

beneath the
MONSOON

visions north of capricorn

GAVIN WILSON



Artspace Mackay
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald.

In the monsoonal regions of tropical Australia, art and life tend to naturally coalesce in response to the compelling all pervasive atmosphere that dominates the annual agenda. The sense of physical isolation is still real in the tropics, while ready access to ideas and information via technology, has opened lines of communication for those interested in the exercise. Artists living and working in the north, committed to an authentic expression about place and culture, continue to produce works of quality and invention that have enhanced and extended our perception of the Australian experience.

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Published by Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council to accompany
the exhibition, *Beneath the Monsoon: Visions North of Capricorn*

Artspace Mackay
Cairns Regional Gallery

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville

7 February – 6 April 2003

24 April – 1 June 2003

6 June – 3 August 2003

ISBN: 0-9750157-0-2

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Ross Searle and Nicolas Rothwell 2002.

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Catalogue production: Goanna Print

Artscans: Fine Art Separations by Rob Little Digital Images

Photography: David Campbell, Shane Fitzgerald, Alex Kershaw, Jon Linkins,
Michael Marzik, Vicki Petherbridge, Anne Lord, Greg Weight, Glen Wilson and
Roger Yeldom.

Thanks also to:

Cr Julie Boyd, Jeff Harris, Erica Nagle, Greg Roberts, Stephen Hobson, Shane
Fitzgerald, Louise Doyle, Michael Marzik, Frances Thompson, Joanne Lankaster,
Tracey Heathwood, Pam Brooks and Somchay Soukvilay.



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Maria Emma McBurney, *untitled (still life, coleus leaves)* c.1880s
watercolour on paper, 47 x 30 cm.
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald

Preface

The lure of the Deep North

Northern Queensland is a place that has provided inspiration to generations of artists. Once you head north of the Tropic of Capricorn you enter a very different part of Australia, one that changes gradually as you head north to reveal regional differences from Mackay to Thursday Island. It is a place where people and communities have been able to flourish despite the sometimes difficult tropical climate conditions. It is also an area with a rich heritage that has had a strong influence upon Australian politics, culture and society.

This exhibition provides an insight into the contribution made by many of the visual artists who have lived and worked in this region. The influence of north Queensland can be found in many aspects of Australian culture including the songs of Grant McLennan, Christine Anu and Graeme Connors; the plays of Kathryn Ash; the fine literary works of Thea Astley; the maverick literature of Xavier Herbert and the historical analysis of Henry Reynolds. This little recognised strong cultural tradition in the north is reflected through the active involvement of various communities in many artistic activities and the development of cultural facilities such as universities, regional galleries, cultural centres and events.

Many of the artists whose works are included in this exhibition have made a lasting commitment towards working within a regional context. They have seen their location as an opportunity to explore their arts practice within a different cultural framework to those of artists in southern cities. The landscape, the natural environment, the people and the heritage of the region have provided them with rich source material. Of course there are still many artists from the region whose work is not included in this exhibition, however *Beneath the Monsoon: Visions North of Capricorn* is probably the first major exhibition to cover the contemporary art of this area on such a scale and scope.

Beneath the Monsoon: Visions North of Capricorn is the first major project to be undertaken by Artspace Mackay and will provide our community with an opportunity to reflect upon its

own artistic heritage and the work of contemporary artists with links to the region. More importantly however is that it will assist in creating an artistic link between the wider communities of North Queensland within a national context.

This exhibition provides visitors to Artspace Mackay with a taste of what to expect over the coming years as the gallery utilises the rich subject matter provided by its region's history and environment to create new exhibitions and projects that are lively, thought provoking and stimulating. The development of a vibrant and active network of public galleries within North Queensland has provided opportunities for the region's artistic heritage to be explored through projects, exhibitions and collections. Artspace Mackay is proud to join this dynamic regional gallery network in north Queensland with an exhibition of national significance. The exhibition will also be seen at Cairns Regional Gallery and Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in Townsville and builds upon curatorial research done by both of these galleries

This catalogue encompasses a keynote essay by the curator Gavin Wilson along with essays by writers familiar with the artists and regions included in the exhibition to provide multiple viewpoints on the development of the visual arts within this region. I would like to thank Gavin Wilson for his work in researching and curating the exhibition, all of the other writers for their contributions and the members of the Artspace Mackay Arts Curatorium Group for their input into the project.

It has been my pleasure to work with many of the artists in this exhibition and I hope that *Beneath the Monsoon: Visions North of Capricorn* will provide a new opportunity for the region's artists to engage with each other in a fulfilling and exciting manner.

Robert Heather
Director
Artspace Mackay



Shane Fitzgerald, *Serein* 2002,
duraflex print ed. AP, 100 x 155 cm.
Collection of the artist and Dr Maurice and Glenda Costello.
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald.

Beneath the Monsoon

visions north of capricorn

Gavin Wilson

To get a sense of the atmosphere that prevails in regions north of Capricorn, along with the impact of living from year to year in this extraordinary environment, it is important to apprehend the seasonal variations that shape the character of the place. The extreme upheavals referred to by locals as the *Wet* and the *Dry* are descriptions that belie the subtle shifts that occur in delivering these great climatic opposites. Recognising this fact, Aboriginal groups across north Queensland and the Top End identify at least six and, in some instances, twelve seasons that reflect the arrival and passing of the monsoon. The might and scale of the north-west monsoon that descends around November is a humbling experience. Its advent underlines the inter-dependence of all life in the face of a tumultuous force indifferent to humanity's hopes and interventions.

The visual and sensual lure of the tropics has drawn artists and adventurers north since the late 19th century, often to escape a temperate winter or the confines of a domestic and social life, narrowly prescribed by the southern metropolitan ascendancy. The creative culture of escape was explored at length in the major touring exhibition *Escape Artists: Modernists in the Tropics* organised by the Cairns Regional Gallery

in 1998. The project unearthed a rich lode of creativity, inspired by a sustained engagement with the landscape and culture of tropical Australia, that remains as a vivid legacy for artists living and working in the tropics and, for that matter, anywhere in Australia.

Organised by the new Artspace Mackay, *Beneath the Monsoon: Visions North of Capricorn* focuses largely on contemporary work that reflects the physical, psychological and cultural impact of living and working as an artist in north Queensland. The exhibition draws from a broad range of practice that includes painting, sculpture, photography and works on paper. The artists selected for display have lived in the region or have strong associations with various sites. From the Rockhampton region are Bill Yaxley and Shane Fitzgerald; the Mackay region Annie Pring Marten, Maria McBurney, Don Heron, Clem Forbes; from the Townsville region Anneke Silver, Anne Lord, Ron McBurnie, Tate Adams; from the Cairns region Ray Crooke, Claudine Marzik, Ed Koumans, Ian Smith, Tom Risley, Arone Meeks; from the Cape York Peninsula Rosella Namok, Fiona Omeenyo, Samantha Hobson, Adrian King; from the Torres Strait Alick Tipoti, Dennis Nona and Clinton Nain. Also on exhibition are works by artists that have drawn inspiration from encounters with



Heading West from Townsville,
November 2002. Photograph by Anne Lord.

the region, they include: John Bell, John Firth-Smith, Peter Kingston, Guy Warren and Salvatore Zofrea. Providing an historic context are several enduring works from a key group of *Escape Artists*; Ian Fairweather, Ray Croke, Donald Friend and Russell Drysdale.

The north-west monsoon is the common element that unites people living throughout the broad expanse of Australia's tropic regions. Put simply, a monsoon refers to the seasonal reversal of wind direction. In Australia's far north, south-easterly trade winds characterise the *Dry* season, generally from April to October, while the *Wet* season, or monsoon is characterised by the arrival of a north-easterly airflow in November through to March. Around late October the through-flow of currents from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean in the north-west of Australia slows, stops and can reverse as the Indian Ocean counter-current flows from west to east into the Timor Gap, and 'blocks' the through-flow. Monsoon systems only exist where static masses of water known as *warm pools* form. In Australia, this leads to the formation of a large raft of relatively still water to the immediate north-west. The land mass must remain warmer than the sea; this is the crucial factor in generating a monsoon. When the sea begins to heat under the tropical sun, the surface temperature rises; evaporation increases and the moist humid air filling the atmosphere will eventually fall, heralding the onset of the Australian monsoon.

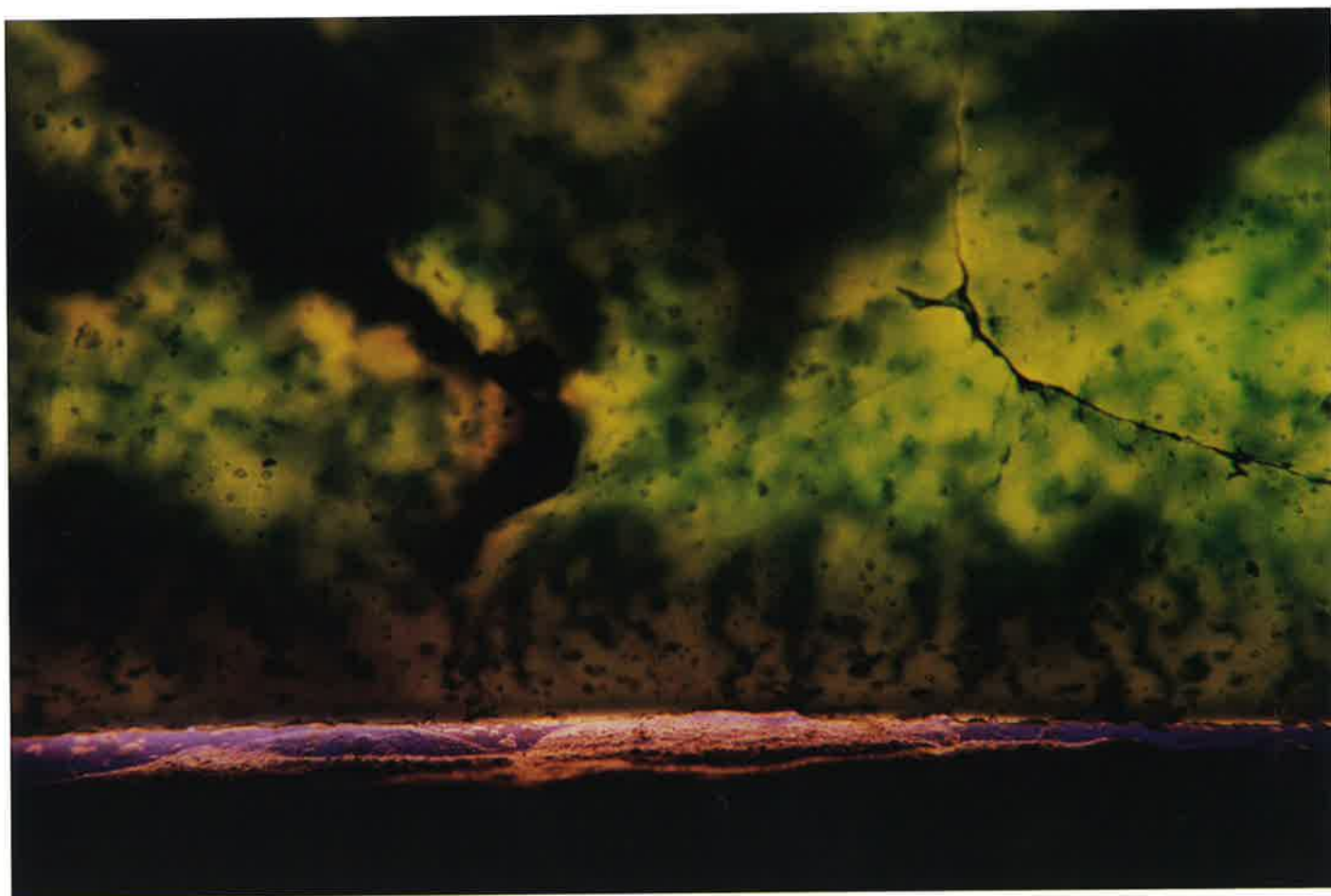
This brings us directly to the work of photographer Shane Fitzgerald (b1973), who grew up in Mackay. His large-scale photo-image *Monsoon, Dusk* (2002), with its deep ambient tones evokes the dense, humid atmosphere associated with the arrival of the monsoon. Working in his Yeppoon studio, Fitzgerald deploys the traditional photographic method of single frame composition. His stated aim is to create works that '*elucidate the symbolic relationship shared between the viewer and the landscape, the real and the ethereal and the traditional and the contemporary*'. A work that exemplifies the young artist's vision is *Daintree* (2002). It is an intriguing composition that pulls focus from the broiling surface of the sea to a forensic probe of tropical vegetation.

Serein (2002) is a work from Fitzgerald's 'Littoral' series that looked at diverse coastal profiles in Australia and beyond. An iridescent waterline lit from a mysterious source hovering at the bottom of the image instils the work with a sense of spiritual awe. Yet *Serein* also generates a vivid sensual atmosphere that locates the experience firmly in the tropics at twilight. The title of the work refers to the unique tropical phenomenon of fine rain falling at evening from a cloudless sky.

Fitzgerald's striking photo-images have evolved from the artist's direct experience of living and working in northern Australia. He frequently anchors his images with a low horizon line that is not necessarily topographic yet acts as a means of wresting the composition from the possibility of cosmic obscurity. Here, he



Shane Fitzgerald, *Monsoon Dusk* 2002,
duraflex print ed.1/1, 127 x 180 cm.
Collection of the artist.
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald.



Shane Fitzgerald, *Daintree* 2002,
duraflex print ed.1/1, 127 x 180 cm.
On loan from private collection.
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald.

appears to have successfully absorbed certain formal devices that also occur in the work of the painter John Firth-Smith. A key to the impact of Fitzgerald's imagery is his ability to handle intense saturated colours within a large-scale format while maintaining spatial intrigue. Looking at these images one is instantly struck by the luminous quality and rigour the artist maintains in devising works of genuine poetic intensity.



To live with any degree of success in the tropics is to submit and adapt. The prelude to the monsoon season in October /November is often accompanied by oppressive conditions. By that stage, the pleasant, languorous days of June and July are a distant memory. These final weeks of the *Dry* season, known as the 'build-up', will test the temper and resourcefulness of most living creatures. The space that exemplifies architectural adaptation in this environment is the verandah – the longer and deeper, the better.

In *Beneath the Monsoon* the verandah first comes to prominence in a watercolour by Annie Pring Marten entitled *The Verandah, 'Winterbourne'* (1873) from the collection of the Mackay City Council. The work is part of a group of studies that appear to have been despatched to England in the 1870s, to give her family members some idea of living conditions at the Branscombe Plantation located on the southern side of the Pioneer River outside Mackay. More

than merely transitional, the verandah at 'Winterbourne' is a critical living space that links the formal body of the house with the environment. Apart from its quality as a fine watercolour, the work is historically significant as 'Winterbourne' was demolished in 1880 after being ravaged by termites. Annie Pring Marten's watercolours depict aspects of life on the plantation and studies of the coastline as far as Cooktown. Along with an album of historic photographs, they were returned to the city of Mackay in 1968 by Charles Dymore Greene, a grandson of Mr and Mrs George Nisbet Marten.

The verandah was a central motif in the oeuvre of Russell Drysdale. It became a key organising element in the artist's monocular outback vision. It framed space and often defined human activity or the lack of it. The verandah heightened the theatrical quality of Drysdale's compositions that often evoke a sense of vacancy and displacement. In *Shopping Day* 1953, with direct reference to his interest in photography, and without a hint of condescension, Drysdale has posed four stoic indigenous figures, in a north Queensland township devoid of all other life. In the far right of the composition, the statue of a lone bugler stands atop the town's cenotaph as a somewhat melancholic counterpoint to the figure of the young Aboriginal boy, slightly removed from the group, staring defiantly at the viewer from the centre of the canvas.

Dry tropical torpor is the theme of Drysdale's *Siesta* (1952). The bulky barefooted figure, compressed into the



Annie Pring Marten,
Somerset – Telegraph Naval Station – Cape York, Queensland 1872
Watercolour on paper
21.8 x 28.7 cm
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council
Photograph by Glen Wilson.



Annie Pring Marten, *The Verandah "Winterbourne"* 1873,
watercolour on paper, 25.6 x 35.1 cm
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council
Photograph by Glen Wilson.



Russell Drysdale, *Shopping day* 1953, oil on canvas, 59.7 x 75 cm.
Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased with funds provided by MEPC Australia Ltd 1988
© estate of the artist, reproduced with permission
Photograph by Brenton McGeachie for AGNSW



Russell Drysdale, *Siesta* c.1952,
oil on canvas, 122 x 148 cm.
Collection of the National Gallery of Australia.



Ray Crooke, *Sunrise, Albion Hotel, Normanton* 1962,
oil over tempura on composition board, 76.5 x 121.7 cm.
Purchased 1962.
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery.

confines of the canvas, exudes the monumental weight and presence of an individual succumbing to the heat of a long day. The figure's rounded form, enveloped in the shade of the verandah, is in contrast to the desiccated landscape beyond. This rarely seen work of Drysdale's is interesting to compare with Ray Crooke's *Sunrise, Albion Hotel, Normanton* (1962).

In the early 1960s, Ray Crooke and fellow artist Percy Trezise, visited Normanton near the bottom of the Gulf of Carpentaria, 502 kms north of Mt Isa. Crooke responded favourably to the town's historic 19th century architectural remnants left from the mining days. He was particularly interested in the shadowy interior/exterior space of the Albion Hotel. The influence of Drysdale is evident in the compositional structure of the work that makes use of architectural fragments that serve to silhouette visual incidents and to heighten the sense of space. Drysdale's *Siesta*, and Crooke's *Sunrise, Albion Hotel, Normanton*, capture the tone and sparseness of a dry tropic landscape at different ends of the day. While Drysdale's massive, dozing figure dominates his composition, Crooke's sleeping figure is barely visible in the murky light of the pub's verandah. In the complex shadow world, away from the tropical sun, Crooke imbues his canvases with quiet poetic mystery. After living most of his life in the far north, Crooke recognises the all-pervading presence of the tropical sun, yet, as in *Mele* (1967), he never allows the sun to obscure the subtle shifts of light he has carefully

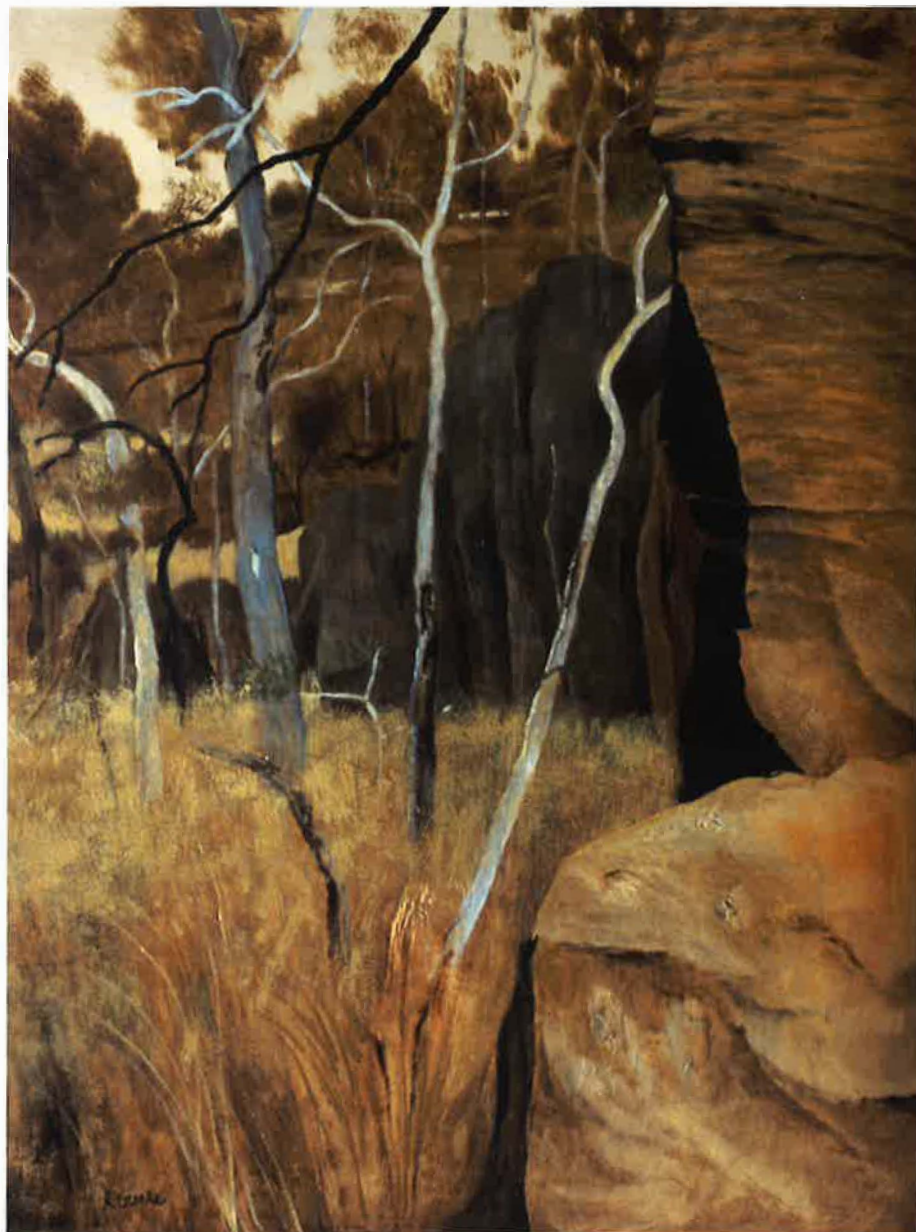
observed in the shadowy interior world of an islander's simple dwelling.

Crooke is one of Australia's most underrated landscape painters. It takes time, often decades, to absorb something of the essence of a place. Equal to his finest island paintings are Crooke's landscape studies. There is no hint of romantic reverie in these works. The paintings have evolved from the distillation of observed fact inspired by his travels across the north of Australia. In the dry, rugged hinterland of Cape York, in places such as Laura, Chillagoe and Normanton, Crooke has imbibed the distinct landforms, vegetation and climate to create works steeped in an authority gained only from decades of immersion and observation.

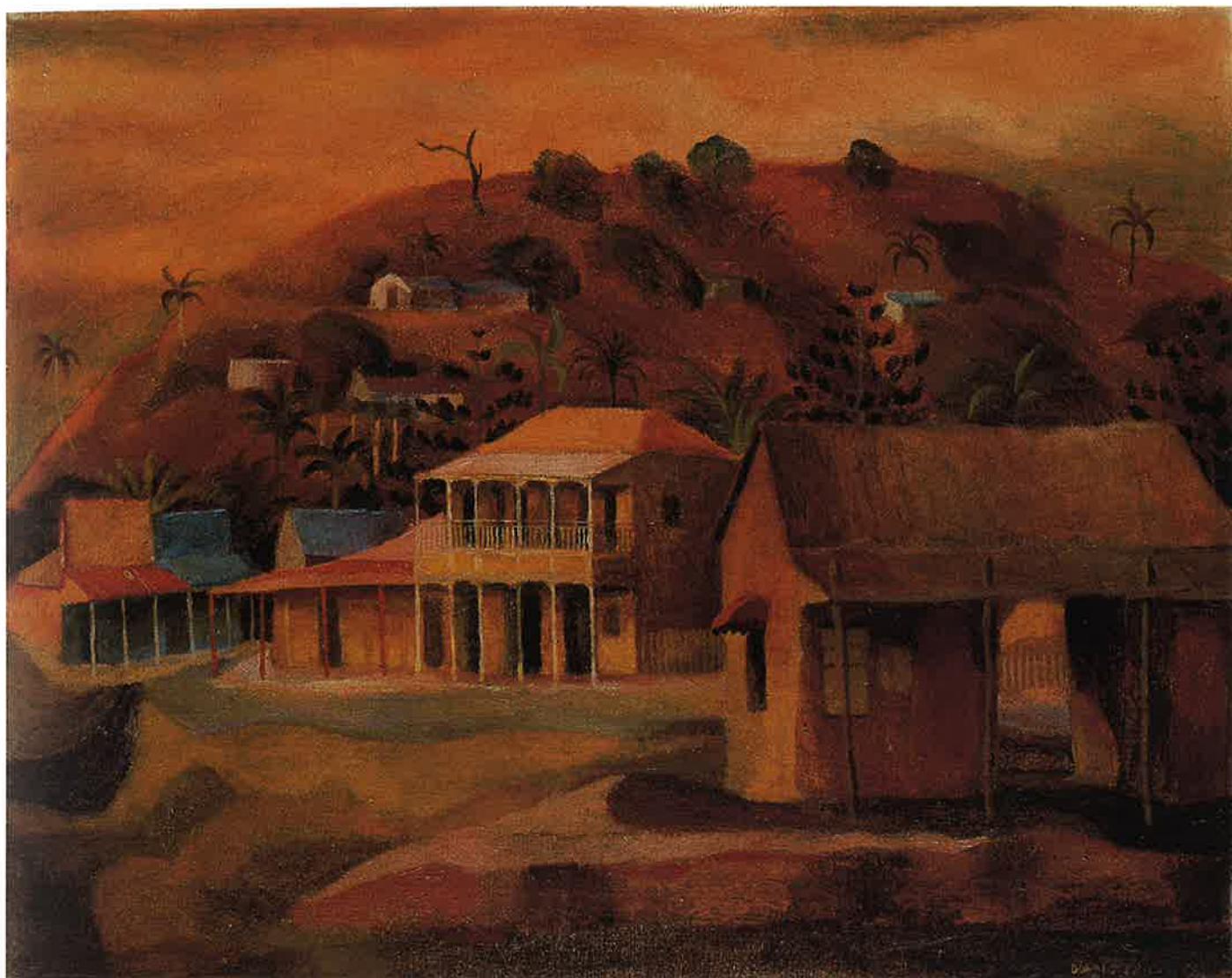
Always on the lookout for intriguing places with a certain historic appeal, Donald Friend had journeyed to far north Queensland in the winter of 1954, to find himself captivated by the old coastal township of Port Douglas. At the time, Friend was living in the gold rush town of Hill End in the central west of New South Wales. Along with Russell Drysdale, Friend had revelled in the fact that Hill End was a rich repository of adaptive vernacular architecture that reflected the resourceful character of its inhabitants. On motoring into Port Douglas, Friend was seized by the romantic notion that this once raucous township, along with neighbouring Cooktown, had been a gateway to the notorious Palmer River gold fields. In *Port Douglas* (1955), Friend has envisaged the place as a kind



Ray Crooke, *Mele* c.1965-67,
oil on composition board, 77 x 120 cm.
Collection of the National Gallery of Australia.



Ray Crooke, *Quinkin country, Laura* 1989,
oil on canvas, 120 x 75 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by David Campbell.



Donald Friend, *Port Douglas* 1955,
oil on canvas, 40.3 x 50.3 cm, (50.4 x 60.6 x 6 cm framed).
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery.
Purchased 2001, Conty and Roydon Robinson Bequest through and
with the assistance of the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation.

of tropical Hill End by the sea, with the ubiquitous Court House Hotel dominant in the scheme. In a diary entry dated 27th August 1954, Friend described his encounter:

I drove up alone yesterday to Port Douglas – a lovely drive on a rather dangerous road, beautiful beaches all the way. I made some sketches, and had a few drinks in the curious old pub where the locals were jolly and friendly. The two barmaids were characters – they concealed a ribald bawdiness behind a façade of privately pursed lips, and their respectability preserved, egged the drinkers on to make the most indecent comments on the village doings.

On his journey north, Friend stopped off in Townsville where he painted a lively small-scale work, *The Schooner Miena refitting at Townsville* (1954). Friend's encounter with the crew of the Miena inspired this fine study of the vessel that would have rekindled old memories of his youth. In 1932 Friend had run away from the family property at Warialda in New South Wales to the wilds of north Queensland. In Cairns he was adopted by Charlie Sailor, and his family of Torres Strait Islanders. Friend's encounter with the Sailor family began his life-long love of tolerant, easygoing native people, that would take him to Darnley Island (Erub), West Africa, Sri Lanka and Bali, providing much of the context and subject matter for one of the great artist's diaries of the 20th century.



The Scottish born artist, Ian Fairweather (1891-1974) was drawn to the east originally through an interest in Chinese art and culture that began while studying the writings of Lafcadio Hearn and Fenollosa as a prisoner of war in Holland in 1915. When Fairweather finally reached China in 1930 he was transfixed by the actual experience. In the museums of Peking he saw the great art of China and was stimulated by the people and landscapes around him in places such as Foochow, Suzhou and Shanghai. He would commit the experience to memory and draw from it in later years.

During the years Fairweather spent in China he continued his study of Mandarin and absorbed the scholarly traditions of ink painting and calligraphy. This discipline became a counterpoint to the rigorous tonal studies he had undertaken at the Slade School in London in the 1920s. Chinese ideograms appealed to Fairweather both for the language expressed and the pictorial form contained in the marks.

After leaving China, Fairweather travelled through the Philippines and Bali before arriving unannounced in Melbourne in 1934. Fairweather's shy, nervous demeanour and his uncompromising need to work out his own ideas about art often left him isolated. While he was welcomed in Melbourne and made important friendships with artists William (Jock) Frater and Lina Bryans he felt an urge to escape the city's narrow Protestant ethos that was at odds with the world he had embraced in the Far East. Over the next



Donald Friend, *The schooner "Miena" refitting at Townsville 1954*,
oil on canvas, 38.1 x 45.7 cm.
Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales
© AGNSW, reproduced with permission.
Photograph by Brenton McGeahie for AGNSW.

20 years, Fairweather lived and worked in mostly remote areas of northern Australia, dogged by poverty and the threat of eviction. At the outbreak of war in 1939 and after stints in Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns, he journeyed via Hong Kong and Thailand to India, where he was commissioned back into the British Army with the rank of Captain. Once again, he had the opportunity to experience a rich culture and landscape; vague ideas of which he had formed through stories he had heard from his father who had been the Surgeon General of the British Army in India. Before joining up in Bombay, Fairweather made his way to the headwaters of the Ganges visiting Simla and the Kulu Valley deep in the Himalayas. The difficult journey and the whole Indian encounter would again provide source material in the years to come.

Back in Melbourne in the winter of 1943 and unable to make a living from his art, Fairweather re-embarked on his quest to find a place where he could live and work in comparative equilibrium. Over the next decade, Fairweather was once again in the far north of Australia. Here he spent a relatively happy and fruitful period (1949-50) at Alligator Creek in Cairns, living in a house boat with a family of Torres Strait Islanders, and later at Brown Bay to the south, across Trinity Inlet.

Fairweather was only to realise his full potential as an artist in the aftermath of an incident that almost cost him his life. In 1952 in his sixty-second year, He drifted for 16 days in a makeshift raft from Mindil

Beach in Darwin harbour to the island of Roti in Indonesia. The natives of Roti revered the near-dead 'spirit figure' rising from the sea. Nevertheless, he was arrested by Indonesian authorities and, being a British subject, repatriated. The reasons for this potentially suicidal voyage are not entirely clear, but he had indicated a desire to get back to England to discover the outcome of paintings he had despatched to a dealer for exhibition and see for himself where he stood in the cultural scheme of things in London. Dismayed to discover that – due to his poor methods of conservation and packing – over 100 of his paintings had been damaged beyond repair, he made a bonfire and destroyed the remains.

Fairweather returned to Australia in 1953 and went straight to Bribie Island at the northern mouth of Moreton Bay. He had found the place earlier in 1945 and was now content to stay 'back to the friendly bush, much older, utterly befuddled and very much alone'. The last decades of Fairweather's life were spent in almost complete solitude. He had found a place to quietly master his ideas about 'representation and the other thing'.

House by the Sea (1967) is a work from Fairweather's late, great period of reflective abstraction. The typical layering of paint gives way to an interplay of dark lines and warm pink tones that delivers an image imbued with a benign dynamic. *House by the Sea* can be viewed as an amalgam of experience plucked from the memories of China, South East Asia and Northern Australia, yet its impact is immediate, a fact



Ian Fairweather, *House by the Sea* 1967,
synthetic polymer paint and gouache on cardboard on composition board,
131.3 x 193.3 cm.
Collection of the National Gallery of Australia.
Licensed by VISCOPY Sydney 2002.

that reflects the painter's hard won struggle to realise artistic greatness. Perhaps Fairweather gave the best advice when confronted with one of his works – '*... painting is not something that must be understood. If the picture is for you, it will produce an almost physical sensation, something of joy, of wonder – a tug at the gut. Don't go trying to understand it, don't expect the painter to stand and deliver his innermost convictions in other than his work.*'



Guy Warren (b.1921) is an artist who has long admired the achievements of Ian Fairweather and the English scientist James Lovelock, whose Gaia theory proposes that this planet and everything in it, animate or inanimate, is part of a living, inter-related system.

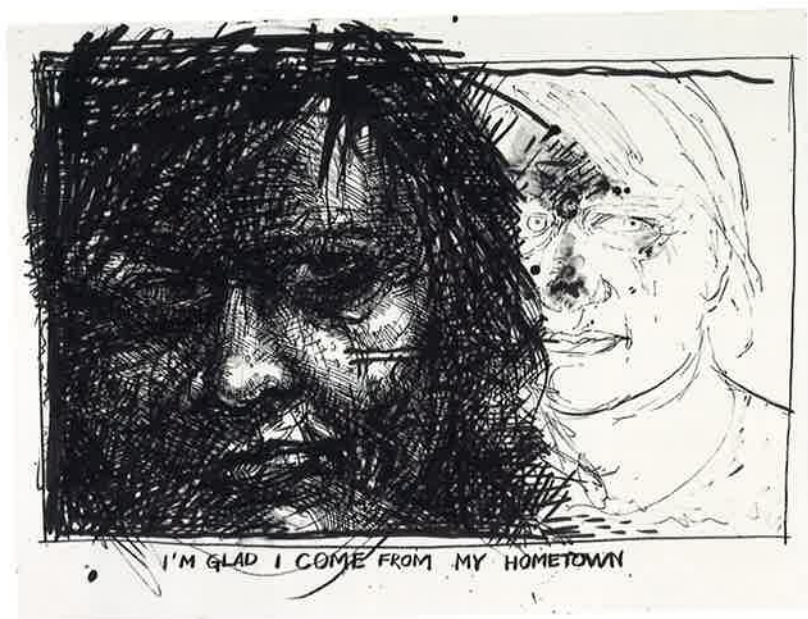
In the arc of Guy Warren's artistic career, like Fairweather, he has gained inspiration from holistic philosophies that place human experience within the context of a larger story. This approach is reflected in paintings such as *Arrival* (1990-98) that bear motifs associated with Warren's complex vision – the volcano, the leaf form, the boat and the female figure all subtly embedded in the composition. The discursive nature of Guy Warren's marks invite the viewer into an ongoing dialogue with the work that may reveal further layers of meaning as a reward for quiet contemplation.

Following is a statement by the artist that reveals his long, intense relationship with the tropics:

My association with the tropical north of Australia goes back a very long way, and the effect which that association has had on my work has been enormous and ongoing. My time as a young soldier in New Guinea (the island of Bougainville in particular) came at a very formative period in my life and has had a powerful influence ever since. All the drawings, watercolours and photographs which I made during that period are still in my possession and the images which spring from that period still influence my work to this day. As a young soldier I was overawed by the sheer visual extravagance of that region, its luxuriant growth, its textures, its colours, its energy. While drawing the indigenous people at that time, I was struck by the way they unselfconsciously decorated their bodies with anything at hand, to the point where they seemed to relate visually to their environment. This passion for the extravagant abundance of tropical growth and rainforest had its origins in a three-month jungle warfare course at Canungra, south Queensland during World War 2, subsequent visits over many years to Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and other parts of far north Queensland and the Northern Territory and, more recently, a car journey from Cairns through the Daintree to the Lockhart River Aboriginal Community on Cape York where I worked for a while with some of their talented artists like Rosella Namok, Fiona Omeenyo, Samantha Hobson and others.



Guy Warren, *Arrival* 1990-98,
acrylic on linen, 274 x 274 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by Greg Weight



Ian Smith, *I'm glad I come from my hometown* (no. 100 from the 'My Hometown' series) 1984, pen and ink on wove paper, 30 x 38 cm. Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery, purchased 1984.



Ian Smith, *Artists came and went in my hometown* (no. 69 from the 'My Hometown' series) 1984, pen and ink on wove paper, 38 x 30 cm. Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery, purchased 1984.

Ian Smith (b.1950) was an infant when Fairweather passed through his hometown of Cairns. While Fairweather's presence in the township at the time was barely registered, his artistic legacy and outsider image became a touchstone for generations of future artists, north and south of Capricorn.

In Smith's fine suite of drawings from the Hometown series he reflects on issues that include isolation, climate, adaptation, tolerance and – in *Artists came and went in my hometown*, (1984) – some of the identities such as Ian Fairweather, Noel Risley, and Junior Baines who lived there or had visited and since departed. As a 17 year old in 1967, Ian Smith escaped the torpid provincialism of his hometown and went south to Brisbane. He dropped out of Architecture at the University of Queensland, got a job in a bank, sang in a rock band and found time to attend art classes with Neville Matthews. From there, he went to art school in Melbourne at the Prahran College of Technology, where he happened to be in the same class as Howard Arkley. He soon met the Brisbane - based dealer, Ray Hughes, who gave him a solo show while still at art school. The relationship continues to this day with Hughes the subject of many acerbic portraits by the artist.

In an ironic twist, Ian Smith now teaches drawing skills to architecture students at the University of Queensland, since graphic communication has languished as a result of the profession's adaptation of computer-aided drafting systems. It marks a full circle for the student who quit

architecture in the late 1960s to pursue a life in art.

Travel to North America and Europe in the 1980's would raise Smith's artistic ambitions and focus his critical antennae. Apart from the great museums that housed his favourite artists; Vincent Van Gogh, Jörg Immendorff, Robert Rauschenberg et al., Smith felt that all the regions he travelled through 'oozed their own creativity' and he put to rest the old provincial adage that all significant art was made 'somewhere else by someone else'.

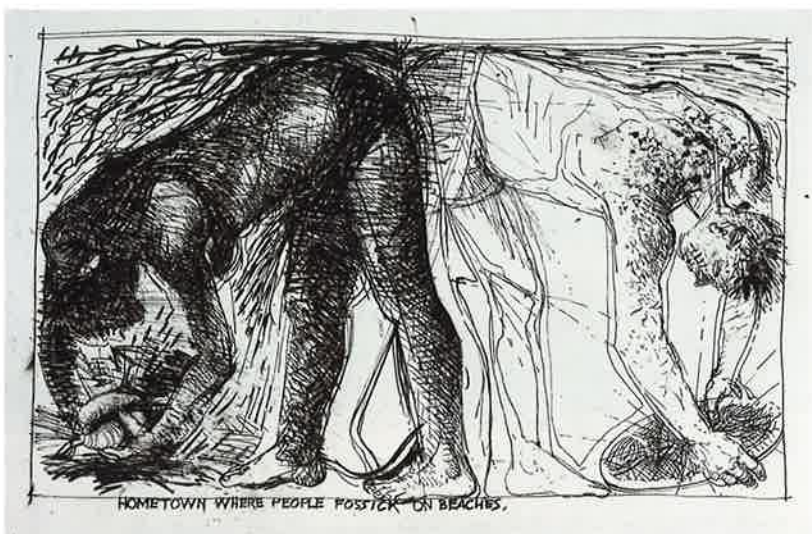
The whole travel process had been a cyclical adventure. Smith's painting was now focused on an attempt to articulate the epic quality he saw in Australian life. In the exhibition entitled *Since I left* at Cairns Regional Gallery in 1996, Smith stated his case in the catalogue essay:

I favoured northern imagery in my mature work, not out of mere nostalgia, but rather to offer alternatives to the Australian icons and myths installed on our behalf by dominant, persuasive writers and artists – the myths of the bush, the outback, the southern urban huddle and more recently, the problematic, repentant, implored identification by whites with aboriginality, outback and urban. If North Queensland is seen by those in 'more important' parts of Australia as a remote, backward, yet physically and desirable place, then it certainly qualifies as a symbol of Australia...

An awareness of extreme climatic conditions experienced in the north has



Ian Smith, *North Australian hometown – on the edge of the rest of the world* (no. 78 from the 'My Hometown' series) 1984, pen and ink on wove paper, 38 x 30 cm. Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery, purchased 1984.



Ian Smith, *Hometown where people fossick on beaches* (no. 79 from the 'My Hometown' series) 1984, pen and ink on wove paper, 30 x 38 cm. Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery, purchased 1984.



Ian Smith, *What if we had no findings* 1989,
oil on canvas, 160 x 210 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.



Tom Risley, *Still life with cadmium yellow* 1990,
found timber, oil paint on canvas, on plywood timber,
150 x 150 x 150 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by David Campbell.



Tom Risley, *Turtle* 2002,
welded steel and paint,
260 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by David Campbell.



Tom Risley in his studio at Herberton, 2002.
Photograph by Gavin Wilson.

entered Smith's mature work. In *What if we had no findings* 1989, the artist has focused on two bending figures, male and female, attempting to pick up the pieces of their lives in the aftermath of a cyclone. These bending figures have been a successful compositional device that filled the rectangular format of the canvas, but importantly, the work reveals Smith's mastery of complex design and ability to let the paint ultimately do the 'talking'.

Tom Risley (b.1947) is an artist whose work is closely identified with the Cape York region. While born in Rockhampton, Tom grew up in Cairns in a bohemian milieu that was at odds with the general tone of the township in the 1950s. Tom's father, Noel was an unconventional character who had rebelled against the ingrained conservative values of his dairy farming family. He was a boiler maker as well as a noted sculptor and painter who, like Clem Forbes in Mackay, seldom attempted to have his work reach a wider audience. Apart from his family, Noel's great love was people and parties. Being an enthusiastic supporter of the alternate lifestyle movement, he ventured down to Nimbin for the inaugural Aquarius festival in 1973. The 43-year-old idealist was disillusioned by the general haphazard nature of the event that, at the time, promised to be a genuine way forward for a fragmented counter-culture. Over time in Cairns, he built an outrigger and a small yacht that he sailed up the coast with his sons, exploring local reefs and beaches.

So it comes as no surprise that Tom Risley would eventually extend his

childhood experience in an environment rich in resource that could now serve his creative needs. His preferred genre in the 1980s was the *objet trouvé*. Risley is widely recognised as a master sculptor. His 'art supply shop' is the Cape York Peninsula. By hitching a ride along with his 20 foot tinny on a Cairns based 'mother-ship', Risley trawls reliable haunts along the Cape York Peninsula, collecting all manner of objects that have been weathered and battered by the action of tides, currents, rivers, reef and sand. Risley's epic beachcombing activities provide the raw materials for the creation of a diverse range of fine sculptural pieces. From the towering, monumental *Totem II* (1986), bristling with recycled timber lengths that evoke native shields and talismanic objects, to the *bas-reliefs* that tell of Risley's ongoing fascination with still life, there is a depth of invention and a sense of constant renewal.

Working in his studio at Herberton, an old mining town in the Cairns hinterland, Risley has constructed a series of metal sculptures made up of small rectangular welded plates. In *Turtle* (2002), the tubular forms curve gracefully through space belying an intractable origin. In *Still life with cadmium yellow* (1990), the artist has moulded a raised segment of canvas in the form of a vessel, and placed alongside it a series of elegant objects pulled together by a swipe of black paint, creating a sensation akin to what Fairweather earlier described as 'something of a joy and wonder – a tug at the gut'.



Tom Risley, *Composite still life II* 1994-2001,
found materials, 240 x 400 cm (5 pieces).
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by David Campbell.



William Yaxley, *Machete man* 1995,
steel, bitumen and limpet shell,
173 x 192 x 50 cm.
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery.
Purchased 1996, Queensland Art
Gallery Foundation.

The same could be said about the painting on exhibition by John Firth-Smith (b.1943). Before we look at this recent work, it may be useful to note the first impact that tropical Queensland had made upon the fledgling artist, back in the late 1950s. As a boarder at Parramatta in the stifling confines of The Kings School, Firth-Smith dreamt of escape. It was a fairly common occurrence at the time, but most runaways returned within a few days. When the opportunity arose for Firth-Smith and fellow boarder David Rudder, the pair disappeared for several months on an escapade that would ultimately change their lives. Shedding their uniforms, donning duffle coats and jeans and with money cleaned out from Firth-Smith's savings account, they went north by train with the idea of reaching Broome:

We bleached our hair and invented false names for each other, then caught the train to Brisbane and then onto Mackay. There was a building near the station called The Cedars and for two bob you could have a shower and a sleep. We asked the woman running the place about jobs. She sent us around to see a bloke called Hugh Hope. He was a huge Burl Ives character with two boats that supplied the islands – Lindeman, Brampton and South Mole. He seemed to like us and signed us on. To mark the occasion he took us down to the pub and shouted rounds of schooners. We had never had a drink before. I remember the euphoria, but by then we were drunk...

Down by the old wharfs there was a trochus lugger from Thursday Island with these islanders playing guitars and eating exotic food. Our boat was called the Hossack H. A semi-trailer arrived with hundreds of mattresses and bases bound for Brampton Island – that was our first job. The problem was someone hadn't fastened the mattresses securely when at sea, and a number of them slid overboard in the rolling swell. We were ordered to lower a row boat and retrieve the cargo tossing about in a big sea. It was hopeless, they were all ruined! Things didn't work out well at all for us on the Hossack H. A year later it sank.

Simoon Rhythms 8# (2002), is a buoyant composition emblazoned with Firth-Smith's distinctive linear organisation. In this case the mood of his marks deviate from the formal abstract to the symbolic. In the burnished orange and black ground of his canvas, with what could be read as a shifting, setting sun hovering above a dark sea, the artist has established a somewhat theatrical ambience. In this intriguing panorama, a painterly flourish of arabesques intones the sound of a hot desert wind blowing out to sea, as suggested in the title of the work.

The work of William (Bill) Yaxley (b.1943) appears to have anticipated the rise of the Mambo aesthetic that had its apotheosis in popular culture at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics, 2000. While at first glance Yaxley's wry perspective on landscape and culture is appealing, it is the richness and texture of



John Firth-Smith, *Simoon Rhythms # 8* 2002,
oil on linen, 91.5 x 274.5 cm.
On loan from private collection.



William Yaxley, *The mangrove monster no.2* 1986, wood, mandarin skin, shell and resin, 90 x 87 x 146 cm. Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery. Purchased 1987.

his work that sets it apart. For over twenty years, Yaxley operated a mandarin plantation at Hyfield near Rockhampton. The life and landscape around him gave rise to Yaxley's idiosyncratic paintings and sculpture. Following are comments by the artist about the inspiration behind his work:

'Keppel Island' (1986), is one of a number of paintings of the island I have done over the years. The previous works were limited by my lack of knowledge of the place. I did a lot of wandering when on holiday there, plus lots of sketches. I wanted to show everything I knew of the place, both past and present. During painting, the island developed a personality of its own, so as to be almost a creature.

In Mangrove Monster no. 2, (1986), the inspiration came to me when I was looking in the window of a second-hand shop in Mackay. Someone had carved and painted a piece of wood with a crocodile head on one end and fish on the other. I made Mangrove Monster No. 1 as a catfish, eel and crocodile in a mangrove setting. Mangrove Monster No. 2 is an integration of the three things to become the one creature.

When we left Queensland we took with us all our cane knives and machetes. Some are still in use harvesting seed crops on our new farm. The rest were incorporated into Machete Man, (1995).

The artist and his family now live in Tasmania where they operate a successful vineyard, under the Yaxley label.



In 1990, painter and printmaker Salvatore Zofrea began the Capricornia suite. It consists of a fine series of large scale woodcut prints that are a tribute to the Italian migrants that had made their lives in the cane fields of north Queensland.

My decision to undertake a series of large woodcut images was inspired by memories of my late uncle, Francesca who came to Australia from Borgia, Italy in 1925. Uncle Frank as we called him would come to our house in Seaforth, Sydney, and tell us wonderful stories of his adventures in north Queensland working on the cane fields with other Italian men. He often described the harsh conditions they lived under. The heat, and the smell of burning cane. He also told us of the strange animals he encountered.

To me as a young boy these descriptions caused me to imagine wondrous creatures and prompted me in recent years to make a trip to Mossman in north Queensland to meet some of the Italians who are still there on their farms. From these experiences I created the 16 wood cut images that comprise the Capricornia suite.

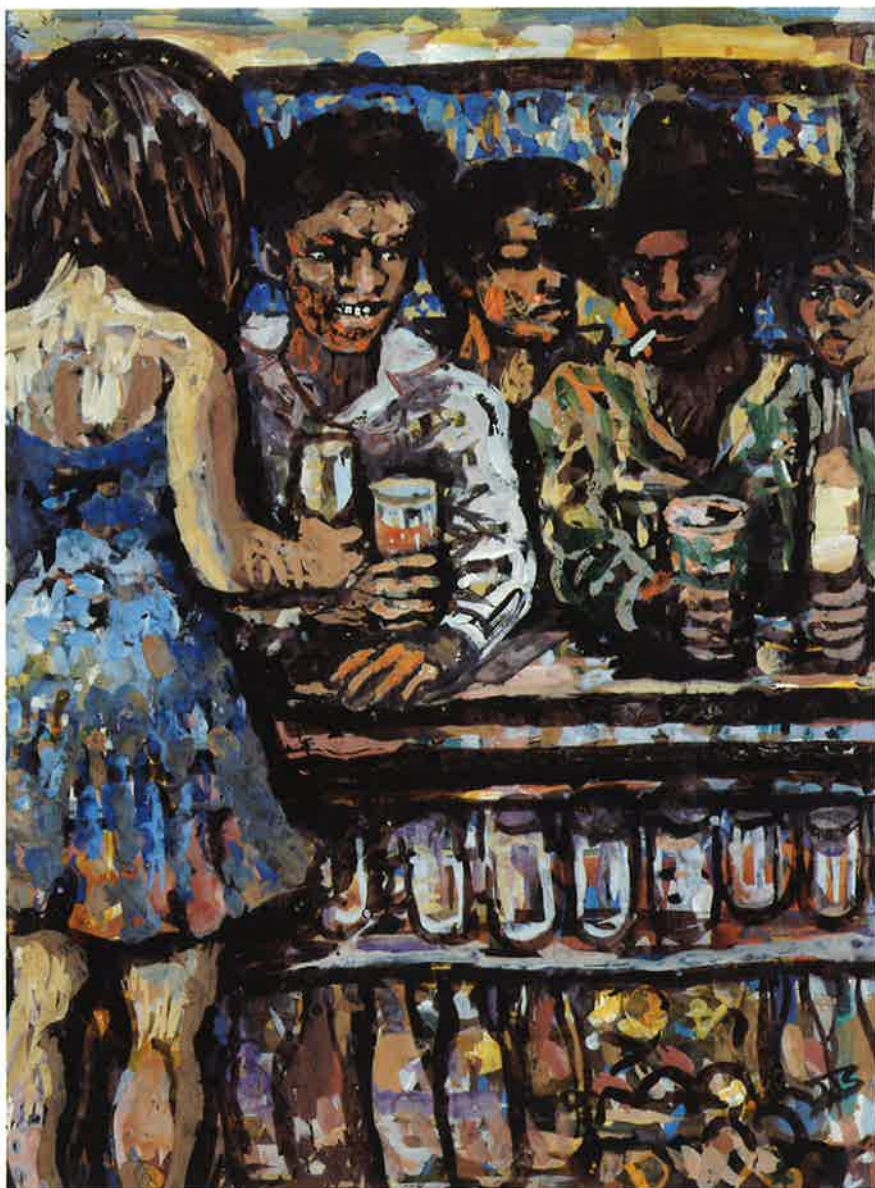
The development of the north Queensland sugar industry saw an influx of European migrants to the region. While Italian and



William Yaxley, *Keppel Island* 1986,
oil on canvas, 182.5 x 182.8 cm.
Purchased 1987.
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery.



Salvatore Zofrea, *Burning the cane* 1992,
woodcut print on paper, 120 x 180 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by Greg Weight.



John Bell, *Bar, Far North Queensland* 1991-92,
watercolour on paper, 45 x 35 cm approx.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by Greg Weight.



Hinchinbrook Channel, 2002.
Photograph by Gavin Wilson.

Maltese migrants arrived freely, others from the Pacific Islands were kidnapped, or 'blackbirded' to undertake the strenuous labour involved in a cane farming operation. Most of these forced arrivals were Melanesians, from the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands. In all, over 60,000 Melanesians had been brought to Queensland by 1901 when the introduction of the White Australia Policy now forced their repatriation regardless of their wishes. A number of unwilling Islander families were hidden by farmers and others were granted exemptions. Most of the descendants of this group, numbering around 20,000, form Queensland's vibrant South Sea Islander community.

Artist/traveller John Bell (b.1938) first came into contact with the South Sea Island population at Sarina, south of Mackay in 1956. He was captivated by the beauty and openness of the people, enjoying their musical traditions and their strong sense of community. Over the years, Bell has produced a range of fine watercolours that reflect life on the cane fields, and 'after hours' at favoured nightspots in the townships.



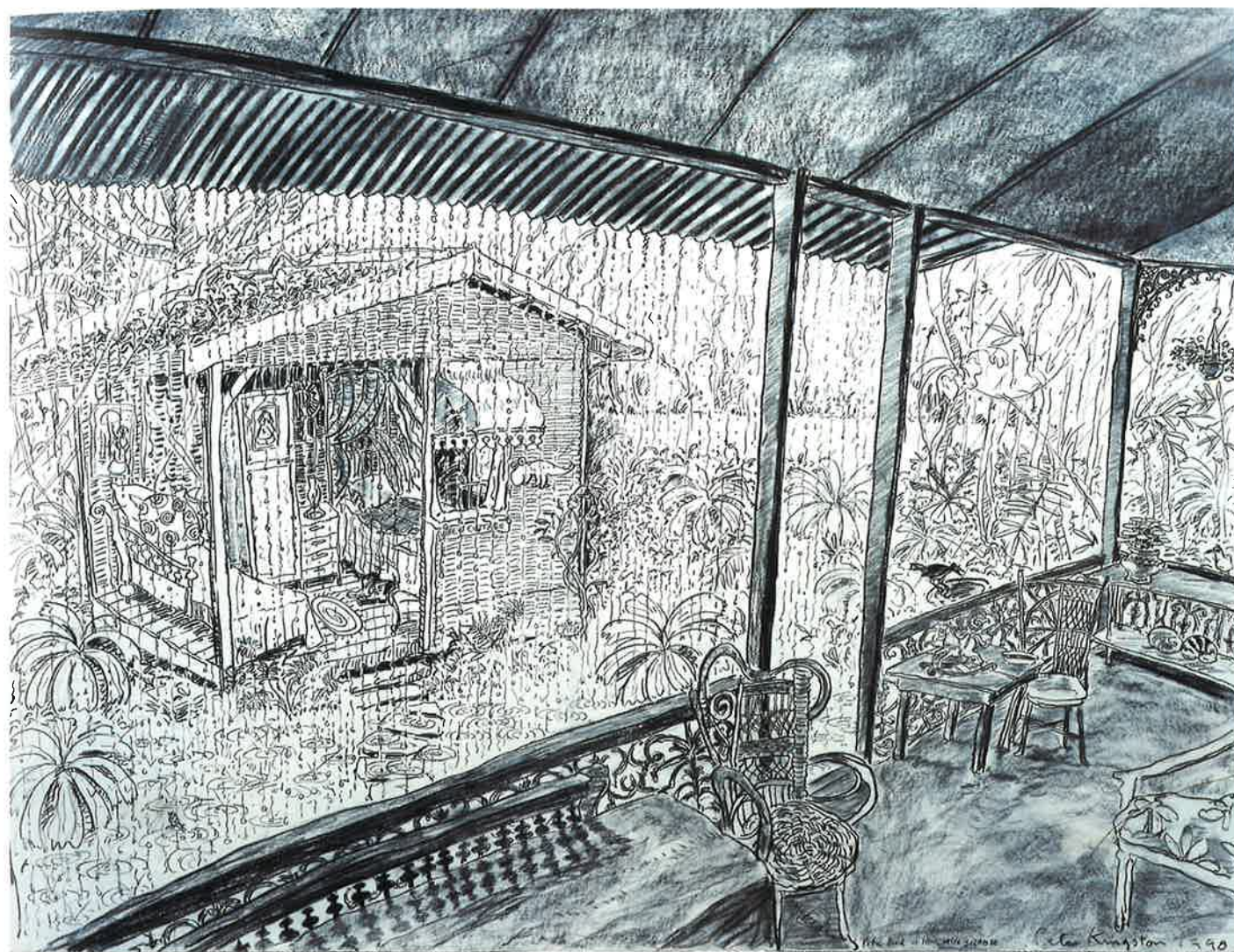
Peter Kingston putting the finishing touches to the MV *Ian Fairweather*, Cardwell 1998. Photograph by Margaret Thorsborne.

In recent times, the painter, graphic artist, and environmental activist Peter Kingston has journeyed north to Cardwell and Hinchinbrook where controversy surrounds the Keith Williams-sponsored development at Cardwell Point, overlooking the World Heritage-listed Hinchinbrook Island. The region has been bitterly divided over the impact of the development. Some see it as an economic saviour for the Cardwell township but the reality lies in a

diminished natural habitat and exaggerated economic benefits. Protesters have taken to the foreshore and waterways in an attempt to mobilise the Federal Government to prevent the destruction of the endangered Dugong habitat and the degradation of the environment by putting a halt to the development.

During a respite from his time on the barricades, Kingston retreated to the home of Hinchinbrook stalwart Margaret Thorsborne, who, along with her late husband Arthur, campaigned to have the region recognised as a World Heritage site. Here on the back verandah, hemmed in by a tropical downpour, Kingston has responded to the event with a fine, large-scale charcoal drawing *Pita bird, Hinchinbrook* (1998). The intensity of Kingston's line, and his sure handling of form and tone, has given rise to a memorable image that harks back to the 1875 watercolour study of a similar environment by his predecessor Annie Pring Marten.

In the monsoonal regions of tropical Australia, art and life tend to naturally coalesce in response to the compelling all pervasive atmosphere that dominates the annual agenda. The sense of physical isolation is still real in the tropics, while ready access to ideas and information via technology, has opened lines of communication for those interested in the exercise. Artists living and working in the north, committed to an authentic expression about place and culture, continue to produce works of quality and invention that have enhanced and extended our perception of the Australian experience.



Peter Kingston, *Pita bird, Hinchinbrook* 1998,
 charcoal on arches paper, 96 x 127 cm.
 On loan from private collection.
 Photograph by Greg Weight.



Don Heron, *Harbour breakwaters* 1995,
oil on canvas, 135 x 45 cm.
Collection of Michael Gardner, Brisbane.
Photograph by Jon Linkins.

Mackay connection

Cathy Knezevic

For the creative spirit, Australia's tropical north has tremendous contrasts. These range from the subtle change of seasons to the dramatic build up of storms and cyclones. The beauty of the warm waters of the reef with its luminous coloured fish and brilliant coral, contrast with its deadly sharks and sea wasps. The fauna reminds us of the uniqueness of this land, whether it is the kangaroo, the platypus, the snakes and crocodiles, or any of the hundreds of colourful birds. North Queensland is a place that few can truly imagine until they have the opportunity to see it for themselves.

Maria Emma McBurney (nee Palmer), was born in Ellerslie, Sydney, NSW and married Dr Robert McBurney at St. Mary's Church, Kangaroo Point in Brisbane in 1874. After their marriage they moved to Mackay where Dr McBurney was the first Surgeon-Superintendent of Mackay District (now Base) Hospital. During Maria Emma's time in Mackay she painted flora common to the banks of the Pioneer River, drawing upon traditions of botanical illustration. It is possible that she may have been influenced by the work of the renowned flower painter Ellis Rowan who visited Mackay during the 1880s, staying with the Rawson family at *The Hollow*, their cattle run on the Pioneer River, as well as at a sugar plantation in Habana. These fine, exuberant works by Emma

McBurney, that reflect the raw fecundity of tropical vegetation are also of great historic value.

Mackay's best-known artist, Clem Forbes, was born in Bowen in 1938. Clem's parents managed many country hotels, which contributed to his impressions of the bush landscape, the creeks, the horse paddocks and picnic races that influenced his work. Clem's determination to paint came in 1948 at Esk, where he first saw Dobell's painting *The Cypriot*, in a travelling exhibition from the Queensland Art Gallery. While in hospital recovering from Tuberculosis he studied the tonal theories of Max Meldrum and later developed drawing skills through an introduction by his artist wife Dorothy Forbes to Nicolaides *Natural Way to Draw*. Clem worked in watercolour, pastels and oils, and was a fine etcher.

In 1964 Clem and his wife chose to move to Mackay from Brisbane to work and raise their family. They established the Bakehouse Gallery in Victoria Street Mackay in 1972, and The Forbes Gallery Studio in 1979 within their George Street home. Through his paintings, particularly of north Queensland scenes, his teaching over many decades, and his eye for excellence, he was a major influence on arts education in Mackay.



Maria Emma McBurney,
untitled (pandanus fruit) c.1880s,
watercolour on paper,
47 x 30 cm.
Collection of Artspace Mackay,
Mackay City Council.
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald.



Clem Forbes, *Brigalow* 1977,
watercolour on paper,
24.5 x 34 cm.
On loan from private collection.
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald.

Over the years there have been recurring images of the rainforest, its small towns and the exotic birds in his work. He painted the wetlands of northern rivers and the fishing villages of the Whitsunday Bays. Critic and artist James Gleeson noted Clem's "good feeling for the Queensland landscape" in a review of his 1973 exhibition at the Holdsworth Gallery in Sydney. It is this feeling which brought strongest recognition from those closest to the north Queensland landscape. He was aware of the principle of the artist Arthur Evan Read who lived and painted in north Queensland who stated that to be able to communicate a place one must live there over time and not just pay a fleeting visit. In 1996 he moved to the Sunshine Coast to work, exhibit and teach. He died in 1997.

Tate Adams, printmaker, lecturer and publisher of limited edition artists' books, was born in Ireland in 1922. In 1942 while browsing through a secondhand bookshop, Tate came across a small book that had a terrific impact upon him. *A True Tale of Love in Tonga* (Faber & Faber, 1935, London) told in twenty three wood engravings and 347 words by Robert Gibbings. This little book opened up a whole new world to him. They were the first wood engravings that he had ever seen and he knew immediately that he wanted to be an engraver and work in books.

Moving to Melbourne in 1951 to commence a 30 year teaching commitment at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Tate has

taught printmaking to a generation of Australian artists that has included George Baldessin and Jan Senbergs. Tate and his wife Glen opened the Crossley Gallery in Melbourne in 1966 which became the active hub of modern Australian printmaking, showing artists such as: Fred Williams, Roger Kemp, Leonard French and John Brack. The Lyre Bird Press was also established in 1977 by Tate to print and publish artists' books in the Crossley Print Workshop.

In 1989, Tate moved to Magnetic Island in north Queensland and built a beach house on the water's edge. His love of this environment has inspired many of his works over recent years. In 1992 Lyre Bird Press was re-established at James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville where it continues to publish artist's books, often in collaboration with other artists. *Palm Landscapes*, four wood engravings from the artist's book titled *Tropical Wood Engravings* (1997) express Tate Adam's fascination with the shapes and beauty of palms (which are an important feature of the north Queensland landscape) and have been a recurrent theme in his prints over the last ten years. The artist's book, including six wood engravings of Pandanus and Coconut Palms was made when he lived on the Island.

Don Heron has been actively involved in a contemporary reassessment of landscape painting in Queensland. His works on display in *Beneath the Monsoon* are identifiable images of Mackay, where Don was born (in 1970), and where weekends

on his grandparents' farm were a cornerstone of family life. He was educated at Victoria Park Primary School and Mackay State High School. While at school, he attended art classes with local artist Clem Forbes. In 1989 he completed a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts) degree at the then Brisbane College of Advanced Education.

He is presently employed at the Queensland Art Gallery in the position of Head of Design in the Exhibition Department. Recently he travelled to Washington to work at the Freer and Sackler Galleries, having won a fellowship with the Smithsonian Institute.

Cathy Knezevic is the Exhibitions Officer at Artspace Mackay. She has a long experience of working with the significant artists books and prints collection at the Mackay City Library, curating and displaying exhibitions and programs.



Don Heron, *Canefields* 1995,
oil on canvas, 35 x 45 cm.
On loan from private collection, Melbourne.
Photograph by Viki Petherbridge.



Clem Forbes, *Carnavon Gorge* 1974,
oil on paper, 62.5 x 99 cm.
On loan from private collection.
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald.



Clem Forbes, *Swamp Ti Tree* 1974,
oil on cardboard, 34 x 44 cm.
On loan from private collection.
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald.



Tate Adams, *Palm Landscape IV* 1997,
wood engravings printed on arches satine rag paper,
Artist's proof from the artist's book *Tropical Wood Engravings*, 27 x 28 cm.
Edition artist's proof.
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council.
Photograph by Glen Wilson.



Tate Adams, *Palm Landscape II* 1997,
wood engravings printed on arches satine rag paper,
artist's proof from the artist's book *Tropical Wood Engravings*, 27 x 28 cm.
Edition artist's proof.
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council.
Photograph by Glen Wilson.



Anneke Silver, *Grey Place* 1982,
oil on canvas, 90 x 90 cm.
Collection of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville.
Purchased 1981.

Townsville scene

Ross Searle

Located virtually equidistant between Cairns in the north and Mackay in the south, Townsville's landscape, climate and ecology is physically and visually overwhelming. Based in the dry tropics, the city is the site of a major army base, which substantially affects the urban character. The population of over 130,000 includes a large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence. It is not surprising that the artistic community has a strong sense of identity and loyalty to the area and its cultural history.

Prior to the 1960s, it can be said that the northern region lacked a contemporary visual culture particular to itself since those artists who made their name depicting the northern tropics, such as Ray Crooke did not contribute to the development of a permanent artistic infrastructure. Not that this was a particular goal of these artists in any case. However, the artists central to the development of its artistic identity did not arrive in Townsville until the sixties and early seventies. A number arrived directly from Europe. From 1975, the Visual Art and Design course at Townsville College of TAFE was taught by artists Anneke Silver from Holland and Robert Preston from England and later Ron McBurnie from Brisbane. They encouraged contemporary art forms, which became distinct historically and thematically from

Brisbane and which constitute a unique contribution to Australian contemporary visual culture.

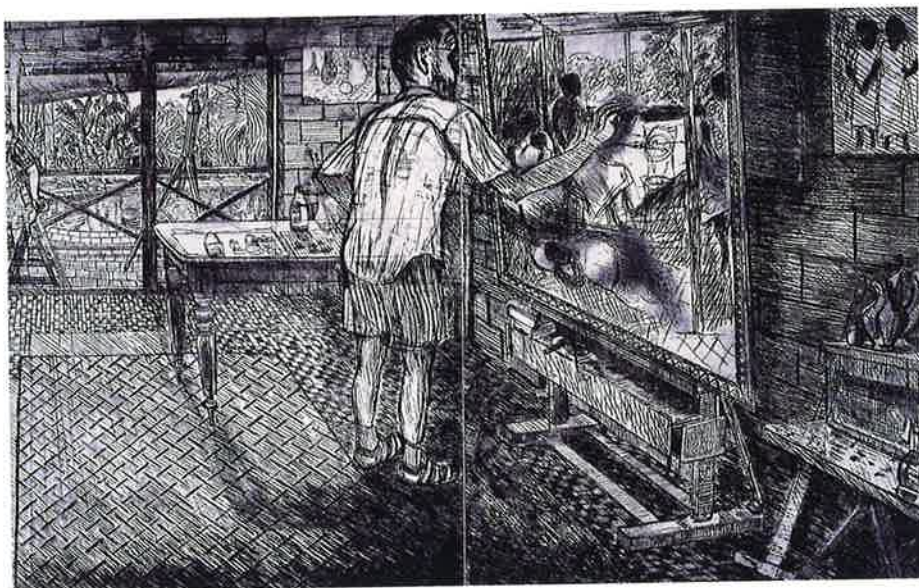
Creative Arts studies were moved from TAFE to James Cook University in 1991 and higher degrees in the visual arts were developed. Anneke Silver's and Robert Preston's theory curriculum at James Cook University was advanced and innovative. They encouraged their students to look beyond the immediate influences of Australian art and incorporated Jungian ideas and eastern spirituality into their teaching.

Anneke Silver is one of northern Australia's most distinguished artists and although not as widely known in the national context, she has made a unique contribution to the development of the visual culture of the region. Silver's work throughout the seventies and early eighties was characterised by her quest to embody the essence of the landscape through a symbolic use of earth colours and a system of painterly abstraction. In the nineties her work was centered on mythologies of the earth and the concept of the sacred feminine.

This concern for the local environment is a feature of the work of a number of Townsville artists including Margaret Wilson, James Brown, Ron McBurnie and



Townsville, 2002.
Photograph by Gavin Wilson.



Ron McBurnie, *Ray Crooke in his studio*
Cairns 2000,
 etching on BFK rives paper, 51 x 40.5 cm.
 Courtesy of the artist.
 Photograph by Roger Yeldom.

Anne Lord, as well as a younger group of practitioners. Many of the succeeding artistic generation in Townsville have acknowledged this powerful influence.

By the nineties, artists moved permanently to Townsville from elsewhere in Australia. An underlying concern of many of these artists was to interrogate the notion of the myth of the tropics. Australia is one of the most urbanised nations on earth, yet the enduring myth of Australia is based on rural and outback imagery. The tropics have not escaped this form of myth making. Ron McBurnie is an artist who has consistently delved into the suburban psyche of north Queensland. His works charter some of the rituals and peculiarities of that zone between the suburbs of Townsville and the local

environment. Anne Lord's practice has been radically politicised in the 1990s. Moving away from explorations of her relationship to the land through symbol and myth, she moved to a more politically critical practice. In 1996 she undertook on an examination of the land use in the region of her family's pastoral origins and the consequential destruction of the environment by industrial agricultural practices. Exhibited at the 1996 Beijing International Exhibition of Computer Art, the documentation was communicated through email and an on-line publication.

As the urbanisation of north Queensland continues, artists are increasingly turning their attentions to the urbanised environment.

Ross Searle was appointed to his current position as Director, University Art Museum at the University of Queensland in 1996. Previous to this he was Director of the Perc Tucker Gallery in Townsville, a position he held for ten years, and one which saw that gallery rise to national prominence due to its fine exhibition program and the consolidation of its collection, in particular art relating to the tropics and the contemporary art of Melanesia. He has made a national and international contribution to the development of significant exhibitions and publications.



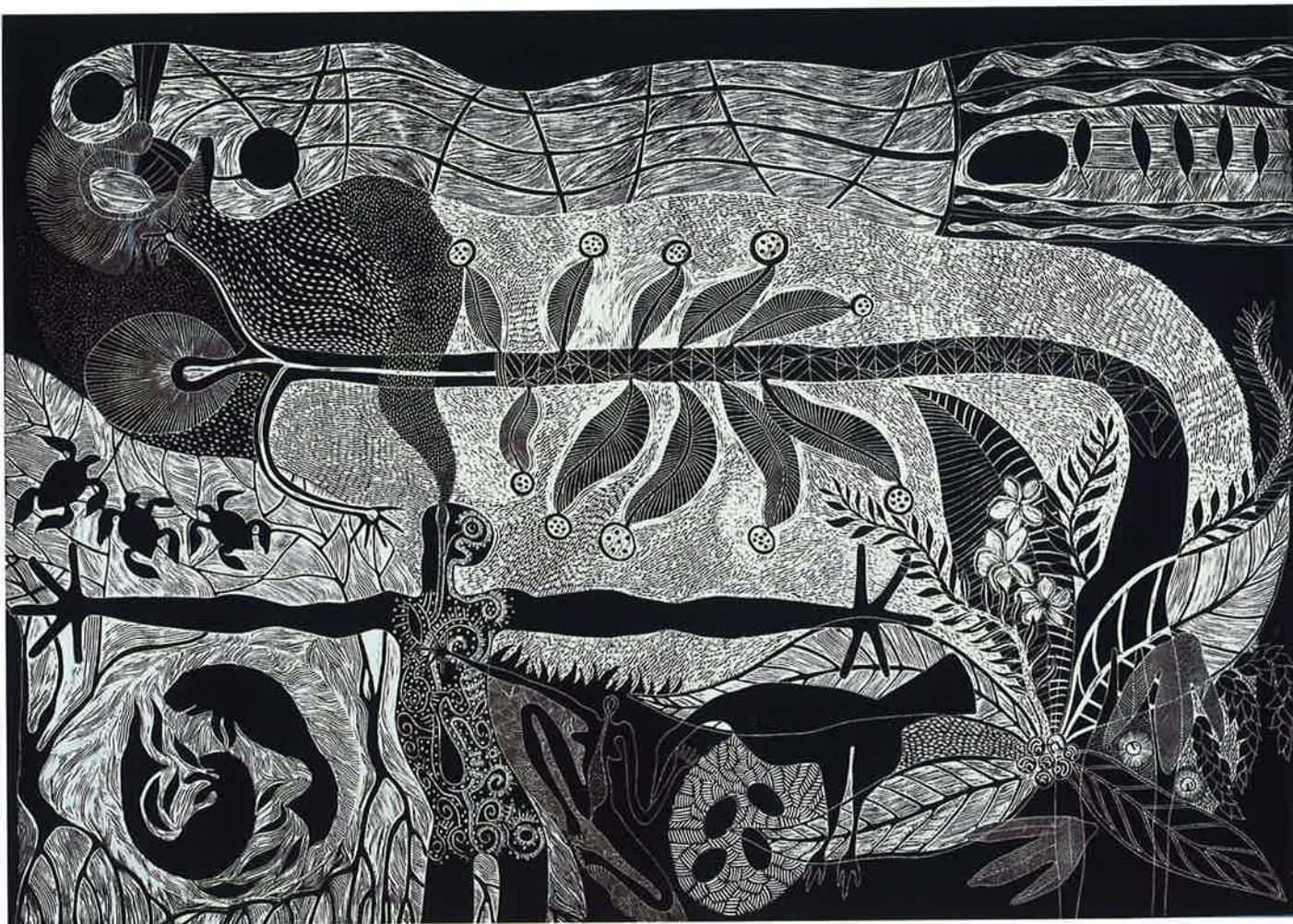
Ron McBurnie, *Ben's place after Cyclone Winifred 1987*,
oil on canvas, 87 x 107 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by Roger Yeldom.



Anneke Silver, *Upper Ross Rock 3* 2002,
charcoal on paper, 31 x 25 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by Roger Yeldom.



Anne Lord, *Twisted air* 1991,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 140 x 170 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by Roger Yeldom.



Arone Meeks, *Celebration* 2001,
linoprint on paper, 120 x 170 cm.
Collection of Cairns Regional Gallery.

The sultry edge

Ingrid Hoffmann

As if nourished by generous tropical downpours, art in Cairns has undergone a growth spurt in the past ten years. Small pockets of bohemia did decamp to the north in various waves since the 1930s, but the millennial transition now affords some perspective on a most fertile decade, the 1990s. Here was the confluence of artists newly arriving, indigenous printmakers gaining profile, established makers coming into their own: an artists' collective germinating, a new regional gallery flourishing. Why in Cairns? Because its contradictions are magnetic, the glorious dry days and devastating monsoons: the sultry, pacey edge.

Of Australia's six states, Queensland is markedly the most decentralised. During the rule of Joh Bjelke Petersen, regional prosperity for non-indigenous Queenslanders was enjoyed in subsidised agricultural and tourism locales, flung along a coastline of more than 2700 kilometres.

But was cultural prosperity visible away from Brisbane society during the Joh era? Adamantly unsubsidised, it was thriving on the margins. The Kuranda Market by the mid 1970s for instance, had attached to itself the reputation of offering the best hand made craft objects in Australia.

Curiously, hippie resourcefulness in a (then, less despoiled) wet tropical hamlet had become a diverse and buzzing magnet for artisans.

Outside the state, ominously little was heard about Queensland's cultural activities. However, by the 1980s, the appearance of work with an intrinsic regional flavour by Tom Risley, William Yaxley, Joe Furlonger, and Ian Smith had gained notice beyond their respective far northern, central and southern Queensland coastal ambits. Art museum curators had also discovered headaddress constructions, or animated objects of dance paraphernalia, made by the remarkable Torres Strait Island artisan, Ken Thaiday Sr., while the engaging narrative paintings of Dick Roughsey had also captured audiences receptive to Cape York indigenous perspectives.

Following the 1989 demise of the Bjelke Petersen Government, a resurgence of creativity occurred in the Cairns region. Kick Arts Collective was born in 1993 and offered an atmosphere of local experiment for up and coming artists, several of whom regularly sent their work to distant galleries. It also welcomed newly arriving artists 'from south' and across the world, who energised the push for an artist-run space.



Sunrise, Trinity Inlet, Cairns 2002.
Photograph by Gavin Wilson.



Ed Koumans, *Natives* 1997,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas,
125 x 123 cm.
On loan from private collection.
Photograph by Michael Marzik.

Kick Arts jolted dormant artist Ed Koumans from his sales job behind a commercial gallery counter, back into a studio: an under-the-house studio, typical of Cairns' open timber-slatted workshops. The first Kick Arts exhibition called *The Fish John West Regrets* in 1993, enabled Koumans to explore a range of newly invented primitive figures, writhing in ironic tribal exuberance across the wall, or staring enigmatically at the viewer, as in *Men and fish* (2002).

Meanwhile, indigenous art was most visible in tourist-targeted shops and galleries, which often stocked undifferentiated desert art. However, alternative directions were made available to young artists at the Far North Queensland Institute of TAFE. From 1984, an Associate Diploma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art was offered and taken up by notable graduates Zane Saunders (who participated in *The Fish John West Regrets*), Alick Tipoti and Dennis Nona. Printmaking remained the distinctive strength of TAFE's training and students' subject matter that often reflected imagery of the Laura rock-art galleries, or, as in the Torres Strait Islander community, contemporary responses to the issues of culture and landownership through the stories of respected elders.

Arone Raymond Meeks, although born in far north Queensland, received extensive professional training in southern centres. The technical excellence of his prints, etchings and paintings enhances the lyrical, sensual expression, to which he

adds the richness of Cape York peoples' culture and a psychological openness to urban cross-cultural realities. Generously, Meeks shares with Cairns peers the benefits of his national and international exhibition experience, echoing his activism during the formation of Sydney's Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative in 1987. Originally from the Torres Strait, Clinton Nain (b.1971) from the Merian Mer-Ku Ku Group is another artist who sharpened his art practice and political instincts in the south, where he now lives. Nain's use of 'stained' fabric and 'cleansing' agents in his installation work is confronting, while his provocative humour can be disarming – 'My work represents my existence and my survival, exploring the untold and unseen from the Blak Queen.'

Of the many northern painters in thrall to the tropics, Claudine Marzik distils with complex tonality the feeling of a season and the essence of place. Wet season vapour signifies the polar opposite of her native Switzerland, from where she emigrated in 1989. For much of the 1990s, Marzik continued practising her profession of floristry, deploying tropical foliage as compositional forms, to elegant effect. Her painting adds stylistic diversity to the felt sensations of place.

When Cairns Regional Gallery opened in 1995, a new symbol of cultural arrival was widely embraced. By welcoming community events in its finely transformed spaces, the gallery added value to its extensive exhibition program. Aware too of its tourism audience, Cairns Regional Gallery regularly exhibits international art,

with a special focus on Japanese contemporary practice. However, it is through its service to north Queensland artists that the gallery preserves a pre-eminent role.

Whether the experience of place was internalised or overtly expressed by artists and those of us who curated their work, an energetic era was upon us during the 1990s. This provoked the freedom to explore, a sense of belonging and I daresay a new take on bohemia in the tropics. The spirited makers living in Cairns and its surrounds created their marks while the torrid monsoon affected us all.

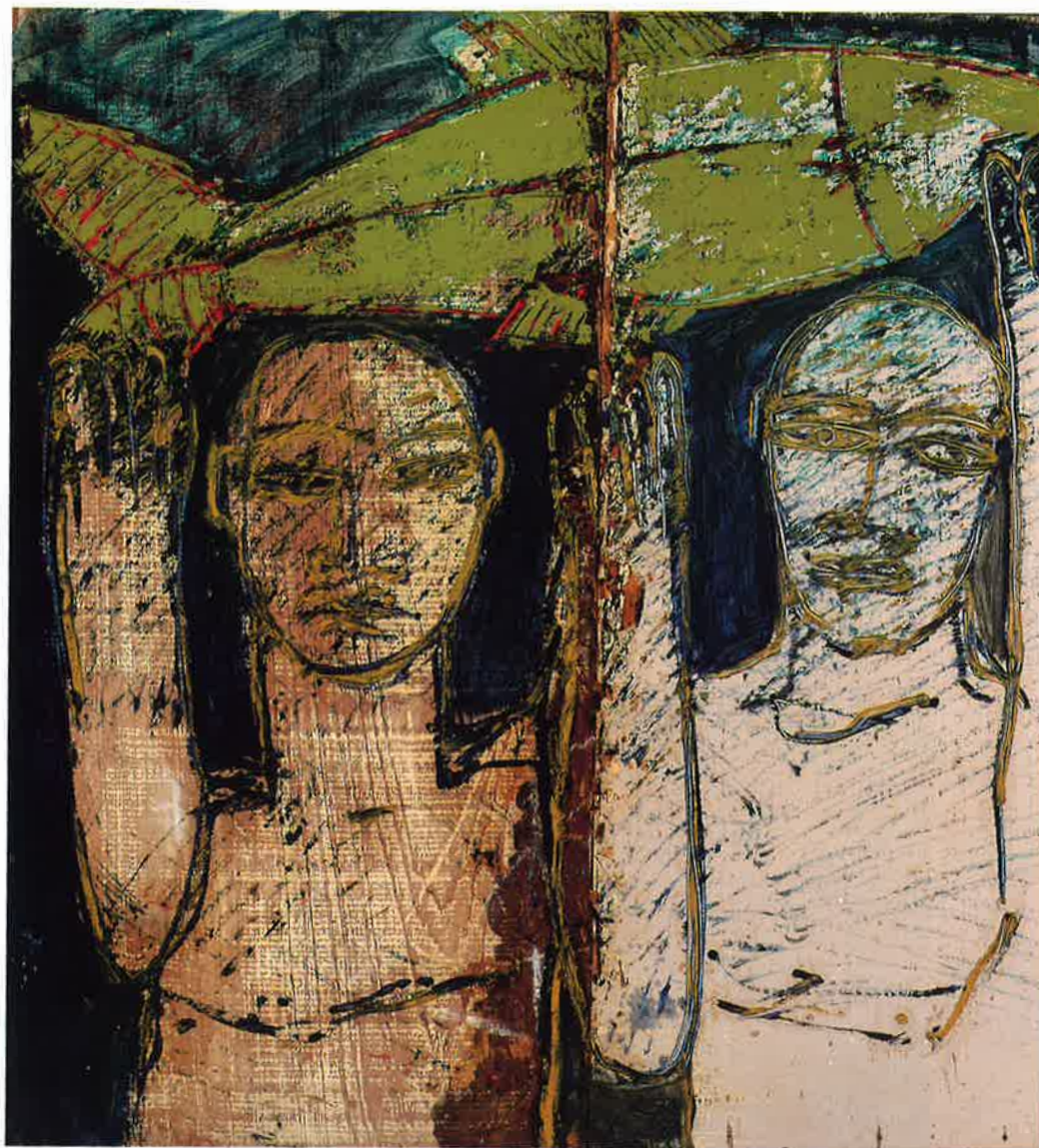
Ingrid Hoffmann is the Director of the Hervey Bay Regional Gallery and has a long association with the arts in Far North Queensland where she has been active as an artist, critic, writer and curator working with Kick Arts and then at the Cairns Regional Gallery. She has also held positions with the Public Art Agency, Artworkers Alliance in Brisbane and Artbank in Sydney.



Claudine Marzik, *Crystal cascade* 2001,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 137 x 104 cm.
Collection of the Warwick Art Gallery.
Photograph by Michael Marzik.



Claudine Marzik, *Wet season No.9* 2002,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 128 x 78 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by Michael Marzik.



Ed Koumans, *Men and Fish* 2002,
oil on timber board, 120 x 110 cm.
On loan from private collection.
Photograph by David Campbell.



Arone Meeks, *Big Wet* 2002,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 183 x 122.5 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by David Campbell.



Clinton Nain, *Acid reign* 2001,
bleached Indian cotton,
triptych 66.5 x 41.5 cm each panel.
Courtesy of the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney.



Dennis Nona, *Malu Lag A Dapar-A-Urunga Aidal (state 2)* 2000,
linocut printed with black ink with synthetic polymer paint,
paper size 122 x 80 cm, image size 88 x 50 cm.
Courtesy the artist and The Australian Art Print Network, Sydney.
Photograph by Alex Kershaw.



Alick Tipoti, *Mawa Kedtha* 2000,
 linocut printed with black ink,
 paper size 102 x 70 cm, image size 100 x 66 cm.
 Courtesy of the artist and The Australian Art Print Network, Sydney.
 Photograph by Alex Kershaw.



Fiona Omeenyo, *My family today ... from my family before time 2001*,
 acrylic on canvas, 174 x 270 cm.
 Courtesy the artist and Andrew Baker Gallery, Brisbane.
 Photograph by Jon Linkins.

The Lockhart River Art Gang

Nicholas Rothwell

Some eight hundred kilometres up a dirt road north of Cairns, there is a place where the mountains are dark, the trees grow lush and the sunset tides race in across the moist, ripple-patterned sands. This is Lockhart River, at the mid-point of Cape York's eastern shore: moist air; bright water; blazing light. A landscape, a set of surrounds so sharp their impact is a constant pressure on both eye and mind. No surprise, then, that there is a temptation to read that environment back into the outpouring of art produced at Lockhart River since 1996, in one of the more remarkable of the many renaissances that make up the Aboriginal art movement of the past three decades. But there is another landscape very much in evidence in the works of the "Art Gang" - the group of young painters and print-makers gathered and nurtured at the ramshackle Lockhart River Arts Centre. This, of course, is the "landscape behind the landscape," that world of story, of spirits and ancestral figures, which existed "before time" and still exists today.

Fame has come swiftly to Lockhart River's art stars: the best-known of them, Rosella Namok, a mere 23 years old, is already one of Australia's most collectable artists; the other young painters whose work has won attention in the city galleries of the south - Samantha Hobson, Adrian King, and Fiona Omeenyo - are of the same

generation. It is worth pausing a moment to ponder just how startling this fact is. Until the Lockhart phenomenon, indigenous Australian art was marketed as the work of an ancient tradition. Its most revered practitioners were its wisest, most knowledge-laden custodians. Rover Thomas, Emily Kngwarreye, Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula - these were artists whose cultural "purity" and closeness to the past was almost as important as the beauty of their canvases. Upon the emergence of the "Art Gang" that stranglehold was broken. Lockhart River's young artists, with their bold, vivid prints and canvases, staked out hybrid terrain. Here were paintings that came from double worlds: indigenous in their themes, authorship, flavour, yet abstract in their look, and western in style and technique. The work of a community art project, yet bearing the benign, potentiating influence of the remarkable couple, Geoff and Fran Barker, whose arrival in Lockhart precipitated the movement's emergence. Paintings, above all, that had the feel of landscape, of place - and yet went beyond the simplicity of representation, to evoke the realm of story within the colours and the feel of Lockhart's monsoonal world.

This doubleness of the Art Gang's work cuts deep: the Christian mission past lurks within the community's surface of



Samantha Hobson, *Stressed out* 2000,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas,
60.5 x 51 cm.
Courtesy of Andrew Baker Gallery, Brisbane.
Photograph by Jon Linkins.

the present day; the contact history of the Cape stands side by side with the realm of ancestral figures. The colour-washes of Lockhart River paintings can seem almost like screens, refracting as much as they reveal of their environs and their monsoonal, sensually overloaded world. Fiona Omeenyo, perhaps the most cryptic and elusive of these young artists, alludes to this twin world, this play between depth and surface, when she speaks of

the way she works. Her best known subject, the tale of the two ancestral parrot sisters, deals with her traditional home, Chester River, or "Pathaco" in language. "It's beautiful country, near the beach, and when you go there, you see the landscape and you feel the story." The hidden world irradiates the painting: "For colour, I just think back, and if I'm doing a painting about the land, I feel and I think what the land looks like; when I do a painting of a family, I see all the different things in the country, and it helps me."

Like so many challenges thrown down to the beholding eye, Lockhart paintings break our categories. Indigenous art, full of indigenous themes, yet made by young artists steeped in the look and impress of the contemporary world. Art that bears the influence of western mentors, even the touch of modernist traditions, while reaching deep into the Cape's realm of washed colours, memories and sounds. Art, above all, still in the making, still coming into being. The cusp of the Australian future, taking shape at the furthest, remotest margin of the continent.

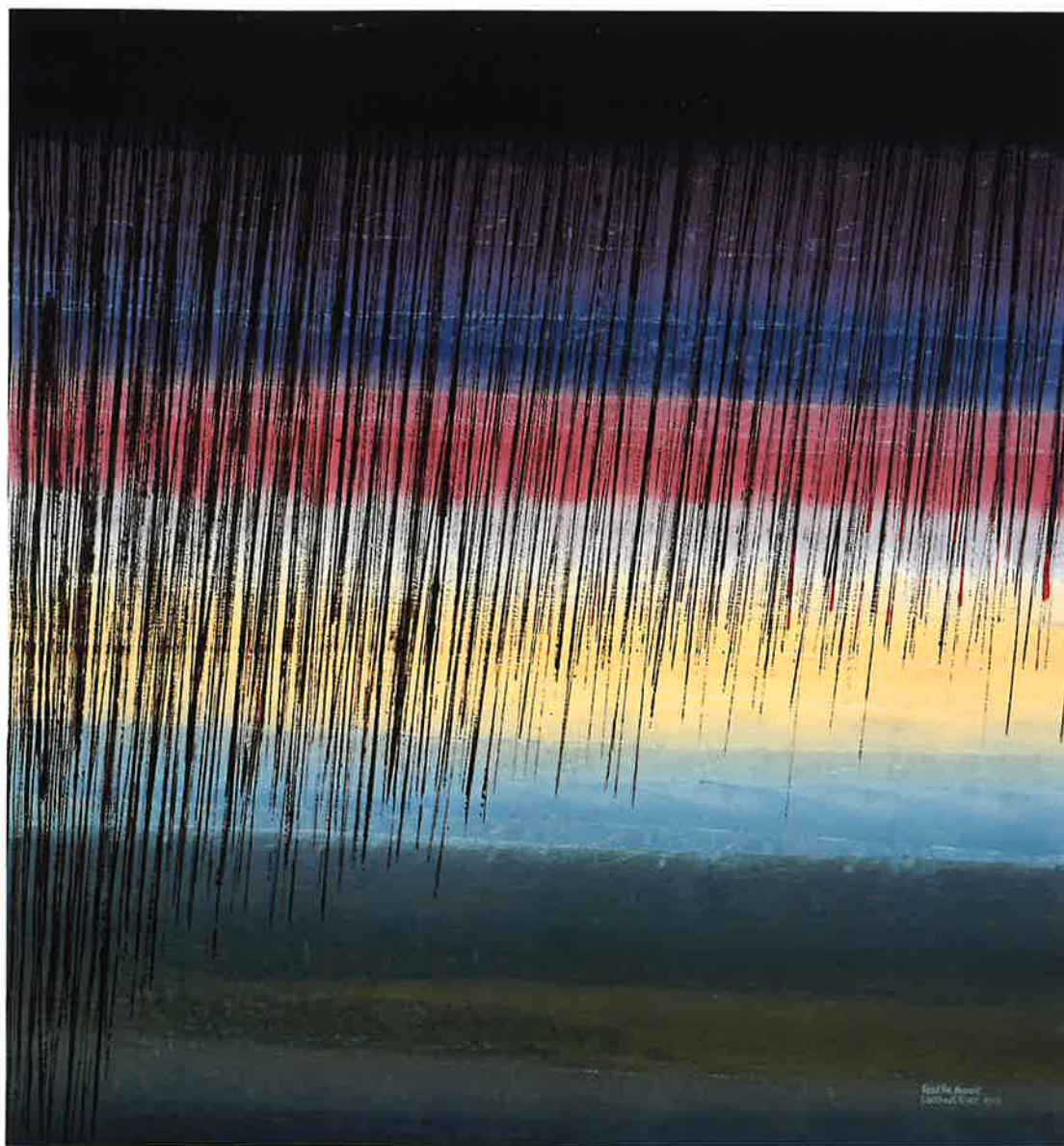
Nicholas Rothwell is a foreign correspondent, literary critic, social, historical and political commentator for The Australian newspaper and the author of the novel Heaven and Earth (1999). He has a particular interest in the issues facing indigenous communities in Northern Australia and has worked extensively in Cape York and the Northern Territory where he is now based.



Adrian King, *Camping at Wenlock* 2001,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 72 x 107 cm.
Courtesy of Andrew Baker Gallery, Brisbane.
Photograph by Jon Linkins.



Rosella Namok, *Wet stormy season* 1999,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 120 x 78.5 cm.
On loan from private collection, Sydney.
Photograph by Greg Weight.



Rosella Namok, *Raining down at Aangkun* 2001,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas,
200 x 184 cm.
Courtesy of Andrew Baker Gallery, Brisbane.
Photograph by Jon Linkins.

List of Works

Tate Adams (b. 1922, Ireland)

Palm Landscape I 1997

Wood engravings printed on arches satine rag paper.

Artist's proof from the artist's book *Tropical Wood Engravings*

27 x 28cm

edition artist's proof

Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council

Photography by Glen Wilson

Palm Landscape II 1997

Wood engravings printed on arches satine rag paper.

Artist's proof from the artist's book *Tropical Wood Engravings*

27 x 28cm

edition artist's proof

Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council

Photography by Glen Wilson

Palm Landscape III 1997

Wood engravings printed on arches satine rag paper.

Artist's proof from the artist's book *Tropical Wood Engravings*

27 x 28cm

edition artist's proof

Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council

Photography by Glen Wilson

Palm Landscape IV 1997

Wood engravings printed on arches satine rag paper.

Artist's proof from the artist's book *Tropical Wood Engravings*

27 x 28cm

edition artist's proof

Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City Council

Photography by Glen Wilson

John Bell (b.1938, Australia)

In the canefields 1991-92

Watercolour on canvas

57.5 x 81 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by Greg Weight

Bar, Far North Queensland 1991-92

Watercolour on paper

45 x 35 cm approx.

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by Greg Weight

Ray Croke (b. 1922, Australia)

Mele c.1965-67

Oil on composition board

77 x 120 cm

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia

Sunrise, Albion Hotel, Normanton 1962

Oil over tempura on composition board

76.5 x 121.7 cm

Purchased 1962

Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery

Quinkin country, Laura 1989

Oil on canvas

120 x 75 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by David Campbell

Russell Drysdale (b. 1912 England – d. 1981, Australia)

Shopping day 1953

Oil on canvas

59.7 x 75cm

Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales

Purchased with funds provided by MEPC

Australia Ltd 1988

Copyright estate of the artist, reproduced with permission

Photograph by Brenton McGeachie for AGNSW

Siesta c.1952

Oil on canvas

122 x 148 cm

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia

Ian Fairweather (b. 1891 Scotland – d. 1974 Australia)

House by the Sea 1967

Synthetic polymer paint and gouache on cardboard on composition board

131.3 x 193.3 cm

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia

Licensed by VISCOPY, Sydney 2002

John Firth-Smith (b.1943, Australia)

Simoon Rhythms # 8 2002

Oil on linen

91.5 x 274.5cm

On loan from private collection

Shane Fitzgerald (b. 1973, Australia)

Daintree 2002

Duraflex print ed.1/1

127 x 180 cm

On loan from private collection

Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald

Monsoon Dusk 2002

Duraflex print ed.1/1

127 x 180 cm

Collection of the artist

Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald

Serein 2002

Duraflex print ed. AP

100 x 155 cm

Collection of the artist and Dr Maurice and Glenda Costello

Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald

Clem Forbes (b.1938, Australia)
Swamp Ti Tree 1974
Oil on cardboard
34 x 44cm
On loan from private collection
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald
Reproduced courtesy of the estate of
Clem Forbes

Carnavon Gorge 1974
Oil on paper
62.5v x 99 cm
On loan from private collection
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald
Reproduced courtesy of the estate of
Clem Forbes

Brigalow 1977
Watercolour on paper
24.5 x 34 cm
On loan from private collection
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald
Reproduced courtesy of the estate of
Clem Forbes

Donald Friend (b. 1915 – d.1989, Australia)
Port Douglas 1955
Oil on canvas
40.3 x 50.3cm (50.4 x 60.6 x 6 cm framed)
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery
Purchased 2001, Conty and Roydon Robinson
Bequest through and with the assistance of the
Queensland Art Gallery Foundation
Reproduced with permission from the Trustees
of the Estate of Donald Friend

Mantis and tropical plants c.1959
Watercolour with brush and ink, and pen and
coloured pencils, heightened with white on
wove paper
34.1 x 49.9 cm
Purchased 2001, Queensland Art Gallery
Foundation Grant
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery
Reproduced with permission from the Trustees
of the Estate of Donald Friend
On show at Artspace Mackay only

The schooner "Miena" refitting at Townsville
1954
Oil on canvas
38.1 x 45.7cm
Collection of the Art Gallery of New South
Wales
Copyright AGNSW, reproduced with permission
Photograph by Brenton McGeahie for AGNSW
Reproduced with permission from the Trustees
of the Estate of Donald Friend

Don Heron (b. 1970, Australia)
Canefields 1995
Oil on canvas
35 x 45cm
On loan from private collection, Melbourne
Photograph by Viki Petherbridge

Harbour breakwaters 1995
Oil on canvas
135 x 45cm
Collection of Michael Gardner, Brisbane
Photograph by Jon Linkins

Samantha Hobson (b.1981, Australia)
Stressed Out 2000
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas
60.5 x 51 cm
Courtesy of Andrew Baker Gallery, Brisbane
Photograph by Jon Linkins

Peter Kingston (b.1943, Australia))
Pita bird, Hinchinbrook 1998
Charcoal on arches paper
96 x 127 cm
On loan from private collection
Photograph by Greg Weight

Ed Koumans (b.1946, Holland)
Men and Fish 2002
Oil on timber board
120 x 110cm
On loan from private collection
Photograph by David Campbell

Natives 1997
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas
125 x 123cm
On loan from private collection
Photograph by Michael Marzik

Anne Lord (b.1953)
Twisted air 1991
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas
140 x 170 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photograph by Roger Yeldom

Maria Emma McBurney
untitled (pandanus fruit) c.1880s
watercolour on paper
47 x 30cm
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City
Council
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald

untitled (still life, coleus leaves) c.1880s
watercolour on paper
47 x 30cm
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City
Council
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald

Untitled (Guavas) c.1880s
watercolour on paper
25 x 34cm
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City
Council
Photograph by Shane Fitzgerald

Ron McBurnie (b.1957, Australia)
Ben's place after Cyclone Winifred 1987
Oil on canvas
87 x 107 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photograph by Roger Yeldom

Ray Croke in his studio, Cairns 2000
Etching on BFK rives paper
51 x 40.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photograph by Roger Yeldom

Annie Pring Marten
*Somerset – Telegraph Naval Station – Cape
York, Queensland* 1872
Watercolour on paper
21.8 x 28.7 cm
Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City
Council
Photograph by Glen Wilson

Peter Botte Mountain, North Queensland Coast
1872

Watercolour on paper

21.5 x 28.5 cm

Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City
Council

Photograph by Glen Wilson

The Verandah "Winterbourne" 1873

Watercolour on paper

25.6 x 35.1 cm

Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City
Council

Photograph by Glen Wilson

Endeavour River, Cooktown, North Queensland
1872-73

Watercolour on paper

22 x 28.7 cm

Collection of Artspace Mackay, Mackay City
Council

Photograph by Glen Wilson

Claudine Marzik (b.1957, Switzerland)

Crystal cascade 2001

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

137 x 104 cm

Collection of the Warwick Art Gallery
Photograph by Michael Marzik

Wet season No.9 2002

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

128 x 78 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by Michael Marzik

Arone Meeks (b.1957, Australia)

Celebration 2001

Linoprint on paper

120 x 170 cm

Collection of Cairns Regional Gallery

Big Wet 2002

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

183 x 122.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by David Campbell

Clinton Nain (b.1971, Australia)

Acid reign 2001

Bleached Indian cotton

Triptych 66.5 x 41.5cm each panel

Courtesy of the artist and Sherman Galleries,
Sydney

Rosella Namok (b.1979, Australia)

Raining down at Aangkun 2001

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

200 x 184 cm

Courtesy of Andrew Baker Gallery, Brisbane

Photograph by Jon Linkins

Wet stormy season 1999

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

120 x 78.5 cm

On loan from private collection, Sydney

Photograph by Greg Weight

Dennis Nona (b.1973, Australia)

Naath 1995

Linocut printed with black ink with synthetic
polymer paint

61.0 x 50.5cm

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia
Gordon Darling Australasian Print Fund 1997

Malu Lag A Dapar-A-Urunga Aidai (state 2)
2000

Linocut printed with black ink with synthetic
polymer paint

Paper size 122 x 80cm

Image 88 x 50cm

Courtesy the artist and The Australian Art Print
Network, Sydney

Fiona Omeenyo (b.1981, Australia)

My family today ... from my family before time
2001

Acrylic on canvas

174 x 270cm

Courtesy the artist and Andrew Baker Gallery,
Brisbane

Tom Risley (b.1943, Australia)

Totem II 1985

Recycled house timber & caulking compound

150 x 150 x 420 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Not illustrated

On show Artspace Mackay only

Composite still life II 1994 - 2001

Found materials

240 x 400cm (5 pieces)

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by David Campbell

Still life with cadmium yellow 1990

Found timber, oil paint on canvas, on plywood
timber

150 x 150 x 150cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by David Campbell

Turtle 2002

Welded steel and paint

260 x 30 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by David Campbell

Anneke Silver (b.1937, Holland)

Grey Place 1982

Oil on canvas

90 x 90cm

Collection of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery,
Townsville

Purchased 1981

Upper Ross Rock 3 2002

Charcoal on paper

31 x 25cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photograph by Roger Yeldom

Mt Sturgeon Station 2002-12-22

Charcoal on paper

31 x 25cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photography by Roger Yeldom

Ian Smith (b.1950, Australia)

What if we had no findings 1989

Oil on canvas

160 x 210 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Tolerant old hometown (no. 9 from the 'My
Hometown' series) 1983

Pen and ink on wove paper

30 x 38cm

Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery

Purchased 1984

Humid, mosquito netted, hometown nights

when we turn the windows edge-on for

maximum wind (no. 16 from the 'My Hometown'
series) 1983

Pen and ink on wove paper

30 x 38cm

Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery

Purchased 1984

Artists came and went in my hometown (no. 69 from the 'My Hometown' series) 1984
Pen and ink on wove paper
38 x 30cm
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery
Purchased 1984

North Australian hometown – on the edge of the rest of the world (no. 78 from the 'My Hometown' series) 1984
Pen and ink on wove paper
38 x 30cm
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery
Purchased 1984

Hometown where people fossick on beaches (no. 79 from the 'My Hometown' series) 1984
Pen and ink on wove paper
30 x 38cm
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery
Purchased 1984

I'm glad I come from my hometown (no. 100 from the 'My Hometown' series) 1984
Pen and ink on wove paper
30 x 38cm
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery
Purchased 1984

Alick Tipoti (b.1975, Australia)
Mawa Kedtha 2000
Linocut printed with black ink
Paper size 102 x 70cm
Image size 100 x 66cm
Courtesy of the artist and The Australian Art Print Network, Sydney

Guy Warren (b.1921, Australia)
Arrival 1990-98
Acrylic on linen
274 x 274 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photograph by Greg Weight

William Yaxley (b.1943, Australia)
The mangrove monster no.2 1986
Wood, mandarin skin, shell and resin
90 x 87 x 146cm
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery
Purchased 1987

Keppel Island 1986
Oil on canvas
182.5 x 182.8 cm
Purchased 1987
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery

Machete man 1995
Steel, bitumen and limpet shell
173 x 192 x 50cm
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery
Purchased 1996, Queensland Art Gallery Foundation

Salvatore Zofrea (b 1946, Italy)
Burning the cane 1992
Woodcut print on paper
120 x 180 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photograph by Greg Weight

Acknowledgements



Map, illustrating the Climate & Physical Geography of North East Australia to accompany the paper by Dr. A. Rattray M.D. R.N.

Published for the Journal of the Royal Geographic Society by J. Murray, Albemarle St, London 1868.

Courtesy Anne Lord.

My initial thanks must go to Mackay City Council and Artspace Mackay Director, Robert Heather, for entrusting me with the gallery's inaugural exhibition. As well, I would like to thank Greg Roberts, Stephen Hobson and Erica Nagle for their enthusiastic support of the project during the early stages of development. My thanks also to Pam Brooks, Tracey Heatherwood Shane Fitzgerald and Somchay Soukvilay at Artspace for their tireless efforts in bringing the exhibition to fruition. Also, my thanks to the Mackay Curatorium Group for their advice and support.

In the realisation of the exhibition and tour, I would like to recognise a number of institutions and individuals whose commitment and

support have made the project possible. My thanks to Frances Thompson, Director of the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Louise Doyle Director of the Cairns Regional Gallery, The National Gallery of Australia, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Queensland Art Gallery, Warwick Art Gallery, Andrew Baker Gallery, Brisbane, Michael Kershaw at the Australian Art Print Network, Bill Wright and Anthony Whelan at Sherman Galleries, Sydney, and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney. Also my thanks to photographers David Campbell, Shane Fitzgerald, Jon Linkins, Michael Marzik, Greg Weight, Glen Wilson and Roger Yeldom.

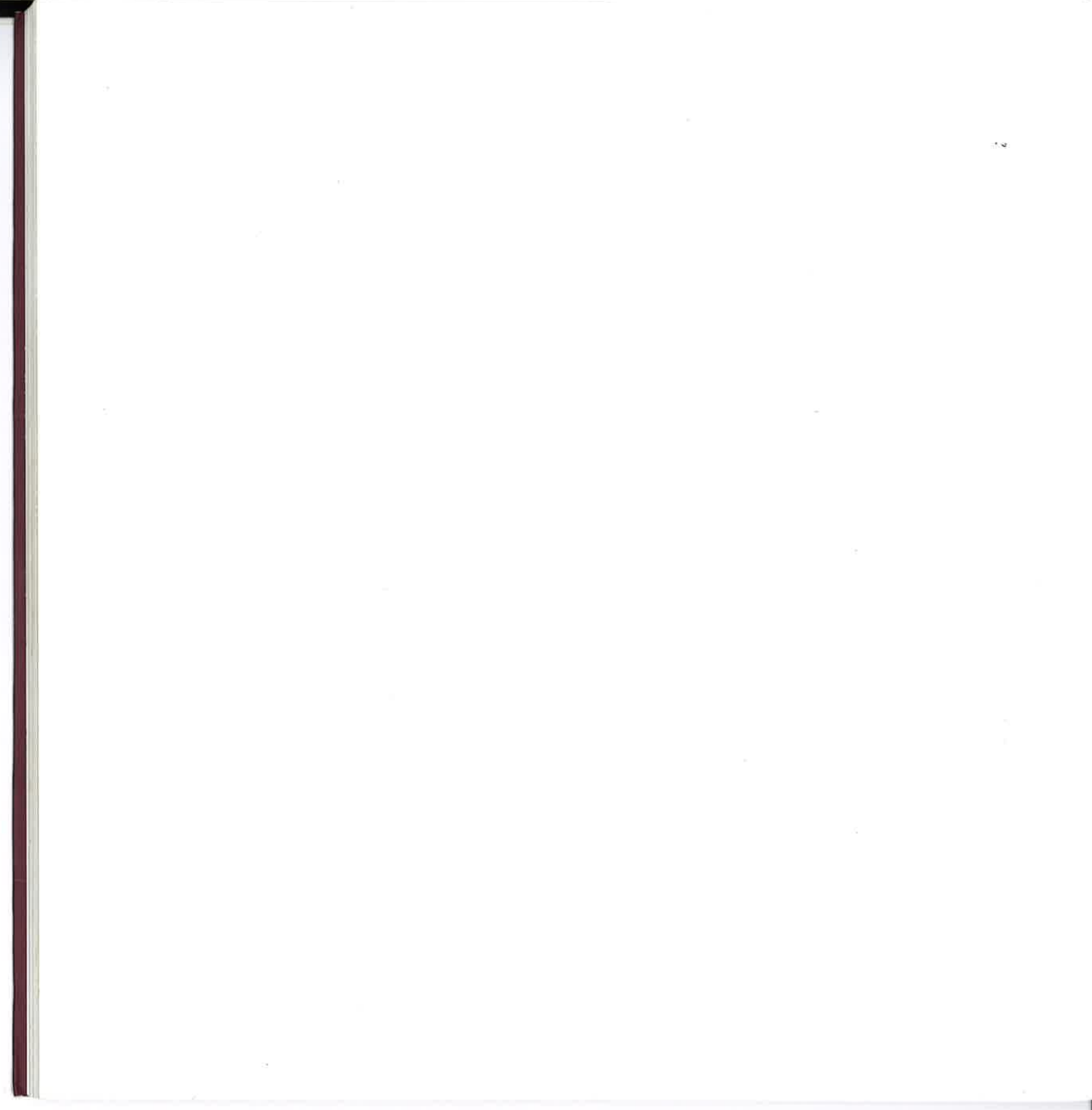
In the production of the catalogue I wish to thank contributing writers Cathy Knezovic, Ingrid Hoffmann, Ross Searle and Nicholas Rothwell for their engaging contributions. My thanks to Maggy Todd for her assistance, support and advice throughout the development and production, to editor Trevor Brentnall, designer Patrick Leong and Phil Abbott at Goanna Print for the company's generous support of the project.

Finally, I wish to extend a special tribute to the artists on display in *Beneath the Monsoon*, whose fine works inspired the exhibition and have enriched us all.

Gavin Wilson



Donald Friend, *Mantis and tropical plants* c.1959,
watercolour with brush and ink, and pen and coloured pencils,
heightened with white on wove paper, 34.1 x 49.9 cm.
Purchased 2001, Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant.
Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery.
On show at Artspace Mackay only.





Photograph by Maggy Todd.

Gavin Wilson is an independent curator, author and award-winning Landscape Architect.

In 1993, he was commissioned by The Art Gallery of New South Wales to research and curate *The Artists of Hill End*, an exhibition that focused on the post-war shift in landscape perceptions and people's relationship to place. The exhibition met with both public and critical acclaim.

In 1998, he conceived and curated the successful touring exhibition, *Escape Artists: Modernists in the Tropics* for Cairns Regional Gallery. In 2001, he conceived and curated the regional touring exhibition *Rivers + Rocks: select works of Arthur Boyd and Brett Whiteley* for the Bundanon Trust. He was commissioned in 2000 by the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery to research and curate *The Big River Show: Murrumbidgee Riverine*. The exhibition was launched in October 2002. He is the author of the monograph *John Firth-Smith: A Voyage that Never Ends*, published by Craftsman House, 2000.

At present, he is the curator/manager of the Hill End Artist in Residence Program, in the central west of New South Wales.

