

# The Gold Award

2022



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**Richard Bell**

Kamilaroi, Kooma,  
Jiman, Gurang  
Gurang

b. 1953 Charleville, QLD  
lives Brisbane, QLD

***Untitled* 2018**

acrylic and sand on canvas, 150 x 150 cm

Winner of the Gold Award 2018. Gift of the Moya Gold Trust through the Rockhampton Art Gallery Trust with additional funds provided by the Rockhampton Art Gallery Acquisition Fund

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

# Foreword

It has been a little longer than planned, but it is a pleasure to present the 2022 iteration of the Gold Award.

Twelve years ago the gallery received a substantial bequest from the estate of Moya Gold (1928 - 2000) for the acquisition of Australian paintings. The Gold Award honours the memory of Moya Gold, philanthropist and educator who understood the joys and opportunities that the arts and education can bring, and has allowed the acquisition of some cornerstone pieces of our collection.

Designed as a biennial by-invitation award specifically targeting contemporary Australian art, the most outstanding work or works by an artist will be awarded a cash prize of \$50,000 and be acquired by Rockhampton Museum of Art. The Gold Award is a joint initiative of Rockhampton Museum of Art, its Philanthropy Board, and Rockhampton Regional Council. The award remains the richest art prize in Queensland, and has allowed the collection to grow, securing the work of red-hot up-and-comers, as well as established masters that may otherwise be out of reach. The only stipulations: the artist must be an Australian resident, and entries are limited to painting media (that is: pigment on support). Artists are invited by the Director; in this case, we have the unique situation of six artist being invited by

my predecessor, Bianca Acimovic, and two by myself. I am certain you will agree that this has given us perhaps the most diverse and surprising group of Gold artists yet, and surely a challenge for our judge for 2022.

The Gold Award 2022 exhibition features Robert Andrew, Gordon Hookey, Euan Macleod, Nonggirrŋa Marawili, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, Wendy Sharpe, Ian Smith & Guan Wei.

The Gold Award 2022 will be judged by the Director of Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Mr Chris Saines CNZM.

On behalf of the Rockhampton Museum of Art, I would like to thank the artists for their stunning works, the judge, for his expertise and always-welcome optimism, and to the Gold Patrons for ensuring that this award will continue to flourish for years to come.

Jonathan McBurnie  
*Director*  
Rockhampton Museum of Art



Philanthropy has long been at the heart of the collecting ambitions for Rockhampton Museum of Art (formerly Rockhampton Art Gallery). The benchmark was set in 1931 with the initial donation by local resident Edward Cureton Tomkins with *Portrait of Dr Francis Robert Tomkins*, dated 1785-1789 by English portrait painter, Lemuel Francis Abbott. This generous display of faith in a public collection helps to define civic identity, and it is a selfless philosophy that still finds carriage today through *The Gold Award*.

This is a biennial contemporary painting prize that honours the memory of Rockhampton resident, Moya Gold. In 2010, she bequeathed an extraordinary \$600,000 to the Gallery Trust, who initiated a painting prize in Moya's honour. Astute in conception, this prize continues the Gallery's commitment to acquiring the best of contemporary Australian painting, a nod to the legacy of the collecting ambitions of former Mayor of Rex Pilbeam during the 1970s. The Award commenced in 2012, and boasts a proud roll call of innovative Australian painters, who pushed the boundaries of the medium to present

conceptually rigorous new work. Every two years, artists are invited to participate in the Award with a selection of paintings, thus presenting to a fulsome representation of their practice with work that has not been exhibited elsewhere.

The inaugural winner of the Award was Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori with *Dibirdibi country* 2011. This stunning painting has since toured to Brisbane and Melbourne in Queensland Art Gallery's acclaimed Gabori retrospective, *Dulka Warngiid – Land Of All*. Imants Tillers won in 2014 with *Epiphany*, a homage to reclusive modernist Ian Fairweather, and in 2016, Melbourne painter Jon Cattapan won with *Raft City No. 4 (surveillance version)*, a haunting exploration of the detritus of life in a digital age. The 2018 Award went to Richard Bell for *Untitled*, a savvy commentary on popular western art and the commodification of Indigenous art. There was no Award in 2020, as Rockhampton Art Gallery was closed in preparation for relocating to the new Rockhampton Museum of Art.

# Introduction

In each iteration of *The Gold Award*, Rockhampton's art loving community, supported by Rockhampton Regional Council, have banded together to acquire works that were on exhibition, but did not win. Perhaps it is a strange sort of compliment not to win an Award, but still have your work find so much favour with the public that people willingly chip in to buy it. Such is the fervour of support for the now Rockhampton Museum of Art's collection that the generosity and benefaction which Moya Gold instilled has continued. Several artists too, donated one of their paintings through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, an act that demonstrates verve and commitment to a regional city's collection.

2022 marks the first time *The Gold Award* has been exhibited in Rockhampton's new Museum of Art. Coinciding with the opening of the new building on historic Quay Street, this contemporary painting award is a defining exhibition for Rockhampton in an era of growth, change and innovation. Congratulations to the finalist artists.

The daunting task of judging the Award rests with Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Director, Chris Saines CNZM, who has generously provided his support to the Museum.

*The Gold Award* is a touchstone of contemporary painting in Australia, and marks Rockhampton as a city with the fortitude to continue investing in the arts in a statement of civic identity and cultural value.

Diana Warnes



**Robert Andrew**  
Yawuru

b. 1965 Perth, WA  
lives Brisbane, QLD

***Residues: buru, nagala, ngan-ga II*** 2021

ochres, oxides and chalk on aluminium composite board, 140 x 760 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Fox Galleries, Melbourne

Photo: Installation view, The Gold Award 2022, Tom Degotardi (FMSTUDIOS)



# Robert Andrew

Born in Perth, Robert Andrew is a descendant of the Yawuru people of the Broome area in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia. Andrew's work "often combines programmable machinery with earth pigments, ochres, rocks and soil to mine historical, cultural and personal events that have been buried and distanced by the dominant paradigms of western culture."<sup>1</sup>

Andrew's work *Residues: buru, nagala, ngan-ga II* 2021 focusses on the notion of process. The six panels have been formed by the intentional erosion of water through layers of white chalk into ochres and oxides. "This process uses a custom-built painting armature to print and obscure documents pertaining to his family's treatment—uncovering and reclaiming these histories."<sup>2</sup> The result of both the deterioration as well as gradual build-up of minerals through chemical reactions brings forth further new layers of stories informed by the merging of these minerals. The flowing and shifting between the red, white and black builds "new typographies reminiscent of the shifting landscapes and moving waters of Yawuru Country"<sup>3</sup>.

Andrew's work is held in the collections of National Gallery of Victoria, Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), St Andrew's Hospital Collection, and Gadens Lawyers Brisbane.

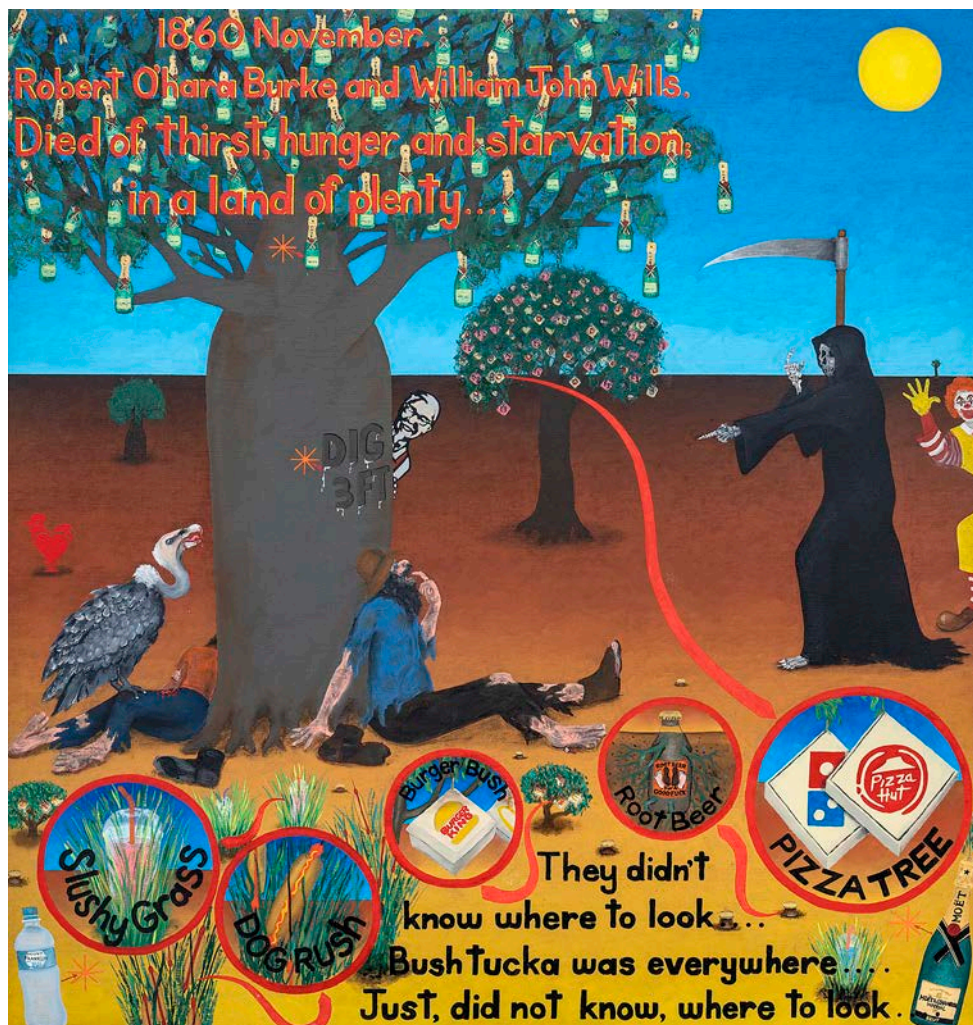
Tessa McIntosh

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1 Robert Andrew, 'Artist statement', Rebecca Fox Galleries

2 Robert Andrew, 'Artist statement', Milani Gallery, Brisbane

3 Ibid.



**Gordon Hookey**  
Waanyi

b. 1961 Cloncurry, QLD  
lives Brisbane, QLD

**Burke and Wills** 2021

oil and canvas on Caravaggio linen, 187 x 177 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane  
Photo: Carl Warner

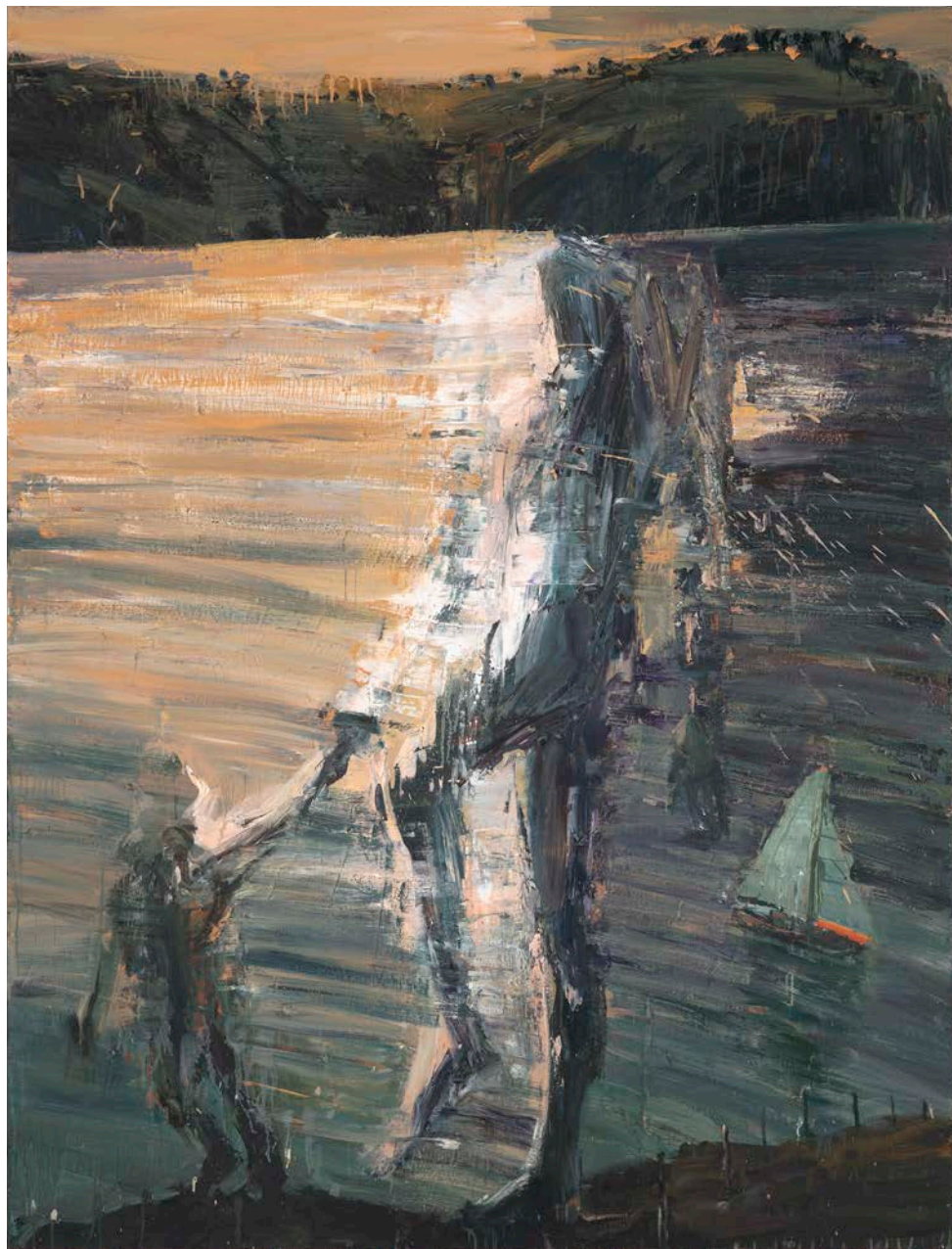
# Gordon Hookey

Using his own experiences, Gordon Hookey is known for his storytelling of Australian history from a First Nations perspective, undercut with a wry humour and subversive twist on pop iconography. Hookey uses visual metaphors to convey his messages on the harsh realities many First Nations Australians face. By combining these metaphors with bold colours and text, as well as incorporating Aboriginal wildlife as central characters, he positions Blak Australians at the forefront, important discussions are had with honesty, and oppressive systems are held accountable.

In *Bushtucka* 2021, Hookey satirizes the story of explorers Burke and Wills, and shifts the narrative from a romanticised tragedy, to a story about the importance of Indigenous knowledge. He achieves this by utilizing the modern iconography of fast food brands in place of bush tucker, with accompanying text reading: *“1860 November. Robert O’Hara Burke and William John Wills. Died of thirst, hunger and starvation; in a land of plenty... They didn’t know where to look...”*

The chosen use of brands further translates bush tucker to the viewer as something that is as accessible and convenient as takeaway, and highlights the continued vulgarization of communities at the hands of corporate imperialism and late capitalism. This subversion contrasts with other interpretations of the story, which portray Burke and Wills as vulnerable men left in a harsh environment, itself a decidedly mischievous take on this mythologizing of the heroic white Australian male. Through protesting these portrayals, Hookey suggests a counter argument – that by portraying Australian country as cruel and unforgiving, one is omitting Indigenous history and knowledge entirely.

Hamish McQuire



**Euan Macleod**

***Big H Little h & Yacht* 2021**  
oil on acrylic on polyester, 180 x 137 cm

b. 1956 Christchurch, New Zealand  
lives Sydney, NSW

Courtesy of the artist  
Photo: Michele Brouet

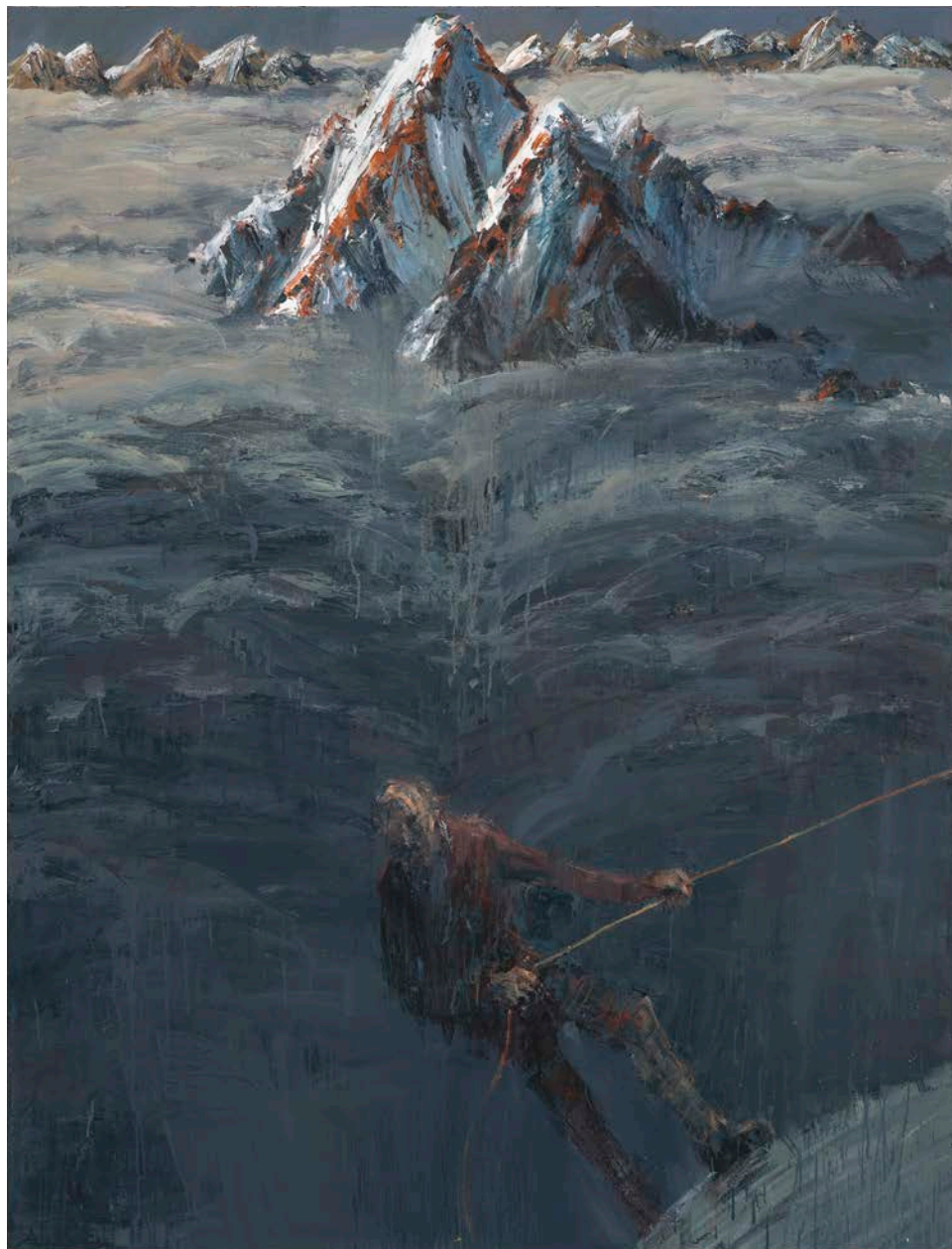


# Euan Macleod

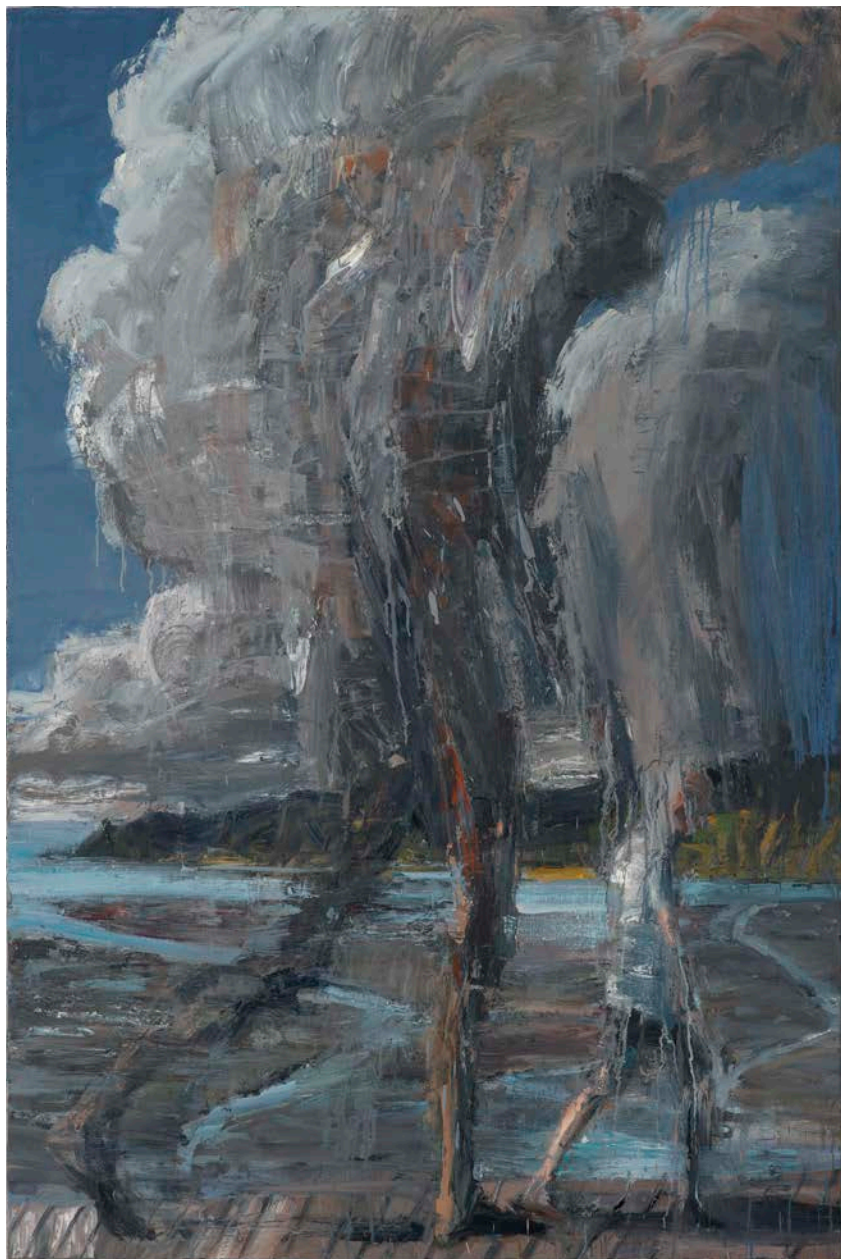
Euan Macleod's practice is an extended and inward journey of the psyche. Deploying a series of timeless and universal iconographies— boats, mountains, pits, shovels, flames— the works are difficult to pin down, slippery to define, but emotive and evocative in their imbrication of referents. Macleod's figures walk, climb, dig and submerge, always searching; ciphers upon which we can project our own thought and emotions. Executed in dense gashes, skeins and deposits of oil, Macleod's *Big H little h & Yacht* 2021, *Esplanade (after Arone)* 2021, *Mountain Adventure* 2021, *Rope descent* 2021, and *Swimming in the Rain (Camp Bay)* 2021 continues the artist's sonorous, often melancholic treatise on existence, peppered with small biographical clues which may or may not be red herrings. The title of *Mountain Adventure* is almost juvenile, a subversive rupture from its sombre subject matter (Macleod often punctuates particularly sombre imagery with puckish, light hearted wordplay or humour, often prompting an unexpected guffaw in front of grim or ponderous pictures). Giants frequently traverse Macleod's landscapes, their bones often buried within.

*Esplanade (after Arone)* refers to the artist's friend, the prolific and charismatic Cairns-based artist Arone Meeks, whose untimely death in 2021 left a significant void in many hearts. Here, he strides, larger than life along the esplanade, flanked by his partner under a vivid, cumulonimbus-laden North Queensland sky. It is a quietly heroic work imprinted with love and hope, a quiet triumph of spirit amid the badlands of two years of emotional entropy. What else has the pandemic been if not a sustained test of the bonds we have forged between us over months and years? Amid these remnants of things lost sit moments of gentle hope and bittersweet nostalgia. *Big H Little h & Yacht* could be a memory, a sketch of a dream or even an emotion. A glimpse of a moment, perhaps never to be repeated.

Jonathan McBurnie



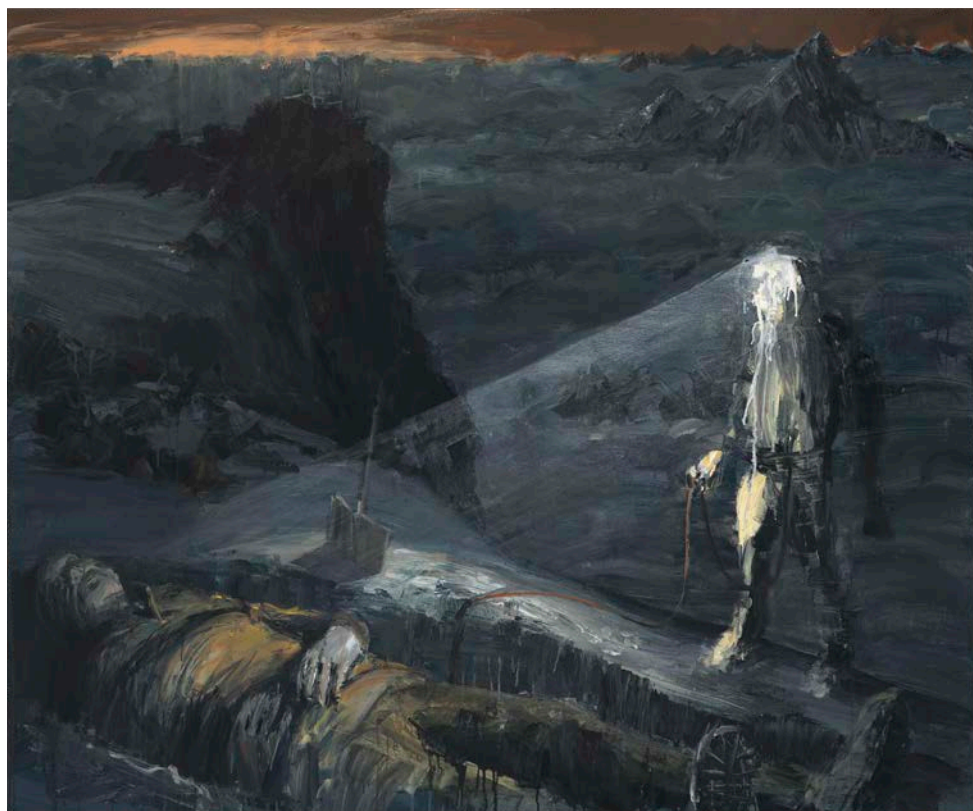
***Rope descent*** 2021  
oil on polyester, 180 x 137  
cm



**Esplanade (after Arone)** 2021  
oil on polyester, 180 x 120 cm

Courtesy of the artist

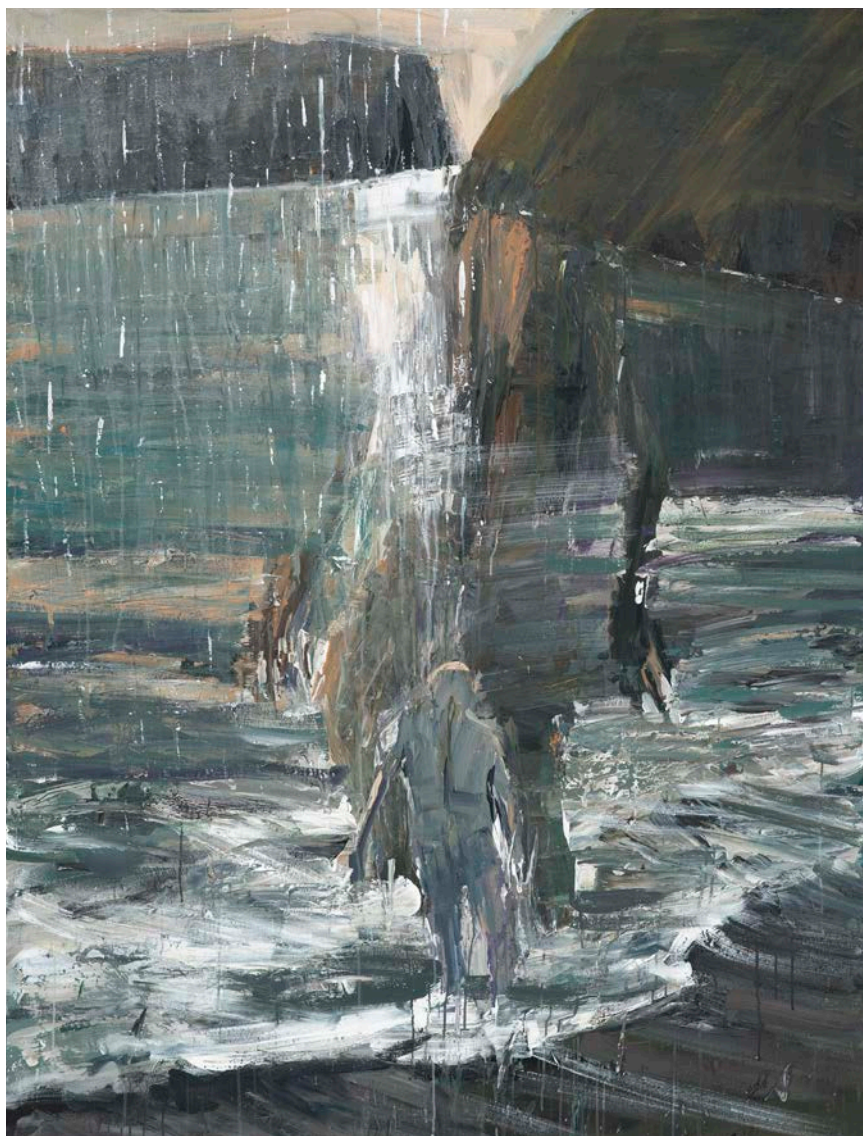
Photo: Michele Brouet



***Mountain adventure*** 2021  
acrylic on polyester, 150 x 180 cm

Courtesy of the artist  
Photo: Michele Brouet





***Swimming in the Rain (Camp Bay)*** 2021  
acrylic on polyester, 180 x 137 cm

Courtesy of the artist  
Photo: Michele Brouet



**Nongirrnga Marawili**

Yolngu

b. 1938 vicinity of eastern Arnhem Land, NT  
lives Yirrkala, north-east Arnhem Land, NT

**Baratjala** 2020

natural earth pigments and recycled print toner on bark  
216 x 115 cm

© The Artist, Buku Larnggay Mulka, NT and Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne  
Photo: Tom Degotardi (FMSTUDIOS)

# Nongirrŋa Marawili

A highly respected elder and artist, Nongirrŋa Marawili's style is unmistakable for its use of line and dot work to represent natural elements. Of these natural elements are four main players: water, rock, fire and lightning. Marawili's painting career began in the 1980s, working in collaboration with her husband, Djutjadjutja Mununggurr. Growing up as the daughter of famed pre-contact artist and warrior Mundukul in Yilpara and Yirrkala, Marawili's respect for country and culture can be felt through the canvas.

In 2017 Marawili stated, "I paint water designs. The water. As it crashes onto the rocks at high tide. Sending the spray into the sky. You know what I mean. That's what I do... This is the painting I do. You may spy on me and think that I am painting sacred things. This would be a lie." *Baratjala* 2020 exemplifies this movement of water, by utilising long thin brush strokes that flow throughout the canvas, with dots representing the spray of water as waves reach the shore. Two rocks in the foreground are suggested by circular shapes, accented by dotted designs representative of barnacles.

The implementation of pink ink is used boldly on the canvas, highlighting the circular designs against the black bark background. The pink ink is sourced from recycled magenta printer cartridges. By using this medium in her work, Marawili reclaims manmade materials and integrates them into the natural landscape.

Hamish McQuire





**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

b. 1988 Colombo Sri-Lanka, Australia from 1989  
lives Sydney, NSW

***Smiling Figure with Hog* 2020**  
oil on linen, 200 x 150 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strump, Sydney  
Photo: Jessica Maurer

# Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran

In painting *Smiling figure with hog* 2020 Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran selected a canvas that in scale was just bigger than himself. As a result, the application of paint feels physical and gestural. He worked using wet on wet paint with a gloved hand to paint swirling, expressive blue forms, a kind of “psychological space” from which two obscure smiling faces emerge.

Those rich red smiles and the flash of white teeth belie a kind of associated happiness that such an expression is typically intended to convey. There is a pathos attached to such a smile, and for Nithiyendran there is also an “element of grimace, ecstasy, horror, anxiety”.

*Smiling figure with hog* is coy, and the function of these red-lipped grimacing faces is unclear. Just who are these two figures, and what are their intentions? Are they individuals, companions, enemies, or indeed the one person? It’s a play with the notion of what Nithiyendran describes as “zoomorphic companionship”, and these figures are tropes that could be considered in the context of a religious, or mythological narrative painting. Broadly Nithiyendran’s art practice draws on the iconography of different religions, and he is attune to complex global histories, as well as being a keen

observer of painting traditions. But his references are by no means literal, and he instead teases out ancient ideas with irreverence, presenting a fresh perspective.

So what is it with these beings and their bulbous eyes and garish smiles that we see in *Smiling figure with hog*? Are they sacred? Is Nithiyendran toying the notion of idolatry, where contemporary God-like figures oversee a globalised world? It seems a stretch to get too prescriptive, but whatever Nithiyendran’s intentions, through the expressive push and pull of paint, he reshapes the figurative painting tradition to offer a thoroughly contemporary narrative.

Diana Warnes



**Wendy Sharpe**

b. 1960 Sydney, NSW  
lives Sydney, NSW and Paris, France

***The presence at her side* 2020**

oil on linen, 125 x 125 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane

# Wendy Sharpe

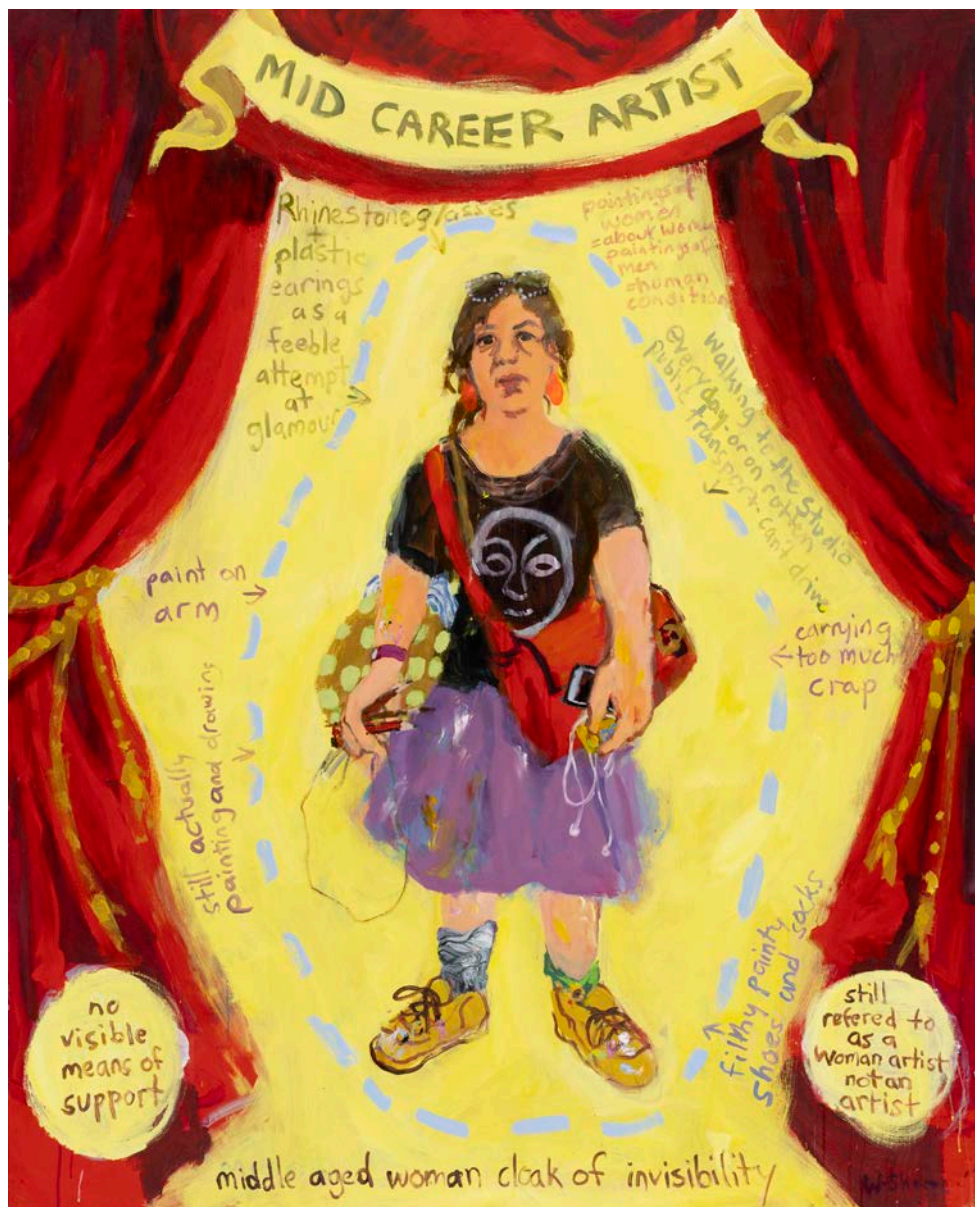
Rich colour and expressive use of paint are synonymous with the figurative paintings of Sydney-based artist Wendy Sharpe. Rather than painting portraits as such, she is first occupied by expressing the human figure and finding an associated narrative – not merely capturing likeness. One might think of Sharpe’s paintings as characterful, for it is her awareness of gaze, gesture, and movement that give her figures a lively and robust sense of action and personality.

*Night Songs (portrait of Jill McKay)* 2021 shows the cool 85 year old actor, activist and artist model Jill McKay. Her pose and gaze – in semi-recline and both calm and confident – feels like a reference to Manet’s *Olympia*. Sharpe renders McKay’s flesh in primary colours, the aqua blue shadows in stark contrast to the dark city in the background. One blue eye stares openly at the viewer, while a diamante-encrusted black patch covers the other. With her red lips, and bejewelled wrist and hands, McKay is radiant.

Sharpe regularly employs a female figure as the protagonist in her narrative-driven paintings – which occasionally are auto-biographical in nature. *Self-portrait as a circus banner in purple skirt* 2021 draws on Sharpe’s love of the circus and the fairground, but the searingly honest text statements simultaneously position herself as a curio. The story of the mid-career artist continues in *The presence at her side* 2020, a loosely auto-biographical painting that shows an artist walking to her studio in Sydney’s Erskineville. A small shadowy figure with an upturned head seems to trail her after, while she looks warily over her shoulder. What agenda does this figure have?

Diana Warnes





**Self portrait as circus banner in purple skirt 2021**

acrylic and oil on linen, 183 x 147 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane

Photo: John Fotiadis





**Night songs (portrait of Jill McKay)** 2021  
oil on linen, 122 x 136 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane

Photo: John Fotiadis



**Ian Smith**

b. 1950 Cairns, QLD  
lives Brisbane, QLD

***Across & down fig*** 2021  
acrylic on canvas, 188 x 278 cm

Courtesy of the artist

# Ian Smith

The fig trees, while being specific motifs, are among those subjects— like clouds passing across the sky— which allow complete subjective freedom, yet remain unquestionably REAL. I can paint at will, following made-up branches across and roots down wherever they lead me. This ‘mindless’ freedom is a most desirable, relaxed state for an older artist’s brain after years of mental wrangling while at work; free to enjoy simply weaving the fabric of the painting’s surface while contemplating all ways of painting, from the simple to extreme complexity.

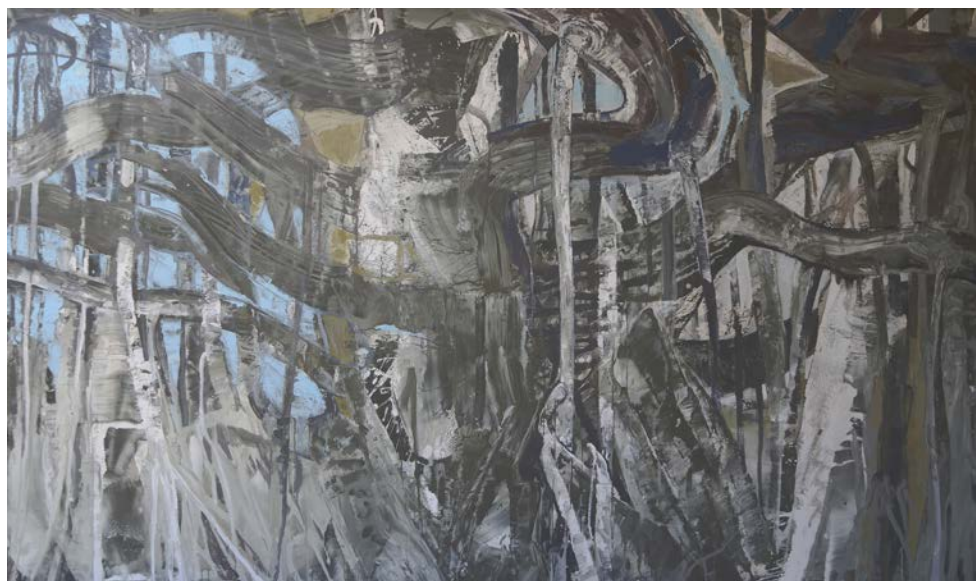
*Jesse in Botanica* 2021 is a nostalgic reflection on travels with my son who is now in his late 30s with children of his own. The work is loosely set in the Cairns Botanical Gardens near my own childhood home, although I’ve also enjoyed Rockhampton’s gardens which rival Cairns’, albeit with focus on botany of its different latitude. In the painting, the other enigmatic [lost?] child figure— that sort of ‘other’ element one doesn’t notice when taking a snapshot— I see as a symbol of lost childhood, Jesse’s and mine.

Ian Smith



***Bending fig(ures)*** 2020  
acrylic on canvas, 120 x 180 cm

Courtesy of the artist



***Forth, back, across & down fig*** 2021  
acrylic on canvas, 178 x 300 cm

Courtesy of the artist





***Jesse in botanica*** 2021  
acrylic on canvas, 126 x 183 cm

Courtesy of the artist



***Landscape with fig(ures)*** 2020  
acrylic on canvas, 120 x 180 cm

Courtesy of the artist



**Guan Wei**

b. 1957 Beijing, China  
lives Sydney, NSW and Beijing, China

***The Era of Data* 2020**  
acrylic on canvas, 87 x 254 cm

Courtesy the artist and Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney



# Guan Wei

Guan Wei was born in Beijing, China, migrating to Australia in 1989. Having experienced such diverse cultures Wei's work focusses on notions of place, identity and boundaries acknowledging both tradition and contemporary issues.

*The Era of Data 2020*, addresses and explores the relationship between symbols and the existence of them in today's digital world. Specifically, the use of numbers which were historically abstract symbols that have now evolved into the essence of computer coding. Wei unpacks these symbols and draws attention to their modern use. "I have attempted to amalgamate classic art, contemporary art, Chinese art and Western art into a mandatory and rational narrative with the knowledge of numerals, so that the prophetic vision presented in my paintings evolves into a conceptualised and metaphorical vision." <sup>1</sup>

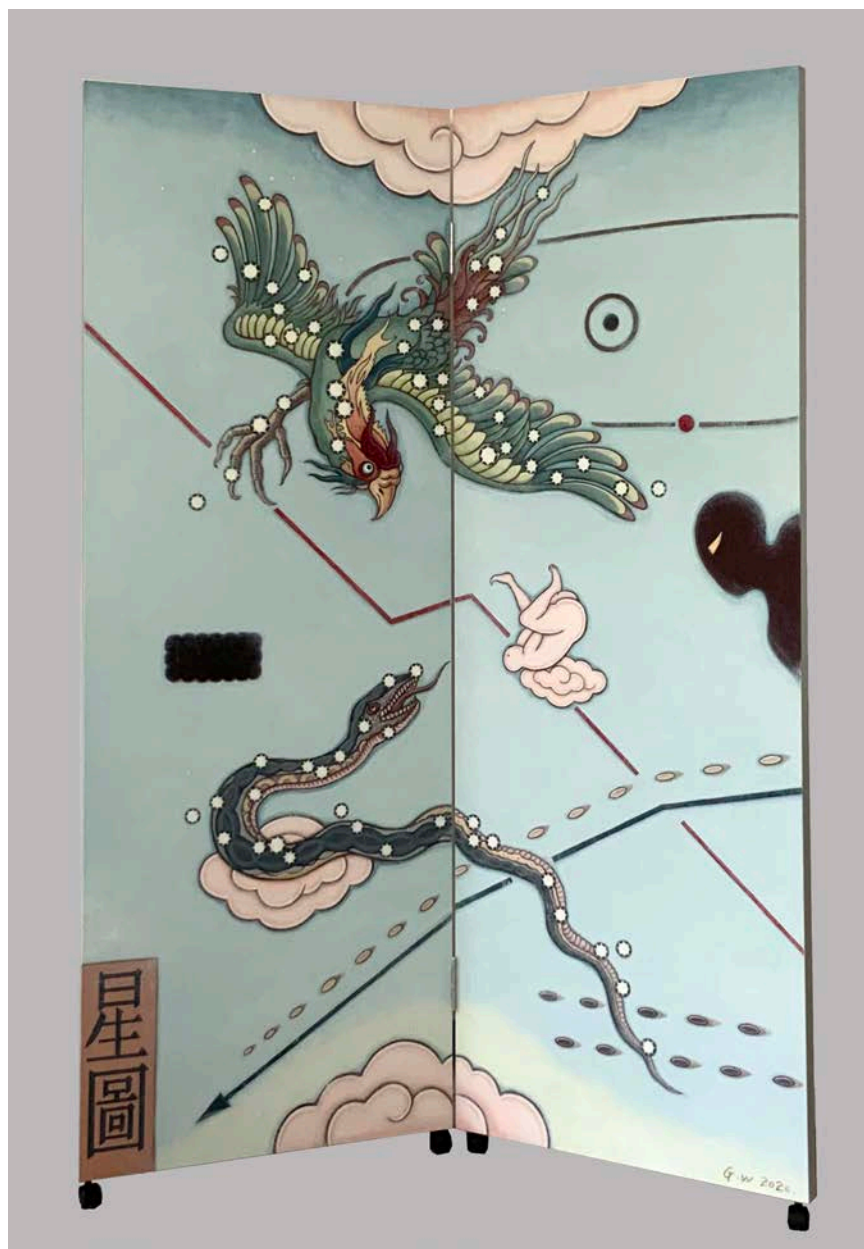
*Star Map No. 3 2020* and *Star Map No. 4 2020* have been created on folding screens – traditional utilitarian objects used to shape and design space. The imagery used also speaks to the notion of space via scientific and technological advances. "Together with astronauts, spaceships, and constellations of various magical creatures, it is like one grand symphony that illustrates the Divine Comedy of humanity stepping out into the Universe and exploring outer space." <sup>2</sup>

Tessa McIntosh

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<sup>1</sup> Guan Wei, *Artist's statement, 2020*

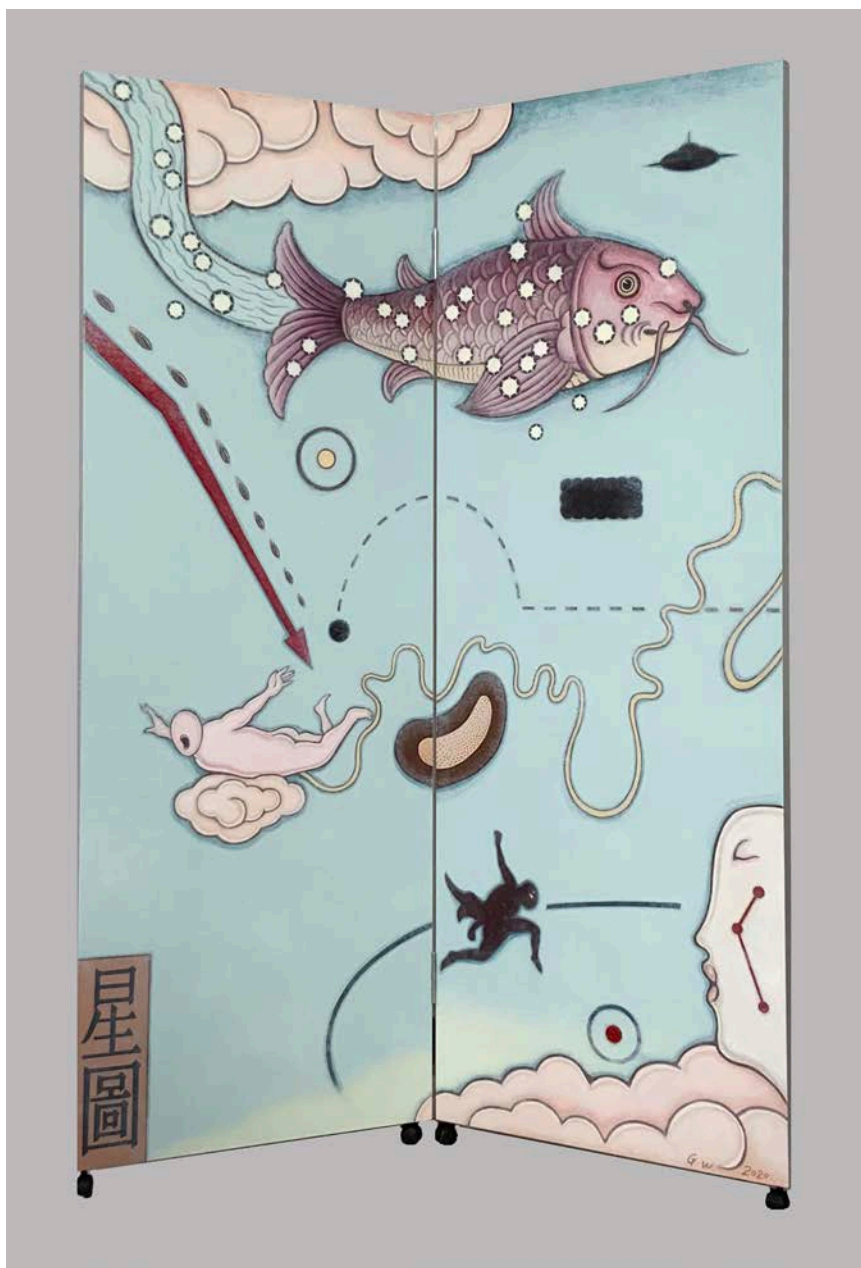
<sup>2</sup> Guan Wei, *Artist's statement*



**Star Map No. 3** 2020

acrylic on board, 180 x 124 x 3.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney



**Star Map No. 4** 2020  
acrylic on board, 180 x 124 x 3.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney



# The Gold Award 2022

## Patron Program

The Gold Patron Program enables Rockhampton Museum of Art to continue to grow through the establishment of an acquisition fund for The Gold Award. This fund provides the opportunity for the museum to acquire works from The Gold Award in addition to the winning artwork.

Mr Eric Anderson OAM & Mrs Beverly Anderson

City Printing Works

Mr Wayne Daniels & Mrs Jan Daniels

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Mr Darryl Strelow & Mrs Margaret Strelow

The Capricornian

The Real Group



# The Gold Award

2022



## Rockhampton Museum of Art

Rockhampton Museum of Art  
220 Quay St | PO Box 1860 Rockhampton Qld 4700  
[www.rmoa.com.au](http://www.rmoa.com.au)

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