre

'Before time' is the expression used by Sandbeach people in reference to ancestral time, or the time before remembered events. This encompasses the spiritual realm of Sandbeach culture. Stories pertaining to this time anchor the identity and meaning of life for different kinship groups. In this image, Terry Platt has included Quinkan spirit figures amid an inverted landscape, suggesting the spiritual realm of experience.

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The first administrators of the Lockhart River Art & Cultural Centre, Geoff and Fran Barker, visited Canberra in 1996 to research fine-art printmaking equipment and processes with Basil Hall and Theo Tremblay at Studio One in Canberra. In that year, printmaking equipment was purchased for the Art & Cultural Centre. In the late 1990s, printmakers Theo Tremblay, Yvonne Boag, and Max and Janie Miller were invited to have residencies at Lockhart River. Such visiting artists not only provided technical expertise, but also acted as mentors.

Totem-inspired pictures of local fauna were a strong feature of Lockhart River art during its early phase of printmaking. Stylised renderings of animals and marine life, such as turtles and dugong, species of fish and birds, crocodiles and other reptiles, were common. The male artists were particularly keen to adopt this type of storytelling in their prints.

Fine art printmaking played a significant role in how the Art Gang's artistic talents matured, as well as in profiling their work beyond the Lockhart River community. A number of Australia's leading printmakers conducted workshops with members of the Art Gang, both in the community and in locations in Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

Linocut prints by children from the Lockhart River Primary School are also displayed, representing the next generation of artists in the community. A selection of prints by these school children was exhibited in the Cairns Regional Gallery, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane and in the International Children's Library in Tokyo in 2002/03.

Printmakers become painters

Rosella Namok and Fiona Omeenyo's later artistic developments in painting are an extension of the stylistic method developed in silk-screen printing.

Silk-screen technique is based on the artist setting up a series of screens that build the image, and then pulling colour through the screens in successive stages. A mechanical element in this process allows for a certain degree of unexpected outcome. All parts of one colour are pulled through at once, so that these stages of the image emerge together and not stroke by stroke as with painting.

In her paintings, Namok works with layers of colour laid one upon the other and then pulls her marks through wet layers of paint, revealing the dried colour of the background beneath.

A comparison can also be made to the way women elders pull their fingers through the sand while yarning.

Sculpture

Melbourne sculptor Michael Nicholls first visited Lockhart River in 2003, and introduced one of the male elders to art-making at the Centre. Nicholls conducted three residencies at the Centre and was instrumental in encouraging Silas Hobson to take up sculpture, along with Philip Sandy, Adrian King's father.

Philip Sandy concentrates on sculptures of the local animals of Sandbeach country, using a small axe and sandpaper to create the form and often painting the works in bright acrylic colours. Philip Sandy is an example of one of the elders following the lead of the young ones (Maureen Sandy has similarly taken up landscape painting).

See above for discussion of Silas Hobson's sculpture *Crocodile Man* (2003), based on the mythic figure of I'wai (the crocodile).

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Paintings of personal expression and contemporary life

Not all aspects of life in Lockhart River community are idyllic. Some of the seemingly abstract works by Samantha Hobson, for instance, represent the social tensions found in this community. Works by Hobson such as *Bust 'im up again* (2001) can be seen as a form of personal expression.

Hobson's 'Bust 'im Up' series of paintings refer to the violence that erupts in the community as a result of alcohol. Her art concerns itself with all aspects of community life and the artist does not shy away from the realities of everyday life and the particular problems involved in remote communities where there is often insufficient employment and education opportunities.

Painting solo

Five members of the original Lockhart River Art Gang have achieved solo exhibitions for their art and now pursue individual careers as professional artists. A remarkable aspect of the art from this small remote community is the diversity of styles. Their art is traditional in the sense that it is always about their community, but it is also worldly in terms of its stylistic global awareness.

These young Aboriginal artists were born into a contemporary world of inherent cross-culturalism and dynamic information exchange, and their aesthetic outlook reflects this world. All of their art is about Sandbeach people and place, but this communal bond is expressed in various styles ranging from naïve landscape and reference to traditional iconography to figurative expressionism, abstract fields of colour and linear minimalism.

Rosella Namok was the first Lockhart River artist to hold a solo exhibition of her work. This occurred at Sydney's Hogarth Galleries in 1999 with the title *'Bout Here ... Lockhart River*. This exhibition was closely followed by the solo exhibition of Samantha Hobson at Brisbane's Andrew Baker Art Dealer in 2000 and Fiona Omeeny's three solo exhibitions in 2001 in Broome, Brisbane and Sydney. Adrian King and Silas Hobson achieved solo exhibitions more recently.

Learning from the elders

The 'Old Girls' are the beloved female elders of the Lockhart River community who advise and nurture younger members of the community, often by telling stories whilst they all gather at Quintel beach near the community. The women illustrate their stories by drawing in the sand and Namok's paintings, such as Old girls they talk in the sand ... talk to us (2003), depict the different characters of these old girls in the different panels.

The women elders who participated in the steering committee when the Lockhart River Art and Cultural Centre formed (established 1995, incorporated 1997) began weaving at the Centre immediately, creating a hub of community traffic around them. In addition to weaving, the women also produced necklaces made from local shells and seeds. The shells are called 'akui' and the distinctive bright red seeds they use are found on rainforest vines and are called 'giddy giddy beads'. Another item created by both men and women of the community were the 'Kuluup Shakers', a dance instrument held in the hand.

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The 'Old Girls' who gathered at the Centre included Maria Butcher, 'Queen' Elizabeth Giblet, Susan Pascoe and Dorothy Short. *Puunya* (baskets) woven by Dorothy Short (b. 1933) – Samantha Hobson's grandmother – were included in the Queensland Art Gallery's *Story Place* exhibition in 2003.

Fiona Omeeny and Samantha Hobson also remember that when they were in primary school 'Old fellow Isaac Hobson' would tell stories and give them 'bush tucker'.

Fiona Omeeny: *He [Isaac Hobson] told us stories and he actually drew the stories on the sand for us.*

Fiona Omeeny: *I remember Dorothy Short yarning to me when I first started painting things. We started doing it on bark, more or less what people think is traditional – traditional painting. But now they know who we really are and what it is about us. They are really proud of us and what we are doing, especially coming from a really small community.*

Rosella Namok: *Before we even started painting, our grandmothers were always telling stories and yarning about like before time, you know, old times.**

Today the young Lockhart River artists acknowledge that the older people are also learning from them. Indeed, elders such as Dorothy Short were motivated to return to basket weaving as the Art Gang gathered momentum. However, the older artists are disappointed that their more traditional work has not met with the same rewards as the work of the younger artists.

*Excerpts from Fiona Omeeny, Rosella Namok and Samantha Hobson yarning with Dr Sally Butler, full text reproduced in *Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River* publication (UQP, 2007)

European history



Adrian King *The New Site* 1999
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 108 x 83cm Private collection

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Adrian King's landscapes involve careful placement of details. He closely observes how things are organised and how people fit into the picture of life. The majority of his landscapes are about outstation life or favourite fishing spots. However, this artwork depicts the current location of the Lockhart River township after it was moved from the Old Site further south in 1967.

In the fifty-year period prior to the establishment of the Anglican Mission in 1924, Lockhart River people were in contact with Torres Strait Islander people, along with Japanese, Chinese, Papuans and Europeans. Many of the Lockhart River men participated in the harvesting of bêche-de-mer, trochus shell and pearl shell, and on land they worked in the sandalwood industry. Labour exploitation was common during this era.

The Anglican Mission's first site was at the 'Waterhole' in Lloyd Bay, some 40 kilometres south of Lockhart River community's present site. This original mission location is referred to by community people today as 'Old Site'. The mission was disbanded during the Second World War.

During the 1950s, the Lockhart River Anglican Mission cooperated with the trade union movement to counter the exploitation of the Indigenous people (see Kylie Tennant's *Speak You So Gently* of 1959 and John Warby's *You-Me Mates Eh!* of 1999). Lockhart River is proud of its history of enterprising innovation, as Johnson Chippendale, Mayor of the Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council, advises in the Lockhart River Community Plan 2004–2008. He writes in that publication:

In 1954, our ancestors at 'Old Site' were the first in Australia to create an Aboriginal Cooperative for trochus shell, pearl shell and bêche-de-mer which created self-employment for the men of the community. Now, many years on, we are again following in their footsteps by creating a fishing company – Puchiwu Fishing Company Pty Ltd – to offer self-employment for the people of Lockhart River and enable them to have real jobs and develop more skills.

In 1967, the Anglican Mission handed over governance of the community to the Queensland Government and a decision was made to transfer the community in 1971 to its new location near Quintel Beach, which became known as 'New Site'. Attempts by the government to relocate the entire population of Lockhart River to Bamaga on the northern tip of the Cape met strong resistance from the community.

Implementation of more severe restrictions on movement and external influences occurred in the post-mission era under the Queensland Government's conservative regime. The community had little technological and communications infrastructure at this time, with no electricity until 1978 and no television until 1982. There were no telephones at all, and there was one barge per month and two very expensive flights per week.

The commencement of the Lockhart River Aboriginal Council as a local government in 1987 marked a significant improvement in these circumstances, initiating an explosion of external contact. Conditions and opportunities improved considerably under a state Labor government (from 1989) and the introduction of the *Queensland Aboriginal Land Act* in 1991.

Lockhart River community and the outstation movement

Most of the population of approximately 850 live in the community of Lockhart River, although many kinship groups have camps or outstations located on their traditional lands. The Lockhart River Community Plan 2004–2008 lists the people's first priority as 'getting back to country', an initiative involving the development of facilities on these outstations and improving access to them by road and sea. A number of native title claims are still in progress for the people of the Lockhart River community.

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Paintings by Adrian King, for instance, depict the Wenlock Outstation camp, one of the outstations. His charming scenes of everyday activity are, in fact, quite political in nature, being statements about the centrality of homelands to his cultural heritage. They express the importance of 'getting back to country'. His landscapes typically describe family activity at outstation camps, including details of the country and flora and fauna.

Custodians of the environment

People of Sandbeach country utilise the resources of the coastal and marine environment. Members of the Lockhart River community are keen fishermen and women and many of the Art Gang's artworks, particularly their prints, depict the creatures of the coastal and marine environment. Dugong (*watayi* in Kuuku Ya'u language) and sea-water turtle are traditionally hunted for food in the Lockhart River region.

The exhibition includes artworks with titles indicating, in language, the name of the creature depicted. The following are in the Kuuku Ya'u language:

Fiona Omeenyo, *Unta Making Next* (1999) – 'green ant' (*untha*)

Evelyn Sandy, *Maniiti Kutini* (2000) – 'rainforest (*maniiti*) cassowary (*kutini*)'

Geoffrey Warradoo, *Kaampi* (1997) – 'flying fox' or 'fruit bat' (*kaampi*)

Geoffrey Warradoo, *Pata* (1997) – 'death adder snake' (*pata*)

Some depictions are totemic images, relating to ancestral stories from 'before time'. Chili Beach is the site of the turtle (*paanti*) story and the stingray (*paalki*) story from the Kuuka Ya'u people, whose language group is divided between the Kungkay and Kanthanampu. They are from the area now known as the Iron Range National Park, with country extending from the ranges to the Great Barrier Reef. In summer, when the water is still and clear, people hunt turtle and stingray in the Chili Beach area. ('Iron Range National Park – Nature, culture and history' on Environmental Protection Agency website: www.epa.qld.gov.au)

Gregory Omeenyo's screenprint *Yipay & Kungkay* (1999) depicts the form of a stingray, seen from above and placed between two drums. 'Yipay' refers to south/south-east and 'kungkay' to north/north-east, suggesting links between Sandbeach people, country and culture.

The harvesting of marine animals such as dugong and turtle by Sandbeach people has been studied by anthropologist Associate Professor Athol Chase (formerly of Griffith University) to ascertain the significance of these cultural practices. However, with dugong and turtle numbers now under threat, Indigenous people are being called upon to re-assess and monitor these practices. In 2005, the following were judged in Queensland to be 'Endangered' – Loggerhead (*lupu/wapun* in Kuuku Ya'u language), Olive Ridley and Leatherback marine turtles, and 'Vulnerable' – Green, Hawksbill and Flatback marine turtles. The conservation status of dugongs in that year in Queensland was 'Vulnerable' (*Nature Conservation Act*) and 'Protected Species' (*Marine Park Act 1982*).

Dugongs and turtles numbers have declined as a result of more efficient harvesting technology, boat strikes, commercial trawling, gill netting and by-catch, 'ghost' or discarded nets, climate change and general degradation of the marine environment (including seagrass habitat). Turtle nests also fall prey to feral animals such as wild pigs.

While Section 211 of the *Native Title Act 1993 & 1998* protects the non-commercial hunting rights of native title holders, governments can regulate Indigenous hunting to ensure the conservation of the species. The Federal Government's Natural Heritage Trust, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Environmental Protection Agency and other government agencies are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop cooperative management programs to ensure sustainable levels of Indigenous harvesting of dugong and marine turtles, with Indigenous people being involved in areas of research, management and education.

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Aboriginal people in the Great Barrier Reef region have initiated a number of marine resource management projects. 'Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements' (TUMRAs) are being implemented by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority with the 70 Traditional Owner groups in their sea country within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In 1995, the Lockhart River Aboriginal Community developed a 'Sea Plan'. Environmental scientists such as Dr Helene Marsh, Dean of Graduate Research Studies at James Cook University, have worked with Indigenous communities and helped develop community-based management of dugongs and turtles (Dr Marsh has worked with the Hopevale Aboriginal Community). Some Aboriginal groups in Queensland's southern Great Barrier Reef region have voluntarily suspended hunting of dugong because of declining numbers.

Dugongs are depicted in Silas Hobson's screenprint *Seashell Dreaming* of 1999, along with turtles, fish and crayfish. For a description by Traditional Owner Isaac Hobson of hunting practices of dugong and turtles in the Lockhart River area, and of the protocols observed by anthropologist Athol Chase in parts of Cape York, which restricted the hunting and eating of dugong to older initiated men, go to *Dugong and Marine Turtle Knowledge Handbook* (Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, February 2005, p. 22).

In the Yarning Circle reproduced in the publication *Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River*, Rosella Namok points out that whereas the old people of Lockhart River 'really only understand turtle and dugong and like that', the young women found their own images:

I don't copy anybody. I don't do the turtle and dugong like the boys' ones in Lockhart. I don't draw like the boys, so I decided to do my own style.*

*Excerpt from Rosella Namok, Samantha Hobson and Fiona Omeenyo yarning with Dr Sally Butler, full text reproduced in *Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River* publication (UQP, 2007).

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Timeline of the 'Art Gang' story

1994	A Curriculum for Community Development is created, involving cooperation between Lockhart River Aboriginal Council, Technical and Further Education (TAFE), and Lockhart River Primary School, so as to provide post-primary education at Lockhart River; assisted by the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP), linking education programs to employment outcomes
1995	Fiona Manderson is appointed as full-time art teacher within the post-primary program at Lockhart River; pottery is first unit offered; elder Dorothy Short teaches traditional weaving to younger members of the community Art Program is housed in demountable building at Lockhart River Primary School
1995	Steering committee organised to establish Arts & Cultural Centre with retail outlet
1995	Lockhart River Art & Cultural Centre finds venue in old hospital premises, aided by Queensland Department of Health, who see benefit in terms of employment, self-esteem and mental health
1996	Geoff and Fran Barker are the first administrators of the Lockhart River Art & Cultural Centre. Before commencing operations, the Barkers visit Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane to research fine art printmaking; they research equipment and processes with Basil Hall and Theo Tremblay at Studio One in Canberra
1996	Old hospital building is converted into combined studio and exhibition space; Centre also used for Ryan Marrott's research retrieving/ documenting Sandbeach languages, traditional stories, songs and music
1996	Printmaking equipment purchased with funds from Gaming Machine Fund, assisted by Indigenous academic Jackie Huggins (Aboriginal advisor to Gaming Machine Fund); artists could explore techniques such as photographic silkscreen printing and etching
1996	Art Gang visited Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland College of Art, Fireworks Gallery, Queensland Aboriginal Creations, local Murri radio station, see models of small-scale enterprises
1997	Lockhart River Art & Cultural Centre is incorporated
1997	Art Gang view Quinkan rock art galleries near Laura, and meet archaeologist Percy Trezise (1923-2005) who has documented these sites
1997	Printmaking becomes Art Gang's favourite media; Cairns Regional Gallery sells Art Gang's printed souvenirs and small gifts in its retail store

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1995-7	Manderson introduces Art Gang to professional artists through workshops and residencies at Lockhart River: Thancoupie (Gloria Fletcher), a Thanaqwik woman Naprunum (Weipa); Cairns-based artists Arone Meeks and Zane Saunders; non-Indigenous artists Yvonne Boag and Gary Shead
1997	First exhibition <i>ngana nyilkana – us painting</i> at Cairns Regional Gallery, the result of Exhibition nodule
1998-2000	Printmakers Theo Tremblay, Yvonne Boag, and Max and Janie Miller have residencies at Lockhart River
1998	Five Lockhart River artists spend two weeks working with Basil Hall and Leon Steiner at the University of Northern Territory print studio
1997	Fiona Manderson departs Lockhart River
1997	Post-primary program becomes the Alternate Secondary Program, with Art Gang students enrolling for formal qualifications in a Certificate of Visual Arts through Cairns TAFE
1997	Rosie Lloyd appointed as the new art teacher at the Lockhart River Primary School (continues for three years); women elders help Art Gang with traditional stories and imagery; students access both the Primary School and the Art & Cultural Centre
1997	Adele Boag Gallery, Adelaide, is the first commercial dealer to stock and promote prints by the Art Gang
1997	Lockhart River Aboriginal Community Arts & Cultural Centre becomes an incorporated body, broadening its focus from a school-based youth initiative to support and promote Aboriginal art and culture
1998	Rosie Lloyd is exhibition coordinator for Art Gang's first exhibition outside north Queensland: <i>The Message Stick: Art from North Queensland's Lockhart River Community</i> , at Queensland Aboriginal Creations, Brisbane (includes prints, paintings and elder women's weavings); exhibition subsequently toured to regional and metropolitan galleries; exhibition ends tour at Brisbane's Andrew Baker Art Dealer, initiating Andrew Baker as the Brisbane representative of all Lockhart River artists
1998	Lockhart River artists begin to enter art competitions; Art Gang wins the Community Endeavour award in the National Indigenous Art of Place Award at Old Parliament House, Canberra in 1998
1998	Rosella Namok and Sammy Clarmont are included in the prestigious 15 th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award; Adele Boag takes two Rosella Namok prints to the 23 rd Biennial of Graphic Art in Lubiya
2000	Lockhart River art gains international exposure when included in Festival of Pacific Arts at Cultural Center Jean Marie Tjibaou in Noumea
2000	Cairns Regional Gallery presents print exhibition <i>In my eyes</i> surveying how Lockhart River is seen by the Art Gang and visiting artists

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2000	Lockhart River art included in group survey exhibitions: Queensland Art Gallery's <i>Fortitude: New Art from Queensland</i> , Art Gallery of South Australia's <i>Beyond the Pale</i> , and National Gallery of Australia's <i>Uncommon World: Aspects of Contemporary Australian Art</i>
2001	Sue Ryan and Greg Adams take over management of the Art & Cultural Centre, resulting in greater involvement of Lockhart River artists in international exhibitions and events, with Lockhart River art regularly appearing in group exhibitions in the United States, Europe and Asia
2001	Education Queensland supplies art teacher for two days a week to work at the Art & Cultural Centre, to nurture a new generation of school children; prints by school children exhibited a Cairns Regional Gallery and in Japan
2003	Melbourne sculptor Michael Nicholls first visits Lockhart River. He conducts three residencies (one in 2005) and encourages Silas Hobson to take up sculpture, along with Philip Sandy, Adrian King's father
2004	Rosella Namok's first international solo exhibition at London's October Gallery
2005	Cartoonist Michael Leunig conducts workshops at Lockhart River
2005	Minister for the Arts Anna Bligh opens the newly expanded Lockhart River Aboriginal Community Arts & Cultural Centre, the \$440,000 expansion involving an additional building containing a print studio, darkroom, office, and a single self-contained accommodation unit
2006	Tom Risley artist-in-residence at Lockhart River Art Centre
2006	Exhibition <i>Unchartered Territory: The Lockhart River Art Gang</i> at London's October Gallery
2007	First major survey exhibition of the work of the Lockhart River Art Gang: <i>Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River</i> at The University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane; publication of the same name by Dr Sally Butler released by University of Queensland Press

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Glossary

'akui': Local shells used by Lockhart River women to make necklaces ('giddy giddy beads' are also used).

Aesthetic: Elements that constitute the form of the work, or a type of picture-making; aesthetic effects might include repetition, rhythm, symmetry or asymmetry; also an aesthetic judgment that finds something beautiful or ugly or boring, a judgment which may be linked to the accepted view of a group or culture.

Anthropomorph: Anthropomorphism occurs when inanimate objects (including non-human beings, or natural or supernatural phenomena) are seen to have human characteristics. It is a form of personification.

Bêche-de-mer: Bêche-de-mer, or sea cucumber, is found on the ocean floor. It is considered a delicacy in countries such as China, Indonesia, Japan and Malaysia, and is valued for its medicinal properties.

'Before time': 'Before time' refers to the past age when traditional law was created for the first time and when it was 'proper strong'; 'Before time' may mean two generations ago or earlier.

Country: 'Country' is a term with specific significance to Aboriginal Australians. It conceptualises how people understand their society, culture and sense of self in relationship to a particular area of land. Kinship relationships, linguistic dialects and social and cultural rights and restrictions are determined by the inherited knowledge incorporated in one's country.

Dreaming: 'Dreaming' is the term used to describe the stories of creation and of the ancestral beings of Aboriginal people; Dr Sally Butler notes that, in her research for *Our Way*, Art Gang members did not use this term and instead used terms such as 'myth'.

Dugong: The dugong, or 'sea cow', is a marine mammal which can grow to three metres in length and weigh up to 400 kilograms. They graze on seagrasses. While dugong have been hunted by Aboriginal people, many Aboriginal Community Councils south of Cooktown have agreed to stop hunting dugong because their numbers have decreased. Lockhart River people hunt dugong and turtle.

Endangered: The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) determines the conservation status of endangered species. The categories are 'critically endangered' (extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in immediate future), 'endangered' (very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future) and 'vulnerable' (a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future).

'giddy giddy beads': Bright red seeds found on rainforest vines and used by Lockhart River women to produce necklaces (local shells called 'akui' are also used).

Iron Range: The range in the Lockhart River region whose red hue derives from iron-ore deposits.

Iron Range National Park: The Kuuku Ya'u people are the Traditional Owners of this country, located 752 km north of Cairns via the Peninsula Developmental Road.

I'wai: A leading ancestral figure in the Hero Cult Saga of the Kuuku 'Yau language group, who appeared with the head of a crocodile and the body of a man.

Kaapay and Kuyan: The two different moieties of the Sandbeach people (See 'moiety').

'Kuluup Shakers': A hand-held dance instrument made by men and women at Lockhart River.

Linocut: A relief technique of printmaking whereby linoleum is cut away with a sharp tool, with the surface to take the ink remaining uncut and the remainder cut away.

Lloyd Bay: Lockhart River township is located near Lloyd Bay; an extensive river system feeds into Lloyd Bay.

Medium/Media: Media are the means by which pigment or colour is applied to the support (e.g. ink, charcoal, pastel applied to a support of paper, canvas); Media is the plural of medium.

Message stick: Aboriginal people, when visiting another tribe, carried a message stick decorated with symbols. Similar to a passport, the stick enabled the visitor to travel on the other tribe's land.

Mission: Indigenous people were removed from their homelands and forced to live in communities administered by the church; the Lockhart River Anglican Mission began in 1924, was disbanded

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during the Second World War, and re-established from 1947 until the church handed over control to the state government in 1967.

Moiety: The concept of moiety determines differences between people across different language groups. Moieties regulate proper activity with regards to marriages and relations between families and kinship groups, among other things. Moiety helps divide Aboriginal society into two halves who are able to intermarry. Moiety is an important factor in the life of Cape York people.

'New Site': The new location of the Lockhart River Mission near Quintel Beach, which became known as 'New Site' and is the present location of the Lockhart River township.

Ochre: Ochre is a type of coloured clay collected by Aboriginal people for use in body painting and rock art, and for decorating wooden tools. Ochres are most commonly red and yellow oxides.

'Old Site': The Anglican Mission's first site at the 'Waterhole' in Lloyd Bay, some 40 kilometres south of Lockhart River township's present site.

Outstation: People from the different language groups at Lockhart River township have begun to establish 'outstations' or camps on their ancestral lands; Outstations exist at the 'Old Site' and at Chilli Beach.

Pigment: A dry matter used for colouring, usually mixed with a base such as oil or water to produce a product like paint.

Pama Malnkana: meaning 'people of the sand beach'.

pama way: 'Sandbeach' or 'our' way.

para way: 'whitefella' way.

Princess Charlotte Bay: A large bay 350 km north of Cairns on the eastern side of Cape York, south of Lockhart River.

puunya: woven basket or dilly bag, using local grasses and dyes.

Quinkan spirits: Mythological or spiritual figures appearing on rock art sites in Cape York.

Quintel Beach: The beach closest to the Lockhart River community, on Lloyd Bay.

'Sandbeach': In the Lockhart River region the term 'Sandbeach' gives common identity to a group of five coastal and inland language groups. These people collectively referred to themselves as 'Pama Malnkana', meaning 'people of the sand beach'.

Sandalwood: Sandalwood is a fragrant wood used as an essential oil, incense and perfume, and in woodworking.

Screenprint: Using a fine screen, an image is determined by blocking out certain areas of the screen, enabling ink to be forced through the remaining areas onto paper lying beneath. The blocking-out process is achieved either with a stencil or a solution.

Settlers: The British/European people who settled in Australia; the term is particularly applied to those people who settled in Australia after 1788 and through the 19th century.

Totem: An animal or other natural being which forms a link for individuals to their land or ancestral beings.

Trochus shell: Trochus are a shell fish found in the shallow waters of coral reefs, and were used by Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders for food and decoration. The 'mother-of-pearl' from trochus shells became commercially popular for buttons, though by the late 1950s the market demand was replaced by plastic. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people provided crews for boats.

Wenlock Outstation: An outstation (See 'Outstation'). Wenlock Outstation is also known as Chuulangun. During the wet season, roads to Chuulangun are cut off by the flooded Wenlock, Pascoe and Archer Rivers.

Wet season: Monsoonal rains each year vary from February to April, to November to May. Swollen rivers cut roads in the north of Cape York during the wet season.

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ARC Quinkan Matchbox Site: <http://www.jcu.edu.au/rockart/>

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Education kit authors:

Dr Sally Butler, curator of *Our Way, Contemporary Art from Lockhart River* and Lecturer, School of English, Media Studies and Art History, The University of Queensland
Michele Helmrich, Curator – Public Programs, The University of Queensland Art Museum.

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Our Way, Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Lockhart River

**The University of Queensland Art Museum
Exhibition dates: 5 May – 1 July 2007**

Exhibition curator: Dr Sally Butler, Lecturer in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History, The University of Queensland.

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