

didn't ever feel as though I'd found my own artistic voice or my own way of working. It wasn't until I moved to Tennant Creek that I found my own aesthetic.

I worked at the Julalikari Women's Art Centre, which is a CDEP employment program, and then I worked on developing the visual art exhibits and program at Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre. I had the opportunity in Tennant Creek to work with some really amazing people and wonderful artists — young and old.

Also, Tennant Creek's a pretty crazy place and lots of interesting people come through and work on projects. At Nyinkka Nyunyu I worked with graphic designers, architects, filmmakers, sound recordists, naturalists and geologists. My life was broadened out from my life in Sydney, where I didn't have any friends who weren't artists, for example. In Tennant Creek my friends were environmental scientists or doctors or midwives or naturalists.

It opened up my world so immeasurably, not to mention being welcomed into another culture. It opened my eyes and made me feel more confident in my own skills. You have to be resourceful and resilient in the face of some pretty tragic community circumstances in a town like Tennant Creek, but it's also very joyful. I think I just grew up. My children were young and it was a good place for them to be; Paul Cockram, my partner, was publishing a magazine about life in the region and that was really great as well. It was sort of like the meshing of direct action and life rather than just talking about it.

What were the circumstances that informed your early interest in politics?

I guess it's from my family. My father worked at Garden Island Dockyard and my mother was a primary school teacher. They met in the Sydney Bushwalkers in the late 1930s and were heavily involved in the early conservation movement. They were both big travellers, self-educated and very intelligent and, because they got married quite late, they had lots of friends. My mother had lots of women friends who were single — I guess from the war, not having had the opportunity to marry perhaps, I don't know — who were all engaged in their occupations and curious about life.

We used to go camping all the time. The first time I went to Ayers Rock, as it was called then, was in a Vauxhall sedan on the dirt roads when I was two. The table was always a place of



'DEATH OF A BROADSHEET' AT MEGALO PRINT STUDIO + GALLERY, MAY 2015.

big discussion and my parents were very social. They lived in a beautiful house that they built themselves in Sydney, on a bush block in the north-west. My father bought this land because a friend of his, Marie Byles, the first female solicitor in New South Wales, encouraged all these young people in the Sydney Bushwalkers to buy land as a conservation strategy.

Do you think that art is necessarily a political act?

Yeah, absolutely. I don't think you can avoid that. Often people say to me: 'political art's rubbish'. But all art's political because all art, no matter what the content, is making a comment about something and that's just what politics is: it's making a position. Everything has a position.

Do you think the screenprinted poster still has the same impact that it did have in the context of activism?

Not in the same way. It's not as if you see screenprinted posters up on the street like you did back in the 80s because there was no other way of

communicating events or services at that time.

When people see screenprinted work on the streets they respond to it because it does have a grittier, stronger look.

Last year I designed and printed a poster for the ANU Gender Institute. They asked for a screenprint because they were hoping that by putting it up around the ANU, the city people might notice it more and come. I don't think it was because of the poster, but they did have to change venues three times because the event was so heavily booked. [whispers] I think it must have been the poster. [laughs]

Back in the early days posters were made cleverly: you'd get seven colours on a poster by only printing four colours and using overlays. Or you could use the same stencil and block parts out and print it again. Screenprinting a poster is not expensive. I think it would be cheaper than

getting something digitally run out at that size and quantity. It is still a valid artform, lots of people are collecting posters and there are lots of young people making them too.

Can you talk a bit more about duality and tension in your work? The recent work, for example, both celebrates the nostalgic aspect of print while also highlighting the fact that it's important to respond to one's time and place.

When I lived in the Northern Territory I learnt not to jump on the bandwagon about issues or concerns that aren't your own. People make a lot of work because they think they should nail their political colours to the mast, but sometimes it's not really their own issue. I want to make work about stuff that's important for me and perhaps, for that reason, a little more nuanced. I don't want to be an ad agency for the Left (although I still am at times), which is something a bit different, more like what I did at Redback Graphix. One of my first jobs at Redback, in 1984, was to make work for the Kembla Coal and Coke's Miners' Women's Auxiliary. I didn't know anything about coal mining or miners or women's auxiliaries or life in a small mining village. I remember being very nervous meeting those women and trying really hard to make a work that they would approve of and be able to use constructively.

When I look back at my work I think how I could have made everything just that much better if I did it again. Often I jump into ideas without too much thought, just a burning desire to get the work made. Perhaps a little more time for reflection would be good but then again perhaps that would cause indecision and then nothing would get made. It is what it is, and if there's one thing I have learned it is to not worry about things that you can't change but to work hard on the things that you can.

IMPRINT EDITOR EMILY KIDDELL.



REBECCA THISTLETON

Hair stylist



REBECCA AT WORK ON KRISTI MORRISON.

I was always good at doing things with my hair, and I have always been really creative. I guess, because I love people and I love getting people what they want. I have been doing it for nineteen years. I left school in year 10 but with an apprenticeship to go to. I knew what I wanted to do, so leaving in year 10 was the appropriate thing to do to get started back then.

These days, kids tend to go to year 12, and do their apprenticeships after that. Now I think I would have done year 12 maybe. I think it is important these days. I am certainly going to tell that to my children. If they are keen to do a trade I think I will still encourage them to go through to year 12. It is important to get that further education I think.

I've been here three years. I have got quite a good clientele, but a lot of people still don't know about it, so I guess it will be good to get it out there as well — yeah, some people are still discovering me.

There is definitely a lot of work in town which is great. I was worried about that when I first started up in Braidwood. There is a lot of event work as in weddings, formals and things like that around town. I have a lot of people come here to get married. I think it is a bit more affordable than getting married in the city.

I'd say probably 70 percent of the weddings I do here are for people from out of town.

The majority of my work would be maintenance; upkeep of colours and styles, but a lot of that is wedding and formal styling work. We have more female clients than male but I still have quite a big male clientele as well. Four or six weeks is generally what people book in advance for. I work on an appointment basis so I am not a walk-in salon.

I try to keep up my education a bit as well by going to courses in Canberra and Sydney at least twice a year. From that I can keep up with new products that are out on the markets — colour products, styling products. Sometimes I go along to education courses for inspiration, to keep inspired and stay motivated and to learn new and upcoming techniques so I don't get stale working on my own.

I remember a couple of years ago a girl coming in and asking me for balayage foils and I had no idea what she meant. Actually she just said, "can I have some balayage?" And I said yes, that's no problem at all, and I went over to my desk and I Googled 'balayage' and realised that I had been doing it for a long time, I just didn't know the name. So I guess that you can get caught out a bit if you don't stay up-to-date with the latest trends.

Google is great. Every time somebody sits down and wants her hair cut, and they are not quite sure what they want, I suggest that she just Google 'short hair styles' or whatever she is after — and just wait for the image to pop up.