Ellarose Savage

From towering figurative ceramic totem poles to spiritual concepts worked into abstract sculptural forms in clay; from marine animals composed of discarded fishing ghost nets washed up on shore to finely detailed monochrome linocuts... the common denominator? Ellarose Savage and her relationship with the sea.

Born in 1969, Savage is one of around 14 artists working at Erub Erwer Meta Artists on Erub (Darnley Island) in the Torres Strait. The centre works to revitalise traditional Meriam Mir culture, and within this context Savage’s practice is innovative and diverse.

Her small and highly embellished figures of three Tiri sisters is an exquisite rendition of memory and place, illustrating her love and respect for the sea, the life-giving force in Meriam Mir culture. Their surfaces – incised with shell-shapes and shimmering with iridescence – represent a physical rendition of the sea washing over the girls and watching over their spirits.

Savage has been a finalist in the Shepparton Art Museum’s Indigenous Ceramic Art Award twice since 2011 and has earned four commendations from the Gab Titui Art Awards since 2007. She was a finalist in the 2010 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award with a ceramic sculptural work, the first time for a resident Torres Strait Islander woman, receiving a highly commended. She is represented in the collections of the Shepparton Art Museum in Victoria, The Australian Museum in Sydney and the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.

Jane Raffan