

The pinnacle of Javanese skills in the use of natural dyes is represented by batiks known as *tiga negeri*. Their name means 'three countries' and indicates that each fabric was dyed in three different parts of Java, in towns famous for producing a particular type of colour with natural dyes (il. 4). Fabrics of this kind became popular in the 1920s and 1930s and their production was usually coordinated by Chinese businessmen.

The complex, eclectic style of this batik reflects the diversity of local traditions which contributed to its execution. While the brown trellis motif of the background is typical of wedding cloths of central Java, the flowers – chrysanthemums and peonies – were favoured by Chinese clients from the north coast of the island.

Today there are still several batik workshops in the Pasisir area which excel in the production of high quality batiks. One of them is Oey Soe Tjoen workshop at Kedungwuni near Pekalongan, now one of the last places on the island which specializes in the production of high quality batiks for the Javanese Chinese. At Trusmi near Cirebon are two batik workshops, Batik Madil and Batik Masina, famous for the revival of the old local designs.

The Roberts and Reed collection provides an insight into the old batik traditions of Pasisir as well as presenting the best examples of batik art from contemporary workshops. For Australian textile enthusiasts, the exhibition offers a wonderful opportunity to appreciate the distinctive traditions of the textile art of their neighbour country. □

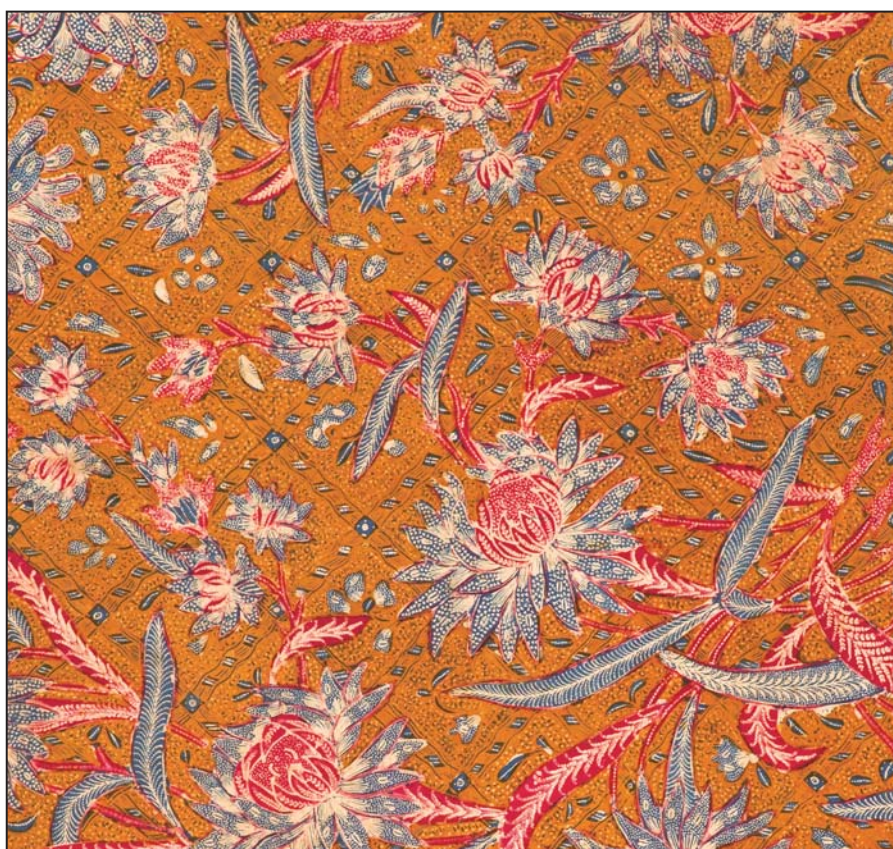
The exhibition *Batik of Java. Poetics and Politics* organised by the Caloundra Regional Gallery, was launched in Caloundra on 10th July and is on show until 14th August, 2010.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue; inquiries to T: 07 5420 8299. E: artgallery@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au Web: www.caloundraregionalgallery.org.au

Dr Maria Wronska-Friend is an anthropologist specialising in textiles of Southeast Asia and has dedicated more than twenty years to the study of Indonesian textiles.

Dadang Christanto, creator of *Batik Has Been Burnt* is one of the most recognised Indonesian contemporary artists; he is currently an adjunct professor at Griffith University Brisbane Qld.

See also **Greg Roberts'** blogspot: <http://northcoastjavanesebatik.blogspot.com/>



Travelling Dates:

Artspace Mackay...
19 August - 2 October, 2010
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery...
3 December, 2010 - 6 February, 2011
Dogwood Crossing @ Miles...
21 April - 3 June, 2011
Noosa Regional Gallery...
10 June - 24 July, 2011

Top of page II. 4: Skirt cloth dyed in three Javanese towns (*tiga negeri*), probably Surakarta, Pekalongan and Lasem, 1930s; cotton, natural dyes, hand-applied wax resist (*batik tulis*); 104 x 253 cm; Greg Roberts & Ian Reed collection. Photo: Mick Richards

Above: **Batik Has Been Burnt #7** by Dadang Christanto (2008); acrylic on Belgium linen; 137.0 x 167.0cm; Jan Manton Art