

# DYLAN MOONEY BOUNDLESS

ARTSPACE MACKAY | 14 JANUARY to 20 MARCH 2022

We respectfully acknowledge the Yuwi People, the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which Artspace Mackay stands. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and extend our acknowledgement to all Aboriginal members of the Birri Gubba Nation.

We acknowledge the important protocols of the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander communities across the Mackay region.



COVER IMAGE: **Dylan MOONEY** *Stuck on you* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

Installation view, *Dylan Mooney: Boundless*, Foyer Gallery, Artspace Mackay, 2022.  
Photo: Jim Cullen Photographer.

# FOREWORD

Dylan Mooney is a proud Yuwi, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI) artist from Mackay. Armed with a rich cultural upbringing, Mooney translates knowledge and stories passed down to him through his art, which radiates with a sense of optimism, power, and pride. Dylan's lived experience as a queer black man is also expressed through his practice. His 2020-21 poster series 'Queer, Blak and Here' seamlessly fuses ancient storytelling, queer culture and contemporary illustration in defiant slogans and vibrantly coloured portraits.

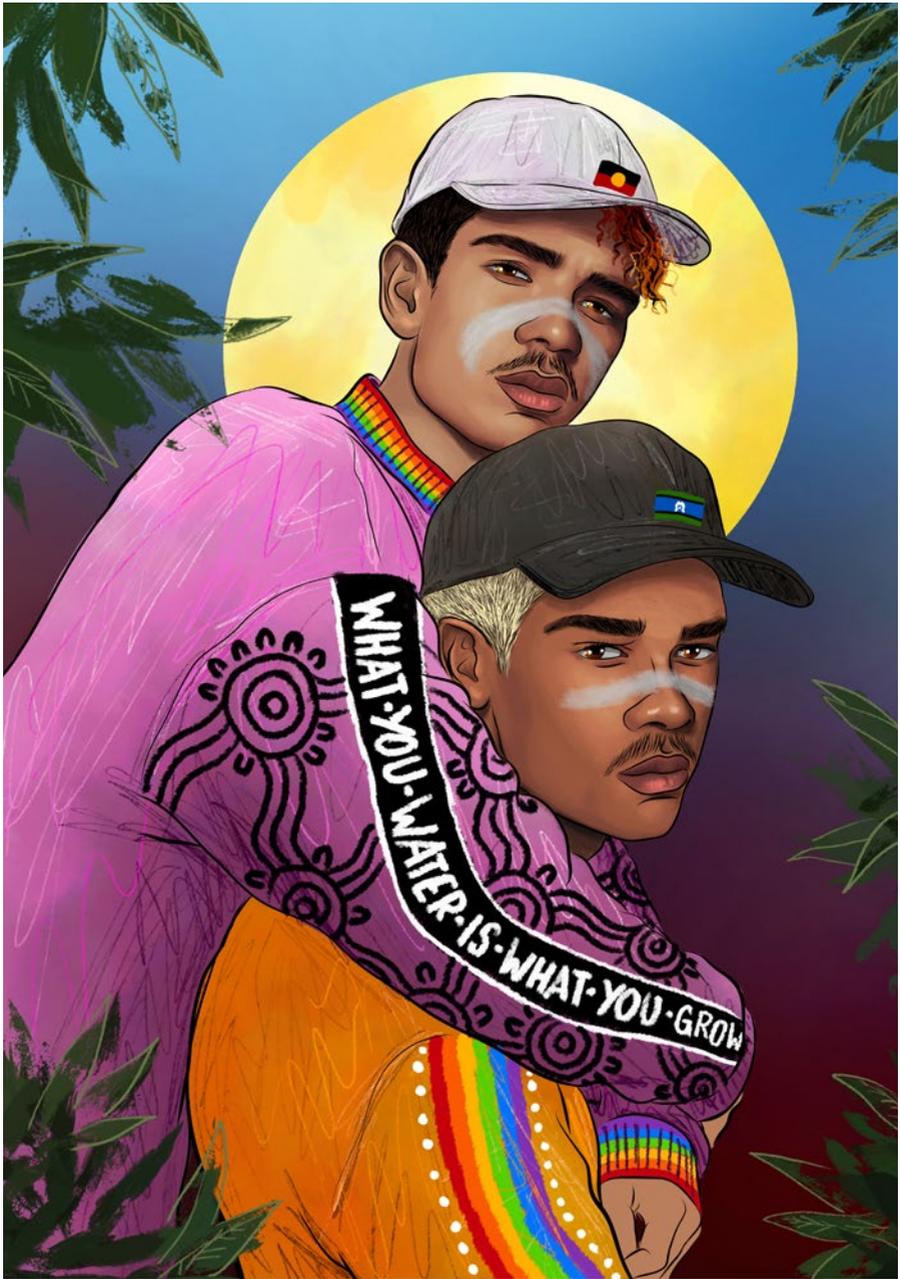
In his latest series of works for the Artspace Mackay exhibition 'Boundless,' Mooney has created portraits in sugar, an evocative material that speaks directly to his ASSI identity and the legacy of blackbirding in this region. The black and white portraits are lovingly titled *The builder*, *The fastest*, and *The wisest*. They remind us there is a resilient ASSI community still thriving in Mackay—their most populous home—who are intrinsically connected to this narrative. Within Mackay's broader community, however, there are still many who are unaware of Australian South Sea Islander history, heritage and lived experiences. The presentation of contemporary exhibitions by ASSI artists in Mackay's regional gallery provides agency to those intrinsically connected to this narrative.

Just as Dylan speaks about the importance of mentors, including Indigenous artist Tony Albert, in shaping his emerging career, Dylan himself is already recognised as a role model and ambassador in our community. He is leading by example and demonstrating to the next generation of First Nations creatives that there are real, achievable, and meaningful pathways to careers in the visual arts. Dylan's deep connections to his Yuwi country and family mean he maintains regular contact and connection with Mackay First Nations communities.

It is with great pleasure that we continue our relationship with Dylan Mooney and present his latest exhibition 'Boundless.'

## **Tracey Heathwood**

Director, Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



**Dylan MOONEY** *What you water is what you grow* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

# Q&A with DYLAN MOONEY

Lauren Turton, Curator, Artspace Mackay

LT: Dylan, over the past couple of years ancestry and identity have become important themes explored in your practice. To begin, can you tell me a little about the exhibition title 'Boundless' and its meaning in the context of this show?

DM: For me this title represents our future as Blak people in Australia. For years our people have had to overcome obstacles that have forced changes for us now in the present day. It's a way of acknowledging those who have come before us. We see today we have no boundaries; we have agency over our own stories and lives. We have all this knowledge and power behind us so there is nothing that we can't accomplish. I can't wait to see what the future holds for our people.

LT: Your practice has two strong arms at the moment—drawing and digital illustration. Often you're using figurative subjects that draw from facets of your personal identity. I've found it interesting to watch over the past couple of years moments in which you've found a way to grow both a more traditional mode of expression as well as digital graphic illustration. Can you tell me about any connections that exist between these two sides of your practice?

DM: For me it depends on the project and how best I can capture what I want to portray in my art. With digital, I feel like I can create work that is simple but has so much meaning behind it. With my more traditional drawings, I can create more detailed works and give viewers more of a sense of where I started with my art practice. The connection between my two sides of my practice is that I'm still using drawing as a way to create. My concepts and themes exist on both sides, and now it's great that I can use both to tell my stories and have them exhibited in regional and state institutions.

LT: The idea of a counter-culture hero is something I see in your graphic practice—recently through your positioning of subjects that could be interpreted as advocates or role models in your communities. Can you tell me about the subjects you choose to portray in your digital graphic works?

DM: The figures found within my digital works are manifestations and symbols of people but also stories that I have heard and have been shared with me. And from seeing the great things that have been accomplished within the Indigenous LGBTQI+ community. From fashion shows, reports and programs made by organisations led by Indigenous LGBTQI+ mob and other artists. These works are an amalgamation of all these experiences and outcomes from all these people and the work that they have done. I place a bit of me in my works as well to show my identity and my connections to my works and the people that are around me.

LT: Can you share more about the importance of 'Queer, Blak & Here' your first major graphic series, and how it came about?

DM: It's important for me because I hope it helps to inspire mob and connect with them—how important it is to share our love, identity, culture. This new series came about from me just experimenting with my drawing practice and wanting to share my experiences with mob on social media, you know we are all growing through it. Once I started sharing my works and gaining support from mob I became more confident and started to share more. Tony Albert saw what I was doing and he offered to help me with my works. He mentored me and gave me advice on what works are best and how many I should have in the series.



Installation view, *Dylan Mooney: Boundless*, Foyer Gallery, Artspace Mackay, 2022. Photo: Jim Cullen Photographer.



**Dylan MOONEY** *Our moment* from the folio 'Queer, Blak & Here' 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

LT: So your desire to share content with an online community was one of the driving factors behind your graphic illustration practice. You've taken an interesting approach with this series, making it available in three different editions, for different audiences including 'institutional,' 'collector' and 'community.' Why was this important for you to do?

DM: It's important for me to have these editions so that my works are available for everyone, I didn't just want my works to be in large galleries and institutions but to have them so that community can also afford these works.

LT: You mentioned Tony Albert as a mentor and I've heard you talk more generally about how important mentorship has been to your career. Can you tell me how this shaped the work in this exhibition and the influence a good mentor can bring to one's practice?

DM: Mentorship for me is a great way to exchange knowledge and it really helped improve my work. This exhibition is a representation of the support and knowledge I have gained from not just established artists but also my friends, family, and community. The influence they bring is very special to me. With a good mentor they really drive you. They position in you what you want to do and give great insight into not only where you want go but who you want to be as an artist.

LT: I love how proudly this series advocates for your First Nations LGBTQI+ community. When you set out at art school did you think your practice would become a tool that would enable you to advocate and give agency to your community?

DM: I never thought I would get this far with my practice and how much I have influenced mob and community. When I first started my digital practice, it was more of a cool-down from my traditional drawing practice. But it's great to see how much I have achieved with these works and how much support I have from mob and I hope I can continue to keep inspiring people and tell my own stories of where I come from and keep putting my community to the fore front.



**Dylan MOONEY** *The fastest* 2021, sugar on painted board, 69.3 x 53.6cm. Courtesy the artist. Image: Jim Cullen Photographer.



**Dylan MOONEY** *The builder* 2021, sugar on painted board, 69.7 x 53.5cm. Courtesy the artist. Image: Jim Cullen Photographer.



**Dylan MOONEY** *The field* 2021, sugar on painted board, 69.9 x 53.4cm. Courtesy the artist. Image: Jim Cullen Photographer.



**Dylan MOONEY** *The wisest* 2021, sugar on painted board, 69.3 x 53.6cm. Courtesy the artist. Image: Jim Cullen Photographer.

LT: The second part of this exhibition speaks directly to your ASSI heritage. For the gallery, the ASSI story is an important part of the Mackay region's history and identity. As a Yuwi, ASSI and Torres Strait Islander man, what does it mean for you to show work in the gallery here in Mackay?

DM: It means so much to me to have a show at Artspace Mackay and in the place where I grew up, which is also my traditional lands. It's great that my community can come and see my work in person. In my art practice, the stories I tell will always be for my mob and community here in Mackay. It is because of these people that I am able to create works with such meaningful narratives behind them.

LT: Dylan, your exhibition is being held alongside your cousin, Jasmine Togo-Brisby. One interesting material you both use, as Australian South Sea Islander artists, is sugar. Can you speak to why this is an important media for you to use, especially in the context of the work being shown alongside Jasmine's in Mackay?

DM: I chose to use this medium because of the context of slavery within Queensland and the history behind this household item. It is overlooked as just a common ingredient, but so many South Sea ancestors suffered for it. Why not use it to share the stories of Mackay's community? But also I wanted to start a conversation; does this sugar define who we are, is it our history, and will it be our future?

LT: Sugar is such a big part of Mackay's colonial identity and is inextricably linked to the enslavement and blackbirding of your—and many in this region's—ancestors. You mention that use of this material also allows you to contemplate its place today, particularly in regards to contemporary ASSI identities. Can you tell me a little more about the subjects you've chosen in these works to encourage this conversation?

DM: The subjects that I chose are of my family—my cousin, who plays in the Kanaka Proud Cups; my grandmother, who was well known in the ASSI community; and Scott Boah, who helped build the South Sea

Hut. It's a mix of different generations. For me it was about having these connections to these people but also their achievements in this community. And what a great way for community to walk into the space and see familiar faces and getting a sense of our past, present and our future as ASSI peoples.

LT: [This is such a powerful and hopeful message that we are really excited to present here at Artspace.](#)

DM: I'm so grateful to be supported by Artspace Mackay and would like to thank the team for giving me the opportunity to present at the gallery. I always feel a sense of pride & belonging when I get to tell my stories in my hometown.

MOONEY BOUNDLESS



Installation view, *Dylan Mooney: Boundless*,  
Foyer Gallery, Artspace Mackay, 2022.  
Photo: Jim Cullen Photographer.

# DYLAN MOONEY: BOUNDLESS

## List of works

*The builder* 2021, sugar on painted board, 69.7 x 53.5cm. Courtesy the artist.  
Image: Jim Cullen Photographer.

*The fastest* 2021, sugar on painted board, 69.3 x 53.6cm. Courtesy the artist.  
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*The field* 2021, sugar on painted board, 69.9 x 53.4cm. Courtesy the artist.  
Image: Jim Cullen Photographer.

*The wisest* 2021, sugar on painted board, 69.3 x 53.6cm. Courtesy the artist.  
Image: Jim Cullen Photographer.

*What you water is what you grow* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

*Growing together* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

*It's just us* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

*Pride + culture* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

*Next to you* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

*Our moment* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.

*Stuck on you* from the folio *'Queer, Blak & Here'* 2020, colour print on smooth cotton paper, edition 2/5, 118.9 x 84.1 cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection, purchased 2021.



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FREE ENTRY 10am-5pm Tuesday-Friday  
10am-3pm Saturday and Sunday  
(closed Mondays)



**Artspace Mackay**



**\$2.00**