



CONNECTIONS:
The Artist/Master Printer
Basil Hall, Ron McBurnie, Michael Kempson

Curated by Akky van Ogtrop
18 December 2022 to 5 February 2023
Cowra Regional Art Gallery

Introduction

On printmaking: *The passion I feel for the way printers can wipe a plate and use ink in the sensitive way to illuminate what I've drawn is a real privilege. I learned everything I know about printing from printers, ...I am so aware of how printers realize my images; I've learned from every printer I've worked with.* ('A Printmakers Document' by Jim Dine p. 63, Steidl, 2013)

There are numerous collaborative print studios around the world and Australia, which have become important sites for artistic exchange and experimentation with print. They play a critical role in supporting and stimulating the creative process and potentialities of printmaking by allowing for dynamic dialogue and exchange between artist and master printer.

The exhibition *Connection, Artist/Master Printer*, introduces the individual and collaborative practice of Basil Hall, artist and founder Basil Hall Editions, Michael Kempson, artist and founder Cicada Press and Ron McBurnie artist and publisher Monsoon Publishing. I have worked with them for many years and have grown to respect them for the sheer talent of their work and the causes that drive them to produce work as artist printmakers and master printers.

My selection of works from their personal archives includes artists they worked with over many years, telling a story of facilitating and showing that the collaboration between an artist and master printer can create some of the most exciting, innovative and unconventional ideas to the medium, not only breaking down barriers between various media and raising the profile of prints in contemporary art but also expanding the boundaries of printmaking.

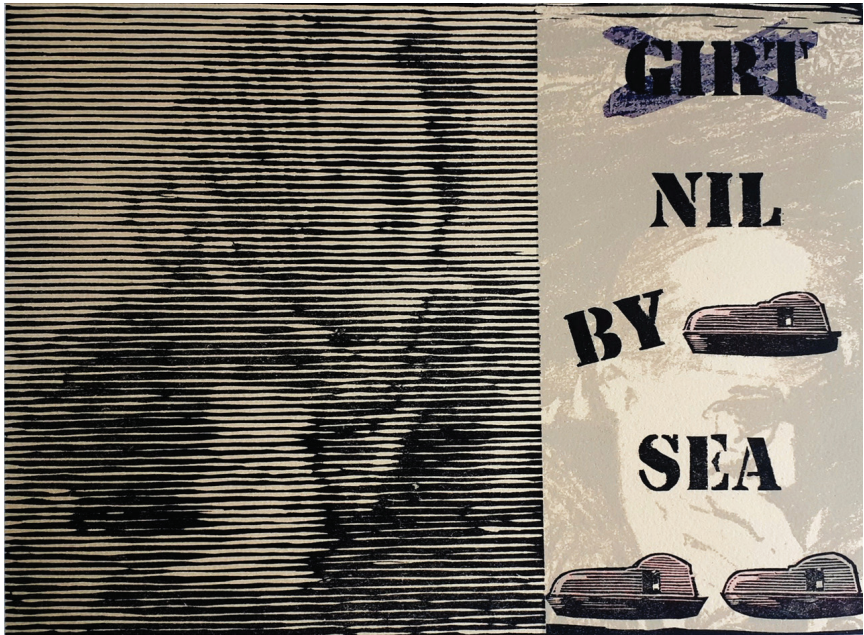
Recognising that the works of their own art practice, is a natural extension of their existing practices, they have no problem in reconciling the very nature of the creative process. Working with various mediums, drawing, watercolour and print, they engage and combine the two different artistic conversations and see their own work as quite separate from the work they create with other artists.

Their dedication and innovative approach to printmaking, Basil, Ron and Michael had a profound impact on Australian printmaking.

Akky van Ogtrop

Curator

Basil Hall



Nil By Sea

2017. Woodblock & silkscreen 22 x 30cm

Courtesy the artist

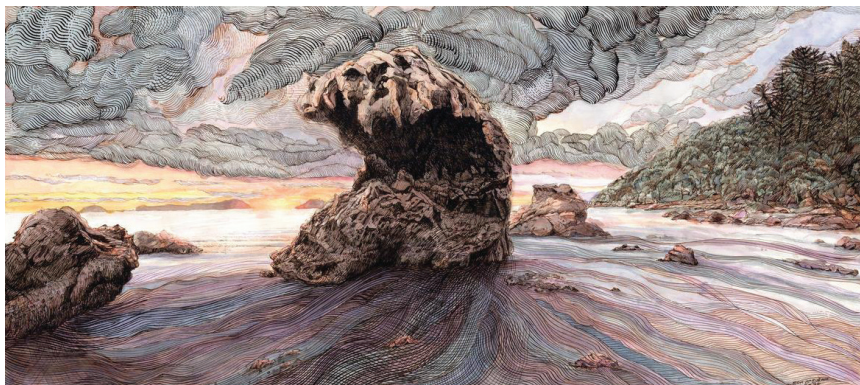
There's a curious symmetry to my career in the arts. It started with collecting some Jörg Schmeisser prints in the 1970s. I wanted to learn how to etch, but it wasn't until ten years later that I was able to go to art school and study under this German master. As a senior student, and for many years afterwards, I was employed as an assistant printer by Jörg, playing yellow or red hands to his blue. I learned a lot about the trade at the Canberra School of Art and in his studio in Turner, as he patiently watched me trying to keep up. Many years later, in 2010, I was able to

invite Jörg to join Fiona Hall, John Wolseley and Judy Watson on Nomad Art's Djalkiri Blue Mud Bay expedition to Yilpara in Arnhem Land. Jörg was already ill and this was his last trip. Some of the prints from the project are in this show. Not Jörg's. I never collaborated with him; I just helped him edition. My life as an artist printer is, as it happens, very clearly illustrated in Points of Connection II. Quite by chance, Akky has selected examples of my own work from 1985 1990 and from 2017 onwards. The pieces I have collaborated on, and which caught the curator's eye, were some I have made with artists, indigenous and non indigenous, from all over Australia in the intervening years of 1990 2017.

The earliest piece is a silkscreen I was commissioned to do whilst still a student, based on one of Klaus Moje's beautiful slumped glass pieces. Another German master craftsman! What faith he showed in a fledgling printmaker. I'm still not sure I could make these today. My recent prints comprise political screenprints and woodcuts, some of which are showing in Cowra, and collagraphs I am making of our country's most reliable historians: the trees.

Basil Hall, October 2022

Ron McBurnie



Giant Rock Cape Hillsborough

2020. Ink and watercolour on paper, 93.5 cm x 123cm

Collection Artspace Mackay

I have always enjoyed juggling the roles of Artist, Art Educator and Printer. Between 1980 and 2013 I lectured in the Visual Arts at James Cook University (JCU) in Townsville. During this time I was also involved in many residencies (including stays in Alayrac, France) and lecturing at ANU Canberra, USQ Toowoomba, NAS Sydney, Vanderbilt University Nashville and Carleton College in Minnesota. During this time I was making work for exhibitions whilst teaching and engaging in collaborative projects with other artists. Throughout this period I collected prints by ancient and contemporary artists whose work had a deep and lasting effect on me.

My involvement in making and editioning prints with other artists arose from my residencies and the opportunity to observe different techniques and approaches to the print process. After Melbourne printmaker Tate Adams and I met in Townsville and re-established the Lyre Bird Press at

JCU we began to design and make artists books with both established and emerging Australian Artists. This led me by necessity to print their work for the proposed artists book publications. I was involved in printing and overseeing the printing and binding of a variety of different publications using many different media and styles.

After the Lyrebird Press ceased publishing at JCU, I launched Monsoon Publishing from my home studio where I worked collaboratively with a variety of artists whose work I loved and whose company I enjoyed, publishing their prints. These artists included Euan Macleod, June Tupicoff, Vincent Bray, Ann Thomson, Gail Mabo, Geoff Dixon, Claudine Marzik and Isabel & Alfredo Aquilizan.

Today, I continue to create work alone as well as with others. Both modes of working are just as exciting and one feeds into the other. I enjoy the quietness and meditative quality of working alone but also the energy of the collaborative process and the fun and camaraderie that exists each time I get together with another artist to make a new print.

Ron McBurnie, November 2022

Michael Kempson



Against the Tide

2019. Etching and aquatint, image size 50 x 70.5cm

Courtesy of the artist and Flinders Street Gallery, Sydney

I first encountered prints at art school in the early 80s. Printmaking comprises a suite of mediums synonymous with the mass circulation of images and ideas, combining centuries of cutting edge technological developments, to facilitate connection between people.

The deliberate pace of drawing onto and then finessing an etching plate is the ideal vehicle for someone with a slow, precise working methodology. The combination of craft involved in engineering the capture and transfer

of ink with the coming together of metal, stone or wood, pigmented fluid and paper to realise an image, again and again, under pressure, has kept me intrigued for forty years.

I usually develop and then expand upon ideas in a thematically linked series, with examples that include: *Child's Play* (2016/17) etchings using toy animals that represent nation states in an increasingly tense geopolitical environment; *Wanderings* (2000) inspired by Hogarth and using Indian miniature pictorial conventions, with motifs connecting personal experience and art history references; and *Prime Ministers of Australia* (1999/2001) screenprints that chronicle the social climate and political shortcomings of some of Australia's Prime Ministers in images and pattern, with a subtle use of satire.

Through Cicada Press I also like teaching and facilitating the production of prints for others. The collaborative process of working with many experienced artists provide students with a framework for life long learning by offering an insight into how, through print practice, they can participate in the transformation of their world.

Since 2001, working with 240 artists has resulted in 56 exhibitions curated here and in diverse countries around the world. This has provided the opportunity to tell many of the stories found in Australian printmaking at a multitude of forums, culminating in an invitation to deliver the keynote address at the internationally significant IMPACT10 conference in Santander, Spain in 2018.

Michael Kempson, October 2022

Acknowledgements

Cowra Regional Art Gallery is pleased to present this exciting exhibition featuring the works of master printmakers Basil Hall, Ron McBurnie and Michael Kempson including collaborative pieces produced with 28 leading contemporary Australian artists. This includes Euan Macleod, Anne Thomson, George Baldessin, Elisabeth Cummings, Vernon Ah Kee, Chris O'Doherty, Fiona Hall, Martha McDonald Napaltjarri, Doris Bush Nungarrayi, Guy Warren. Helen Geier, Gloria Petyarra, Judy Watson and Jorg Schmeisser.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank curator Akky van Ogtrop for her passion and insightful support and assistance which has made this exhibition project possible.

Thank you to the Cowra Shire Council for its ongoing support of the Gallery and the generous support of the Gallery Advisory Committee and the Gallery volunteers.

Brian Langer
Gallery Director

The Cowra Regional Art Gallery respectfully acknowledges the Wiradjuri People, the traditional custodians of the land where the Gallery is situated.

Published by the Cowra Regional Art Gallery on the occasion of the exhibition:
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Cowra Regional Art Gallery is a cultural facility of Cowra Shire Council
ABN 26 739 454 579
ISBN 978 0 6453166 2 9

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Cover image: Judy Watson, *names of natives* 2010. Etching from three plates:

Overlay – Robert Brown's diary from Matthew Flinders' expedition to Blue Mud Bay

Inks – sanguine, green black and black

Plate – 49.5 x 37.5 cm, Sheet 64.5 x 53.5cm

Edition of 40 on Hahnemuhle paper

Courtesy Judy Watson and grahame galleries + editions



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