



## Meet our Members - Solenne Ducos-Lamotte

### ► Interview with Solenne Ducos-Lamotte,



**You recently joined the Board of elected Directors of the Indigenous Art Code, what does it mean for IDAIA and for you?**

It is all about **passion, commitment** and **strategy**.

**The Indigenous Art Code** is the official international code of conduct set up to ensure the fair and ethical trade in works of art by Australian Indigenous artists. It aims at **protecting the artists from unethical treatment and exploitation**, and the **buyers from unfair misleading and fraudulent practices**.

**IDAIA** contributed to draft the **Indigenous Art Code in 2010** and is a registered **member of the Code since 2011**. Promoting and providing access to the ethical and curatorial sector is part of our very mission, and working alongside the existing like-minded stakeholders and organisations is our approach.

So being involved in the **Code's governance and regulation structure** only makes sense. It puts IDAIA in a better position to raise even more awareness about the Code and ethical practices, and be more effective in our promotional and educational actions thanks to a better understanding of the problems and opportunities for the sector.

**These are critical times for the Code**. So far the Code has been a **voluntary code**. On the negative side there continues to be **significant unethical and unfair treatment and exploitation of Indigenous artists** by some dealers in the Industry, and the nature of the misconduct has not changed significantly since the Senate report was published in 2007.

On the positive side **290 galleries, dealers, artists and art-lover individuals have signed up as members or supporters of the Code**, which is also backed by State and Federal governments and major public museums. **IartC** has addressed and helped resolve a significant number of complaints and breaches. It is interesting to note that part of the alleged offenders have been signatory members.

With growing numbers of Code members especially overseas, the ever **increasing international markets for Australian Indigenous Art**, the arrival of **new Indigenous Directors**, and the transition toward a mandatory Code, the Indigenous Art Code is entering a **new vital and exciting phase**. IDAIA is very happy to be part of, and has a role to play in, notably by promoting ethical practices in the international marketplace.

This is a great recognition for IDAIA, still a growing organisation which will also certainly benefit from the increased visibility to raise more support and sponsorship!

**On a personal level** I feel very much honoured that I was invited to stand for election, and then be elected. This is my **first position as a Board Director** and it is a fantastic opportunity for personal and professional growth. There is so much to learn from the invaluable experiences and insights of my fellow Board Directors, drawn from the Indigenous visual arts industry and the wider community, ranging from Indigenous leaders, artists and curators, to representatives of **major Indigenous Artists Resource Organisations, art centres and commercial galleries, and non-arts Legal/Business Experts**.

I am passionate about **protecting and developing the best ethical practices**, and a **fervent defender of the Aboriginal-owned art centres model**. I believe in a stronger industry in which cultural maintenance and sustainability need to be strengthened and nurtured. Fairness for both the artists and the consumers is paramount



for me. I am bringing to the Board my knowledge and skills, my international experience and connections, and above all my unconditional love for the Indigenous art and culture ò plus maybe my **Franco-Australian determination!**

**Everyone willing to support the ethical Aboriginal art sector, I encourage you to become a member:  
[www.indigenousartcode.org](http://www.indigenousartcode.org)**

### **According to you, what are the future stakes of the Australian Indigenous Art in the Australian and international markets?**

In spite of the global economic downturn and the fact that the Australian Indigenous art (AIA) market in Australia has been declining in recent years (the auctions result is probably back to the level achieved in 2002), it remains highly positive as **the international market for AIA is still booming, ever growing in Europe, and opening in Asia notably in China**, with collectors diversifying and starting to buy Aboriginal art. Just this year a Chinese collector bought an entire exhibition of over 40 works! Besides in Australia the downturn is counterbalanced by the recrudescence of top quality exhibitions, prizes and festivals dedicated to Indigenous art and culture, raising the bar in terms of quality and contributing to validating and solidifying the ethical sector.

The keys for the long-term viability of the AIA market are on one side **the quality and the integrity of the art works**, and on the other side access to information on **the importance of the provenance of the art works**.

The stakes are actually much broader than one would think.

**The market performance and the provenance of the sold works have a direct impact on the Aboriginal art centres and the communities**, the sales of the art works being often the only source of non-government revenue. Inversely the conditions of artistic creation, social cohesion and cultural transmission provided by art centres allow for the quality and integrity of the works produced which can then be put on the market.

**Aboriginal art centres** are recognised as the only original provenance allowing for absolute certainty as far as the authenticity, the ethical nature and the quality of an artwork for sale, are concerned. They are non-for-profit Aboriginal-owned artist cooperatives, facilitating the production and distribution of artworks, while ensuring the fair remuneration of artists and managing their careers. They play a key role in the development and sustainability of the sector:

- Recording the artworks' creation details, guaranteeing their authenticity and a permanently traceable provenance through a unique catalogue number,
- Providing a pricing reference framework,
- Redistributing benefits to artists (between 50% and 70% of the sale price of works)
- Ensuring cultural maintenance, renewal, learning and social cohesion . crucial factors for the aesthetic quality and proper telling of the artists' stories.

With now over 100 art centres in Australia, there only remains a very small number of Aboriginal communities who do not possess such an organisational structure.

The results of Aboriginal art auctions organised by reputable auction houses, and notably the record achieved by Bonhams earlier this year (totalling \$5.05 million, with 87% of the works sold), are very reassuring, proving that **high-quality works of impeccable provenance always get fantastic results**.

All museums and most major international art collectors are now aware of the importance of the provenance so the challenge is more for broader audiences. People have the right to make an informed decision as to the production conditions, payment to the artist, integrity of the work, and of course the provenance giving value to the work.



At **IDAIA** we have **developed a number of tools and services** to learn about Aboriginal art and its sector, notably on our **website** where we reference all the Aboriginal art exhibitions and events organised by public institutions across the globe (which I strongly recommend to attend for anyone to appreciate what are high quality and ethical art works). We also offer a **monthly newsletter** presenting the latest developments for Aboriginal art on the international scene, regular educational activities in Australia and overseas, and a brochure on practical advice for the purchase of Aboriginal art works. And we are of course available for any question: [info@idaia.com.au](mailto:info@idaia.com.au)

### Can you describe your personal background and your role within IDAIA?

I am the **Founder and Director of IDAIA** . International Development for Australian Indigenous Art . based in Sydney. After my initial **Business School degree** (1999) and a 4-year experience in management consulting in Europe, I completed my education at the prestigious Parisian art schools **Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts** and **GRETA des Arts-Appliqués** (2003), and I gained a **Master of Art Administration** from Sydney's UNSW College of Fine Arts (2005). I was previously Head of the **Aboriginal art department at Michael Reid – Caruana & Reid Fine Art** in Sydney (2004-2008), working in close collaboration with Australian art market analyst and 3-gallery owner **Michael Reid**, and world-renown scholar **Wally Caruana**, who was the first senior curator of **Australian Indigenous Art at the National Gallery of Australia** in Canberra for over twenty years.

Since its creation in 2008, IDAIA has thrived to **promote Indigenous Australian Art towards international audiences**, on one side working with and for the official Aboriginal art centres spread across Australia by helping them sell their artworks and organise exhibitions, and on the other side developing education programs and curating exhibitions, while **involving volunteers, curatorial contributors, government representative organisations, benefactors and corporate sponsors**. IDAIA is also the only entity providing an online overarching platform of information on Australian Indigenous Art across the globe, and has two important areas of action, France and China.

Here are examples of exhibitions we organised in just 2012-13:

- **WaterMark** . The signature of lifeqin Hong Kong (2012), in partnership with the Australian Consulate in Hong-Kong and Macau, the Australia-China Council and benefactors;
- 5 art centres exhibitions in France, their first dedicated show outside of Australia: *'Lydia Balbal'* (2012), *'Strong Women Country'*(2012), *'Papunya Tjupi Artists'*(2012), *'Martumili Artists'*(2012) and *'Waringarri Artists: Raison d'Etre'* (2013);
- *'Beyond the Papunya Dot / Le point de Panuya'* at the Musée du Montparnasse in Paris, in partnership with DiffArt Pacific and the Embassy of Australia in France, presenting the vision of ten Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists;
- *'Gestuelles – the art of transmission by Aboriginal desert women'* (2012-13), touring the Alliances Françaises institutions across Australia, in partnership with the Embassy of France in Australia and Air France.

In my 10 years of dedicated experience, I have **intensely travelled across Australia and the globe**, I have been working with major international art galleries and institutions, enriched Australian Indigenous Art in both private and institutional art collections worldwide, presented hundreds of talks, lectures or seminars, I have led an international team, and negotiated, planned and implemented many exhibition projects on several continents.



As **IDAIA's Director** I see myself as being at the service of the ethical and curatorial Indigenous contemporary art sector, that is, primarily the artists, but also the curators and the entities helping the production and presentation of ethical and quality art works, and on the other side the audiences willing to access these ethical and quality art works as well as information on the ethical and curatorial sector.

My job is to constantly look for and **create new opportunities**, reflect on how to better **serve the industry and develop a sustainable model for IDAIA**, so that:

- artists via art centres can continue to express their culture and talent, and live from their art,
- curators can explore and open minds on the worldwide scene,
- overseas audiences can admire more high-level exhibitions,
- buyers can access more ethical and quality art works,
- anyone can access information, learn, research about the ethical and curatorial Indigenous art sector,
- more volunteers, interns and contributors can offer their motivation and develop competencies,
- more support is provided for the ethical sector,
- and more synergies and cross-beneficial projects are developed.

this is a lot and this is ambitious, but working with and for talented artists, marvellous works of art, insatiable appreciating audiences and art lovers, inspiring people and generous stakeholders, what's not to love?!



IDAIA

Specialising in International Development for Australian Indigenous Art  
Pour le Développement International de l'Art Aborigène d'Australie