

James MORRISON

Goodenough Bay 1959

2016

oil on linen

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased Cairns Art Gallery Foundation, 2017.

James Morrison grew up in Papua New Guinea and his childhood memories of its tropical landscape, combined with his early training as a florist are factors that continue to inform the composition and narratives in his exotic landscape paintings. In 1972 he moved to Melbourne and now lives and works in Sydney.

For Morrison, the tropics continue to be a place of unlimited possibilities, as a place where myth and reality can merge, and where animals can assume human qualities and humans can adopt animal characters. His vivid recall of the landscape of his childhood seamlessly shifts between real and imaginary places and events to create a narrative of fictional and factual histories and future possible realities.

Goodenough Bay 1959 depicts a veritable war of the worlds, an imagined clash of cultures. It is set in Milne Bay Province, northeast Port Moresby, and references an event in 1959, the year in which Morrison was born. In that year, there was an alleged mass sighting of UFOs in the area. A local pastor reported the event, describing in detail the UFOs and the alien figures on top of the crafts who were waving to the people on the ground below.

Morrison explains some of the many complex elements and references within his painting that 'records' this event in Goodenough Bay:

I have arranged the plants as if by a florist. The female face is looking away, her head covered by a billum. I have her slightly out of focus, almost as if she is fading away from this scene. The white hand offering the strawberry is a very loose play on [Milton's epic poem] Paradise Lost. When the white explorers first entered the Highlands in 1930, the people thought they were ghosts or walking corpses because of their whiteness. Maria, the female robot from the Fritz Lang film Metropolis, is emerging from the darkened space that the woman is receding into.

Linda JACKSON AO

Heliconia poncho

1987

handprint on cotton

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased 2019.

Green Heliconia poncho

1987

handprint on cotton

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased 2019.

Anthurium poncho

1987

handprint with paper stencils on cotton

Designed for Club Tropical Resort Port Douglas.

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased 2019.

Rainbow Linda Khanga ponch

1987

paper stencils, screenprint on cotton

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased 2019.

Linda JACKSON AO

Blue ocean textile length

2000

handprint on cotton

Designed for Club Tropical Resort Port Douglas.

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Gift of the artist, 2019.

Barrier reef textile length

2000

handprint on cotton

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased 2019.

Flowers colour swatches

1999

handprint on cotton

Designed for Toberura Island Hotel, Fiji.

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Gift of the artist, 2019.

Linda JACKSON AO

Born Melbourne

Linda Jackson is a renowned Australian fashion designer. She grew up in Melbourne and studied fashion design and photography before travelling extensively overseas in the 1960s. During her travels she spent much of her time in New Guinea and Asia, immersing herself in tribal cultures and exploring the diversity of ethnic clothing and body ornamentation.

In the mid-1970s, Linda Jackson and another famous Australian designer, Jenny Kee, gained notoriety for their flamboyant Flamingo Park fashion parades in Sydney, which were an explosive fusion of art, music and fashion. Together they defined Australian fashion, creating a distinctly Australian 'look' that incorporated recognisable elements of Australia's unique landscape, flora and fauna.

Jackson has also had an extensive career as a textile designer. In 1987 she was commissioned to create a range of furniture textiles for a Port Douglas resort and three years later she completed a range of textiles for a resort on the Fijian island of Toberua. During her time on the island Jackson developed an enduring passion for the striking shapes and colours of the hibiscus and frangipani flowers and traditional Fijian tapa cloth.

In 2000, Jackson returned to Port Douglas and for the next ten years she developed designs for furniture ranges and tropical clothing, incorporating elements of tropical flowers and plants found in both Fiji and her new home in far north Queensland region. She also drew creative inspiration from the local Kuku Yalanji people in the Mossman area, and many of her designs from that period incorporate elements of the surrounding tropical rainforest plants, leaves and flowers.

Jackson's striking textile designs, inspired by her experience of the tropics, combine the distinctive colours and textures of the Australian bush, with a range of experimental painting and printing techniques that use a combination of paper stencils, leaves and string with gold, copper and silver pigments. Speaking about the inspiration for her work Jackson says, *'Australia is an artist's paradise...an endless source of ideas and influence.'*

Heather KOOWOOTH

Wik Mungkan and Djabuguy/Yidinji

Mayie fig and wild ginger

The wild bush apple

Brilliant displays of mangrove

2017

watercolour on paper

Commissioned by Cairns Art Gallery, 2017.

Heather Koowootha is of Wik Mungkan and Djabuguy/Yidinji descent and grew up in remote Cape York Indigenous communities, including Pompuraaw, Aurukun and Yarrabah. She learned traditional ways as a child and her works are inspired by stories and experiences that are remembered, and that she in turn will pass on to her children and her children's children.

Koowootha's carefully constructed prints portray traditional elements of lore and order, sacred land protocols, bush medicine, bush foods, and other themes based on community life, history and culture. Native fruits, berries and plants feature in much of her work, along with her knowledge of the changing of the seasons that convey information about the times of year for flowering and harvesting plants and fruits, including native quandongs, bush apples, lawyer cane vines and wild ginger. While her works convey a careful sense of colour and composition, they are incredibly accurate and are a visual record of cultural information.

Heather lives and works in Cairns and is continually exploring new techniques and ways of incorporating traditional knowledge into her art practice, while always sharing her deep knowledge of country. For Heather, art is a passion that keeps culture strong.

Roland NANCARROW

No Borders for Migratory Birds

2019

synthetic polymer paint on polyvinyl chloride and wood

Purchased Cairns Art Gallery Foundation, 2020.

Roland Nancarrow is a Cairns-based artist who works across a range of media. His sculptural works are primarily a synthesis of form, light and colour, and reference life forms observed in his own garden and the forests and botanical gardens of far north Queensland.

During a recent trip to Columbia the myriad of bird species that abound in South America, and the lush tropical flora and fauna of the region increasingly intrigued him, and became an inspiration for a new body of sculptural works when he returned to Australia.

No Borders for Migratory Birds is a sculptural representation of the many species of birds that annually migrate to far north Queensland. Many of these migratory birds travel extensive distances from countries in the northern hemisphere, while others come from neighbouring countries such as Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Pacific Islands. For Nancarrow these birds symbolise and are a metaphor for freedom and a way of redefining notions of man-made territorial and political borders.

Melanie HAVA

Dugul-barra and Wari-barra

Barrier Reef Bubbles 1

2019

synthetic polymer paint and gold leaf on canvas

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased Cairns Art Gallery Foundation, 2020.

Melanie Hava has cultural connection to Far North Queensland and is of Mamu, Dulgu-barra decent. Her father is Austrian and her mother is Aboriginal, from the Johnstone River catchment area of the Wet Tropics that adjoins the Great barrier Reef.

For Hava the reef and the rainforest country are a source of creative inspiration for her art practice. Her diverse cultural heritage plays an important part in shaping her identity as well as her approach to experimenting with different painting styles and techniques.

When I was in my late teens/early twenties I started playing around with the idea of combining my Aboriginal and Austrian inspirations so I travelled to Austria to live with my father's family and absorb as much as I could of the folk and European culture. More than anything I loved the architecture. The patterns, gold leaf and occasional Swarovski crystal in my works are some things that I've gleaned from the European side of my heritage.

I have now settled down in Cairns – close to my mother's country - where I'm feeling close with the spirit of rainforest and reef animals.

Melanie Hava, 2019

Hava is passionate about capturing the joy and beauty of tropical land and marine animals in her paintings. The many different marine life forms that populate the enchanted underworld waters of the Great Barrier Reef fascinate her, as do the antics and playfulness of the tropical birds that inhabit the rainforests that surround her home. For Hava the tropics is a place of great beauty and wonderment.

Segar PASSI

Meriam Mir Dauareb people

Mam edge

Totobem ide sis temarki

Stima kor kor

Koob

2012

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased by Cairns Regional Gallery, 2012.

Dauar

Lowtide

Turtles

Luggers

2014

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Cairns Art Gallery Collection.

Gift of the Blair family in memory of Heather Blair, 2014

Untitled (Sea creatures)

2017

synthetic polymer paint on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Commissioned by Cairns Art Gallery, 2017-18.

Segar PASSI

Meriam Mir Dauareb people

Segar Passi is a self-taught artist and important Elder from the Torres Strait Island of Mer. As a young boy he started painting using pigments made from crushed stones and brushes made from dried pandanus. In the 1960s he began using more contemporary art materials to paint the marine and bird life that are abundant on the island, as well as portraits of family members, daily life on the island, and stories based on Christian Creation stories.

Passi's style of painting has been described as naïve realism, meaning a style that is not influenced by academic or artistic conventions or interventions. As such, he is an 'innocent observer' of life forms and changing weather patterns, and he depicts them in a style that is unselfconscious, spontaneous and personal.

However, the term naïve realism fails to capture the natural ability of self-taught artists such as Passi. In his work there is a richness and depth of colour, as well as deep understanding of his subject matter that sets him apart from other so-called naïve artists. When depicting the birds or the fish of his country, each painting or drawing is executed with a careful accuracy and attention to detail that leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the exact species of his chosen subject matter.

Passi is also a knowledgeable observer of the climatic changes that dictate the rhythm and rituals of traditional island life. In this particular suite of paintings, Passi illustrates different cloud formations – the sunset clouds in Mam edge announce clear weather and optimum fishing conditions, while *Totbem id sis temark* and *Stima kor kor* show clouds that signal changes in wind conditions. The fourth work, *Koob*, captures the storm clouds that signal advancing monsoonal rains.

As a deeply cultural Elder, Passi uses his art to educate young people on Mer about clouds and predicted weather patterns, as well as the habits and habitats of the marine and other life forms that abound in the tropics. It is this aspect of intergenerational cultural knowledge exchange that is profoundly important to Segar Passi.