



City of Townsville Art Collection: Recent Acquisitions

2 December 2022 - 5 March 2023

Australian Government's Cultural Gift Program

Tom Risley lived and worked in far North Queensland, creating work from his home studio in Herberton. From this isolated place, his art reached a national and international audience.

Risley was born in Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia in 1947 and died in 2010. He was a prolific artist and continued to make art throughout his long illness and in close association with Coral Risley.

I worked at the Ray Hughes Gallery in Sydney briefly in the mid-nineteen eighties. That is where I, and my mother, Ginny, met Tom Risley. I would acquire pieces of his art over the next decade.

Tom was both a nuggetty, earthy character and a wild adventurer in my mind. Risley spoke about trawling the Far North Queensland coast in a boat (a tinny?) for flotsam and jetsam to use in his work. Including beautiful pieces of driftwood peeling paint, huge, timeworn, and soft surfaced, odd bits of rope, plastic, and metal colanders, amongst other treasures, collected with an eagle eye for form and colour.

When he and Coral visited Sydney from Herberton, they brought with them the great expanse, a sense of self so different from us urban city dwellers. The great expanse seemed within them to be characterised by a zero-bullshit approach to conversation and life. The poetry in the sculpture and relief pieces spoke for itself; words were unnecessary. And Tom was a quiet man with a soft speaking voice.

- Memories and thoughts about Tom Risley by Julie Green, June 2021

Julie Green and Frans Vandenburg donated this artwork through the Australian Government's Cultural Gift Program in 2021. This acquisition aligns with the collection priority area: 6.2 Australian Art, Art of North Queensland, Australian Modern and Contemporary Art. This collection area focuses on art created in North Queensland, including historical, modern, and contemporary art, craft, and cultural material of all media created by artists, both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous.