

close to the wind

close to the wind is the epitome of honouring Mother Country, detailing the innate connection that I have with her. My work details the fragility of Country, and how she mourns to be loved, respected, and taken care of. Flooded banks held by imprinted bags—the bags represent a womb – holding – protecting – nurturing.

The title makes me think of the messages that are carried in the wind, our need to collectively listen more actively and hear the messages being shared from Country and our Ancestors. There is an intimacy in observing, feeling, and honouring what is heard and this series of works respects the energy of the wind to deliver what we need to hear about our surrounding world.

Each of my works have their own individual history, the materials that I have chosen are bought together as subtle reminders of their past, like memories or remnants of another life lived. I have taken every opportunity in making this work to capture some of the moments that are often missed in the printing process. This has meant intuitively imprinting a freshly screenprinted bag on paper, capturing a moment that would otherwise be lost, an instantaneous impression of that moment. I have also used inks that are reflective—creating a dialogue between the work and the viewer—illuminating heavy histories that are often not addressed in our everyday lives.

The essence of my work is family, honouring Country, and how I bring those tangles of life together with respect and integrity.

— LISA WAUP

close to the wind is a new body of work that celebrates Lisa Waup's sustained exploration of printmaking. Investigating new inks and printing techniques, she has revealed an intuitive process that eloquently illustrates her life's journey of discovery and connection. Her practice is concerned with the hidden histories of Australia, often referencing the ongoing impacts of colonization and the layers of colonial intervention that continue to impact First Peoples and the environment.

A significant element in Waup's practice is the First Nation's concept of Country. This extends to the spiritual and cultural aspects of the land, encompassing the sky and waterways and our individual responsibilities to the native plants and wildlife. The natural environment is a grounding element in her work, in which she encourages a narrative of respect, engagement, and activism.

For Waup, motherhood, family, and Country are connected because the act of making allows her to unite histories of dispossession with the strength and resilience of First Nations families, including her own. Incorporating found and historical materials, she addresses the hidden histories First Peoples have held alone. Weaving in objects that may have otherwise been discarded, she gives them a voice.

close to the wind is a personal exploration of her life experiences and, in many ways, her works could be defined as self-reflection. Though her stories are not always unique, they are her own. By creating this work, Waup shares with her audience the importance of deep listening, being present, and advocating for family and Country.

— HANNAH PRESLEY, Guest Curator



Connections to the land and sea deliver me to a place of belonging and peace. It surrounds me, it nurtures me. It delivers me calm. It inspires me to do what I do as an artist. I can hear the old ones calling me.
— LISA WAUP

The patterns Waup has created in these works come from a cherished visual diary to which she endlessly adds. Each intricate design is hand-drawn in ink, and they are all monochromatic and malleable. Waup sees them as movements—mark making and line work that speak to the interrelationships between the land, waters, and all people. When repeated and overlaid on the works in this gallery, the patterns transform into waters that silently tell a story while moving across the land. For Waup, water is a direct link between the spiritual and physical realms.

In *upwelling*, we see a repeated print built up to reflect a stormy body of water, the inky palette of which speaks to pollutants and the poisoning of marine life. She asks her audience to reflect on the future we are handing over to the next generations. The print was not made with ink, but a translucent glue creating an effect that conjures polluted, murky waters and deep emotion that wells up at the devastating loss of marine life in our warming oceans.

In *moving tides*, the complex arrangements of line work conjure a dark and shadowy tone, illustrating Waup's frustration with the greed and self-interest related to climate change. She asks us to consider what will be left for future generations if we do not take responsibility for our sacred waterways. We have a collective responsibility to care for Country and are reminded that water is our survival.

— HANNAH PRESLEY, Guest Curator

LISA WAUP

Born 1971

Gunditjmara, Torres Strait Islands, Italian

Left:

upwelling 2023

Screen painting with glue on Somerset paper
Printed with Stewart Russell and Danica Miller,
Spacecraft Studio
Courtesy of the artist

Right:

moving tides 2023

Screen painting with ink and reflective ink on Somerset paper
Printed with Stewart Russell and Danica Miller,
Spacecraft Studio
Courtesy of the artist

My practice has a strong spiritual element. I have an intuitive connection to Country, of the earth and waterways being a living being. As the details of my history have always been blurred, and there are facts missing, this connection is a replacement for what is unknown. — LISA WAUP

Through an intuitive printing process, Waup has rendered ghostly impressions of the sandbags on display. Pressing the textured inky surface of each freshly screenprinted bag onto sheets of paper, Waup has transferred a secondary design and captured a moment often lost in the printing process. With the addition of natural ochres and other inks, including a reflective ink used for industrial purposes, Waup creates a series of unique prints that mirror the diverse and picturesque terrain of Australia.

These gestures of Country are layered and adorned with meaning. From utilitarian objects, they have been transformed into vehicles for story. Each design represents an idea, from family and history to the self and future pathways. Waup invites us in to explore the nuanced and complex narratives the bags contain. In doing so, she impresses upon us the importance of respecting Country.

— HANNAH PRESLEY, Guest Curator

LISA WAUP

Born 1971

Gunditjmara, Torres Strait Islands, Italian

Impressions of Country 2023

Impressions of screenprinted Jute/hessian sandbags
with ink and reflective ink on Somerset paper
Printed with Stewart Russell and Danica Miller,
Spacecraft Studio
Courtesy of the artist

The reflective ink on the bags illuminates when you shine light on them, and the process offers a reciprocal gaze—you can see them, and they can see you. Conceptually, this industrial material becomes a way of reflecting on the historical and ongoing injustices imposed on First Nations people since colonial invasion. — LISA WAUP

holding Country II embodies the innate understanding that Waup has of Country. As a whole, the installation of elaborately adorned bags provides a sense of protection, while the reflective quality of the ink commands our attention. This is her way of shining light on the hidden histories of First Peoples.

While visiting family on Yorta Yorta Country in Northern Victoria, Australia, Waup experienced the build-up to a major flood. During that time, she and her family filled sandbags that were then used to protect their home from encroaching floodwaters while also holding the riverbanks. Years later, inspired by more recent flood events, Waup began working with the same sandbags, which are made from a natural material called hessian or burlap. Decorated on both sides with designs from her visual diary, they transcend their utilitarian nature. The bags become repositories of memories, traditions, and human experiences; and, in this sense, they are both protectors and depictions of Country. Each one tells a unique story that is inked into the very fabric of its design.

Bags are an extension of the “vessel” that has been a recurring motif in Waup’s work. This form takes on a wider meaning for her, conjuring a sense of care, nurture, and inner strength that she refers to as the “mother.” Each hand-crafted handle is unique and connects to events that are both personal and historical. The plastic brown-skinned babies could be read as a reference to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families, known as the Stolen Generations. The vintage army belt could also be seen to reference the First Nations Australians who served their country only to return to continued discrimination.

For Waup, the floods that she and her family experienced highlighted the ongoing destruction that has resulted from the colonization of our waterways. This body of work invites us to consider our individual responsibility to care for Country, particularly due to the extreme weather changes we are witnessing with the climate crisis. — HANNAH PRESLEY, Guest Curator

LISA WAUP

Born 1971

Gunditjmara, Torres Strait Islands, Italian

holding Country II 2023

20 Jute/hessian sandbags screenprinted with ink and reflective ink

Assorted handles [brown-skin plastic dolls, vintage woollen army belt, metal letters from the VFL (Victorian Football League) stadium, power cords, crucifix light globe (glass, metal), iodized aluminium, aluminium, rubber, handspun nettle, paint, cotton sennit, remnant cotton and satin fabric and thread (Lisa Waup x VERNER), jute string, brass clock cogs, brass keys, sea grass, linen rope, vintage cardboard shipping tag, vintage electrical cord for a sewing machine (circa 1940), metal chain, locks, key, raffia, vintage light cord (circa 1940; bakelite, copper, rubber, cotton), copper, turmeric handspun hemp, two-ply handspun hemp, braided jute, buttons, reclaimed wire, vintage electrical cord (bakelite, metal, copper, rubber cotton)]

Printed with Stewart Russell and Danica Miller, Spacecraft Studio

Courtesy of the artist