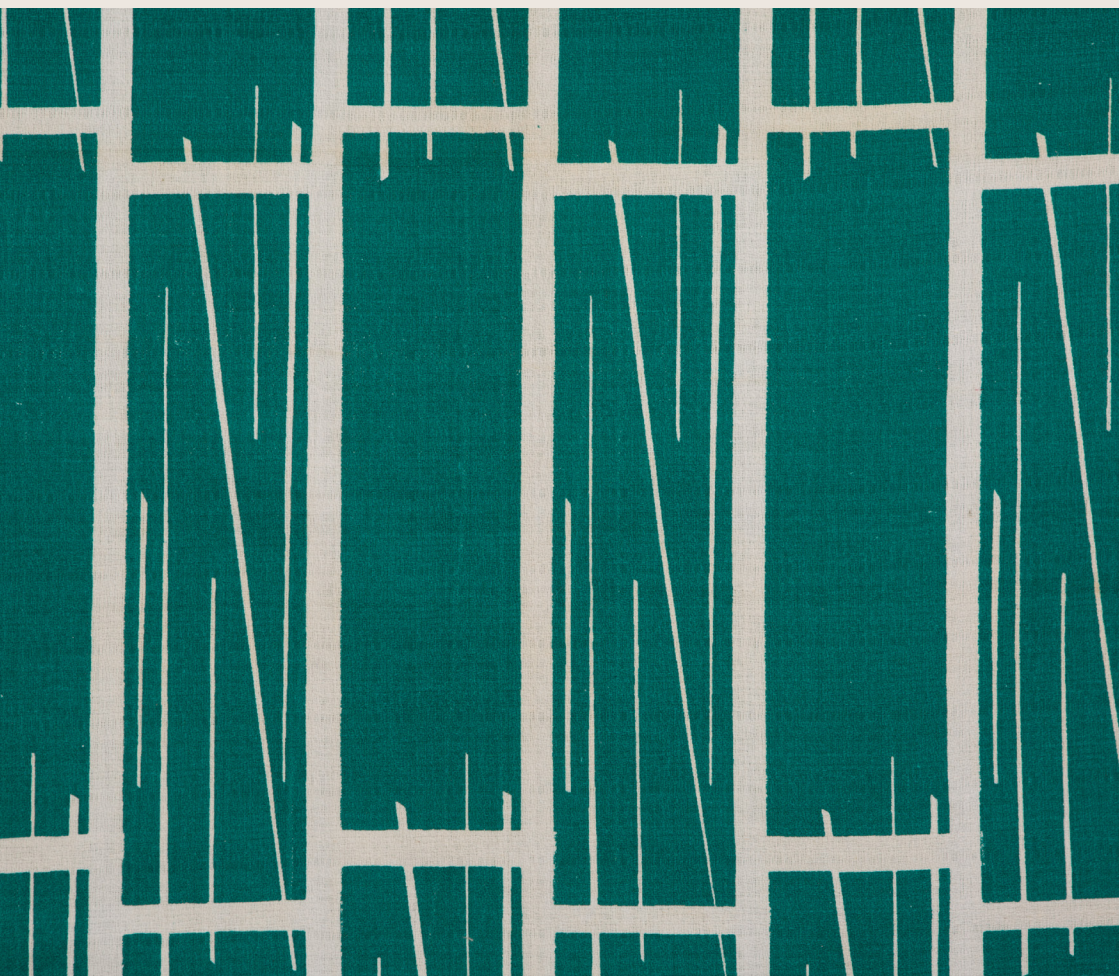


Frances Burke

Works from the TAMA Collection



**September 2021 -
February 2022**

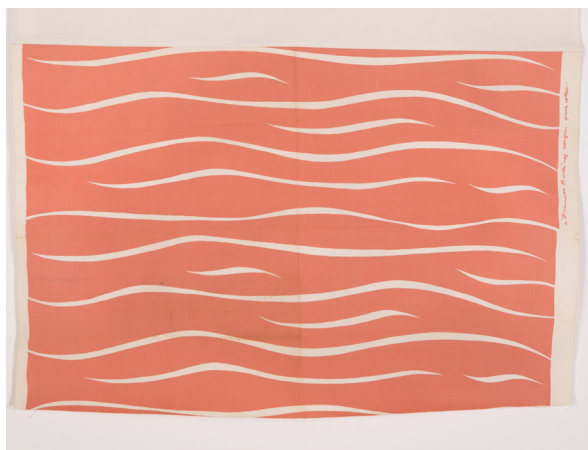


Frances Burke

Works from the TAMA Collection

Australia's most influential and celebrated textile designer of the mid-20th century, Frances Burke (1904-1994), employed Australian native flora, garden flowers, marine subjects, Indigenous culture and increasingly, abstract motifs in her stunning modern fabrics.

A confident, determined designer and businesswoman; Burke made the shift from fine art to design in 1937. While she began by designing dress fabrics for Melbourne's fashionable Georges Department store, printing them on linen using lino blocks, she was an early adopter of the screen-printing process and during the war years began printing on cotton. Burke's furnishing fabrics took their place in influential modern buildings Australia-wide through collaborations with leading architects and interior designers. They included Robin Boyd's 1949 House of Tomorrow, Roy Grounds' Quamby flats, Guilford Bell's Royal Hayman Island Resort for Ansett Airlines, and Yuncken, Freeman Brothers, Griffiths and Simpson's Canberra Civic Centre Theatre.



Cover image: *Staccato* (detail), 1962, screen-printed cotton, 119 x 126cm © RMIT Design Archives, Ararat Gallery TAMA, Ararat Rural City Council and MDP Photography & Video.

Tiger Stripe, 1939, screen-printed cotton, 57 x 89cm © RMIT Design Archives, Ararat Gallery TAMA, Ararat Rural City Council and MDP Photography & Video.

In the post-war period, Burke made regular trips to the United States and Europe, on her return advising homeowners and manufacturers on the latest trends in products, colours and home design in lectures and interviews. At *New Design* her fabric showroom and interior design consultancy Burke introduced furniture by emerging designers Clement Meadmore and Grant Featherston in the early 1950s and presented local and imported homewares, mostly from the United States. She was enthusiastic about the convenient and comfortable lifestyle experienced by ordinary American women. Her fabrics and advice were regularly featured in *Australian Home Beautiful*, *Australian House and Garden* and the newspapers of the day.

Some of Burke's designs had remarkable longevity. *Tiger Stripe* (1938) for example, was produced in a wide range of colours until 1970 and *Crete* (1946) remained popular into the 1960s. Drawing from a rich variety of sources including Indigenous culture in *Goanna* (c.1954) and Pacific Island tapa cloth designs in *Bird and Tree* (1940), Burke also looked to Japan, as in *Plum Blossom* (1948) and *Zen* (1965). She loved exploring the potential of native flora, seen in *Waratah* (1955) and *Flannel Flower* (1955), while garden flowers were used in *Belladonna* (1940), *Periwinkle* (n.d.) and *Rose* (1947). Burke's clever interplay of a single striking printed colour with lively gestural lines revealing the white base fabric, had a vibrancy characteristic of the post-war era. This can be seen in Burke's fabrics for Hayman Island including *Angel Fish* and *Seapiece* (both 1949) which expressed the freshness of the luxurious new tropical resort and led to further commissions.

Burke's three decades in business (1937-1970) were an unparalleled success in the story of Australian design. Her fabrics have been collected by the NGA, the Powerhouse Museum, NGV, RMIT Design Archives and Sydney Living Museums in addition to Ararat Gallery TAMA.

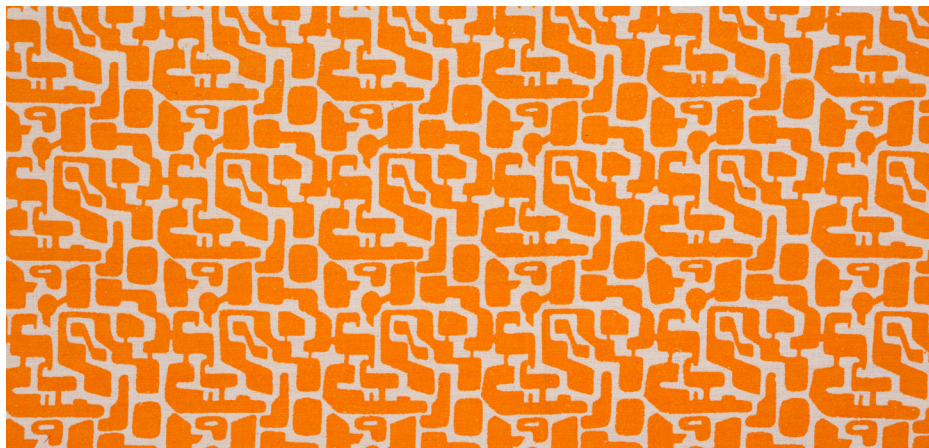
Catalogue essay written by Nanette Carter and Robyn Oswald-Jacobs.



Belladonna, 1938-41,
screen-printed cotton, 45 x 89cm
© RMIT Design Archives, Ararat Gallery
TAMA, Ararat Rural City Council and
MDP Photography & Video.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the team at RMIT Design Archives.



Mosaic (detail), 1962, screen-printed cotton, 54 x 120.5cm

© RMIT Design Archives, Ararat Gallery TAMA, Ararat Rural City Council and MDP Photography & Video.



Flannel Flower (detail), 1955, screen-printed cotton, 85 x 87cm

© RMIT Design Archives, Ararat Gallery TAMA, Ararat Rural City Council and MDP Photography & Video.



Ararat Rural City



Ararat Gallery TAMA is a cultural
facility of Ararat Rural City Council

A. 82 Vincent Street, Ararat, VIC 3377
T. +61 3 5355 0220
E. gALLERY@ARARAT.VIC.GOV.AU
W. ARARATGALLERYTAMA.COM.AU

