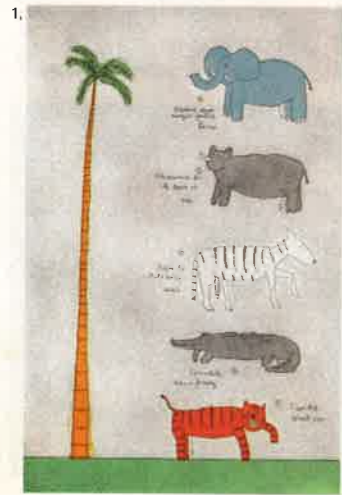


Evolution: A DISRESPECTIVE

Irreverent. Melancholy. Absurd. Empathetic. Fantastical. These are just a few of the adjectives onlookers have used to describe the work of Darwin visual artist Rob Brown. A new retrospective at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) looks at 20 years of imagination, colour and paradox from this one of a kind maverick painter and creator.

By Anna Dowd



A mixture of paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures, the exhibition tells the story of Brown's art practice through 126 titled artworks. Including 42 works sourced from private collectors, coordinator Wendy Wood says that from the outset it was clear what a huge fan base Brown has; the hard part was choosing what to include. "There were so many beautiful and hilarious artworks," she says. Walking through the Ken Waters Gallery, you're exposed to Brown's early career drawings from uni and travel, right through to the well known collection of Togart Contemporary Art Award paintings. Not usually one for exhibiting around themes, Brown says he eventually came around to the idea of character-based groupings in his paintings, so the exhibition offers the you

the chance to experience his warped and witty homage to the idols of the Renaissance, absurd anomalies, underdogs, the profane, ANZACS, Aussie icons, rock stars and superheroes. Expect to react.

The first solo exhibition of a contemporary Territory artist in nearly two decades, Brown's retrospective heralds an exciting new era for MAGNT. Described by local art historian Anita Angel as "the illegitimate progeny of a crossed marriage between high and low art," Brown's artistic evolution could well be the perfect fireworks display to kick things off.

WHEN: Showing until Sun 29 Mar 2015
WHERE: Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
INFO: magnt.net.au



Interview with Rob Brown

Where does the name of the exhibition come from?

It's kind of a blend, a play on the fact people don't realise the museum is also the Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. It shows the evolution of my work. A lot of the work revolves around the Darwinism idea. And then I thought I was a bit too young for a retrospective. A disrespectful seemed better.

What's it like seeing years of work all in one space?

My little children all come home! Amazing. Not that I like all of my children. But yeah, pretty overwhelming. When I first came to see the empty gallery space, my little tummy went into knots thinking, '[there's] no way we're going to fill the space'. But we had to cull in the end. It's been gorgeous.

Tell us about the oldest works in the exhibition?

The oldest works have been sitting in drawers and cupboards for 20 years. It's a little bit daunting, but great to see them dusted and framed and given a voice on the walls of such a public institution. Some of these works have gone from the very private straight to the very public. I wish them well...

How would you sum up your artistic career so far?

I've done my sums, and I'm about three quarters of the way through my life. Best part is I haven't grown up yet. If I can maintain that for another 20 years my life will have been complete.

Caption info: 1. Rob Brown, Male of the Species 2011 (detail), etching and aquatint on BFK Rives paper, Courtesy the artist and Charles Darwin University Art Collection
2. Rob Brown, Cooking with Noah 1999, polypropylene, pine, tusk shell and polyurethane
3. Rob Brown, Metamorphosis 1999, charcoal and acrylic on paper
4. Rob Brown, Katherine Show Day 2009, mixed media