

Official Opening: Territory Spirit Fabric Exhibition
SPEECH by Mrs Pauling at the Territory Craft Gallery – 29 May 2009

It is a privilege to have been asked to open this Exhibition, or as Lillian so wonderfully describes it - "this creative adventure". This adventure is embodied in the title "Territory Spirit". It encompasses the colours of the Territory from the burnt orange of the interior to turquoise seas, themes from tropical pandanus to essential waters and wet season subjects.

A variety of techniques are displayed on these dynamic silks and fine cottons, including the precise and painstaking style of shibori. This is the Japanese word for a process of dyeing fabric that involves stitching, gathering, scrunching and tightly tying the undyed fabric before immersing the fabric in a dye bath. As Lillian described it to me, there is wonderful anticipation and joyful surprise as the effects on the different fabrics are seen for the first time. Instead of the predicted purples a beautiful azure may appear. Indigo can create ethereal blues against white and against black the indigo has a life of its own as it discharges to create new shade and mood.

In Japan, masters of the art of shibori are considered "National Treasures" whose work is revered in museums and private collections. Here, in Darwin, I am happy to say that we also value our artists. It is great to have this opportunity to share Lillian Smith's artistic techniques and Jillian Thompson's unique and imaginative surface design painting, printing and dyeing skills. I applaud their renewed energy as they exhibit this art to wear and art to simply hang and admire.

Before I conclude, I have a little warning to share. Two of the pieces display red dots. I fell in love with them both. The first is a silk wrap I've renamed "Childhood Beach" as I am sure there was a Queensland beach many moons ago with just these glorious colours of sand and sea. The second is a silk chiffon that will be perfect for the road trip that we will undertake from Darwin to Alice Springs. Over six days, five receptions will be held at Pine Creek, Katherine, Minyerri, Tennant Creek and Alice to celebrate the Queen's Birthday. And I think the perfect outfit for the occasion is the one entitled "Colours of the Territory".