

# ART MATTERS

**Fascinating. Unique. Inspiring. Relaxing. Engaging. Striking. To glance at the pages of visitor books from past Togart Contemporary Art Awards, you get it straight from the beholders mouths. With an eclectic mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and artworks, and a willingness to push the boundaries, it's no wonder this has become one of the premier art awards in Australia.**

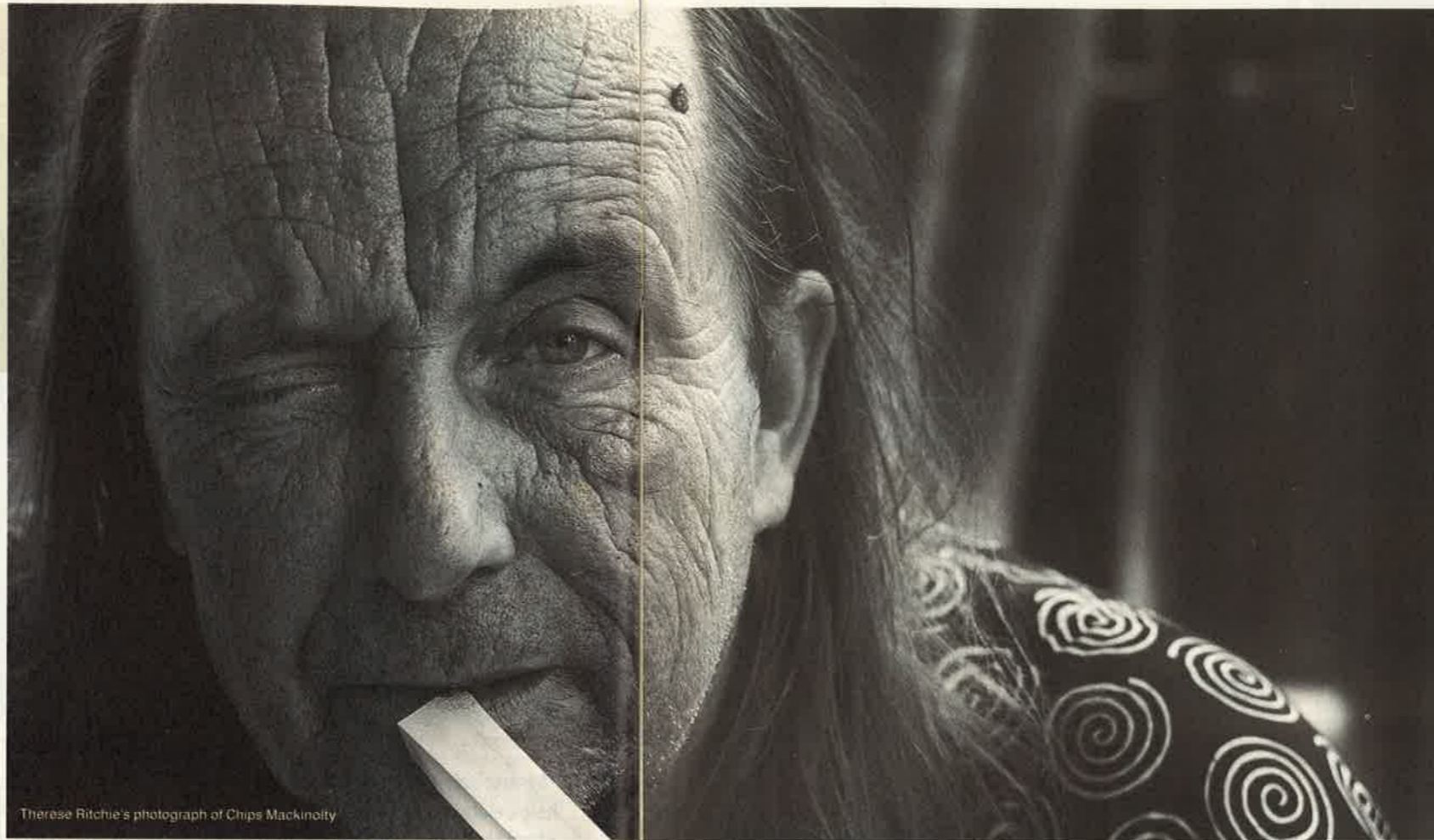
By Anna Dowd

Now in its seventh year, the Award has a history of challenging ideas about which artists and which works should and could be included in a contemporary art award. Established in 2007 by the Toga Group (property development, construction, investment and management) in conjunction with the public art program around the Waterfront development in Darwin, Togart Award Manager Felicity Green says creating an art award that was open to all cultures was important and timely.

"It opened up a whole lot of avenues for artists that weren't there previously. There was a real shortfall in opportunities for non-Indigenous artists up in the north and Indigenous art was rarely included in a contemporary context" Felicity says. "It makes for an interesting dialogue between everyone involved, that's truly cross-cultural and multicultural. And I think that's a conversation that's happening and relevant in the Northern Territory and across the nation."

And the rules around inclusivity have continued to expand from there. Togart is unique in that it is not only open to those who call the Territory home, but also to artists whose work demonstrates a 'strong connection with the region'. It is a kind of gentle prod to the idea of straight lines on maps and feeds into the ongoing conversation about what it means to be a Territorian. The art is from, or of the northern region of Australia. But it embraces the notion that an artist doesn't have to be physically situated here to stay profoundly influenced by the vast landscapes and cultural complexity of the region; to stay connected.

The result is a vibrant set of artists and artworks. Showcased in Darwin's own Chan Contemporary Art Space, the experience is a convenient annual snapshot of works both inspired by the region, and inspiring. It's a two way thing, and every year the public are asked to vote for their favorite artwork, with a People's Choice Award being announced at the conclusion of the exhibition.



Therese Ritchie's photograph of Chips Mackinolty



Niaomi Hobson



Alison Inkamala

Walking through the cool white interior of the Chan this year, you're guaranteed to be kept guessing. From Peppimenarti fibre artist Kathleen Korda's spectacular weaving, to Therese Ritchie's exquisite photographic portrait of fellow Darwin artist Chips Mackinolty, this year includes entries from artists from the tropical Tiwi Islands, down to Victorian historical town of Ballarat.

Artistic and Public Program Coordinator at the Chan, Simon Cooper, says this year the Awards are particularly impressive in the breadth of finalists, both in terms of cultural backgrounds of artists and mediums used to make the art.

**WHEN:** Tue 17 Sep – Fri 18 Oct | **Opening** Tue 17 Sep | 6pm  
**WHERE:** Chan Contemporary Art Space  
**INFO:** [togartaward.com.au](http://togartaward.com.au)



Winsome Jobling

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**One of the great things about Togart is that with the great variety of artists, there is a high chance you'll find at least something you connect with, enjoy and can get something out of.**

Simon Cooper, Artistic and Public Program Coordinator at Chan

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Siyang Zhou