



ikuntji artists



Volunteering at Ikuntji
Artists



ABOUT

Ikuntji Artists is a member-based, not-for-profit, Aboriginal-owned and operated art centre. It is situated in the community of Ikuntji / Haasts Bluff and has a board of five Indigenous directors all of whom live and work locally.

Ikuntji Artists was the first art centre established by women in the Western Desert Art Movement. Already in the 1980s, women began painting in Ikuntji in the aged care facility. They had been instructed by their husbands and fathers, and they had often assisted them in completing their paintings. By the early 1990s these women artists decided to pursue setting up their own art centre.

Ikuntji Artists was first established in 1992 and was initially set up to fulfil the role of women's centre providing services such as catering for old people and children in the community.

After first experiences in printing T-shirts, the artists began producing acrylic paintings on linen and handmade paper, which quickly gained the attention of the Australian and international art world as well as earning the centre an impressive reputation for fine art. The focus changed from a women's centre to an art centre in 2005 with the incorporation of the art centre as Ikuntji Artists Aboriginal Corporation.

Today Ikuntji Artists work across the mediums of painting, printmaking (on paper and on textiles), and jewellery-making, drawing their inspiration from their personal Ngurra (country) and Tjukurrpa (Dreaming).

The art centre is a space for maintaining and reinforcing cultural practices through art-making. It is the cultural hub of the community and operates as a studio and offers opportunities by empowering members. It fosters inter-generational transfer of knowledge and invests in future generations of artists with strong connections to cultural practices and beliefs. Our art is famous for bold colour choice, decisive brush strokes and a long legacy of internationally renowned artists.



COME JOIN THE TEAM!

We would like to invite any volunteers to join the team as they are an essential part of our business!

If you are thinking about visiting us and generously donating your time and skills please know your contribution is invaluable!

Living and working as a volunteer in a remote Australian Aboriginal community, whether for three weeks or for several months, provides a unique opportunity not available to many.

As part of our hardworking team, you will be rewarded with a diverse and interesting experience.

When considering volunteering at Ikuntji Artists please familiarise yourself with our organisation through our website <https://ikuntji.com.au> which explains who we are, where we are, what we do, and why we do it.

This information will help you understand our business and assist you to make an informed decision about volunteering, in what can sometimes be a challenging and fast-paced environment.

You can also learn more and follow us on Instagram and Facebook by searching @ikuntjiartists.

The duties required of our volunteers include assistance with the day-to-day operations of the organisation in accordance with your skillset. As a small art centre, we usually have between one and three volunteers working here at any one time, along with a dedicated team of staff.

We have hosted volunteers from all over the world so if you are keen to join us, please contact Manager Dr Chrischona Schmidt on fineart@ikuntji.com.au

WHO CAN VOLUNTEER?

Ikuntji Artists welcome volunteers of any age group (18+) and any nationality.

Our commitments and program of activities vary throughout the year which will determine timeframes we can host volunteers and what skills are needed.

We would love to have a chat with you when you might be available (please don't just turn up!) and what your contribution will be during your stay.

We ask that all volunteers be available for a minimum of three weeks and able to do physical work.

Please note:

- Volunteers may be subject to vetting or required to apply for permission to come.
- We do not accept pets so please consider this when planning to volunteer.
- In some cases, we do accept groups of two to volunteer together. Though this is subject to the above vetting and permissions. We acknowledge that volunteering alone may be a worry, though we often coordinate volunteer's time to cross over, and you will always have permanent staff on-site with you.
- It is logistically tricky to have visitors in terms of accommodation and transport to and from Alice Springs. However, there is a passing tourist trade. There is a camp site at Glen Helen, which is on the road between Alice Springs and Ikuntji (about 60kms unsealed road from Ikuntji). If you plan on having a day visitor/s please ensure that they have applied for a transit permit through Central Land Council (www.clc.org.au). As Ikuntji is on Aboriginal land, it is illegal for non-community members to stay overnight anywhere on community without a pre-approved permit. This also applies to partners and family members of staff and volunteers. Please remember you will be working during your stay at Ikuntji and will be needed during work hours (generally 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday, although some flexibility may be required).



VOLUNTEER DUTIES

Depending on your skillset, you could be working in the art studio preparing canvases and paints, cleaning up and generally assisting the artists. Alternatively, you could be helping build stretchers and developing the art centre site and gardens. Finally, we have a gallery and office that is the hub for sales, marketing, catalogue management, administration and a thousand other jobs. You may be working with arts workers, staff or independently over your stay.

Work hours are 9am to 4pm five days a week, with a lunch break from 12-1pm. However, this will require some flexibility depending on circumstances and events.

There are a range of areas that we accept volunteers:

- Working with art materials: Mixing paints, priming canvas, and assisting artists in the studio.
- Assistance with packing orders and sales
- Working in the native plant garden as well as maintenance of the grounds

Please let us know of any other skills or areas of expertise you may have so that we may be able to find tasks that make best use of your talents.



WHAT TO EXPECT

IKUNTJI/HAASTS BLUFF

- Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff is a small Western Desert Aboriginal Community located 230kms west of Alice Springs, with unsealed roads.
- Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff is very remote and services here are limited so you need to be healthy, resilient and self-sufficient to volunteer.
- It has a fluctuating population of around 160 people, most of whom are Pintupi-Luritja speakers. There is no public transport or mobile phone service. There is free access to the internet in the community for anyone via starlink.
- The community has a church, school, shop, aged care facility, administration centre, and health clinic (only operating on Tuesdays though) as well as private housing and a small airstrip.
- Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff is home to a mostly Aboriginal population, which maintains its own culture. There are important cultural sensitivities that you need to understand and respect. These include not entering certain areas in and around the community, wearing appropriate clothes and requesting permission to take photographs.
- Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff is located in the West Macdonell Ranges and is surrounded by stunning mountain ranges. The community has a riverbed, which is dry most of the year.
- The temperature varies from 45 degrees in summer to minus 5 degrees in winter.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES

We recommend that you learn about Aboriginal cultures.

If you can, get a copy of Whitefella Culture and read it. However, please be aware that each community and language groups have their own cultural practices.

For example, many Aboriginal cultures do not consider it polite to talk to new people. It is also often not customary to thank people for their work, or to look at someone in the eyes when you talk with them.

Whilst the people at Ikuntji are very welcoming and understand whitefella ways, it is important you take this opportunity to learn and embrace another culture. If you are ever unsure, please ask staff.

DOGS

There are some 'Camp Dogs' around (dogs which live in the community but are allowed to roam freely). There can be dog fights and occasionally people can be attacked by dogs. We do not recommend you go out alone at night, but if you are out alone and are scared of dogs, please carry a stick or pick up a stone and threaten to throw it at them. This usually keeps them at bay.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Working in a remote Aboriginal community requires a high level of emotional resilience. People with recent trauma and/or mental health issues should consider their capacity to work effectively in this environment.
- Volunteers should ensure they have health insurance and sufficient money to sustain themselves for their full stay at the art centre. If from overseas, volunteers must have health insurance and sufficient money to sustain themselves for their full stay in Australia. Volunteers are not paid for any work at Ikuntji Artists.
- In remote Aboriginal communities, you might be exposed to conditions and illnesses not commonly found in most developed countries.
- Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff is a 'dry' community so alcohol, drugs and pornography cannot be brought into the community, purchased or consumed anywhere in the community. This policy is strictly enforced by the local police.
- The art centre and the donga accommodation are within a secure, fenced and locked compound area. When you venture out into the community you need to act responsibly and be conscious of your own personal security.
- You will need to provide full personal details before arrival, including your residential address, driver's license or passport details, any medical conditions and emergency contacts etc. You must sign a form to indicate your agreement to comply with the Ikuntji Artists Safety Policy.

TAKING PHOTOS

The general rule is: ask before you snap. There are many sacred sites around and even within Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff and pictures cannot be taken of them under any circumstances. There are also some sacred trees within the community that cannot be photographed or touched. If you get to go out bush during your stay, please ask before taking pictures. Please also ask before taking any pictures of people (in particular children) and artworks. Additionally, please do not take photographs of people's houses, this includes yards. Please note: Ikuntji Artists would like a copy of photos and videos you take during your stay to use for marketing purposes, with accreditation to you.

WHEN TO COME

Ikuntji Artists is usually closed from mid-December to early January, during the hottest part of the year. However, some staff stay on during this period and there is still volunteer work to be done if you can manage the hot weather, although you will not have daily contact with artists. The weather is seasonal but as Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff is in the desert, winter nights can be cold and summer days and nights extremely hot. Check the conditions, temperatures and forecasts before you come.

ACCOMMODATION

You will be provided with modest accommodation free of charge, in a donga. Please expect single bed accommodation, running water, a fridge/freezer, cooker and basic cooking utensils, and access to a washing machine. All accommodation has electricity (via a local generator). We advise you to bring your own entertainment.

The water supply is via artesian wells and is heavy with minerals so you may want to bring your own drinking water. The water is safe to drink but some people don't like the taste.

If you wish to make trips into Alice Springs before, after or during your stay, accommodation is at your own expense.

INTERNET AND MOBILE RECEPTION

There is Starlink internet connection at the art centre which is intended for business use; however, there is now Starlink internet community-wide which is free to access for everyone. There is no mobile phone reception anywhere in the community. Please keep in mind that Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff is a remote community, and weather and other external factors often impact the quality and availability of internet. There is no landline telephone service at the accommodation donga; however, volunteers may use the landline telephone in the art centre after business hours for calls if required.

POST

The Administration Office receives post once a week via a mail plane. Please get any post addressed to you c/o Ikuntji Art Centre. Please note the mail has to go through Alice Springs first, and then out to Ikuntji, so it can take several weeks to arrive. We suggest not to use the postal service to receive mail during short stays.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHES

You must dress appropriately for the local culture. In general, certain areas of the body (shoulders, bottom and thighs) must be modestly covered. You will be working in an art studio or outdoors and therefore it is essential that you wear sturdy shoes with a closed toe. You will also be working with wet paint so please be prepared to get dirty and don't wear your best clothes!

The temperature in Ikuntji varies from 45 degrees in summer to minus 5 degrees in winter. Please check the average weather temperature of Alice Springs before your departure and pack accordingly. During winter this means lots of long-sleeved tops, woolly hat, gloves etc. Plenty of old clothes that you don't mind getting paint on. Sturdy footwear. Sunscreen, sunglasses, and a good shade hat.

FOOD AND WATER

There is a small local store at Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff with basic supplies (including frozen meat, bread, milk and some fresh fruit and veg) that is re-stocked fortnightly. We recommend that you do not rely solely on the local shop for your food and water needs. It is worth coordinating with whoever is picking you up from Alice Springs to arrange a shopping trip before you leave Alice Springs. The water at Ikuntji is bore water and is potable, however it does have a distinctive flavour and the supply could potentially get polluted. It is advisable to either buy bottled water (the store does sell this) or bring a water filter of some sort, alternatively you can boil water before you use it.

MEDICAL AND PERSONAL SUPPLIES

Medical and personal supplies: Bring all your medical and personal chemist supplies. Conditions in the desert are basic and there are high incidents of disease and infection. Before you come to Ikuntji Artists please make sure that you are up to date with Tetanus, Hepatitis A and flu vaccinations (at your own discretion). If you need any medications, please bring them with you. You can also bring anti-bacterial hand wash or body wash if you wish, and we recommend you bring a basic medical kit. Please note you must be physically fit before coming, and if you have any ongoing conditions that you are managing (eg: epilepsy, asthma, diabetes etc) please let the art centre manager know before you arrange to come.

ENTERTAINMENT

We cannot guarantee access to a TV, so advise that you bring entertainment with you. There will be a stable electricity supply and many volunteers bring a laptop or tablet with music and movies. You can also bring cards, books, games, musical instruments etc. You may also go for walks/runs/do exercise in certain areas around community.

Please check with staff before leaving the art centre grounds, as many areas are off limits due to cultural protocol.



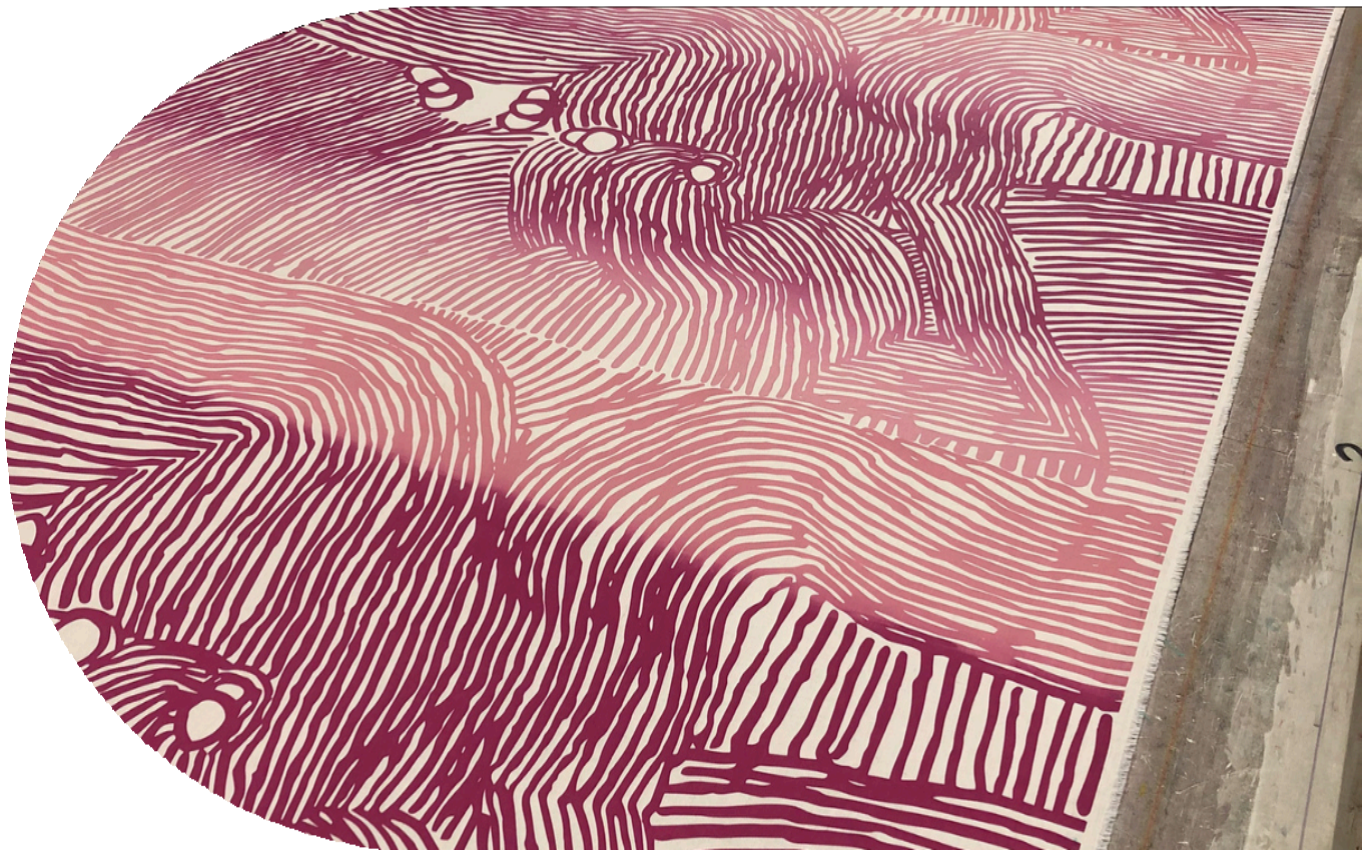
BUYING ART

Ikuntji Artists centre has an on-site gallery where you can buy paintings, prints and sculptures as well as our other merchandise. We also sell works via galleries in Australia and overseas, and online via our website. Many of the artists who work here are very highly regarded and awarded nationally and internationally. The art centre is a professional space representing high profile artists. Some works are extremely valuable and collectable. Ikuntji Artists is a not-for-profit organisation run by the local community. The artists who paint here are professionals and the money they earn by selling paintings is a vital income stream. In some places, creating art is one of the only available sources of income.

Please do not approach artists directly about buying paintings; all sales must be through the gallery for legal reasons.

GETTING HERE

Ikuntji Artists is 230km west of Alice Springs, accessible via unsealed roads. You will be expected to get your own flights to and from Alice Springs. We will arrange for you to be picked up from Alice Springs on a day /time that fits into the Art Centre schedule. Please contact us before making travel plans and changes, as our schedule is very busy and subject to change.



BUS

There is a local bus service, the Centre Bush Bus, which comes to Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff twice weekly. The trip takes about five hours each way. Please consult their website for up-to-date timetables. The trip costs \$110.00 one way and you will need to book a seat.

Phone: 08 8953 0127, www.centrebushbus.com.au

YOUR OWN VEHICLE

Coming from Alice Springs via Namitjira Drive, the last 60km of the road is unsealed and a 4WD vehicle in good mechanical condition is recommended. The road is sometimes closed after rain. Check the road conditions on www.roadreport.nt.gov.au. OPAL or diesel fuel is available in Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff, but is very expensive.

TRAVELLING AROUND THE AREA

You are free to move around the community within the boundary as you wish. However, there are significant cultural sites that you cannot go near within the community and outside of the boundary so please ask for permission before you walk. We recommend that you do not walk around at night, especially alone. There is no public transport system around the area, though there is a Bush Bus service which operates weekly between Alice Springs, Ikuntji/Haasts Bluff and surrounding communities. Please consult their website for an updated timetable and ticket information. Be sure to check in with staff before planning any travel.

NEXT STEPS

If you want to offer your services as a volunteer in whatever capacity you can, please contact us to discuss possible timing. The art centre can be busier at certain times of the year, the accommodation may be fully booked or activities in the community may preclude visitors from being

here. Always check with us first before making arrangements

to come.

Contact by email
preferred: Dr
Chrischona Schmidt
fineart@ikuntji.com.
au

RECOMMENDED READING

Australia Council's Indigenous Visual Arts Protocol
Guidelines:

<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/visualprotocols-for-indigenous-visual-arts-protocol-guidelines-2017-2019.pdf>

f Central Land Council Resources on People and Culture and Transit
Permits:

<https://www.clc.org.au/articles/cat/>

S. Hagan, 'Whitefella Culture', Edition 4, Australian Society for Indigenous Languages, 2008.



www.ikuntji.com.au