

Case study

MIArt Designs - Mornington Island art and fashion



Mornington Island artists are making their mark on the fashion world while passing on cultural tradition and stories to the next generation.

What

Artists from Mornington Island Art Centre (MIArt Designs) created new wearable art garments and an exclusive bag range as part of a series of workshops led by designer and curator Grace Lillian Lee. Elder artists engaged young people who had not previously attended the arts centre but who were interested in learning more about design and the performance elements integrated into the fashion shows.

The stunning wearable art of hand-crafted textiles created by MIArt Designs and launched at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF) in 2015 has gained wide recognition with showcases in Cairns, Adelaide, Melbourne and on Mornington Island.

Artists continue to experiment with their designs and to integrate dance, cultural songs and music performance into their fashion shows, which feature the artists themselves along with local community members.

When and where

2016-2017 at Mornington Island, Cairns, Adelaide, Melbourne



From left: Netta Loogatha, Dolly Loogatha, Amy Loogatha and Ethel Thomas with some of the distinctive bags.

Key stats

- 6 elders
- 21 artists
- 15,000+ audience

Arts Queensland investment

\$15,000 - **Indigenous Regional Arts Development Fund** partnership between Arts Queensland and the Mirndiyān Gununa Aboriginal Corporation.

The **Indigenous Regional Arts Development Fund**, part of the Backing Indigenous Arts initiative, is a partnership between the Queensland Government, through Arts Queensland, the Torres Strait Regional Authority and 16 Aboriginal Councils and host organisations. Goals for IRADF are cultural retention and arts development activities.

Find out more

John Armstrong, Art Centre Manager

Mornington Island Art Centre

Email: miart@morningtonisland.com.au

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/miartdesigns>

Outcomes

- Elders' engagement as cultural mentors in the dance and music performance elements supported cultural retention in the community, and increased the interest of young people in local cultural tradition.
- Artists modelled their own pieces in the campaign, and were involved in the fashion shows.
- MIArt Designs were exhibited at CIAF 2017 and the Tarnanthi Festival 2017, South Australia. The media's positive reaction has strengthened the community's unity and pride.
- The National Gallery of Victoria is stocking MIArt Designs merchandise, helping to build the brand's reputation nationally and creating new income streams for artists.
- A new relationship with Jam Factory Gallery, Adelaide, is creating opportunities for artistic development and exhibition funding.

Learnings and reflections

This project has reinvigorated culture, language and dance, providing a contemporary platform for the younger generation to work collaboratively with Elders, strengthening the community's cultural identity.



Artists working on one of the pieces



Models in MIArt Designs.

Artist comments

The younger ones walk taller in the community.

Community member

This is exactly what we want. Community member

I feel there is a massive future in the textile and fashion industry stemming from Australia's Indigenous cultures. There is a movement happening where people want to learn more about these cultures and connect with them through fashion. Grace Lillian Lee

Tips for others

A fully costed business plan and a detailed project plan are imperatives.

What next?

Other galleries and stockists are interested in carrying MIArt Designs.

MIArt Designs is also looking at future exhibition and fashion performance opportunities, and also to initiate a program to further engage children.