

CAIRNS
ART
GALLERY

7 SEP –
3 NOV 2024

ALICK TIPOTI
COLLECTION IN FOCUS

ARTWORK LABELS

Alick TIPOTI

b.1975

Kala Lagaw Ya

Kisay Girer

2014

hand-coloured vinylcut

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Alick Tipoti, 2015

Kisay Dhangal

2014

hand-coloured vinylcut

Donated through the Cairns Regional Gallery Foundation with the assistance of Robina Cosser, 2015

Kisay Mabayg

2014

hand-coloured vinylcut

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Alick Tipoti, 2015

Involving the spiritual presence of moonlight, three *Kisay* (moon) prints of 2015 highlight the aura of light cast by the maternal figure that protects *Zenadh Kes*. The knowledge of *Kisay* is handed down in traditional songs, stories and importantly, dance, with the enduring *Kisay* dance performed to the beat of the *Warup* (drum).

Yellow moonlight arching around the images relates to how *Zugubal* ancestral spirits guide hunters and fishers by understanding ecological conditions. For instance, *Kisay Dhangal* refers to the nocturnal rituals of hunting dugong. A wooden charm of a dugong hangs below the *Nath* (the hunting platform built in the shallow waters offshore). Tipoti describes the significance of the charm:

The hunter would carve the back of the charm hollow as if it was a canoe. He would then place some ancestral bones and some sea grass obtained from a dugong's mouth he had previously killed. When the light of the moon shines on the charm the hunter waiting with his Wap (harpoon) whispers a sacred chant that will lead the dugong to the Nath. When there is no moon, a different chant is whispered to acknowledge the floss-florescence created by the dugong when exhaling underwater

Alick Tipoti, 2015

Soll

2000

hand-coloured linocut

Commissioned by Cairns Regional Gallery, 2001

Alick TIPOTI

b.1975

Kala Lagaw Ya

Kuyku Garpathamai Mabaig (headhunter)

2007

linocut

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Alick Tipoti, 2012

Tipoti explains that *Kuyku Garparthamai Mabaig* means head-hunter, and that here he shows a head-hunter communicating with the spirits of his victims.

Details of these particular practices are never shared with other people due to cultural beliefs and protocols. I have also identified the weapons of the Kuyku Garpathamai Mabaig; the Gagai (bow), Thaiyak (arrow), Gagauru (bow rope), Upi (bamboo beheading knife). Famous Head-hunters were known to have several wives. In the top half of the Gagai, I have hidden three wives. When a Head-hunter departs his island with his army ... his wives await his return. Sometimes he does, sometimes he doesn't. When it is past the time he has indicated he will return, he is considered dead. On short trips his wives place a Kukuwam flower in a Kubar (coconut shell) when the Kukuwam dies, he is believed to be dead. Back in the time of the Head-hunters, attacking and fighting skills were important when initiated.

Alick Tipoti, 2012

Alick TIPOTI

b.1975

Kala Lagaw Ya

Kobupa thoerapiese

1999

linocut

Purchased by Cairns Regional Gallery, 1999

Kobupa thoerapiese means 'preparing for war' in the Kala Kawaw Ya language of the north-western islands of the Torres Strait. Clad in the traditional regalia of inter-island conflict, the central figure of a Saibai Island warrior strikes a dramatic dancing posture. A complex background design envelops the figure and evokes the spirit and meaning of a song about a legendary tame crocodile. Aka the crocodile is disguised among ritual objects and creatures.

Through this representation, Tipoti reclaims the history of his people and recounts one of many narratives about the times when warrior heroes reigned. Tipoti as a younger man looked to his elders for permission to retell legendary stories in linocut form.

Alick TIPOTI

b.1975

Kala Lagaw Ya

Adhikuyam

2008

handcoloured linocut on paper on canvas

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Alick Tipoti, 2012

Tipoti's hand-coloured linoprint *Adhikuyam* is a visual retelling of a warrior epic from the western island group of *Zenadh Kes* (Torres Strait). The chronicle concerns *Kuyam*, an expert hunter, who wears emblems endowed with magic powers that make him invincible. He interacts with the *Zugubal*, who take on human forms while they inhabit the island world but are superhuman in their strength and performances.

Adhikuyam is like an ancestral song-cycle. Over many detailed episodes, the legendary humans of this narrative derive new knowledge and power or may be magically transfigured into creatures as they traverse islands and seas. They take on the spiritual forces that guide the hunt, the prey, and warrior battles, and embody the ancient knowledge, practical know-how and spiritual wisdom of *Zenadh Kes* people.

Baywa Waaruu

(Water spout - turtle)

2015

Baywa Dhangal

(Water spout - dugong)

2015

hand-coloured vinylcut

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Alick Tipoti, 2015

The *Baywa* (waterspouts) imagined in these images are a sacred sign of connections with spiritual ancestors and appear in *Zenadh Kes* rock art. Island sorcerers of ancient times often saw *Zugubal* (spiritual ancestors) at sea in their large canoes. Asking them to help when the hunt was failing, *Zugubal* would use waterspouts to manifest dugong and turtle and carry these straight to villagers. The dugong and turtle at the top of these images were delivered from the sea by *Zugubal*.

Occasionally a waterspout will occur in its tropical marine environment. It begins as a dark circle spiralling in the water and then vaporises into a rising funnel before the process reverses. Both food and totem, dugong and turtles were delivered via these magical waterspouts, which are clearly inspirational to Tipoti today.

Alick TIPOTI

b.1975

Kala Lagaw Ya

Girelal

2011

linocut

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Editions Tremblay, 2012

Girelal shows the figures of warrior forebears moving among birds, sea life and the water currents of *Zenadh Kes*, all symbolising its cosmology and the everyday world imbued with the presence of spiritual ancestors. In a rhythmic approach recalling ancient chants and dance, Tipoti uses patterning to show the connectedness of a whole ecological system.

The designs Tipoti transfers to linocuts are extensions of those traditionally carved into wood and shell surfaces. Intricate and complex, his patterns often represent an array of ocean currents coursing through the Torres Strait, and they also provide the artist with a means of expanding the limits of linocut printmaking in scale and technique.