

Home / News / Local News

APRIL 11 2016 - 11:40AM

## A modern myth for Moynihan’s muse AMBER WILSON

Local News

PRINTMAKER Daniel Moynihan firmly believes the Tasmanian Tiger still exists.

The acclaimed Melbourne artist, whose work is currently exhibiting in a retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ballarat, has had a 40-year fascination with the almost-mythical thylacine.

It was in 1972 that he caught a glimpse of the declared-extinct thylacine in *Time Life* magazine. The creature emerged through his work over the next decade until he visited Hobart in 1980, making detailed sketches from a private room at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

But it was when he worked in



A life obsession: Daniel Moynihan is fascinated by the latest thylacine sightings and continues to find inspiration in its somewhat mythic form. Picture: Kate Healy

etching in Paris for a year in 1983 that the tiger truly began to preoccupy his work.

“The animal just jumped into a little drawing I made on the second night I was in Paris and from then on I started using it in isolation,” Moynihan said.

While in Paris, Moynihan found himself intrigued by a handicapped man he saw on the Metro network, inspiring one of his best-known works *Tiger man*.

He said the thylacine represented for him more than just an extinct – or at least highly elusive – animal.

“I’m not just making a study of an animal. I’m actually drawing the history of Australia really,” Moynihan said.

“In a way, the animal represents a whole range of issues and my idea of being Australian. Because it was eradicated, that’s another aspect that’s interesting to me.

“(Although) I still think it’s alive.”

He said he was not as concerned with the physical proportions of the creature – although he would be able to reproduce a skeleton accurately if necessary – than he was with the way the thylacine had evolved in a mythical sense.

“It’s something that moves through art history where the animal and the man and the people who hunted it become one in a sense,” he said.

“It’s laced with history, it’s laced with myth.

“Because it’s so elusive, it makes it even more fascinating and enables me a lot of room for interpretation.”

The tiger has become Moynihan's muse as he keeps in touch with the latest sightings and the Tasmanian characters enmeshed in the science and culture surrounding the creature.

“I don’t feel right if I’m not putting a tiger in the work. I need some form or semblance of the tiger in each work,” he said.

“The image changes quite a lot, it’s always recognisable as a tiger. It’s on the streets of Paris, New York, as a part of whatever I’m doing, the tiger is there.”

*The Art of Daniel Moynihan: Printmaking 1966-2016* is currently exhibiting at the Art Gallery of Ballarat until June 19. Entry is free.

