CAIRNS
ART
GALLERY

17 Oct 2026 –
21 Feb 2027

MARINE DREAMS

COLLECTION IN FOCUS

ARTWORK LABELS

Fred WILLIAMS
b. 1927, Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria, d. 1982

Inlet, Weipa
1977

gouache on Arches paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased with funds from the Cairns Regional Gallery Foundation, 2014

Garry SHEAD
b. 1942, Sydney, New South Wales

Kingfisher
1999

screenprint on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Gift of the Lockhart River Art Gang, 2000

Sidney NOLAN
b. 1917, Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria, d. 1992

Sea Anemone
1948

transfer drawing on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Ray Crooke, 2006

Anna EGLITIS
b. 1931, Suva, Fiji, d. 2023

B for Barramundi
2024–2025

hand-coloured linocut on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Anna Eglitis, 2006

Billy MISSI
Kala Lagaw Ya
b. 1970, Mabuiag Island, d. 2012

Dhamu Kobalal Ar Biydhai (Seahorse & Squid)
2010

hand-coloured lithograph on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Editions Tremblay, 2012

Guy WARREN
b. 1921, Goulburn, New South Wales, d. 2024

Portland Roads
1999

screenprint on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Gift of the Lockhart River Art Gang, 2000

Heather Wunjarra KOOWOOTHA
Wik-Mungkan and Yidinji/Djabugay
b. 1966, Gimuy/Cairns, Queensland

Clamshell off the east Coast Regions and tropical Islands area and the Cape York, Gulf of Carpentaria
2023

watercolour and felt pen on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Commissioned and purchased with the assistance of the Double R Arts Foundation, 2025

Arone MEEKS
Kukumidjii/Kukulanadiji
b. 1957, Sydney, New South Wales, d. 2021

Singing up country 13
2010

monoprint on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Arone Meeks, 2011

Dr Ken THAIDAY Snr
Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait), Meriam Mer (Erub)
b.1950, Erub (Darnley) Island

Jason CHRISTOPHER

Clamshell with hammerhead shark
2013

aluminium, perspex and mechanical gearing

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Commissioned and purchased Cairns Art Gallery, 2013

Dr Ken THAIDAY Snr
Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait), Meriam Mer (Erub)
b.1950, Erub (Darnley) Island

Beizam dance mask (hammerhead shark)
2001

black bamboo, plywood, nylon line, plastic, paint and feather

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Commissioned and purchased by Cairns Regional Gallery with funds from the Centenary of Federation Arts Project Queensland Grant, 2001

The *Malo-Bomai* ancestor story from Zenadth Kes, Torres Straight Islands, describes the arrival of Bomai the most sacred god of the region who could transform himself into objects and sea creatures. His nephew Malo, embodying Bomai's power appeared as a man with a shark's head.

This story inspires the *Beizam, hammerhead shark*, headdresses made by Dr Ken Thaiday Snr an Elder from Erub, Darnley Island, which are worn for customary and ceremonial dances.

Dr Thaiday Snr, who calls these creations 'dance machines', has said of these transformative objects 'When I'm dancing [wearing the headdress] I become the shark'.

In 2013, his collaboration with Dr Jason Christopher resulted in a robotic work that continues his explorations into ancestors, culture, and kin, but in this case through the radical innovation of an autonomous dance machine.

Patricia PICCININI

b. 1965, Freetown, Sierra Leone

No fear of depths

2019

silicone, fibreglass and hair

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased by Cairns Art Gallery with the assistance of the Cairns Art Gallery Foundation, 2019

Underwater footage by Tom Park

Patricia Piccinini is an artist who is recognised for her hyper-realistic works that amaze and confound, prompting responses that can range from horror, wonder, intrigue, empathy and compassion despite the inanimate nature of her sculptures.

In 2018, Cairns Art Gallery initiated a research residency in Far North Queensland for the artist, where she met with marine biologists and other scientists to explore the distinctive and abundant tropical life forms in this region. *No Fear of Depths* is the result of her research, and the artist explains that this work is about a human child who is transitioning towards adulthood.

The hybrid creature who tenderly holds her appears to be caught at an evolutionary point between the land and the sea. ‘It is a gentle scene’, Piccinini says, ‘and it reminds us that we are nurtured by the nature around us.’

Daniel BOYD

Kudjla/Gangalu

b. 1982, Gimuy/Cairns, Queensland

Untitled (NNPCBUW)

2025

Untitled (COTOBP)

2025

oil, acrylic, archival glue, screen print on canvas

Cairns Art Gallery Collection.
Gift of Daniel Boyd, 2026

Daniel Boyd's works span an array of historical references from landscape and Western-style portraiture to the traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Through his signature 'dot' painting technique, he presents visual manifestations of Indigenous collective memory and perception. Through his work he aims to bring to the fore the often overlooked and discarded history of his Indigenous ancestors.

He has said 'We have the oldest continuous culture on this earth and it's important to celebrate that'.

In these paintings he turns his attention to an examination of well recognised 'ancient' artefacts—a classical Western archetype of beauty, masculinity and domination through the depiction of Poseidon, the powerful and temperamental Greek god of the sea. These paintings are based on a marble sculpture of Poseidon from 177-150 BCE that Boyd researched during a visit to the Pergamon Museum in Berlin.

Alick TIPOTI

Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait), Kal Lagaw Ya
of the Mauiligal (mid western islands)
b. 1975, Waiben (Thursday Island)

Adhikuyam

2008

hand-coloured linocut on paper on canvas

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Alick Tipoti, 2012

Alick Tipoti belongs to a generation of Zenadth Kes, Torres Strait Island, artists who have redefined print making in the region. He conveys intricately detailed traditional motifs in highly skilled, refined prints, like this major hand-coloured linocut. Tipoti sees this process as an extension of cultural wood carving techniques used for designs on functional items and ceremonial objects.

Adhikuyam is a retelling of a warrior epic involving legendary spirits and human characters, specifically chronicling Kuyam an expert hunter who is endowed with magic powers that make him invincible. The characters traverse land, and voyage between islands, telling multi-layered stories of ocean navigation and encounters with ancestors, superhuman entities, community, enemies, and prey.

Ryan PRESLEY

Marri Ngarr

b. 1987, Mparntwe/Alice Springs, Northern Territory

Bedburner

2015

custom-printed linen

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Commissioned and purchased, 2015

Ryan Presley's practice reckons with themes of power and dominion—in particular, how religion and economic control served colonialism and empire building over time, and ongoing representation of its customs and edifices in contemporary life.

Bedburner reflects these concerns and references Christian iconographic styles along with other cultural motifs. The extensive, all-over patterning of waves creates a cosmic ocean of dreamlike intensity, which is in contrast with the depiction of dramatic incidents involving shark attacks, lifeboats, and what look like tasers.

Presley's work speaks to how the ocean, colonisation, and migration have a deep entanglement, and the role of visual culture in shaping these narratives.

Brian ROBINSON

Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait)
b. 1973, Waiben (Thursday Island)

Tagai - Guardian of the heavens

2007

linocut on paper

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Gift of Robina Cosser, 2007

Brian Robinson is a highly respected Cairns-based artist who creates work inspired by his Zenadth Kes, Torres Strait Island, heritage and the tropical marine environment surrounding Waiben, Thursday Island. He often incorporates these motifs and designs along with references to pop culture movies and comics.

*Tagai – Guardian of the heaven*s depicts Tagai, a great fisherman and spirit being who created the world. He is represented by a star constellation in the southern sky, known in Western astronomy as Pleiades and Orion. Here, he is depicted as a figure standing in a canoe with outstretched arms. In his left hand, the Southern Cross (Crux), he holds a fishing spear, and in his right (Corvus) a piece of the tropical plant red fruit.

Tagai's story focuses on the stars, central to navigation, identifying Torres Strait Islanders as sea people who share a common way of life.

Linda JACKSON

b. 1950, Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria

Barrier reef textile length (designed for Club Tropical Resort Port Douglas)

2000

silkscreen printed on cotton

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Purchased 2019

Linda Jackson has been a pioneering figure in Australian fashion design since the early 1970s taking inspiration from native flora and fauna, along with collaborations with other artists and artisans. She is renowned for her work with Jenny Kee, another much-loved and influential artist and designer, and together they established the legendary Flamingo Park shop in Sydney.

Jackson lived in Far North Queensland for a period in the 1990s and worked on a number of important design commissions, including a series of textile furnishings for the Club Tropical resort in Port Douglas. Her hand-printed Barrier Reef fabric from this series revels in her distinctive, vibrant, bold, and joyful imagery bringing her love of the underwater world into our terrestrial sphere.

Janet FIELDHOUSE

Kala Lagaw Ya / Meriam Mir
b. 1971

Turtle Charm

2023

raku trachyte, rafia, wire and clay

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Commissioned and purchased, 2024

Janet Fieldhouse has said :

> My work is an expression of my Torres Strait Islander heritage: the material culture, the rituals of social and religious life, and artefacts which are created to fulfil the functional and spiritual needs of the peoples of the Torres Strait.

Her hand-built forms acknowledge traditions of navigation, living off the sea and the land, and women's traditional practices such as scarification and weaving body adornments for ceremony.

Turtle Charm, with its abstracted ceramic figure and woven neckpiece, functions as both a contemporary sculpture and a talisman to attract beneficial forces. Marine turtles play a significant ecological role in Janet's Meriam Mir homelands, contributing to food ecosystems and featuring prominently within knowledge and kinship systems and customary law.

Ben TRUPPERBAUMER

b. 1948, Bielefeld, Germany

Muricidae

1997

bronze

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Commissioned and purchased, 2010

Originally from West Germany, Ben Trupperbaumer has lived in the Far North Queensland region for decades, where he has consistently created works that reflect his observations of this tropical land and sea environment.

His sculpture *Muricidae* marvels at the geometry of nature, as seen in this work where the expansive bronze shell-like form swirls outwards, gently balancing on its whorls.

'Muricidae', more commonly known as murex or rock snails, are predatory sea snails and marine gastropod molluscs. Ben skilfully conveys the alluring appearance of seashells and the wonder of non-human architectures and structures that house life in the sea. However, *Muricidae* also alludes to the reality of the dangers that also lie within these realms.

Alair PAMBEGAN

Wik-Mungkan
b. 1966, Aurukun, Queensland

Winchanam Clan Body Design
2020

Bonefish Man & Dancing Spirit Man - Winchanam Ceremonial Dance
2020

ochre and acrylic binders on linen

Cairns Art Gallery Collection. Commissioned and purchased with the assistance of the Cairns Art Gallery Foundation, 2021

Body painting is an ancient tradition of deep spiritual significance to Australia's First Peoples. Specific designs and motifs are used to identify family and language groups, social position, totems and tracts of land. Strict guidelines and restrictions apply to body painting designs, which must be respectfully followed.

Alair Pambegan's paintings explore the use of body painting and totems in the Winchanam initiation ritual of the Wik-Mungkan people. He has custodial responsibilities of Walkaln-aw (Bonefish Story Place), a significant ancestral narrative and story place along the Watson and Archer Rivers that run into the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The cultural symbol and clan totem of the bonefish is tied to the tidal rhythms and seasonal rains of the region. In these paintings Pambegan creates layered meanings across the life-giving spheres of Sea Country, ceremony, community and culture.