

**THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST**

**REPORT  
From**

**Lillian Smith – 2002/2 Churchill Fellow**

**“To study overseas to expand my vision and broaden my horizons in  
the field of Surface Design”**

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Signed:

Date:

Lillian E. Smith

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## INTRODUCTION

I would like to acknowledge and warmly thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia whose Churchill Fellowship Award enabled me to travel overseas to expand my knowledge of Surface Design.

I listed my reasons as a need to travel overseas to expand my vision, step beyond the usual, for educational research and critical thinking update and especially to uplift my appreciation and knowledge of Surface Design beyond the capabilities I have at present.

These aims I feel were met when I went to The Surface Design Conference in Kansas City in June and then traveled on to visit Galleries and Museums in America and Paris, France and London, England.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Nungalinya College who gave me the Leave and encouragement to go and study overseas and the encouragement of the Northern Territory University. I feel the students in these places will benefit from my expanded artistic knowledge as well as I will myself.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**Occupation:** Teacher of adult Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander students studying the 12 month Textile Art (Surface Design) Course at Nungalinya College and also Lecturer at the Northern Territory University (now the Charles Darwin University) as part of the School of Fashion Dept.  
I am also a Practicing Artist.

### **Project Description:**

To attend the “Hands On” International Surface Design Conference in Kansas City which is sponsored by the Surface Design Association and hosted by the Kansas City Art Institute. Dates: June 2, 2003 – June 13 2003

Part 2 was travel to attend Galleries and Museums to see the art works and any textiles on show to heighten my awareness and knowledge of what is happening in the outside world in these areas from the perspectives of the past to the present day.

### **Highlights:**

The highlights were certainly having the opportunity to be part of the “Hands On” International Conference with all the highly professional lecturers and the chance to mix and exchange ideas with such a great variety of other artists. The energy and interchange was wonderful and very valuable, as many of the people who attended remarked on.. It seems with textiles especially, to see and feel the colours, textures and fabrics is important for understanding how it has been created.

Other incredible highlights were the opportunities to go to the best Galleries in the World to see their artworks live and up front. From these exhibits from earliest times (up to today) one can appreciate more fully the processes in the history of art which have lead up to the techniques, products and design skills used now.

**Major Lessons and Conclusions:** The SDA lists among its main purposes “Setting standards of excellence to guide the development of study and practice in the field, including its responsibility to the environment.” Including the other “to encourage exploration, innovation and cultivation of diverse perspective”- I will be encouraging my students to use these stimulating frameworks as a spring board for their work as well. To conclude: it is important and stimulating to get away and have this exchange with other artists to avoid operating in something of a vacuum.

## PROGRAMME

The main part of my programme was to go to the International “Hands On” Surface Design Association Conference in Kansas City.

This enabled me to take part in lectures and workshops given by people who are among the best in their field.

The ones I attended were by:

**Ana Lisa Hedstrom**, a world famous California artist who has worked with shibori techniques for over 25 years. Her clothing and wall hangings are Internationally known.

**Micheal James**, who is senior lecturer in the dept of textiles, clothing and design at the University of Nabraska, in Lincoln - the place where he also lives and maintains a studio. Micheal is a Fellow of the American Craft Council and his very interesting work is included in numerous public and private collections.

**Catherine Ellis Meurdter**, who has been a weaver and dyer for many years over which time she has developed her “woven shibori” process. She has won numerous awards and exhibited widely. Also Catherine has been the Head of Professional Crafts Fibre Programme at Haywood Community College, Clyde N.C. for the past 20 years.

**Tilleke Schwarz** (from Holland) she lives and works near Delft. Her specialising in embroidery has come after professional training in Fine Art with a focus on drawing. Her work shows a good sense of humour with a graffiti touch to it. She has exhibited and been published widely. Awards include the European Prize for Modern Embroidery.

**Els van Baarle** (Batik artist also from Holland) has had her work shown throughout the USA, China, Europe and Korea. Her style is modern using bright colours. Els has won numerous awards and also been published widely and has been conducting workshops in the US and Europe.

**Leslie Nobler Farber** works with digital/mixed media textiles designs. She is art professor at William Paterson University. Leslie has received many degrees in the field she has chosen and exhibits her interesting and diverse work nationally. She is also published widely.

**Dorothy Caldwell** is a studio artist who works with resist and discharge dyes. She has travelled widely studying dyeing and stitching techniques in many places including India and Japan. Her work is published in the Fibrearts and Surface Design Journal amongst other well known journals

**Jason Pollen** is currently full Professor and Chair of the Fibre Art Dept at Kansas City Art Institute. He received his BFA and MA degrees in painting from the City College of New York. His list of clients for his designs makes the mind Boggle as they include Yves

St Laurent, Lanvin, Liberty of London and many others! He has designed textiles in Europe, Japan, India and the USA for both fashion and the Home textile markets..His work is naturally in many important collections and he has begun recently to design and market textiles for the home under his own label.

**Joy Boutrop** is a qualified textile engineer who comes from Denmark, near Copenhagen. She graduated from the Fachhochschule Niederrhein, Krefeld, Germany. Joy has done research into colour depths and is now lecturing at Denmark's Designskole, Copenhagen as well as going off to be guest lecturer at many other Colleges and Universities.

**Bus Tour of Exhibitions (as part of Conference Itinerary)** We were taken in busses to a number of Textile Exhibitions which were on concurrently with the SDA Conference. As I've noted in my diary, comments went from "What was that?" to "Why ?" to absolutely "WOW!" and "Awesome!" and "How would you do that?" An interesting variety from the traditional to very modern, to way out with some amazing techniques demonstrated in many of them.

**Jane Dunnewold** is a well known author and artist who lives and works in San Antonio, Texas. She has chaired the Southwest School of Art and Craft in San Antonio from 1990 —2000. Jane has workshops at her home at Art Cloth Studios and her fabric designs are acclaimed Internationally. It was through my correspondence with Jane that I got to hear about the SDA Conference.

**Dr. Jerry Trapp** – a practicing pharmacist, he "lives and dyes" in Kansas City. He has a passion for research, investigation and teaching which he puts into his surface endeavours. His lecture on "Myth, Truth and Opinion" with practical information on dyes from the viewpoint of a Chemist was very technical but also very interesting to hear the technical side.

**Elizabeth Busch** has numerous workshops in Australia, the Netherlands, Canada and the USA to her credit. She has a BFA in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design and has awards for numerous Quilt designs.

**Vendor's Exhibition and Trunkshow** was where various artists sold their work and also Vendor's brought art books to sell and silks etc.

**Taliha Draheim** spoke on the "Overview of Commercial Design Opportunities" Talihai is a professional designer and designer's agent and holds a master's degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art and has taught at California College of Arts and Crafts, Kansas City Art Inst and Academy of Art College. Her homeware fabric designs have been marketed Nationwide.

**Hitoshi Ujiie** specialises in digitally produced textile designs and he has established his own Hitoshi Ujiie Design studio in New York. Ujiie is assistant professor of textile design at Philadelphia University.

**Karren K. Britto** creates very beautiful pleated and shibori accessories and garments under her label “Entwinements”. She has a background in chemistry in which she has a Ph.D and has been lecturing at Universities for 25 years. Karen is also the author of “SHIBORI: Creating Color & Texture on Silk.”

**Yoshido Wada** has exhibited widely and has received numerous awards, grants and honours. Yoshika received her BFA in textile art in Japan and MFA in painting in the USA. And is the vice president of the World Shibori Network and served as co-chair of the past 3 International Shibori Symposia Internationally.

(These details of the Lecturers at the SDA Conference have been obtained from the “Hands On International Surface Design Conference” Information Booklet.)

**Workshops:**

**Discharge Using Thioureadioxide (or Thiox ) with Joy Bouttrop and Jason Pollen.**  
**Master Class: Acid Dyes on Silk: lecturer - Karen Britto**

**Galleries visited: Kansas City Textile Exhibitions:**

Fiber: Up Close and Far Away

Digital Delight

Jason Pollen

Digitally Printed Floorcloths

Couplets

Student Exhibition

Fabric Constructions

KCAI Student work

Dichotomies in Silk

Wends Gu

**Chicago:** Contemporary Art Museum,

Fine Arts Museum –one of the finest collections of Impressionist paintings

**Olympia:** Evergreen University Fine Art Dept. – relating to non toxic dyes.

**San Francisco:** the Bueno Yerba Centre

Museum of Modern Art

**San Antonio:** Fine Art Museum – exhibition of Chihuly glass “Seaforms”.

**Albuquerque:** Fine Art Museum – antique American Indian weaving and pottery.

**Sante Fe:** Georgia O’Keefe Museum – famous for early abstract paintings and flowers

13 Moons Gallery – fabric and kitsch Craft

Tiqua Gallery – flower paintings

Governor’s Palace- early costumes and home furnishings

**Taos:** American Indian Pueblo - relating to our Aboriginal lands and crafts.

**Navaho Indian Reservation Headquarters:** relating to weaving, ceramics, jewelery and way of life.

**New York:** The Guggenheim Museum – working through Impressionist paintings on.

The Metropolitan Art Museum – exhibition the “Goddess” use of exquisite draped fabrics using the Greek Goddesses in their draped tunics as their inspiration. .Famous designer labels.

Glass by Tiffany – Inspirational designs in glass.

Russian costumes and antique fabric samples from earliest recorded times.

The Museum of New York – brilliant exhibition of actual wearable art clothing from the 20's era. Incredible bead work and colours and patterns.

The Museum of Design – exhibition of Design students winning work. Included some fine, woven fabrics and interesting hand printed fabrics and dress designs.

The Fashion Design Institute Museum – exciting exhibition of hand printed fabrics.

Having said they felt we should celebrate the role of the individual printer now (in the write up in the Entrance Hall,) as there was a real need to print small quantities of “one off” cloth especially in this age of mass production, we then found all these pieces on Exhibition were all from about 20 years ago – really beautiful famous designer clothes amongst them.

**London:** The V&A Museum – collections of antique hand woven fabrics from Iran (acquired in the 1800's) also very large tapestries, Japanese and Chinese hand dyed and embroidered fabrics and many other fabrics from around the world. A collection of hand printed fabrics from the last 40 years was worth seeing also for the use of colours and design and the printing techniques which were described below each one.

**Paris:** The Louvre – for Art and History.

**Musee Galliera** – a Collection of Marlene Dietrich's clothing.

**Couturier Shops** – for use of latest fabrics in high Fashion.

## MAIN BODY AND CONCLUSIONS

I have been extremely fortunate to be able to go to the “Hands On” International Surface Design Conference and to be able to take part in lectures and workshops with such highly qualified and interesting teachers. The time spent outside lecture time was also very useful and interesting as it is the time when one meets the other artists there and compares techniques and problems; their fabrics and photo’s come out and then before you know it, there’s a full on “flap and tell”!

Fabrics really have to be seen “live’ for their textures, colours and design techniques to be fully appreciated. It is never the same when they appear in print as some of the differences in pattern, stitching (or fabric) maybe very subtle and hard to just see and colours are very hard to reproduce as “true” to their real colour, or tone.

All round it was very stimulating and very constructive. If you are a teacher and/or a practicing artist, it is very difficult after a while, to keep giving out and not top up the reserve inspirational and technical levels. It is also necessary to keep up to date with new techniques and design fashions. A certain amount can be gained from the Internet and Libraries but it is never the same as “going Live” as it were to experience it at first hand.

Going to the best Galleries in the World to appreciate art from earliest times til the present day is a unique experience that would be impossible to replace in any other way, in my opinion. It is very necessary to build on the knowledge of the past before one can move forward in any concrete way.

**Conclusion:** To sum up I would like to say that I would go through the blast furnace that was Paris in a heatwave anytime to be able to visit the Louvre and the other Galleries again. I would happily walk miles and hazard the mysteries of the subway again in New York to see those incredible Galleries another time – and I would even hazard English Rail (which seems to have trouble running in hot weather) to see the V&A Museum again - but allow several days, just in case.

The lecturers at the SDA Conference were among the best in their chosen fields and gave us a valuable insight into their specialised areas.

The workshop on Thiox (or “Discharge Using Thioureadioxide”) with Joy Boutropp and Jason Pollen was really informative and fun. As they have worked together before, they share a lot of knowledge of the processes and their interesting and humorous delivery style makes the subject easy to enjoy

and the listener want to participate. The processes covered were direct application and immersion dying.

Having to choose 3 classes from far away and get the one out of the 3 that the Conference Organisers can fit you into must always present problems and sadly the lecturer I had was not so well prepared as some for “Acid Dyes on Silk”. As she admitted she was prepared for 3 days not 5.

I did find out that these dyes are far too labour intensive for too little return for our students and probably for myself at this stage. Colour wise these Acid Dyes (Pro Chem Lanacet ) are more resistant to fading than other dyes and better for matching up colours exactly for big orders, but for our students the exactness of the measuring process (to the last tenth of an ounce and last granule of dye powder) would be tedium personified (not to mention highly unlikely) for, in my opinion, not a lot to be gained in changing the dyes that we use already. We specialise in “one off” lengths of fabric and to stand there in this tropical climate that we have, stirring a boiling cauldron of dye and fabric for an hour seems a lot more more work and discomfort than we require at this stage.

It was very interesting to have the opportunity to compare other processes though. It was also interesting to compare different teaching styles and see the delivery style from the Chemist’s point of view. The lecturer is a Chemist first, Artist second, I got the feeling.

Strict Work Health and Safety was enforced in the workshops.

Careful note taking was encouraged of dye recipes and results which is important to match results again.

I found out that the work I do (and that of my students) holds up well on the world stage even though it is different to the work I saw. This is of great interest and importance to know where you are compared to other countries and artists.

To finish up I would like to congratulate the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for the really valuable work it is doing. I would never have had such a unique chance to broaden my artistic horizons without this scholarship and I do feel sure it will not only benefit me in my own artistic endeavours but that of my many students as well.

**Recommendations:** I recommend these opportunities for study in other countries be continued and encouraged for the valuable exchanges they provide of information and sharing of knowledge.

I recommend intending scholarship applicants do their research as thoroughly as possible beforehand, but to be aware things do change. The original place I applied to study was not available at the time I intended

going I learned later. It worked out for the best fortunately for me as I got to a much better Conference, but equally it could go the other way. The fees cost more than I had originally applied for so that could have created difficulties. Fortunately, in my case, it didn't.

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust guide notes do recommend you don't try to take in too many places at once and I would second that. The mind gets saturated and I don't think you get the full benefit of what you are going to see after that point.