

18 January 2018

### Preamble

Artspace Mackay is a regional art gallery operated by the Mackay Regional Council (MRC) that has the benefit of being accommodated in a distinctive architectural award winning building designed by Cox Rayner that opened in 2003. With its striking angular forms and brilliant combination of materials, Artspace Mackay is a dramatic, unflinchingly contemporary element in the civic precinct. It immediately evokes the excitement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while also engaging with the history of the region's sugar cane industry through the Craig Walsh sculpture featured on its external wall. It is a building that enables meaningful and memorable interactions between art and the community to be realised, thereby contributing to a greater sense of social cohesion and civic pride.

In November 2017 Julie Skate, then Director of Artspace Mackay, engaged Frances Lindsay AM, (the Consultant) one of Australia's most experienced art museum professionals to undertake a review of the Art Collection Development Plan being drafted; to view the Collection at Mackay; consult with stakeholders; and prepare a final report for presentation to Council.

In the first phase of this program the Consultant reviewed existing plans, policies and the exported Collection database, and visited Artspace Mackay 8-10 November 2017 to view the Collection and to consult with the Director and other relevant staff. The timing of the visit also provided an opportunity to attend an exhibition opening of four exhibitions featuring Queensland artists.

The vibrancy of these exhibitions, combined with Artspace Mackay's attention to detail with a high standard of exhibition design and presentation, was most impressive. The combination of the four exhibitions and the focus on Queensland artists was also clearly much appreciated by the large number of people who attended the opening reception. It was an excellent example of a gallery embracing the community with programs that are relevant while also being curatorially rigorous.

This approach to excellence and relevancy in programming importantly underpins other aspects of Artspace Mackay's mission, namely - ***the development of collections and growing the cultural and creative economy of the region.*** To this end the Mackay Regional Council Art Collection Development Plan has been prepared as a Draft Document for the consideration of the Artspace Mackay Visual Arts Advisory Committee.



**Frances Lindsay AM**

# Mackay Regional Council Art Collection Development Plan

## VISION

*A community empowered through an engagement with its own original and distinctive cultures and its increased knowledge and understanding of art and design.*

## MISSION

*Artspace Mackay creates a window to the world by sharing art and design with people of all ages and abilities through a program of exhibitions, public programs, the development of collections and growing the cultural and creative economy of the region.*

## 1. History of the Art Collection

The Mackay Regional Council Art Collection was commenced in the late 1980s by the Mackay City Library with the gift of 28 hand coloured lithographs by the 19<sup>th</sup> century naturalist artist John Gould (1804-1881). This was followed by the acquisition of three engravings from Sir Joseph Bank's *Florilegium*, focussing again on the early history of Australia and its flora and fauna, as well as on art related to book publishing. This was further emphasised in 1989 with the purchase of a collection of first edition books and works on paper by noted printmaker and writer, Barbara Hanrahan (1939-1991)

To celebrate the opening of Artspace Mackay in February 2003, Tate Adams, distinguished printmaker, teacher, gallerist and co-founder of the Lyrebird Press, generously donated over three hundred works on paper, artists' books, wood blocks and reference books to the Mackay Regional Council Art Collection. This gift became central to the Art Collection policy of focusing on artists' books, which was confirmed with the establishment of the biennial National Artists' Books Award (The Libris Award) in 2006 that has been instrumental in growing this area of the Collection and attracting national interest in Artspace Mackay. This collection of artists' books is now the third largest of its kind in Australia, after the National Gallery of Australia and the State Library of Queensland.

After Artspace Mackay was granted Category 1 Deductible Gift Reciprocity (DGR) status, which allows donations of artwork to be made under the Australian Government Cultural Gifts Program, other significant groups of works were gifted. These include a major donation by Geoff and Fran Barker of an important group of 43 prints and one painting by the Lockhart River Art Gang, including works by leading Indigenous artists such as Rosella Namok and Samatha Hobson among others.

Also in 2006 the Pioneers Potters Inc. donated a collection of 64 ceramic works to Mackay Regional Council. As an organisation the Pioneer Potters was formed in 1975 by a group of

local artists who established seminars and workshops with experienced potters and held annual acquisitive awards that attracted local, national and international artists.

In the 15 years since Artspace Mackay opened, the Art Collection has also grown through individual acquisitions purchased from exhibitions and commercial galleries. In addition, its programs, collection displays and interface with the community have led to more artworks being acquired through gift and donation.

The focus on contemporary art that has been generated has extended beyond the gallery with a number of public sculptures commissioned by the Mackay Regional Council (MRC) installed throughout the city centre of Mackay. Public sculptures by Donna Marcus have been a catalyst for contemporary art, while those of Fiona Foley have provided a distinctive regional focus on the history of the Indigenous heritage and industry of the region.

Over time the Mackay region visual arts community has become multi-generational with Artspace Mackay becoming an important cultural resource for reflection, learning, enjoyment and social engagement.

With the Collection now totalling some 1279 works (some of which are folios containing individual works), it is time to revisit and refine the methods of acquisition. The Collection has emerged somewhat organically as most collections do in the early stages of their development, with some notable groups of works that provide a strong framework into the future. Now, the focus should be on using carefully guided priorities and strategies for the judicious growth of the Collection, while also taking on board programming requirements, access, conservation and housing needs.

The potential for Artspace Mackay, its Collection and programs, presents an exciting prospect for attracting a growing national and international audience interested in the unique environment of the region.

## **2. Purpose of the Art Collection Development Plan**

The Art Collection Development Plan (the Plan) presents a strategy for collecting priorities for the future growth of the MRC Art Collection (the Collection). The aim is to ensure that the existing and future Collection incorporates items that are significant, well conserved and in line with the Vision and Mission to develop the best art collection possible, given available funds.

The Plan seeks to address current gaps in the Collection and encourages commitment to long-term collecting sustainability.

The Plan is supported by:

- The Art Collection Policy - with reference to (Mackay Regional Council Art Collection Policy No.071, endorsed 23 Nov 2016, Folio 41242)
- Artspace Mackay Business Plan 2017- 2021

- Mackay Regional Council Arts and Cultural Plan 2016-2020

The Plan should be reviewed annually by the Visual Arts Advisory Committee and the Director, Artspace Mackay, at which time progress with identified gaps should be measured and priorities realigned. It should also be revised as part of an on-going five-year cycle (2022).

### **3. Collection Management Overview**

The Mackay Regional Council Art Collection is held in the public trust for current and future generations. The Mackay Regional Council is ultimately responsible for the MRC Art Collection and, through the Director, Community and Client Services, ensures that collection management policies, guidelines, procedures, and standards are developed and implemented.

The Director, Artspace Mackay, or designate, is responsible for ensuring that anyone who works with the MRC Art Collection is aware of such policies and procedures.

#### **3.1 Acquisition of Art Works/ General Principles**

In acquiring works of art for the Collection care must be taken in ensuring that each accession strengthens the Collection and can be properly cared for, stored and used. It is also important to ensure existing, designated funds for the purchase of artworks for the Collection are in place, whether this be through the Mackay Regional Council annual budget, sponsorship or the Artspace Mackay Foundation.

Works must fit within the collection priority areas, and valid titles to the work, whether by purchase, gift, or bequest, must be obtained, ensuring compliance with ethical and legal requirements.

The authenticity of the work and its provenance must be established and confirm that the work has not been illegally obtained or exported.

In terms of Ethical Principles the Collection Development Plan is guided by the following:

- *ICOM Code of Ethics* (International Council of Museums)
- *Museum Australia Code of Ethics*
- *Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material*, Australian Government, Attorney General's Department, Ministry for the Arts, 2014
- *UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit, Export and Transfer of Cultural Property 1970*

- *Pacific Islands Museums Association Code of Ethics for Pacific Museums and Cultural Centres.*

The Collection will provide the basis for displays, exhibitions, research and educational programs that serve to culturally enrich the Mackay community and contribute to the overall enrichment of society. Each new acquisition is a valued cultural resource for the community, today and for future generations.

Artspace Mackay acknowledges its stewardship role of the Collection and allied documents. It conserves and ensures the security of the artworks and maintains the database for its proper management.

It provides community access to the Collection, and outreach to the wider audience through loans, travelling exhibitions and information on the Collection. The development and implementation of an online database for learning and enjoyment is central to this commitment.

The Collection plays a role within the national community of galleries and museums. It serves as an important lending facility to public galleries, institutions, agencies and organisations.

The Collection includes artwork from all visual arts mediums, currently tagged and identified in the Collection Management database as: **paintings/ prints/ drawings/ glass /ephemera/ photography/ artists' books /ceramics /fibre /sculpture /video /new media**

The Collection will be developed through recommendations made to the Visual Arts Advisory Committee by the Director of Artspace Mackay. The Committee will make further recommendations relating to the acquisition and deaccessioning of artworks according to the criteria set out in this Plan. Final decisions on artwork purchases and deaccessions will be made in accordance with the roles and responsibilities outlined in The Art Collection Policy and ratified by the Director Community & Client Services under MRC delegation.

If an artwork is deemed suitable for possible inclusion in the Collection its provenance must be confirmed and its condition assessed. Once this research is complete and is satisfactory then the artwork or item is submitted to the Visual Arts Advisory Committee with all provenance documentation, a statement of significance, expected costs and a detailed description of the artwork or item.

**Itemised artworks in the Collection currently comprise:**

Medium

Total

Artists' books	593
Small sculpture (Karla Dickens, Michel Tuffery)	15

Bookplates	114
Ceramic	101
Folio (photograph)	2
Folio (print)	18
Misc. (crafts, reference books)	57
Painting	13
Photograph	25
Print	201
Public art / sculpture	16
Wood block	22
Work on paper	72
Zine	30
Total number of items:	1279

### 3.2 Collection Areas

The existing Collection has a number of highlights, however it is beyond its current scope to develop a comprehensive history of Australian art. Nevertheless artworks proposed for acquisition should fit within one or more of the following defined collection areas (ref: Art Collection Policy), and overall make a meaningful contribution in line with the Mission and Vision:

1. **Art & Environment** – works of art that relate to the unique Australian environment including photography, sculpture, mixed media, multimedia, painting, drawing and printmaking;
2. **Mackay Region** – works of art by significant Australian and International artists who have links to the Mackay region through their life and/or artworks;
3. **Mackay Culture** – works of art and cultural objects that relate to the unique cultural communities of Mackay with a special focus on the work of artists with connections to the Indigenous, Australian South Sea Islander and Maltese communities;

4. **Historical/Contemporary** – works of art by important Australian or International artists that will provide the community of the Mackay region with access to the work of leading historical or contemporary artists.
5. **Contemporary Indigenous** – works of art by established or emerging contemporary Australian indigenous artists, exploring issues pertaining to Australia's First Peoples.
6. **Artists' books** - the broad definition being books or book-like objects where an artist has had a high degree of control over the final appearance, and where the book is intended as a work of art in itself.
7. **Pasifika** – works of art or objects from the Pasifika region (Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia) that are high quality examples of the artistic and cultural heritage of the region.

In addition to the above listed categories a new area should be added that is essential in terms of Contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century art, namely: **Digital and New media** - including photography, video, and installation.

### 3.3 Collection Highlights

Current **Collection highlights** relating to the above Collection Areas as numerated in brackets are:

- Tate Adams, Artists' Book Collection. (4,6)
- Annie Pring Marten (1872-3), watercolours by this 19th century local Mackay artist, which provide insight into the colonial history of the Mackay region. (1,2,3)
- Maria Emma McBurney, an early artist represented by a group of eight 19th century botanical watercolours demonstrating her keen observation of the flora and fauna of the Mackay region. (1,2,3)
- John Brack, a suite of lithographs of female nudes, published in 1981-82 by the Lyre Bird Press and donated by Tate Adams. These are highly regarded works by this major Australian figurative artist of the 20th century. (4)
- Barbara Hanrahan (1939-91), a large group of works on paper by this accomplished printmaker and writer whose work explored female archetypes. (4)

- Glen Skien, a printmaker from Mackay and co-founder of the Silent Parrot Press who is currently a lecturer at Griffith University. He is represented in the Collection with a number of intriguing and poetic assemblage box works and artist books. (2,3,6)
- Euan Macleod, New Zealand born artist who moved to Sydney in 1981, represented in the Collection with an impressive group of dark, painterly prints dealing with the human presence in the landscape. (1,4)
- Danie Mellor, born Mackay 1971, represented with an important body of works concerned with Indigenous and Colonial histories and their legacy today. (2,3,4,5)
- Lockart River Gang, an important portfolio of prints and one painting by leading Indigenous artists from the eastern side of Cape York Peninsula - Samantha Hobson, Rosella Nambok, Greg Omeenyo, and Geoffrey Warradoo. (1,3,5)
- Billy Missi, Torres Strait Islander artist, now living in Cairns, represented by one of his best-known etchings, *Sapur Au Kuki (Dark Flock of Bats)*. (1,2,3)
- Ron McBurnie, a Townsville printmaker represented by 54 prints and artist books, some of which are collaborations with other artists. It includes his series of etchings depicting well-known artists in their studios, some of who are also in the Collection. (2,4)
- Noel McKenna, a Brisbane born artist who now lives in Sydney, represented with a strong group of etchings, lithographs and artists' books that reveal his quirky, humorous and at times poignantly poetic reflections on Australian life. (1,2,4)
- Davida Allen, born in Charleville, a noted Queensland painter who first came to prominence in the early 1980s with vivid neo-expressionist paintings that are inspired directly from her personal feelings and observations of other people. She is represented in the Collection with three paintings and the important portfolio, *Close to the Bone* 1991, comprising 14 lithographs and 10 etchings. (2,4)

### **3.4 Acquisition targets**

Reflecting the Collection areas, seven acquisition targets outlined in the Art Collection Policy were endorsed by Council October 2017, viz:

1. Retrospective and contemporary works that visually represent Mackay's culture past and present;
2. Retrospective and contemporary works of art, including artists' books by established artists;
3. Works of art by Indigenous Australian artists;
4. Works of Art by artists from the Pasifika region;
5. Collections of works of art that can be exhibited as a unique body of work or form part of a larger exhibition;
6. Mackay culture - works of art and cultural objects that relate to the unique cultural communities of Mackay;
7. Commissioned artworks to enhance public spaces and the urban environment; (Mackay Regional Council will continue to participate in the commissioning of public art to convey the importance of art in public spaces, and provide the ongoing support of Artspace Mackay staff to these projects).

### **3.5 Current Sources of Funding for new acquisitions**

At this stage there are only limited funds available for the growth of the Art Collection through purchase, with Mackay Regional Council providing funding for acquisitions of some \$20,000 per annum.

In addition, Artspace Mackay receives \$10,000 every two years through a sponsorship agreement with Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal Pty. Ltd, specifically for the acquisition of artists' books. On a biennial basis this allocation funds the two acquisitive awards for artists' books of \$7,000 and \$3,000, as part of the Libris Awards exhibition. This sponsorship is not guaranteed and is subject to successful ongoing applications to the company for continued support.

Artspace Mackay Foundation also provides selected funding for acquisitions of artworks, with 15 works on paper having been funded over a ten-year period 2007-2017.

### **3.6 Key Actions for the Development of the Art Collection and building the Endowment.**

**3.6.1. *Increase advocacy to potential donors*** to either donate significant works that would be leadership items for the Collection, or to give funds to purchase such artworks.

**3.6.2. *Growing the Endowment (Trust Funds)***. Artspace Mackay Foundation must be a key driver in growing the Trust Funds to support its activities and to help purchase major works for the Collection. The Foundation should be instrumental in attracting donations and bequests.

**3.6.3. *Building on strengths*** by identifying aspirational artworks that are desirable acquisitions. For example, the acquisition of a group of works by Fiona Foley would resonate with the major public sculptures by her that are part of the Blue Water Trail of the Mackay Regional Council's Public Art Program, and be a valuable resource for the gallery and community.

The recent purchase of a major Gwyn Hanssen Pigott artwork has been a major achievement for the Collection enhancing its ceramic holdings with a key work by an internationally significant artist who had ties to the Mackay region.

**3.6.4. *Enriching the existing major Collection areas***. The collection of artists' books is an important resource that continues to grow via the Libris Awards, along with a few carefully selected purchases from the biennial exhibition. It is desirable however, to also acquire works from other sources to ensure that the calibre and diversity of acquisitions remains high.

Of particular note in the collection of artists' books are works by key artists of the Conceptual Art movement of the 1960s-70s that provide scope for exhibitions, public programs, and possibly further acquisitions. Such programs could generate new research and scholarship on the period. This in turn could provide an impetus for future gifts and donations.

Currently the collection of artists' books contains a number of reference books, some of which have been wrongly catalogued as artworks, and this needs to be addressed. The collection would also benefit from additional research by an expert in this area to extrapolate on its significance in comparison with other artists' book collections in Australia and potentially overseas.

**3.6.5. *Programming focus exhibitions that illustrate the history of the Mackay region***. Although the holdings of works by early artists such as Annie Pring Marten and Maria Emma McBurney are small, nevertheless they have star power in terms of highlighting the history of the region. Featuring them in displays, exhibitions and publications should serve to encourage potential donors in the community.

**3.6.6. Creative Programming addressing the target Collection areas.** For example, inviting key artists, especially those whose work addresses issues concerning the environment and Indigenous histories, to participate in an Artist-in-residence program or to create an installation in the gallery. Meaningful engagement and dialogue with living artists is a key tenet to generating excitement and support for the gallery, its programs and the Collection.

## **4. Care of the Art Collection**

The MRC has a duty of care to ensure that the MRC Art Collection is cared for to the highest professional standards so that artwork in the Collection remains in optimal condition in perpetuity.

Policies related to the MRC Art Collection ensure that a balance is maintained between providing access to, and ensuring preservation of, artwork in the MRC Art Collection.

Artspace Mackay staff loan appropriate works from the Collection to other art museums and a variety of locations that meet gallery standards, and monitor their care and condition over time.

### **4.1 Storage facilities and access**

The current storage facility for the Collection at Artspace Mackay has reached its capacity, and plans are underway for new compactus units to be installed in the art storage area. This will partly ameliorate occupational health and safety problems and provide a safer environment for the handling of artworks and for staff members, however storage for artworks remains at capacity. Off-site storage or an extension to the existing space will be required in the near future and planning for this should be undertaken now as a realistic forward projection.

***Action: Scope and plan for the immediate and future storage needs of the Collection to ensure the safety of the Collections, safe-handling of the artworks and occupational safety of staff.***

### **4.2 Risk Management / Disaster Preparedness**

The development of a plan to deal with prevention and preparation/response and recovery in terms of safeguarding the Art Collection in any possible environmental disaster is a high priority, if Council has not addressed this already.

***Action: Work with MRC to ensure that the Disaster Preparation Plan is art specific and that Artspace Mackay has a Collections Emergency Plan.***

### **4.3 Deaccessioning items from the current Collection**

The term 'deaccession' means that an artwork is removed from the Collection and considered for disposal by sale, exchange or some other means. When this occurs the records must show where the object has been removed to, the date of that action, and the circumstances of it being deaccessioned.

The deaccession and disposal of any work in the Collection must be approached with extreme caution, and approval for this should only be granted for the following reasons - where the work: falls outside the Collection policy; is a non-essential duplication of a work already in the Collection; is in an advanced state of deterioration that Art Conservators state is irretrievable, and where the work presents a physical/environmental risk to staff, the public and other artworks; is subject to legislation that prevents the Council displaying it or having legal title to it. In the case of living artists who retain moral rights to the work, disposal of the work should not be undertaken without the written consent of the artist.

A preferred option for ensuring that the quality of the Collection is maintained is to judiciously refer certain works of inferior status to a sub-collection, such as a Corporate Collection that is utilised as furnishing for Council offices and spaces, or a study collection that contains items and works that give insight into an artist's methodology or a period in time.

An item can be moved from one collection into another more appropriate sub-collection owned by the same organisation, or can be disposed of by means outlined in the Mackay Regional Council Art Collection policy (ref 6.9 Deaccession and Disposal).

In the case of a small and relatively recent Collection such as the MRC Art Collection, special care should be taken with works by local artists, especially those who are still exhibiting. However, moving such works into the Corporate Collection will serve to mitigate against any possible reputational damage. The works retain their original accession number with an additional designation e.g. CC (Corporate Collection) plus new location.

This would not impact on the valuations; it is simply a device to allow for consolidation of the Collection into a concise, significant and relevant collection that can be maintained to the correct standard within the restrictions of current human and financial resources.

***Action: It is desirable that objects that do not have significance to the Collection should be removed from the main collection and placed in a sub-collection.***

## 5.0 Categories of sub collections

- **Corporate Collection** – includes items such as artworks in the offices of council buildings. These art works are of low intrinsic value and significance, but do provide public access to and enjoyment of art. This includes gifts received through the MRC Sister Cities relationship that can serve as a furnishing collection in council buildings.
- **Study Collection** - comprising ephemera: small scale material related to artists and their work, made for specific, limited uses (usually intended to be discarded); and support material: frames, bases, artists' materials, palettes etc. This material is rarely accessioned in its own right.

***Action: Identity artworks that could be allocated to the Corporate Collection, for submission to the Visual Arts Advisory Committee.***

## 6.0 Access to the Collection

Providing access to the Collection serves to promote appreciation for its significance within the community and beyond, both nationally and internationally. It may also encourage further donations to augment the holdings, and it encourages scholarly research that facilitates new insights and discoveries.

The primary means for achieving this goal is through exhibitions and displays and allied publications at Artspace Mackay, but loans to other institutions and exhibitions also serve to invite and encourage further research and enquiry. In this regard Artspace Mackay's programs - *Tate Adams Reading Pod*, that enables visitors to access the Artists' Book Collection; and the *Speed Date the Collection* event, which also provides access to that part of the Collection, are innovative ways of opening up the riches of the Collection to the community. In terms of disseminating information on the Collection, Artspace Mackay thus endeavours to deliver to a variety of audiences - children, adults, the local community and potentially online to national and international audiences.

***Action: Critical to this endeavour is providing online access to the Collection database as an urgent requirement.***

## 7.0 Summary of Action Points

- *Increase advocacy to potential donors*
- *Grow the Endowment (Trust Funds).*
- *Build on existing strengths in the Collection to enrich the existing major Collection areas*
- *Identify aspirational artworks that are desirable acquisitions.*
- *Program focus exhibitions that illustrate the history of the Mackay region.*
- *Utilise creative programming addressing the target Collection areas.*
- *Scope and plan for the immediate and future storage needs of the Collection.*
- *Work with MRC re Disaster Preparation Plan and an Art Collection Emergency Plan.*
- *Identify works of no significance to the Collection that could be allocated to the Corporate Collection.*
- *Provide online access to the Collection through the database.*

End.