

Batik. The Javanese art of wax designs

The exhibition *BATIK OF JAVA, POETICS and POLITICS* was co-ordinated by the Caloundra Regional Gallery QLD where it was launched (July 19 – August 14 2010). It is a travelling exhibition, see tour venues and dates, page 12. **Dr Maria Wronska-Friend** writes about specific works that feature in the show.

In October 2009, Javanese batik became the first fabric from Asia to be placed on the UNESCO list as an item of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This recognition is certainly well deserved. Fabrics with wax-drawn designs, made in numerous workshops in various parts of Java, are one of the greatest living textile traditions of the world.

Textile art is perhaps the major form of visual expression in Indonesian culture, and fabrics produced on Java with the complex wax-resist method called batik, have been recognised as the major achievement of textile art of the archipelago. Even today, in Java, it can take up to one year of daily work to produce fabric of the highest standards.

To celebrate UNESCO's decision, the Caloundra Regional Gallery on the Sunshine Coast has organised an exhibition called *Batik of*

Java: Poetics and Politics. This exhibition presents two Queensland collections of Indonesian textiles and paintings, one being batik fabrics from the north coast of Java from the Greg Roberts and Ian Reed collection, and the other being a series of recent paintings entitled *Batik has been Burnt*, by the Brisbane-based Indonesian artist Dadang Christanto.

Over the centuries, batik textiles on Java have evolved into a multitude of regional and ethnic styles. Of these, two are the most distinctive: the subdued blue and brown fabrics of Central Java associated with the traditions of the courts of local Sultans, and the batiks of the northern coast of Java, which feature more dynamic and freely-drawn designs executed in a multitude of colours, and which are the subject of this exhibition.

