

INJALAK ARTS & CRAFTS

NEW SCREEN PRINTING BUILDING

John
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Architects



Injalak Arts & Crafts: New Screen Printing Building

Presented by: John Cameron, Director John Cameron Architects

To: Eco-Tourism Australia, Global Eco Conference, Noosa 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge that this presentation is being given on Aboriginal land and recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of Aboriginal people in this land.

OUTLINE

About Injalak Arts and Crafts – location, history and production

Injalak Rock Art – hill tour and cultural connections

Tourism at Injalak – seasonal visitation and experiential context

New screen printing facility – design drivers, process and outcomes

Discussion – megatrends and sustainability considerations

Conclusion – summing up and question

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WELCOME

Injalak Hill
framed by a
bush shelter



In early 2013 Injalak Arts and Crafts invited John Cameron to assist with the process of exploring design possibilities for a new screen printing facility proposed to be constructed on the site of the existing Arts Centre (the Centre), integration with existing facilities and overall master planning of the site. The new screen printing building proposal is a catalyst for reviewing Centre operations and facilities holistically to establish an overall master planning vision and framework to guide business planning, funding objectives and ongoing site development to enhance the visitor offer, improve operational efficiency and most importantly reinforce community benefits from the enterprise.



BACKGROUND:

The current Centre was officially opened in November 1989



The current Centre was officially opened in November 1989. The building was purpose-designed for screen printing and associated value-adding through sewing. It has a rectangular plan form lying approximately east-west on the site. Originally the building was flanked by open verandas to the north and south. Over time these verandas have been substantially enclosed to increase secure and air-conditioned space in response to growth in activity and participation at the Centre. Growth pressure has also led to the addition of an amenities out-building exclusively for use by male artists and an air-conditioned shipping container to provide additional storage capacity for stock and archival materials



BACKGROUND:

The building was purpose-designed for screen printing and associated value-adding through sewing



Tourist visitation is an important and growing feature of the Centre's activities. Visitors are given the opportunity to observe and engage with the artists at close quarters in an intimate and authentic manner. There are no 'shows' put on purely for the benefit of tourists. This authenticity helps foster a bond between visitor and artist. This bond tends to translate into increased sales at the gallery shop.

In the early days men (bininj) represented the majority of artists on site. Over time the number of women (daluk) participating in arts and crafts activities on site has increased. The men now predominantly occupy the northern side of the building and the screen printing workshop areas. Men are mainly occupied with ochre painting and screen printing. The women predominantly congregate on the southern side of the building where they are primarily involved in the processes of basket making and weaving. Women also paint and print, however men are not currently involved in basket making or weaving. Apart from screen printing and sewing, the majority of arts activity is undertaken outdoors.



BACKGROUND:

Activity has outgrown the building.

John Cameron was invited to help explore ways to expand the facilities.



Injalak is managed by an incorporated Association whose members are the artists and community. The Association has a number of objectives, with the principal emphasis being cultural maintenance and economic self-determination. Through its constitution the Association aims to "support and enrich the culture of the people in this area" and provide economic benefits for the residents of Gunbalanya and its outstations whilst operating as a not-for-profit enterprise.



GUNBALANYA:
Gunbalanya/
Oenpelli is a
community in
West Arnhem
Land set in a
landscape of
wetlands and
escarpments



Although the Arts Centre is located in Gunbalanya, it also endeavours to service artists who choose to live at outstations and/or who have few other options for economic activity. This outreach is an important aspect of Centre operations to be carried forward when planning for the future.



GUNBALANYA:
Arrguluk Hill
Textile products
Injalak Hill

MEGATREND:
"Digital
Whispers"



Arrguluk Hill is a scenic feature.

Some of the value added products produced include satchels and silk textiles.

Injalak Hill and the lagoon is an iconic backdrop for the Centre.

Digital Whispers: E-commerce and social media are becoming increasingly important business tools for Injalak Arts and Crafts.



GALLERY/SHOP

Satchels

Baskets & Bolts

Silks and woven
pandanus



The Centre offers a truly inspiring experience. Location on the edge of the settlement affords wonderful views of the floodplain and escarpment country, dominated by Injalak Hill.

The art and craft for sale and in production is of the finest quality and is of tremendous interest to visitors from both cultural and commercial perspectives. Visitors value and appreciate intimate access to the artists and the authenticity of the experience.



HILL TOUR:

Late Gudjewg -
the wet season...
Barra monsoon
wind blows from
the north-west

...a time of
thunderstorms,
heavy rain and
flooding...

Spear grass
grows tall!



Gary Djorlam leads on through the tall Gudjewg spear grass as we embark on our tour of the rock art galleries at Injalak Hill.



HILL TOUR:
Garry and John
pause for a
happy snap on
the climb to the
rock galleries...



Garry and John photographed by Danny with a backdrop of flood plain and stone country



HILL TOUR:
Garry and
Danny at the
first gallery



The first gallery:

Rock art has been present here for tens of thousands of years. The viewing experience is completely authentic, without walkways, barricades or interpretive signage.

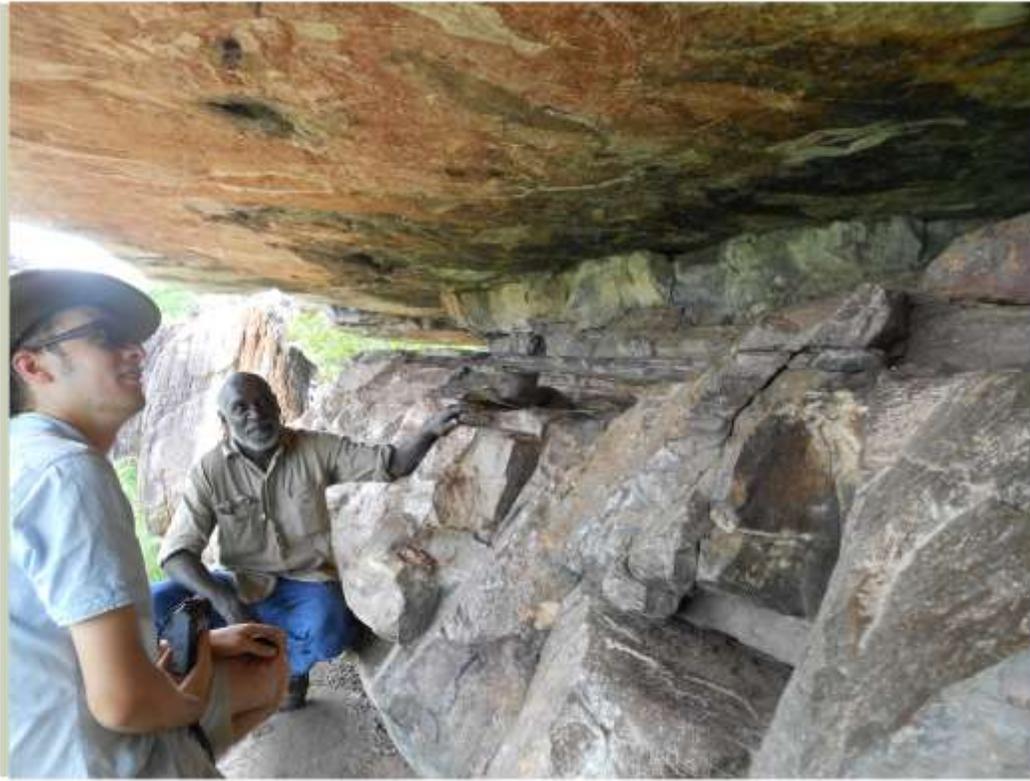


HILL TOUR:
Ochre grinding
bowl and rocks
polished
smooth over
thousands of
years...



This rock ledge is polished smooth by millennia of human contact.

Centre field is a 'bowl' for ochre grinding carved out of the rock. In the background is evidence of a fire that would have been used for making charcoal for pigment.



HILL TOUR:
A viewing
experience
doesn't get
better than
this...



The expression on Gary's face tells it all. He is delighted to be sharing some of the stories with Danny and I.



HILL TOUR:

A viewing
experience
doesn't get
better than
this...



An x-ray style painting depicting a birth scene. The associated story speaks of the rivalry between the younger and older wives of a man.



HILL TOUR:

A viewing experience doesn't get better than this...

MEGATREND:
"Great Expectations"



The painting is layer upon layer and often includes useful information about food sources. Other art depicts spirits and dreamtime figures and evokes the associated stories that are passed on in the oral tradition.

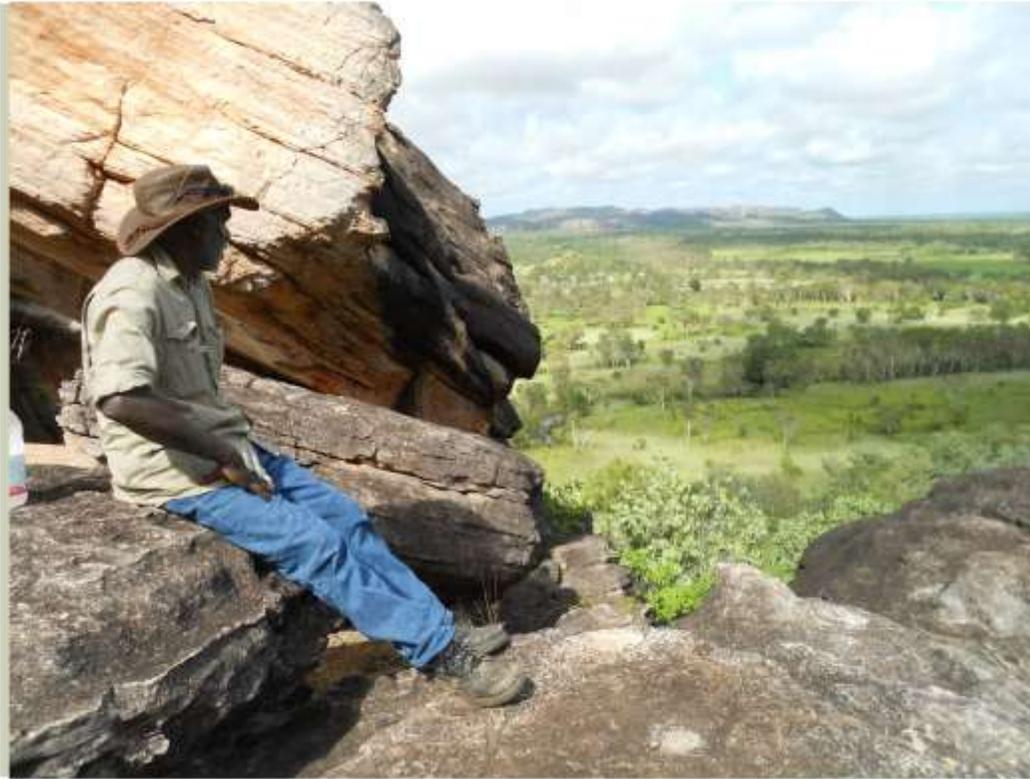
"Great Expectations – As incomes grow, people shift their discretionary expenditure towards experiences as opposed to products. The experiences future tourists will seek will be 'authentic' to the destination and its people, personalised and often involve social interaction and emotional connection." This experience delivers on such expectations!



HILL TOUR:
Stone Country
escarpment
nooks and
crannies –
niches full of
stories and
dreaming



No country for old men? The going was not as tough as this image might suggest, nevertheless the tour does require a moderate level of fitness, particularly with the heat and humidity as it is!



HILL TOUR:
Stone Country
escarpment and
flood plain
Gary tells the
story of
'borrowed'
water from the
upstream mob...



Spectacular views are the reward for some tough hiking.

The story of the borrowed water:

Gary tells us that the people of this land will always acknowledge that they are drinking the water of people from upstream. When visitors come from up country they are made welcome with food and drink, because “we are drinking your water, so we will share our food with you.” Through this story we begin to understand the notion that the bounty of the land belongs to all the people. No group has a monopoly over any resource. That said, tribal rights for hunting and gathering are respected. Game caught while in another's country must always be offered to the locals first. By the same convention a visitor would never be allowed to go hungry, unless there was some overriding circumstance such as a grievance or dispute.



WURRGENG:

'cold weather' time; humidity is low, daytime temperatures around 30°C - night-time around 15°C. Most creeks stop flowing and the floodplains quickly dry out. Burning continues, extinguished by the dew at night.
TOURIST SEASON!



Wurrngeng:

June to August Wurrngeng is the 'cold weather' time; humidity is low, daytime temperatures are around 30°C and night-time temperatures are around 15°C.

Gunmaiyyorkk are easing winds still from south-east.

Most creeks stop flowing and the floodplains quickly dry out.

During Yegge, (previous 'season') drying winds and flowering Darwin Andjalen woolly butt trees tell Bininj (men) that it is time to start Gunak fire burning the woodlands in patches to 'clean the country' and encourage new growth for grazing animals.

Burning season continues in Wurrngeng. Fires are extinguished by the dew at night.

By day, Ganamarr Red-tail black cockatoo crunch on seeds of eucalypt trees and Nawurrngbil Whistling Kites patrol the fire lines as insects and small animals try to escape the flames.

Bamurru Magpie geese are getting fat and heavy after weeks of abundant food, and a myriad of other waterbirds crowd the shrinking billabongs.

Anbaandarr turkey bush turns real pink!

The best sign of Wurrngeng is big mob Balanda tourists at the Centre!



WURRGENG:

'cold weather' time; humidity is low, daytime temperatures around 30°C -night-time around 15°C.

Most creeks stop flowing and the floodplains quickly dry out. Burning continues, extinguished by the dew at night.

TOURIST SEASON!



Domestic and international visitors arrive in numbers approaching 10,000 in a good season. This burst of tourists is a frantic time for all at the Centre.



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'cold weather' time; humidity is low, daytime temperatures around 30°C - night-time around 15°C.

Most creeks stop flowing and the floodplains quickly dry out. Burning continues, extinguished by the dew at night.

TOURIST SEASON!



Groups are the principal tour format. Several operators cater for visitor demands to visit the Injalak Gallery. A sub-set of these will also do the hiking tour of Injalak Hill, for which the Centre provides the guides.



WURRGENG:

'cold weather' time; humidity is low, daytime temperatures around 30°C - night-time around 15°C.

Most creeks stop flowing and the floodplains quickly dry out. Burning continues, extinguished by the dew at night.

TOURIST SEASON!



Smoke from distant grass fires – part of the Gunak process of caring for country. Note the large number of birds circling in the smoke. These include the whistling kites – apex predators in such large numbers gives an idea of the abundance of life hidden in this landscape.



WURRGENG:
'cold weather'
time; humidity is
low, daytime
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Most creeks stop
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TOURIST SEASON!



A tour group receives information about the process of weaving pandanus fibre into baskets and mats.

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BORIS & CO:
Tourist season
attracts visitors
from around the
world.
The mayor of
London, Boris
Johnson and his
family visited in
August...

*Mega-Facebook
cred!*



On 17th August 2013 Injalak was visited by Boris Johnson (Mayor of London) and family and was presented with a screen-printed tea towel as a gift.

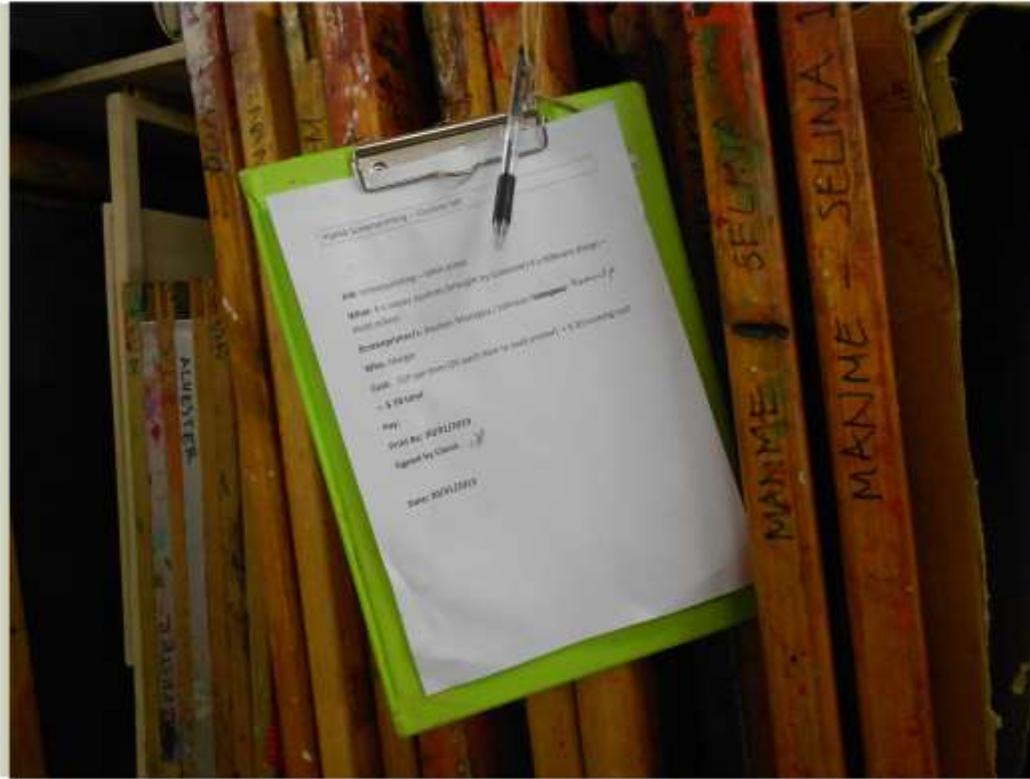


**SCREEN
PRINTING:**
Samson and
Isaiah screen
printing on the
8 metre table.
A 20 metre
table is needed
for commercial
production
runs...



Tim Growcott of Top End Textiles, and the John Cameron held a Skype conference to discuss and review 'best practice' ideas for the screen printing facility.

Tim has a history of involvement with the Centre, assisting in the past with set up and skill building for the screen printing process. As such he is well placed to provide input into the proposed facilities upgrades.



SCREEN PRINTING:

Silk screens and job sheet.

Safe storage and effective maintenance of these screens is vital



Also discussed during the Skype conference were critical success factors for screen printing at Gunbalanya including;

- a building of generous volume to assist with keeping the work spaces comfortable;
- a larger screen printing table, up to 20 metres in length;
- a continuous flow curing oven with greater through-put capacity;
- better screen storage and handling systems, including cleaning;
- the benefits of value-adding through sewing on-site;
- a larger darkroom, and;
- computer based design facilities (air conditioned).



SCREEN PRINTING:

The freshly printed fabric is loaded into a curing oven to set the ink.

The oven is another limiting factor for production



Current production is limited to 8 metre fabric lengths. Commercial production needs to be based on 20 metre fabric lengths. A 20 metre table cannot be accommodated within the existing building.

Productivity issues extend beyond the screen printing activities. The Centre as a whole has outgrown its current facilities. The gallery/shop as a primary revenue raiser has top priority in terms of location, however supporting administration and back-of-house functions such as storage, receiving and dispatch are crammed into 'left over' areas. As such they are sub-optimal workspaces that do not support efficient operations. Given these conditions the staff is doing an outstanding job supporting the diverse range of activities required to keep the centre running.

Once the new building is completed and screen printing activities are relocated the existing building can be functionally reorganised to address these shortcomings



DESIGN:

Donna, Gabriel and Samson discuss design ideas around the table with John



John's first visit was on from March 11th through to March 15th, 2013. A design workshop exercise was conducted on Thursday 14th following three days of familiarisation, observation and discussion with members of the community and other stakeholders.

The opportunity to observe proceedings with 'fresh eyes' yielded insights into the operations and presentation of the Centre.

A deliberate strategy to look, listen and learn through engagement with as many members of the community and Centre staff as possible before making recommendations or suggestions was adopted. A key driver for this strategy is the desire for strong community ownership of outcomes generated. Members of the community embraced this approach expressing a keen interest in learning what an architect does and participating in visioning and planning processes.

Technical information, such as original working drawings, site plans, maps and reports, was not available at the time of the workshop process. The author prepared a 'mud map' site plan of the current layout as a basis for discussion, analysis and design.



DESIGN:

In 2007 flood waters lapped the windows of the Arts Centre. We agreed the new building should be above the flood...



The March 2013 workshop identified flood immunity as a key objective for the new building.

Based on anecdotal evidence from the 2007 flood event, to achieve flood immunity requires a floor platform level at least 1.5 metres above local ground level. Due to space constraints, raising the floor plane to this extent means an elevated floor structure (rather than a concrete slab on fill). A raised floor adds to the base cost of the project. Given the need to raise the floor for flood immunity, rising beyond 1.5m to achieve minimum headroom clearance of 2.1m under the building does not add significantly to the cost. This strategy allows the land area to be used twice, once on the ground plane as a shaded work/rest area for ochre painters and others, and again on the upper level for equipment based activity such as screen printing. An elevated floor also provides flexibility for services connection, particularly for water supply and drainage, both during initial construction and over time.



DESIGN:
Donna and John
discuss some
possibilities

MEGATREND:
"Bolts from the
Blue"



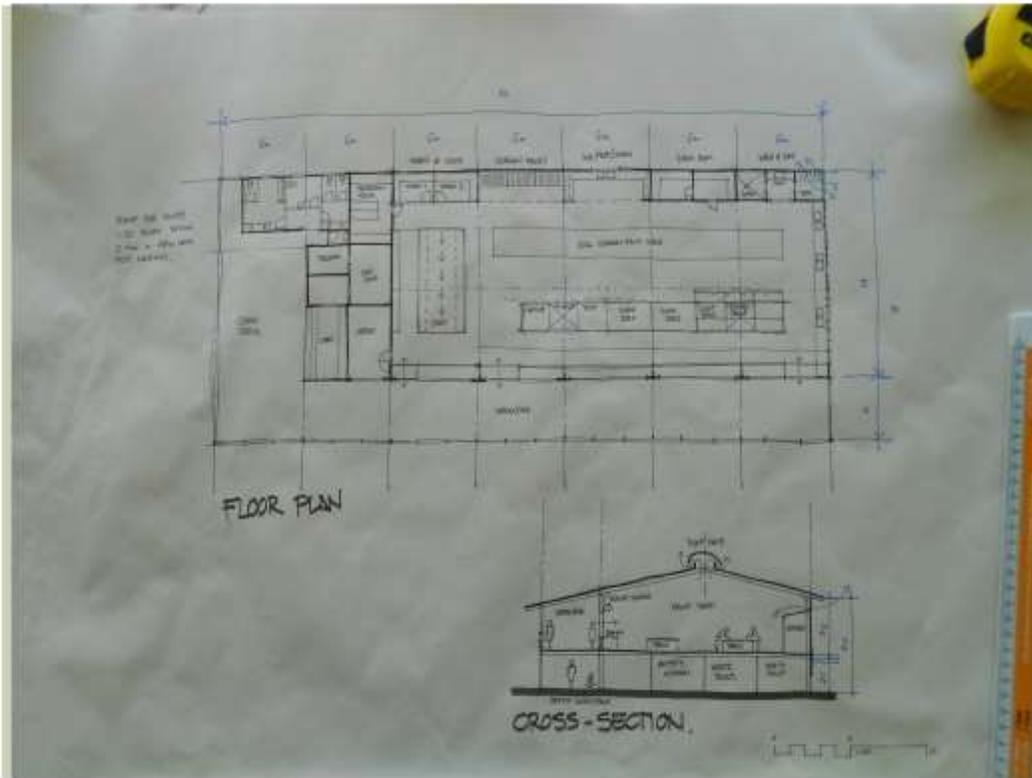
During Thursday rough drawings were prepared in a collaborative workshop environment, with extensive input from a range of stakeholders. The drawings illustrate a possible layout for the new screen printing building, and preliminary possibilities for adaptation of the existing building and an overall site plan incorporating the possible relocation of a Traditional Owner's house onto the site as per the proposal by Deborah Kemp and Karen Coote.

Originals of the workshop drawings remain on site for ongoing comment and review by stakeholders. Further investigations including; cost assessment, engineering and regulatory frameworks need to be undertaken before the project can be realised.

Sensitivity to extreme events:

- Extent of climate change impacts
- Increased flooding and coastal inundation
- More intense cyclones
- Geopolitical instability associated with water scarcity
- Geopolitical instability associated with food insecurity
- Increased human mobility is elevating infectious disease risk
- Bacteria evolving faster than antibiotics
- More systems and procedures to reduce the spread of disease are likely.
- The impact of perceived risk

Increased uncertainty increases the popularity of domestic holidays



DESIGN:

Hand drawn layout at the end of the workshop process

SUSTAINABILITY:

Energy, Water, Social



Design Strategy:

Conceptually the building is a decorated shed with a flexible internal fit out that can be adapted over time. The design, whilst led by the architect, is the product of a collaboration of ideas from a range of stakeholders and interested parties. The architect has spent time in and with the community developing the project brief and exploring design concepts.

productivity.

Support green transport: Supply chain efficiency?

Develop adaptable buildings and spaces: good place to work, easy to adapt

Inform the end user: Ensure the end user (customer) is aware of sustainability policies and actions.



DESIGN:

Gabriel explains
the developing
design to fellow
artists



Design Strategy:

The building also becomes a 'living gallery' rich with local content and connection to country. Importantly the design is never frozen in time. The basic skin and bones will last many generations and each will have their chance to contribute to the project.

As Gabriel Maralngurra observed, each generation should be able to identify a part of the building that their ancestor has made or contributed to, passing on the stories, culture and traditions of the people.



DESIGN:
Gabriel explains
the developing
design to fellow
artists



Procurement Strategy:

Procurement will likely be in phases linked to availability of funds. The first phase involves supply and installation of the building shell. The shell is fitted out in the second phase. Subsequent ongoing enhancements including solar power, rainwater collection and storage, café operations and artistic embellishments, can be rolled out progressively.



DESIGN:

3D visualisation of the new building concept.

The railings will have traditional motifs and sculptural elements



The Big Shed:

Phase one is the procurement of the building shell. The most cost-effective means of enclosing the required space is a prefabricated portal framed steel shed. Such buildings are readily available from a number of suppliers in the region. Competitive tendering from a select list is a viable procurement method.

The scope of work for phase 1 includes the shed frame, roof, external walls and elevated floors. The contractor will be responsible for site clearing and preparation, provision of materials, labour and all necessary equipment. Contract obligations will include obtaining compliance certification for a class 6 and class 8 building against the Building Code of Australia. It is likely that such a contractor will not be from the community.



DESIGN:
3D visualisation
of the new
building
concept
The panels will
be screen prints



Fit Out:

Phase two sees the building operationalised. Local trades and suppliers will be used for this work wherever possible. Of particular note is the potential for local supply of the external stairs, ramp and balustrade. These elements will be fabricated from steel then galvanised for durability. Galvanising is not available in the community, however all the fabrication and installation are local.

Placing as much of the fitting out works with the local CDEP equivalent could lead to significant cost savings.

When the stairs, ramp and balustrade are in place internal fit out can commence. The first priority is to operationalise the screen printing workshop. This is contingent upon a new 20 metre table – locally made – but all other fittings and equipment from the current workshop can be re-used in the interim until updated and/or purpose built items can be sourced.

The internal layout of the workshop, café, office and amenities can be achieved through non-load bearing partitions that are independent of the structure of the building. This ensures ultimate flexibility over time. It also means that basic building skills are all that is required to complete the fit out work.

A mezzanine type storage platform above the office, café, amenities and store 1 is possible if the walls are suitably constructed to transfer the load.

John Cameron Architects: 07 3395 5455



THANK YOU.



The design concept for the new screen printing workshop is well received and widely supported by the community and the board. Further design development is anticipated before finalising the phase 1 tender package scope, however the big picture size and scale of the building shell is essentially established.

A variety of funding sources will be rallied to enable the project to proceed, including some self-funding.

The project is ambitious but at the same time has emerged from a highly collaborative design process with input from a broad range of stakeholders. The aspirations embedded in the proposal represent an affirmation of the importance of indigenous arts and crafts both to the community and to regional tourism outcomes.