

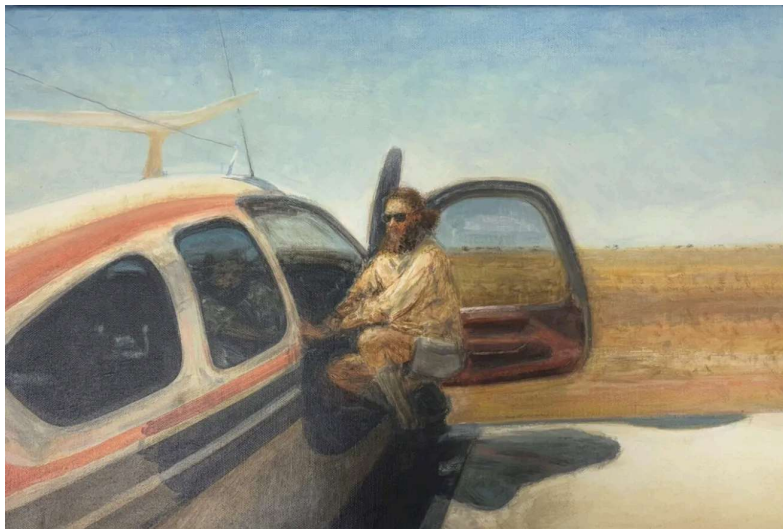
## Landscape art award honouring arts visionary takes flight

Flying Arts founder Mervyn Moriarty saw more of the Queensland landscape than anyone, so it's only fitting there is now a landscape art award in his name.



[Phil Brown](#)

Feb 28, 2024, updated Feb 29, 2024



Aaron Butt's portrait of Mervyn Moriarty, *The Flying Artist*, can be seen at Mitchell Fine Art in Fortitude Valley.

Mervyn Moriarty was the art world's equivalent of the Flying Doctor. It has been more 50 years since the respected artist used the winnings of an art award to become a pilot and fulfil a dream.

Moriarty, who died in 2021, took to the skies and flew a light aircraft with a cadre of committed volunteers to support artists in rural, remote and Torres Strait communities across Queensland, a state the size of Western Europe.

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In doing so he founded the organisation now known as the Flying Arts Alliance. It wasn't medical help he offered, it was more in the realm of cultural and creative succour. Like the Flying Doctor, it was a revolutionary idea and Moriarty was a visionary adventurer.

During his years at the helm the organisation was credited with being a catalyst for social regeneration for hundreds of artists living on rural properties and regional towns throughout

that people in the cities took for granted.

The impact his plane's arrival must have had on the tiny remote communities he visited, frequently with distinguished Australian artists in tow, was significant. Moriarty's workshops, and the instructional manuals he left behind, shaped a generation of Queensland artists and disrupted the isolation of artists across the state.

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So, it's fitting that there is a wonderful portrait of Moriarty in The Mervyn Moriarty Landscape Award Exhibition 2023, which is on at Mitchell Fine Art in Fortitude Valley.

This painterly portrait, *The Flying Artist*, is by Aaron Butt who lives in the Moreton Bay Region. He uses themes such as affect, photography, objecthood and history in his work and exhibits with the acclaimed Jan Manton Gallery in Brisbane. Its gallery director Jan Manton continues to provide mentorship and career guidance to the Flying Arts Alliance artists.

Honouring Moriarty's legacy, in 2021 the Flying Arts Alliance added the inaugural Mervyn Moriarty Landscape Award as a category of the Queensland Regional Art Awards (QRAA), an annual visual arts prize and touring exhibition for established and emerging artists living in regional and remote Queensland. The Mervyn Moriarty Landscape Award is open to landscape artwork in any medium and pays homage to Moriarty's penchant for en plein air (in the open air) landscape painting.

The winners across the 10 QRAA award categories, including the prestigious Mervyn Moriarty Landscape Award 2023, were announced by one of Australia's most celebrated contemporary

Recently retired Queensland Court of Appeal judge, Anthe Philippides, who has been the chair of FAA since 2022, says “Flying Arts, with its 50-year legacy in regional arts, is an extraordinary accomplishment”.

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“I feel keenly the responsibility as someone to whom the baton has been handed to make sure that it is well placed to continue for another 50 years,” Philippides says.

Philippides is a passionate supporter of art and artists and worked tirelessly with her committee to increase the annual pool of money for the QRAA, elevating the awards to the most valuable in Australia for regional artists. The 2023 awards are worth an impressive \$140,000, with all the sponsorship prize money going directly to artists.

Now arts advocate and gallery director Mike Mitchell is generously hosting the Mervyn Moriarty Landscape Award Exhibition 2023, featuring 20 works selected by Foley and Jonathan McBurnie, director of the Rockhampton Museum of Art.

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The winner of the award is multi-disciplinary First Nations artist Naomi Hobson, with her ceramic installation *Red Kangaroo and Little River Cod*. Described by judge Foley as “innovative

Townsville artist Jo Lankaster's work *Illuminate* won the highly commended award for highlighting the intricate and delicate nature of microorganisms, ecology and the impact of climate change on a micro level.

Chinchilla artist Helen Dennis's work  *Holding On*  examines the reality of lockdowns in urban areas, the rising costs of living and food insecurity as well as the devastation of floods and fires.

The Flying Arts Alliance's Strategy Plan 2020-25 emphasises its commitment to supporting rural, regional and remote arts communities to promote the visual arts and creativity, launch arts careers, strengthen wellbeing and promote social connection. This work extends to bespoke art services for communities and schools, including art classes in remote schools, young artist residencies in metropolitan centres, professional development workshops and industry consultations as well as the prestigious suite of awards.

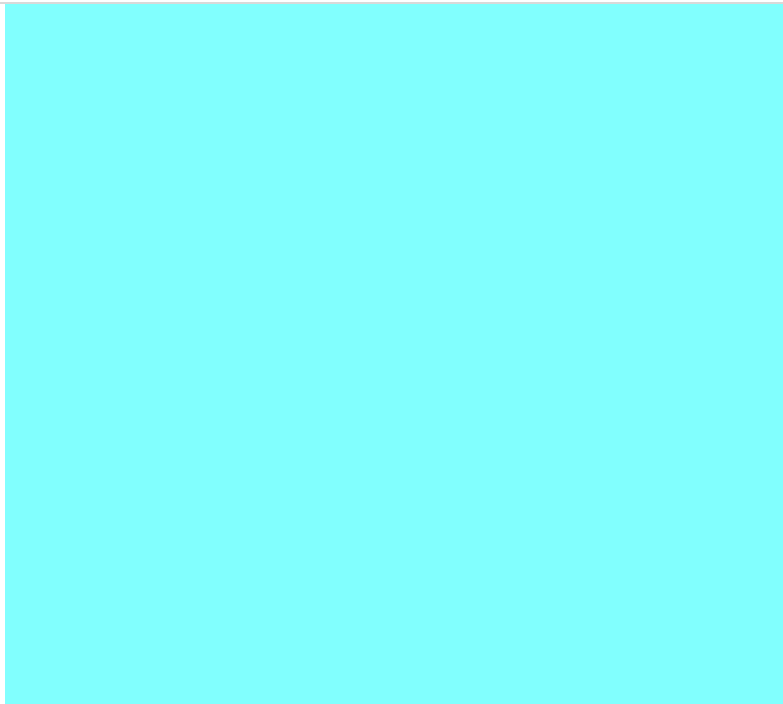
The spirit of Mervyn Moriarty, which must surely be soaring somewhere above the Queensland landscape, would, no doubt, approve.

**The Mervyn Moriarty Landscape Award Exhibition 2023 continues until March 13 at Mitchell Fine Art, Fortitude Valley**

**[flyingarts.org.au](http://flyingarts.org.au)**

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