

***Referencing Piranesi:*** an art exhibition of eight artworks by (Gordon) James Brown featured in the SoCA Staff Show at the eMerge Media Space from 28<sup>th</sup> April to 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2011

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This exhibition consists of nine artworks—a sculpture, an oil painting, an ink drawing on copper laminated canvas and five ink drawings on paper. Augmenting these artworks is a book display designed to showcase the stylistic attributes of the *Le Carceri* [The Prisons] prints by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778).

By intention, the book display contextualises the nine artworks in the sense that the images of Piranesi's prints in the opened books invites the gallery visitors to compare Piranesi's stylistic approach to image making with the approach of a contemporary North Queensland artist.

### **Gallery Statement:**

The decision to reference Piranesi's work extends beyond the single print, *Sepolcro delle tre fratgelli Cuniatii in Albano*. My motivation arose after hearing about an author who was planning to write a book about Australian artists who reference the eighteenth century Italian printmaker, Giovanni Battista Piranesii. What a pleasant surprise this was for me as I had already constructed in the fish tank that is my bed head, an assortment of cylinders and block-like structures designed to replicate one of Piranesi's fantasy prison scenes. But now I was spurred on to do the job properly and reconstruct a more calculated response to Piranesi's *Le Carceri* (The Prisons), with the hope that the fruits of my industry would be featured in this book. I pictured an architectural wonderland of bridges, gibbets, strung ropes, arches and towers in which brightly coloured neon tetras would frolic. My goal was not to reproduce in my fish tank what Piranesi had already created in his prints, but rather to personalise his vision in my own way. In short, my attitude to referencing Piranesi was a bit like the insightful comment made by an early travel-writer in Japan who remarked: "I caught typhus from Ivan, but I am suffering from my own typhus"<sup>1</sup>—an attitude that I construed to be about personalising gifts acquired from others.

Of great interest to me during the execution of this suite of artworks is the problem printmakers face with lighting: the image that they draw originally on the plate becomes reversed resulting in a change in lighting direction that impacts on a viewer's reading of the printed image.

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<sup>1</sup> Hornfeld, AG 1922, *Paths of Creation*, Kolos, Petrograd, cited in Vygotsky, LD 1971, *The Psychology of Art*, Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, p. 40.

## Exhibited Artworks:



*Referencing Piranesi (Sculpture)*, 2011  
Bitumen on terracotta, 32 x 122 x 31 cm (variable)



*Referencing Piranesi (Lighting from the Top-Front-Right)*, 2011  
Oil on canvas, 38.5 x 122 cm



*Referencing Piranesi (Lighting from the Top-Front-Left)*, 2011  
Pen and ink on copper laminated canvas, 38.5 x 122 cm



*Referencing Piranesi (Panels 1 to 5)*, 2011  
Pen and ink on paper, 76 x 57 cm

Exhibition Invitation Advertising:



**SoCA Staff Show**  
Wed 4 - Fri 13 May

Adam Brown  
Anne Lord  
James Brown

**Opening: 5pm, Fri 6 May**  
All welcome, refreshments provided



eMerge Media Space | School of Creative Arts Complex | Building DA300 | Townsville | JCU  
p: 07 4781 3142 | e: gallery@jcu.edu.au | www.jcu.edu.au/soca/gallery/ | free admission



**SoCA Staff Show**  
Wed 28 April - Fri 13 May 2011, eMerge Media Space, Townsville