



2 WORLDS

RONALD EDWARDS PEPPER

2 April – 12 June 2022

2 Worlds is an exhibition of new artwork by Ronald Edwards Pepper, a proud Gunnai man and artist living and working on the traditional lands of his Ancestors in Morwell, Gippsland in South Eastern Australia. Ronald was born in 1982 on Gunnai Country and has developed his artistic practice over the past twenty years. He is deeply influenced by the cultural knowledge passed on to him from his Ancestors, through his Mother Elizabeth Anne Pepper (1955 – 2020) and grandparents Dolly Mullet and Watson Pepper, who relocated to Morwell from Lake Tyers Mission during the 1960s. On his mother's side, Ronald is also a descendant of Uncle Ben 'Lanky' Manton (1841 – 1929), a highly esteemed Elder and advocate for First Peoples' rights and reconciliation.

This new body of work brings together Ronald Edwards Pepper's current stylistic interests and continued exploration of Gunnai designs, Dreaming, creation stories and themes related to personal identity and his unique experience as a Gunnai man living between two worlds – culturally, artistically and between *the old* and *the new*.

"Many hats I had to wear, or something like T-shirts, to create myself as an artist. I was raised in the western way of working, to get to where I am in life today. To be able to tell stories in both ways. I can use colours and handprints with designs on them – me in today's world – but they still have connections to the land of South Eastern Australia. Layerings. Colours of Country. Made up of different colours. To be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander today, we are many colours not just Black.

I am deeply connected to my Country; I sense the old knowledge coming back to me.

I see things in an Aboriginal cultural way.

I see people in the landscape.

It takes me back to traditional culture

Back to the old ways.

Storytelling and ceremonies.

The second world I live in, bright colours.

We may not be seeing them at day, but at night they will pop out.

It's like moving from what has happened, acknowledging the past to move into the future.

Messages come to me through the art that I create. I hear my Ancestors talking to me in a spiritual way. I feel my Ancestors giving me knowledge and telling me to respect the cultural ways. I believe that ceremony and art are ways to take people back to Country and to culture. I believe that ceremony and art are bridges that connect us to the Ancestors. They are also the forms through which knowledge can be passed on to other people.



I use ceremony and art to show that I belong to the Country. It is through them that I tell my stories. Making art and holding ceremonies is about connecting to the Earth and listening to messages from the Country. I feel that I keep culture alive in this way. I sense messages coming to me when I do this work.

Dedicated to my Ancestors and my mum, Elizabeth Anne Pepper, a strong Aboriginal woman. Yarrabee (Goodbye).

Thank you to my cousin Kathy Dalton for encouraging my dreams.” – Ronald Edwards Pepper

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ronald Edwards Pepper has been making artwork since the early 2000's and has participated in over thirty exhibitions in both Australia and overseas. In 2008, Ronald won the 'Lin Onus Award' in the Victorian Indigenous Art Awards, described by the artist as a turning point in his career, gaining recognition for his striking and unique depiction of the creation story of *Borun and Tuk*, a Dreaming story that is significant to the GunaiKurnai people. Incorporating Gunnai designs in his paintings, Ronald's works of art reflect the unique character of the art and culture of First Peoples' from South Eastern Australia.

In 2017, Ronald graduated from Federation University with a Bachelor of Visual and Media Arts. Between 2002 and 2008, he completed several TAFE certificates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art & Design and language studies. In 2007, he undertook a traineeship in the 'Young Ambassador Program' at Latrobe Regional Gallery, Morwell, where he was also a 'Trainee Mentor in Education' in 2010.

After graduating from university, Ronald has completed several public art commissions, including a recent large-scale commission for the 2021 Yirramboi Festival, titled *Coming out of the darkness* (2021); and *Give me your hand my friend* (2015), Waterhole Creek Cultural Trail, Morwell. Ronald is passionate about education and promoting the art and culture of First Peoples from South Eastern Australia and travelled as a cultural advocate to Japan (2010) and China (2013), supported by Latrobe City Council's Sister Cities program.

Ronald's works of art embody a harmonious convergence of the old and the new, incorporating Gunnai clan designs, Dreaming and creation stories rendered in luminescent colours and materials that vibrate with energy. Ronald primarily creates mixed media works on canvas, paper and board, incorporating a range of acrylic, aerosol, fluorescent and glow in the dark paints, photographs, found objects, personal items and archival material. His works explore his experience living and working as an artist between *two worlds* and his identity as "a proud gay Aboriginal man" (Ronald Edwards Pepper).

In 2021, Ronald was awarded 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumnus of the Year' at Federation University. Ronald was recently awarded the 'Creative Victoria Award for Excellence in any Media' the major prize in the 9th Koorie Art Show Awards at Koorie Heritage Trust.

His works of art are included in both private and public art collections throughout Australia and overseas.



KOORIE
HERITAGE TRUST
GNOKAN DANNA MURRA KOR-KI

ARTWORK

"It's Time" Emu Uluru (land of many colours), 2022

Synthetic polymer paint, mixed media and gold leaf on canvas

1600 x 1600 mm

Sale Price: \$1,950.00

Borun's Five Canoes, 2022

Synthetic polymer paint and mixed media on canvas

505 x 405 mm

Sale Price: \$455.00

I Will Return (Boomerang), 2022

Synthetic polymer paint and mixed media on canvas

608 x 912 mm

Sale Price: \$650.00

Colours in Country, 2022

Synthetic polymer paint on synthetic paper

15 parts: 228 x 305 mm each

Sale Price (available individually): \$80.00 each

I See Colours in Country, 2022

Synthetic polymer paint and mixed media on canvas

810 x 1600

Sale Price: \$1,300.00

Beautiful Land, 2022

Synthetic polymer paint and mixed media on canvas

795 x 1590 mm

Sale Price: \$1,300.00

To See Layers in Colours, 2022

Synthetic polymer paint on board

600 mm x 25 mm

Sale Price: \$1,040.00

Borun's Dreaming, 2022

Synthetic polymer paint on board

600 mm x 25 mm

Sale Price: \$1,040.00

All artwork collection of the artist