



JOURNEY
INTO A TOXIC
HEARTLAND

Conceptual Land and Body Art by **Aly de Groot**



JOURNEY INTO A TOXIC HEARTLAND

Exhibition venue: Charles Darwin University, Darwin, NT July 13 - 29, 2006

Through the use of plant materials and contemporary basket making construction, I reference the extreme conditions of landscape, climate and the diversity of cultures which influence and surround me where I live in Northern Australia. I am also concerned with the urgent issue of nuclear waste disposal in the Northern Territory, as well as the crucial issue of human beings using one another without thought or thanks. Aly de Groot, 2006

Aly de Groot completed her BVA (Hons) at Charles Darwin University during 2006 and has received a scholarship to continue on with her Masters degree in 2007. Prior to completing her recent academic studies, she continuously built a solid regional reputation in Wearable Art, culminating in her winning the student prize at the **Northern Territory Fashion Awards** in 2006. As well, during this all important year, she was selected to be included as an emerging artist-designer in Munich, Germany for the prestigious event known as **Talente**. Closer to home, de Groot exhibited with **24 hr Art**, the alternative artists-run centre in Darwin and in **Hatched**, the Australian national exhibition at PICA, Western Australia, which showcases emerging, contemporary artists.

The award of a prestigious Freedman Foundation travelling scholarship allowed de Groot to be mentored in alternative photographic processes on textiles with Robert Renfrow, from Arizona, USA at the Australian Forum for Textile Arts' *Aotearoa Textiles* in New Zealand during 2005 – the processes learned were used extensively in works shown here, and included in her Honours exhibition.

A young parent herself, de Groot has initiated and produced community-based projects such as **Birds Nest Baskets – Vessels of Knowledge** at Alawa Primary School in 2005, funded under the NT Artists-in-Schools program. She learned to work collaboratively with school groups from another mentor, Wendy Golden, a fibre artist based in Victoria. This mentorship was made possible through

an Australia Council for the Arts scholarship, and led to her inclusion in the exhibition, *Call and Response* which was launched in Darwin at Territory Craft in September, 2006 and is to be shown in Brisbane at Gallery 159 during the Brisbane Textile FORUM, end of June, 2007.

Most recently, Aly de Groot has been facilitating/directing a large-scale fibre art/garden project with differently-abled children at Henbury Elementary school, Darwin.

According to **Lycia Trouton**, who reviewed *Journey into a Toxic Heartland*, "... De Groot, a weaver by training, contextualises her artwork by locating herself within a HEART state, a very *feeling* condition, and historically: female, irrational and emotive... she also references a narrative (autobiographical) JOURNEY... and also considers SITE/LAND in the way that a sculptor would....

"Aly de Groot's body and land art explores topical contemporary socio-political issues to which she has been sensitised.... De Groot's fibre-based artwork posits a moralistic message that we must celebrate the positive possibilities offered by a new outlook on Australia's postcolonial settlement and discard worn-out sexist and racist attitudes.... Along with de Groot's carefully woven grass creations, her artwork has a grassroots-political subtext: to 'weed out' the corrupt and callous elements in a globalised economy where terror and pain are regularly inflicted by humans onto other humans and we treat one another with contempt -- or worse -- sometimes leading to violence and death..."

This page below, SHADOWS, 21 colour photographs of woven objects, each 30cm x 28cm. Opposite page top, PEOPLE IN NOWHERE, 10 figures made from pandanus and bush dyes, each 75cm x 20cm; detail from SHADOWS (pink). Bottom of page: EXPOSED, cyanotype on silk, plant dyes, 120cm x 45cm each, plus large detail as background to page. Blue figures: details of SHADOWS. All photography by Fiona Morrison

