

Insights

EDDIE KOIKI MABO LIBRARY
24 MAY TO 26 JULY 2024

A selection of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art
from the James Cook University Art Collection



Michael Cook, *Majority Rule [Bridge]*, 2014. Inkjet print on paper, ed 4/8 84 x 120 cm. Donated through the Australian Cultural Gifts Program by Caroline O'Rorke and Bruce Forbes Graham for the James Cook University Art Collection in 2023. Reproduced with permission. © Michael Cook, 2024. Photo by Through the Looking Glass Studio.



**ART
EXHIBITION**
EDDIE KOIKI MABO LIBRARY

BUILDING 18 | JCU TOWNSVILLE
BEBEGU YUMBA CAMPUS, DOUGLAS

Insights

FEATURED ARTISTS

James Billy
Michael Cook
Karen Doolan
James Doyle
Larrtjanga Ganambarr
Goobalathaldin (*Dick Roughsey*)
Gail Mabo
Narritjin Maymuru
Arone Meeks
Rosella Namok
Susan Peters Nampitjin
Tommy Pau
Jeannie Mills Pwerle
Brian Robinson
Teho Ropeyarn
Joel Sam
Bai Tapau
Thanakupi (*Gloria Fletcher Thancoupie*)
Alick Tipoti
Clare Jaque Vasquez
Judy Watson
Aicey Zaro

This year's exhibition *Insights* has been curated by the Library Special Collections team, and with the endorsement of exhibition patron Gail Mabo, to shine a light on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks in the James Cook University Art Collection. It showcases a selection of exciting works and provides some insights into their meanings, significance and the artists who created them.

There are 26 diverse artworks by 23 artists available for viewing. They can be found on the ground and first floor levels of the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library.

Artwork styles and mediums on display include graphic, representational and abstract landscape, animal, plant and human forms in paintings, prints, photography and sculpture. Connections and reconnections with culture are explored through their imagery, and culture is both shared and retained through the stories the artworks contain and depict.

Through *Insights*, JCU Library is working to develop understanding and appreciation of the arts and cultures of Australia's Indigenous artists and their creative output and contribution to our nation's culture. We recognise and acknowledge the artists' Indigenous custodianship of Country, and aim to draw attention to their cultural and artistic knowledge and practices, as well as to the interdisciplinarity of the works and themes explored.

Indigenous cultures are "living and evolving entities, not historical phenomena"ⁱ and this is demonstrated in the way that Indigenous art spans from "ceremonial, land-based orientation to encompassing the external interest and demand embodied in the art market".ⁱⁱ

The exhibition includes connected displays on level 1 of the Mabo Library of publications and materials drawn from the Library Special Collections. The physical exhibition will be supported by a growing digital presence of the artworks featured in the JCU Art Collection, through NQHeritage@JCU – the online repository for the Library Special Collections.

The JCU Art Collection is recognised as a University Collection managed by JCU Library Services. It comprises over 1000 individual works located on University sites including JCU Townsville, Bebegu Yumba campus, JCU Cairns, Nguma-bada campus, JCU Mount Isa, Murtupuni campus, JCU Thursday Island, Ngulaigau Mudh campus and JCU Mackay, Ngudya Yamba campus.

Explore the Collection further in NQHeritage@JCU.

ⁱ Valuing Art, Respecting Culture: Protocols for Working with the Australian Indigenous Visual Arts and Craft Sector, Doreen Mellor and Terri Janke, National Association for the Visual Arts, 2001.

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

EDDIE KOIKI MABO LIBRARY ART EXHIBITION

The Eddie Koiki Mabo Library Art Exhibition has historically celebrated the anniversary of the official naming of the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library recognising Eddie Mabo's great achievements and our connection to this eminent Australian and the official launch of James Cook University's Reconciliation Statement on 21 May 2008.

An exhibition of artworks by Gail Mabo, Eddie Mabo's daughter, was held on the first anniversary of the naming of the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library. Since this time, Library Services has endeavoured to hold a regular exhibition.

"The Eddie Koiki Mabo Library will forever commemorate the link between the man who changed the land laws of Australia and James Cook University."

Sandra Harding, 2008
Vice-Chancellor, JCU (2007-2022)

Eddie Koiki Mabo was a Torres Strait Islander man from Mer (Murray Island) and a long-time resident of Townsville. He is well-known as a land rights activist and was the lead plaintiff in what has become known as the Mabo Cases I and II. In 1982, he and several other Mer Islanders - Sam Passi, David Passi, Celuia Mapo Salee and James Rice - started a legal action that lasted 10 years.



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On June 3, 1992, a decision was handed down in the High Court of Australia in favour of the plaintiffs. The High Court rejected the legal doctrine of *terra nullius* (no man's land) that underpinned the Crown's claim to own all the land of Australia and ruled in favour of the Meriam plaintiffs' ongoing title to their land. Sadly, Mr Mabo passed away five months before the decision was made.

Eddie Koiki Mabo was one of the most important historical figures to have spent time at the University. Employed at JCU as a groundsman, he was also a student, guest lecturer, colleague, and friend of JCU staff and students. Several catalysing moments that led to the Mabo cases are acknowledged to have occurred at the University. These include conversations with his friends, historians Emeritus Professor Henry Reynolds and Associate Professor Noel Loos, and a 1981 Land Rights Conference where he delivered a speech that sparked the interest of lawyers.



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