Northern Territory art travels to Albury, Adelaide

The work of two of the Northern Territory’s most respected artists will go on show in South Australia and New South Wales during the next six months.

The exhibition, “Not Dead Yet: Therese Ritchie and Chips Mackinolty – a retrospective exhibition”, captures the landscapes, major events and personalities that have defined the Northern Territory.

Representing four decades of work in 113 pieces, the exhibition is drawn from the Charles Darwin University Art Collection, as well as loans made by the artists and private collectors in Australia.

Developed by CDU Art Collection and Art Gallery Curator Anita Angel, the exhibition features screen prints, posters, drawings, photographs, digital collages and limited edition fine art prints and paintings, dating from 1969 through to 2008.

"‘Not Dead Yet’ highlights the best of a collaborative and creative partnership by two Territory-inspired, contemporary Australian artists as they’ve worked ‘together, sideways and apart’,” Ms Angel said.

“Therese and Chips are historians of the moment. Their work deals with their experiences in the Northern Territory and highlights social and political issues that were, and still are, faced by Territorians.

“This is art that communicates a message. It is educational, politically and socially engaged, but can also operate as outright propaganda. There seems to be something in the air about this kind of art in 2013.”

Ms Ritchie and Mr Mackinolty arrived in the Northern Territory in the early 1980s, and are considered to be pioneers of “alternative printmaking” in the region.

Works included in “Not Dead Yet” were produced at the Darwin studios of Green Ant Research Arts and Publishing in the 1990s and Jatuk Graphics in the 1980s, at the Tin Sheeds’ Earthworks Poster Collective at Sydney University in the 1970s, as well as independently by Ms Ritchie and Mr Mackinolty.

Ms Ritchie is a graduate of the CDU Art School and a former lecturer in graphic design. Mr Mackinolty was a leading essayist in Printabout, the catalogue for the University Art Collection’s first touring exhibition in the Territory and interstate through Artback NT in 1996.

Both artists are recognised donors to the CDU Art Collection, gifting many works included in “Not Dead Yet” to the university.

The touring exhibition will be shown at the Albury Regional Gallery from 8 February to 31 March 2013 and then at Flinders University Art Museum – City Gallery in Adelaide from 4 May to 14 July 2013.
The art of political posters and their ability to endure is captured in a new exhibition at Flinders University City Gallery.

*Not Dead Yet* is a major retrospective of the work of Darwin photographer Therese Ritchie and printmaker Chips Mackinolty on loan from Charles Darwin University Art Gallery.

Surveying more than 100 works spanning 40 years cramming the walls of Flinders University City Gallery, Mackinolty points out that even some of the early pieces are still in production.

"Some of these images have been posters and T-shirts and then back to posters again," he says.

"Some have ended up as banners because digital printing means you're not limited to the surface you print on now.

"And some have a life on the internet – from there people can print and distribute them in their own way."

Mackinolty arrived in the Top End in 1981 to work in Aboriginal communities as an art adviser.

He had been making political posters as a member of the Earthworks Poster Collective at Sydney University's Tin Sheds studio in the 1970s, and found lots to inspire him in the Territory.

Ritchie moved to Darwin around the same time to study photography at the then Institute of Technology.

Their paths crossed and after doing a few "bits and pieces" together they embarked on their first collaboration in 1991.

The artists have worked together on and off since while pursuing individual careers.

Their art is bold, confronting and humorous. The posters, combining image and text, are as much documents of their time as they are a call to arms on issues ranging from human rights to land rights, indigenous health, ecopolitics, policing and mining.

"They can catch a moment in time, or a circumstance, or a political climate," Ritchie says. "You can chart the history of a place through political posters."

**LOUISE NUNN**

*Not Dead Yet* is at Flinders University City Gallery until July 14.
Therese Ritchie, We wish to make you happy, 2003, inkjet print, 44cm x 120cm

Chips Mackinolty, Make life impossible, 1976, screenprint, 76cm x 55cm

Therese Ritchie, Living in harmony Nightcliff shorelin, 2003, inkjet print, 44cm x 120cm
EXHIBITION REVIEW

Not Dead Yet
Therese Ritchie & Chips Mackinolty
Flinders University City Gallery
State Library, North Terrace
Exhibition concludes 14 July

Promising to pack a punch.

It seems to be a common assumption amongst exhibition goers that when a gallery holds a retrospective exhibition the creator is already six feet under. As the satirical title of Flinders University City Gallery's current exhibition Not Dead Yet suggests, Chips Mackinolty and Therese Ritchie are far from dead and buried. They are still kicking about the place and they'll make sure everyone knows it too.

Developed by Anita Angel, curator of Charles Darwin University Art Collection and Art Gallery, this landmark exhibition examines the poignant graphic protest art of Mackinolty and Ritchie. For forty odd years these artists have been fundamental figures in Australia's political poster movement, creating bold and often humorous works that have served to "rally the troops". Their works expose fiery social and political issues - issues that are often muted, misrepresented or just down right ignored by the mainstream media.

Not Dead Yet chronologically revisits the artists’ involvement and influence within this movement, showcasing screen-prints, posters, drawings, photographs, digital collages and fine art prints and paintings from the late 1960’s through to the present day. Beginning with the Earthworks Poster Collective in the Tin Sheds at Sydney University - the unprecedented ferment
of protest art in the 1970s - through to the 1980s with the Darwin based studios of the Werehaus Artist’ Collective and Green Ant Research Arts and Publishing in the 1990s. The initial display at Charles Darwin University featured over 160 artworks; the Flinders University City Gallery exhibits a smaller but very comprehensive selection. A salon style display plasters the gallery walls; the density complimenting the original intent of the works. You can imagine some of Mackinolty’s early works such as Pig Iron Bob Dead at Last from 1978 and Make Life Impossible created in 1976 tiled across an alleyway or building as they were originally displayed.

The collaborators first met in Darwin in the early 1980s through the Werehaus Artist’ Collective. Mackinolty was an art advisor for Aboriginal art centres in Katherine and Ritchie ended up in the Northern Territory by chance. As Angel states in her catalogue essay, “Working together, sideways and apart, [Ritchie and Mackinolty] have captured the lives, landscapes and major events that have defined the [Northern Territory] both as ‘home’ and as an enduring Australian frontier”. Within their joint and individual artistic ventures they highlight sensitive Australian issues, including human rights, land rights, indigenous health, eco-politics, mining and policing. There are several iconic works featured within the exhibition including Mackinolty’s widely circulated 1985 screen-print Nyuntu Anangu maruku ngurangka ngarany (You are on Aboriginal Land) which protested for and eventually commemorated the recognition of Aboriginal land rights with the hand-back of Uluru.

There is a strong focus on the racial prejudice of people in Australia’s far north, but also Australia’s nation wide sense of bigotry. As seen within Ritchie’s inkjet print series Shortgrass people created in 2003, particularly Shortgrass people 3 which captures a Caucasian gentleman, beer gut out in the tiniest of shorts, drinking a tinny on the side of the road. Typical Australian right? Ritchie illustrates that if this was an indigenous Australian the authorities would have been all over it like a heat rash. This only skims the surface of the racial discrimination Indigenous Australians endure on an everyday basis.

Not Dead Yet is not just a celebration of the huge oeuvre Chips Mackinolty and Therese Ritchie have produced over the past four decades. This exhibition demonstrates how art still has the ability communicate, to educate, to shock and to make us listen. Not Dead Yet promises to pack a punch.

Madeline Reece

Not Dead Yet is on show at the Flinders University City Gallery until the 14 July 2013.
Christopher Testa

SOME of the political works of art on display in the *Not Dead Yet* exhibition are confronting, while others are extremely emotive. What they all seek to do is give a voice to some of Australia’s most marginalised communities.

The exhibition at the Flinders University City Gallery surveys the work of Northern Territory political poster movement pioneers Therese Ritchie and Chips Mackinolt, comprising political posters, screen prints, drawings, photographs, digital collage works and limited-edition fine art prints and paintings.

“They are very, very powerful political works,” Flinders University City Gallery director Fiona Salmon says of the collection.

“They are political events of consequence that will speak to audiences.”

The works are on loan from the Charles Darwin University Art Collection. Juxtaposing the lives and landscapes which define the Top End, they show the passion and the struggles of Territorians from the 1970s to the present.

With a strong focus on issues affecting Indigenous Australians, Ritchie and Mackinolt are passionate about standing up for the rights of Australia’s first people.

“They want to give a voice to Aboriginal people who are so often marginalised in the mainstream press or not represented at all,” Salmon says.

“Therese and Chips are interested in human rights generally, but Indigenous rights are of particular importance to them.”

“For them, living in the Top End, it’s the most visible and pressing issue day-to-day.”

Ms Salmon says the works have made people across Australia think about the challenges faced by Aboriginal Australians, as well as the Timorese, and raised the plight of those people “into the mainstream consciousness.”

“It’s a very different story about Indigenous people than we normally hear.”

www.indaily.com.au/?id=77793&sr=0#folio=11
Many of the prints and posters date back three or four decades, with viewers able to follow a visual narration of Australian political history.

“We have works from the ’70s and some date back to the University of Sydney, when Chips was an arts student there,” Salmon says.

Anita Angel, curator of the Charles Darwin University Art Collection and developer of the collection, says while the works’ origins lie in the Territory, audiences Australia-wide will relate to the themes.

“It is a place where the personal is political and life, like art, is only as honest as you are,” she says.

“Messages conveyed by their art travel well beyond the Northern Territory’s borders.”

Close links between the two host universities helped bring the collection to Adelaide for the first time.

“Flinders University and Charles Darwin (University) are sibling institutions, in a sense,” Salmon says.

*The exhibition continues until July 14.*