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Brit behind Boyd, Whiteley honoured

By Bonny Symons-Brown | September 23, 2009

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THE Brit behind some of Australia's most famous sculptures is one of eight people to receive honorary Order of Australia appointments.

Governor-General Quentin Bryce announced the latest recipients of the prestigious award today.

Peter John Morley, master founder and director of Meridian Sculpture in the inner-Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy, was recognised for his contribution to the Australian arts.

He learned his craft in London during the 1960s and despite starting his own business there, a failed marriage and a persuasive Australian friend led him Down Under in 1973.

"I arrived and soon discovered there was really nobody casting sculpture into bronze in this country," he said.

With local artists being forced to have their work cast abroad, Mr Morley decided to set up his own operation.

"From a small beginning it slowly built up and we were able to do all the work here, to the extent now that obviously none of it goes overseas, it's all done in Australia," he said.

Guy Boyd was the first important sculptor Meridian worked with, but other big names soon looked the company up.

"Because it's such a small world, the art world, word got around and we then ended up doing Robert Klippel, Brett Whiteley, Arthur Boyd," Mr Morley said.

"So I've been lucky in my career, I've managed to cast work for not only the world's best but also Australia's best, which is most satisfying."

He has also ensured that some of leading Australian figurative sculptor Peter Corlett's best known works, including *Simpson and his Donkey* and *Phar Lap*, could be cast affordably.

Mr Morley, who has trained a generation of sculptors at Meridian, paid tribute to his colleagues' contribution to the award.

"The cliches come out. It's not all done on your own, particularly with this sort of work. We're only as good as the people who work with me," he said.

"They're more than craftsmen, most of the men that work for me - and with me - they are all artists." The honorary appointments are awarded to non-Australian citizens who have given extraordinary service to Australia or humanity at large.

Other recipients in the latest round are educator Yoshimaro Katsumata, molecular biologist Professor Sangkot Marzuki, Honorary Australian Consul for Rio de Janeiro Dr Ronaldo Veirano, Maltese Australian Association president Nicholas Bonello, community advocate Joan Therese Brownlie, Malta-based Friends of Australia Association Tony Cutajar and military buff Khun Kanit Wanachote.

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