



# WINDWASH

at Megalo Print Studio + Gallery

One morning, in late March 2010, a one-day installation, Windwash, went up on the dry lake bed of Lake George north-east of Canberra. The project was an example of the power of collective action, the original premise from which Megalo Print Studio + Gallery was born 30 years ago.

Megalo Print began in a humble shed in Canberra in 1980 as a screen print on paper studio, and soon broadened to include screen printing on fabric. Later, after merging with Studio One, it was able to offer access to intaglio, relief and lithography equipment. Today Megalo has the most comprehensive range of print facilities available to artists and the general community in Australia.

The Megalo archives document the organisation's artistic activity, including work on fabric from protest art on t-shirts, printed banners, repeat length fabric and latterly tea-towels. It is a unique studio that has had a long history of engaging with community art, the most recent of these activities being Windwash.

The Windwash project saw artists invited to be part of an installation of hand-printed tea-towels on the bed of Lake George, formerly known as Weereewa, north east of Canberra. The theme of the 2010 Weereewa Festival was 'Winds of Change', in recognition of a new, contentious wind farm installed on the bare, brown hills rising on the eastern rim of the shoreline.

Lake George has always been the subject of conjecture, myth, reality and contest. It is an ancient site, beautiful in its physical aspect and important through its Aboriginal history. The Windwash project brought all of these things into play – an opportunity for artists to engage in the debate about climate change, renewable energy, historical debate or, for some, the opportunity just to make art.

Forty-three artists produced 201 tea towels which were pegged on a fencing line stretching 200 metres across the lake bed. In the still hours of the early morning the tea towels stood like postage stamps, against the horizon line from one aspect, and disappearing into the

distance from another. By the time the hot afternoon arrived, filled with gusting winds, over 350 people had looked at, admired and perhaps purchased something that is artistic, utilitarian and a symbol of the important cultural role provided by Megalo.

This installation was a visual indicator of the role that Megalo fulfils, one where individual artists can excel and produce work in a studio imbued with a community ethos. This is the strength of Megalo Print Studio + Gallery; it is a place where professional artists work alongside amateurs and where skills and experience are shared in an informal and collegial manner. The organisation manages a comprehensive program of classes, residencies, projects, access and exhibitions.

The international reputation of Megalo continues to grow, promoted through the residency program, and significant linkages have been forged between Megalo and the national cultural organisations located in Canberra. The history documented in the Megalo archives is dense with the names of artists who are renowned in contemporary Australian art.

Projects have been undertaken in East Timor, the Northern Territory and in Canberra's own backyards – Megalo is constantly seeking ways to uphold, reinvigorate and ensure that printmaking maintains its contemporary focus and relevance for all sectors of the community.

The Windwash installation was the culmination of all that Megalo has to offer. A perfect example of a beautiful whole made of individual parts, demonstrating Megalo's importance as a community access printmaking facility. May there be another 30 years of artistic activity at Megalo Print Studio + Gallery.

*Megalo Print Studio + Gallery is located at 49 Phillip Avenue, Watson ACT and is open Tuesday-Saturday, 9am-5pm. More information from phone (02) 6241.4844 or visit the website [www.megalo.org](http://www.megalo.org) Megalo gratefully acknowledges the support of the ACT Government through artsACT and the Visual Arts and Crafts Strategy.*