

BEHIND THE SCENES OF TOWNSVILLE'S INTERNATIONAL PRINT EXHIBITION

Compact Prints 2008

First held in 2002, *Compact Prints* was conceived and curated by Rebekah Butler, who was President of the Umbrella Studio Board of Management at that time. Although this was a national event, it generated considerable interest from overseas printmakers. In 2004 it was expanded to include international printmakers and was co-curated in-house by Umbrella's administrator, Alana Mandryk and part-time Gallery Officer, Madeleine McClelland. The third exhibition in 2006 was once again managed by Alana Mandryk, with assistance from part-time staff member Alison McDonald. Finally, in 2008 funding from the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) provided financial support to engage Alison McDonald, a full-time paid curator, to oversee the administration and installation of the exhibition.

There has never been a specific exhibition theme, only a stipulation that the prints must be exactly 12 × 12 cm, and that photographs must be digitally manipulated. All submissions will be accepted unless they are of poor quality or offensive artwork. The project is handled almost entirely by email and post, and many of the participants have taken part in all four *Compact Prints*. It's a testament to the professionalism of the Umbrella Studio staff and all the participants that it all comes together each time, and continues to be widely appreciated and anticipated.

Seven months prior to the opening, expressions of interest are sent out to previous participants and printmaking organisations, who promote the exhibition, through their own networks. Word

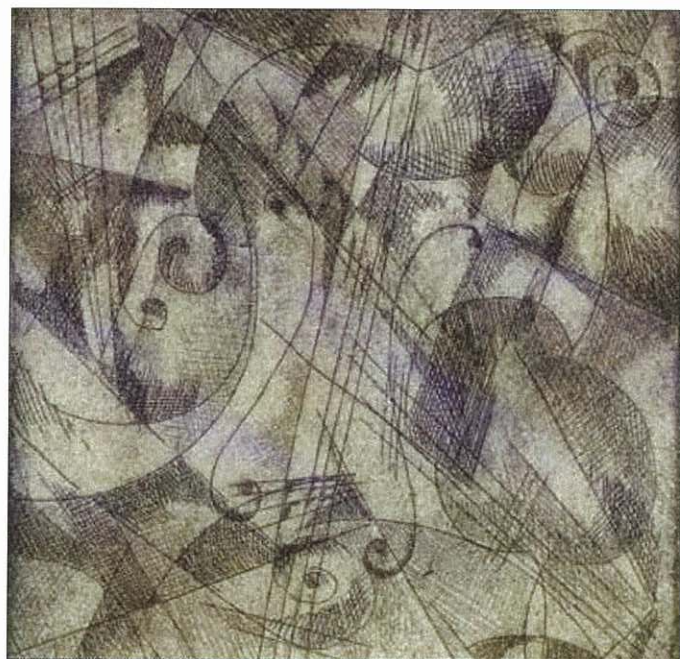
of mouth is our most successful promotional strategy, with news spreading quickly on the internet between participants. The deadline for entry forms enables the database to be built, and then there is a physical deadline for the prints to be delivered. Two copies of the image are provided by each artist; one to be scanned for the digital catalogue and used in the exhibition, the other to be exchanged with another artist. Once the exhibition is over, the exchange prints are randomly selected and each participant receives a print from another artist, a digital catalogue, a few of the invitations and any copies of media publicity. A record is kept of the exchange process, so that artists inquiring as to who received their print is readily available.

The 2008 *Compact Prints* includes the work of 130 artists from all around the world, including Italy, Denmark, Ireland, Ukraine, United States, Finland and Iran. The digital catalogue contains all the artists' images and statements, and states their town/city/country of residence. There is a brief introduction by Vicki Salisbury, Director of Umbrella Studio, and a foreword written by a selected participant, with a credit page on the back acknowledging those that helped with the project, including government funding bodies and sponsors. This year's digital catalogue will also have an original music component to enhance the viewing process.

This year, it was requested that participants submit a third print as a donation for our yearly fundraiser/auction. It was completely voluntary to do so but many of the participants have been very



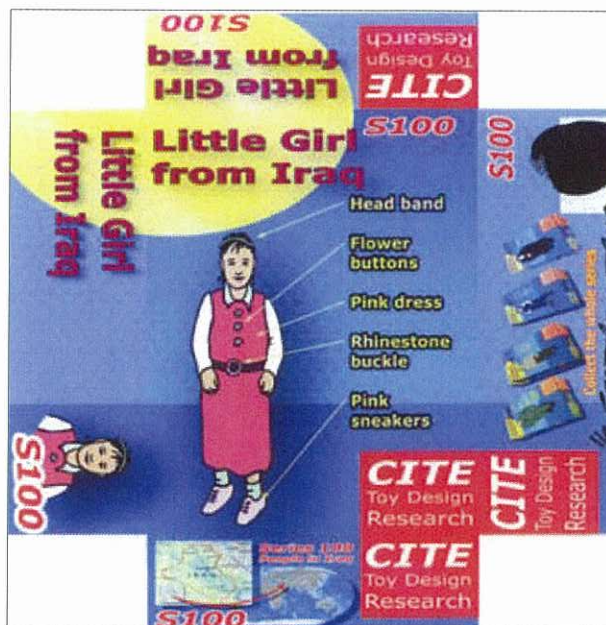
Cathryn Backer, Compact Print



Colleen Carradi Brannigan, Compact Print



Maverick Fox, Compact Print



Scott Betz, Compact Print

generous and were really pleased to be involved with fundraising at Umbrella Studio. The money raised from the print fundraiser will go towards hiring two emerging artists to curate exhibitions in 2009. Many of the participating artists ask who received their print, and some artists have kept in correspondence with each other from opposite sides of the world.

In 2006, it was decided to hold a local component to *Compact Prints* to engage the community and further create interest outside the printmaker world. *Students In-case* was implemented, and opened to students from secondary schools in the region. Art teachers

liked the idea and supported their students to participate. It was wonderful to see so many traditional techniques and talent from the young students. The youth component has been extremely popular and it was requested by teachers and students to repeat the project. Umbrella studio has decided to run the project every two years at the same time as Compact Prints.

Compact Prints is at Umbrella Studio until 16 November. 482 Flinders Street, Townsville.

Alana Mandryk

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