

Australian Galleries, Melbourne

Winsome Jobling

Monsoon – Paper & Water

15 September – 3 October 2026

This years' Wet Season was biblical!

The rainfall total of 2400mm from October to April was 44% above average.

The Top End Wet season is a season of instability and extremes. The monsoonal winds: a sea breeze the size of a continent bring in dense moisture laden warm air and the atmosphere is palpable. Variations in temperature, electrical charge and water vapour feed the instability of these huge moisture laden clouds.

The horizon disappears to the rolling rumble of thunder that rattles household objects and the crackle of lightning that flashes daylight bright. Waves pound the shore and the hermit crabs climb nearby trees for safety.

The impact is profound for the environment and its communities and part of the unique identity of the Top End.

The first rains cleanse and refresh everything; washing away the dust and bushfire ash layers and steam rises off the roads. A huge sigh is released across the Top End to the joyous smell of petrichor!

It rains for days sometimes weeks, and the Spear Grass grows from seed to 2 metres in the blink of an eye.

The last rains – the Knock-em-downs force the Spear Grass seed heads to the ground where their tail like awns absorb moisture making them twist and screw the seed into the wet earth to lie in wait over the dry for the following wet season.

Papermaking

Water is a fundamental element for hand papermaking. In fibre preparation it washes, soaks, cooks, decomposes and rinses. Then the flow of water creates a sheet of paper as it carries the abraded cellulose fibres across the mould where they begin to chemically fuse.

Water and Cellulose = $H_2O + C_6H_{10}O_5$ = a chemical reaction where positive Hydrogen and negative Oxygen ions bond and as the water is removed these Hydrogen Bonds strengthen.

Hand papermaking is a balancing act of fluidity and containment.

These works are a departure from past work as I try to let the papers speak without the addition of drypoints and printing ink. I am trying to make the water visible through pouring, spraying and painting with liquid pulp and the building of layers of colours and fibres using water to add or subtract elements. A physical response to The Wet.

My papermaking is seasonal and the wet is the most important as plants like Spear Grass and Gamba Grass (a declared weed) grow quickly enough for multiple harvests. Tree sap is rising so bark fibres like Banyan Fig and Native Hibiscus are engorged and pliant.

Rain water rinses the fibres after cooking and collected rainwater fills the beater and the vats. Fibres can be processed and frozen to be made into paper during the less humid Dry Season

The cellulose fibres used in these papers include Spear Grass, Gamba Grass, native Kapok and Abaca as well as cotton rag (coloured bedsheets, blue shearers singlets and vintage black velveteen). I have also used aqueous dispersed pigments and indigo dye.

This year it felt like all the water in the world had fallen over the Top End - all the water since the beginnings of time - the same water that birthed the world.

I love the wet season!

Winsome Jobling, 2026

Process video link (5minutes)

[Winsome Jobling - Artist Profile](#)