

Artist Bio:

currently resides in Cairns.

primarily a painter but believes an artist needs to be versatile, working in printmaking, creating award-winning children's books and even working with lasers, as well as being a trained teacher.

Arone Meeks was born in Sydney in 1957 but grew up in Cairns before returning to Sydney to attend art school. Meeks has been proactive as a founding artist with the Boomalli Aboriginal artists collective in Sydney and initiating the annual NAIDOC exhibition at the Tanks Art Centre in Cairns. These activities create dialogue between communities and showcase what indigenous artists have to give. He has been awarded significant fellowships including the first Indigenous Australian residency at Cite des Arts in Paris.

Arone grew up with his initiated grandfather and spent time with one of the North's most celebrated indigenous artists Thancoupie, who, he describes as 'Athoy' - spiritual mother. He has lived with the Mornington Island community, finding strength in belonging to its social foundation. Arone produces paintings, sculpture and prints that express a passion for country, spirituality, sexuality and politics. His path is one that redefines his connections through art mediums. The spiritual is actualized through art and his response is one of 'working it through' an intuitive process. Arone is able to express a unique spiritual response to country that has a harmony in connecting disparate worlds. His subjects are sourced in nature and represent a cultural responsibility with an expression of contemporary art.

Arone's indigenous links are with the Kokomidiji of Cape York, around Laura, the site of renowned rock art galleries filled with graceful drawings of quinkans. Laura is known as a place of Aboriginal magic and sorcery; it is also the location palpable effect on Arone. He feels a physical reaction to sacred country that helps forge relationships with kinship, a sense of self and 'renewing the dreaming'. Arone's art is not governed by the same barriers and protocols that govern traditional Aboriginal art but is placed in the context of the contemporary urban.

Arone's practice is based intuitively on the shifting definition of cultural identity. It is one that has a connection to dreams and experiences that have touched his soul. Sexuality has an influence and is conceptualized as part of the human matrix. As an urban aboriginal that inhabits a world in proximity to traditional tribal lands and communities, he describes his practice by saying, "I am hunting for lost pieces of myself." It is a process where imagination comes from within and possibly an inexhaustible source for his art. For Arone the process of painting is great therapy for defining self and existence. He finds humanity in the gesture of the mark and this is evident in much of his work. His art objects are like his children, sent off into the world, and like children the finished objects take time to reveal their full consequences to him.

Russell Milledge February 2006

Artist Bio: Arone Meeks, born 1957, is a Kuku Midigi man, currently residing in Cairns. Meeks grew up in Yarrabah and El Arish, FNQ, although his country is the area around Laura, Cape York. He completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the City Art Institute in Sydney in 1984 and has forged an impressive national and international career since. A foundation member of Boomalli Aboriginal Artist cooperative in Sydney, which celebrated their 30th year of operation, last year. He was awarded the Cite des Arts Studio in Paris, Completing residencies in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Brazil, Boston, Sante Fe, India, Thailand, NZ, Cook Islands, NPA To name a few. Meeks practice includes painting, sculpture, drawing and public art commissions as well as linoprints, etchings and monoprints and Childrens books including Enora and the Black Crane, which was awarded The UNICEF Children's book of the year to him by Audrey Hepburn, and was the first contemporary Aboriginal Artist to be commission by Australia Post to design a stamp in 1988, for the Bicentennial. His work appears in many national and international collections, both public and private.

[Review: Arone Meeks: Beyond the Blue: Unbroken at Megalo](#)

- Sasha Grishin

Arone Meeks: Beyond the Blue: Unbroken at Megalo

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Arone Meeks was born in Sydney in 1957, as a lovechild of Valerie Meeks, a KuKu Miidiji woman from Laura in Far North Queensland and a Spanish man travelling with a circus. On his birth certificate, he was registered as Raymond Power, but as he never knew his father and lost his mother by the time he was seven, he grew up as Raymond Meeks and was cared for by an abusive uncle in Cairns. Encouraged by a school teacher, Christine Wood, at the Tully State High School, to pursue his natural ability in art, he got a folio of work together and, when he was about 15, he was accepted into the Queensland University of Technology art school in Brisbane. After about a year he moved down to Sydney, where he worked at various jobs in the kitchen and as a silver service waiter, while studying at art schools, especially the Alexander Mackie. For Meeks, a thumbnail biography is almost mandatory, as so much of his work is about identity – who he is, where he comes from, his sexuality and the vast rich culture of his country.

It was in Canberra in the early 1980s that Meeks, through Banduk Marika, was introduced to printmaking and he commenced his ongoing association with the wonderful master printer Theo Tremblay, who at that time was working at the Canberra Art School and at Studio One. Meeks describes printmaking as a friendly, democratic medium that you can share around and in this way spread your story. The famous ceramicist, Thancoupie, spiritually adopted him and became his mentor. She gave him the tribal name Arone (Black Crane) during his initiation in 1988 in his home country of Laura. Through this he gained permission to depict the culture and legends of the peoples of Cape York. The exhibition at Megalo brings together prints by Meeks from several series – the startling colourful monoprints and the stunning, huge *Spirit Ark* linocut, all printed with Tremblay in Cairns, as well as some of the very recent etchings and lithographs that he has completed during his six-week fellowship at Megalo in Canberra. Although Meeks' imagery is figurative, it is whimsical and emblematic rather than strictly literal.

Although Meeks is proud of his ancestry and cultural heritage, his art is not locked into prescribed traditional imagery and plays with the eternal forces, such as serpent dreaming, the male and female creation and destruction, light and darkness and draws on a wide range of sources, including the irrepressible Keith Haring.

Arone Meeks creates works of art that speak of cross-cultural interaction, relationships, gender, traditional and modern spirituality and his environment. Working across painting, sculpture and printmaking from his home studio in Cairns, he frequently undertakes teaching and education projects, community art projects, private and public art commissions and artistic residencies. Meeks has both traditional and formal education, having been taught cultural arts by his grandfather and other relatives before undertaking study at the City Art Institute in Sydney. Meeks is a founding member of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artist's Co-operative, a group of significant artists that came together in 1987 to challenge preconceptions around urban-based Aboriginal Artists. (Boomalli continues to promote and support Aboriginal Artists in New South Wales.) In 1989 Meeks received an Australia Council fellowship to study in Paris and went on to exhibit his art throughout Europe, North and South America. He returned to Queensland to study with various tribal Elders, including those of the Lardil people of Mornington Island. His artworks fuse his education and life experiences. He employs traditional images and themes that often engage with issues surrounding land rights and human rights.