

CAG COLLECTION ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Artist Name :
BRIAN ROBINSON

Language/Born:
Maluyligal/Wuthathi/Dayak peoples
Born 1973, **Thursday Island**, Queensland



Artist Bio:

Robinson is a multi-skilled contemporary artist, whose practice includes painting, printmaking, sculpture and design. The graphic style in his practice combines his Torres Strait Islander heritage with a strong passion for experimentation, both in theoretical approach and medium, as well as crossing the boundaries between reality and fantasy. The results combine styles as diverse as graffiti art through to intricate relief carvings and construction sculpture echoing images of Torres Strait cultural motifs, objects and activity.

Media areas: printmaking, sculpture, painting, design

Contexts: Cultural, Personal, Contemporary.

CAG Collection Links:



The sea gods have awoken 1998
plywood, woven mat, dowel, felt tip pen, synthetic polymer paint on wood
100.0 x 200.0 x 21.0 cm



Tagai - Guardian of the heavens 2007
linocut, printed in black ink from one block
59.0 x 200.0cm



and they flew from the airfield at Ngurupai 2007
linocut
38.3 x 55.5 cm



Channel Marker, Waiben. 2008
plywood, MDF board, formex plastic, dowel, paint & fabric
167.0 x 73.7 x 20.5 cm



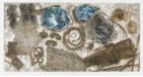
... the blooms continue to flourish 2015
custom-printed linen
48.9 x 13.9 cm



Usal - the seven sisters that play amongst the stars 2016
linocut printed on paper and mounted to board, pine dowel, rattan, shells, raffia, twine, feathers, plastic beads, plastic skull
100.0 X 230.0 X 10.0 cm



Land Sea Sky - charting our place in the universe 2016
linocut mounted on board
99.2 x 193.7 x cm



A curious bunch of bits and bobs - Oceanic artefacts at the Australian Museum 2016
etching
49.2 x 98.7 cm (unframed)



Pada Kuyk: Power beyond the grave 2019
pallid plastic, enamel spray paint, polyvinyl chloride
85 x 85 x 85cm

Current Body of Work: (April 2020)

Arcānus curio series

The *Arcānus curio* series expresses the importance of indigenous customs and culture for the traditional land custodians of the Pacific Islands. Ritual objects are the cornerstone of practiced rites and they conjure up images of the exotic, the spiritual and the fabulous in the Western imagination. Their use in ceremony permits spirits and ancestors to be contacted and made active in this world.



Work in progress from the *Arcanus curio* series for Ritual
The charm of the biro-biro (Torres Strait): Arcānus curio series
2020

coloured pencil on rag paper
56 x 76 cm

CAIRNS ART GALLERY ON-LINE LINKS

[Artist Studio Video](#)

Brian discusses his current body of work from his studio at home in Cairns— The *Arcānus curio* series

Brian Robinson [Pacific Crosscurrents](#) Catalogue, Cairns Regional Gallery 2016

Cairns Art Gallery Resources for Students and Teachers

School resources developed around QCCA Visual Art 2019 v1.1

Four key unit concepts – *Art as lens*, *Art as code*, *Art as knowledge* and *Art as alternate* – and the relevant focuses, contexts and media areas that frame each unit.

QCAA Syllabus Links

Unit 1 - Art as Lens

Brian Robinson's art practice is grounded in Torres Strait mythology mixed with an infusion of family stories, his personal history and a sense of humour and play.

View the artwork *As the rains fell and the seas rose* 2011, linocut printed in black ink from one block, 62.0 x 112.5cm.

- In this story instead of Noah gathering all the animals to join him on the ark, the Torres Strait warriors are gathering figures of contemporary and popular culture. Identify as many of these figures as you can.
- Research the history of one of the figures, Astro Boy and in particular his power and skills tempered with the human emotion of empathy. Astro Boy was set in a futuristic view of the world from a 1950's viewpoint. Consider what current social issues or concerns Astro Boy might be affected and challenged by.
- Create your own avatar with special powers and skills and research back through your own family history/ancestry to create a profile of five other characters based on who you know or what you can discover about your personal family history and stories.

Art as Code

View the large linoprint [Land Sea Sky](#) – *charting our place in the universe* 2016, linocut mounted on board, 99.2 x 193.7 x cm. In this work Robinson shares the place where land, sea and stars meet, and the Torres Strait Islander people and ancestors reside. On further investigation other discernible non-traditional figurative and non-figurative motifs and icons can be discovered amongst the patterns and shapes.

- Sketch and name as many identifiable figures and symbols as you can find.
- Classify them into what you think are traditional and non-traditional groups.
- Research each element you have identified and write a couple of sentences about each one.

Art as Knowledge

WATCH – Brian Robinson - [Artist studio video](#)

In these new *Arcanus curio* series Brian Robinson is responding to a series of Ritual objects from a Museum collection.

- Consider how the original meaning or intention of the object is being challenged or altered by the artist?
- How might these works reflect the influences of his life and experiences?
- How does the choice of material and technique influence the interpretation of these works?
- How has historical or contemporary events contributed to the intended meaning of these the artworks?

Art as Alternate

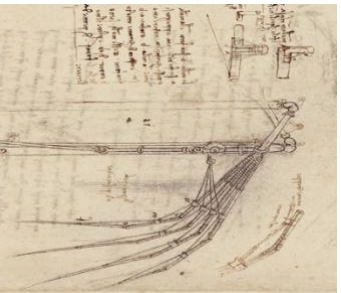
View the exhibition *Brian Robinson Pacific Crosscurrents* Catalogue

Cairns Regional Gallery in 2016. This exhibition surveys the broader Pacific influences in the contemporary art of Brian Robinson. It examines the artist's biographical Pacific connections, his art practice of responding to museum collections of Pacific cultural material, the signs and symbols in these artworks that express Pacific crosscurrents.

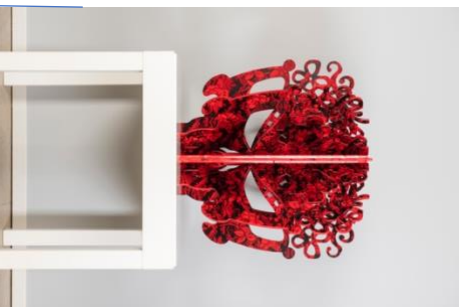
- Look at divergent pathways in Brian's practice within this body of work? How has he moved between the two dimensional plane and into three dimensional forms?
- Identify some of the techniques and processes he has used in presenting these works and objects and consider how they might affect the viewing and understanding from an audience perspective.
- Research and create your own reverse chronology case study to investigate another key contemporary artist that work across a variety of media techniques and processes.

REVERSE CHRONOLOGY

Exploring influences
on the practice of
BRIAN ROBINSON



Leonardo Da Vinci sketched many ideas of designs relating to human and avian flight which then resulted in several different designs for flying machines. Brian was inspired by Davinci and other Renaissance masters like Raphael and Michelangelo who were more than just painters.



Brian Robinson, *Power beyond the grave* 2019, pallight plastic, enamel spray paint, polyvinyl chloride



Brian Robinson, *A curious bunch of bits and bobs - Oceanic artefacts at the Australian Museum* 2016, etching



Pablo Picasso was inspired by African and Oceanic artefacts.



Comic book hero The Phantom created by Lee Falk



Pablo Picasso
Guernica 1937, oil on canvas
Robinson was inspired by his Cubist period

Additional Resources and Links:

[Art Sets. Art of the Torres Strait Islands](#)

An introduction to the people, culture and history

AGNSW

[Learning – Brian Robinson](#) *Up in the Heavens the gods contemplate their next move...* 2011.

QAGOMA

[Brian introduces Up in the Heavens](#) Artist interview with Brian Robinson.

QAGOMA

[Brian discusses his Sculptural installation practice](#) in *Defying Empire* exhibition

NGA

[Education resource](#) *Defying Empire*

NGA

[Artist Talk video](#) – Brian Robinson Saltwater Country 2016

Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute

[Brian interviewed after winning Hazelhurst Art on Paper](#) *Land Sea Sky – Charting our place in the universe* 2017

ABC Television

[Profile Brian Robinson](#)

Mossenson Galleries

[INSTALLATION TIMELAPSE VIDEO](#) of his sculpture installation for the **Océanographique Museum of Monaco**.

[RECENT RESIDENCY 2020](#) - Brian Robinson visited the Kluge-Ruhe Collection as a resident artist from February 8 – March 8, 2020. He worked with UVA students in the printmaking and sculpture studios at UVA, and gave a number of public talks.

Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia