

CONNECTING THE WORLD THROUGH SCULPTURE

From the Ground Up
7–24 July 2021

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This exhibition traces one journey among many possible routes through the Monash University Collection and is presented in three separate iterations: *From the Ground Up*, *The Sculptural Body* and *In the Air*.

Connecting the World through Sculpture has been conceived as an ‘archaeological dig’ through the Collection that imagines the gallery space as housing a series of spatial strata or layers to be revealed over the course of the exhibition period.

This first iteration, *From the Ground Up*, includes one of the earliest sculptural works to enter the Collection: Ron Robertson-Swann’s architecture-inspired *Byzantium*, 1974, acquired the year it was made. Early conceptual works by Aleks Danko and Tony Trembath are also presented, both of which came into the Collection some years after they were first exhibited.

With a nod to Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s monumental *Wrapped Coast*, 1969, Danko’s and Trembath’s wrapped forms move audiences away from thinking about sculpture as identifiably figurative, abstract, permanent and plinth-based. They choose more elusive forms that, quite literally, could be wheeled around (in the case of Danko’s work) and consist of industrial materials utilised more commonly for other purposes (in the case of Trembath).

Some decades later, Geoff Kleem revisits the idea of modular and moveable sculpture, adding an additional element of potential ‘usefulness’: the screening device apparent in *Three Minutes Ago*, 1998. Jan Nelson’s *Defiance*, 2013, is also reminiscent of a ubiquitous form—in this instance, the water-filled barriers increasingly used to regulate the movement of people and traffic. It’s a stand-in for wider issues around

free speech and the right to public assembly and protest.

The majority of the works in *From the Ground Up* are floor-based and as such occupy the same spatial plane as humans. Peter Cripps’s mirrored work is a field of possible and changing perspectives that disrupts our ability to form a singular or reliable view, ‘off the wall’. In Inge King’s *Threshold*, 1983–84, the artist re-introduces the idea of the picture window or framing device, while encouraging us to see through and beyond it.

Malu Gurruwiwi’s morning star poles and Nonggirrja Marawili’s hollowed logs represent the strong connections to Country held by these artists and its honouring in ceremony. Other vertically oriented works by Nicholas Mangan and Louise Weaver allude to the environment in a broader sense, to growth and adaptation as well as the impact of human intervention into these processes.

The Monash University Collection is recognised for its support of young and emerging artists and practices as is evident in Simone Slee’s *Fold II*, 1996, acquired when she was just out of art school. The idea of developing an art career from the ground up and through stages—including as an ‘emerging artist’—is playfully reflected on in Emily Floyd’s *Important Emerging Artist*, 2004, while Kathy Temin takes charge of presenting her own, miniaturised, mid-career survey in *My House*, 2004–05.

The urge to memorialise through sculpture remains one of its key concerns, however many artists push against related notions of the heroic and monumental. No one more than Matt Hinkley, whose carefully cast and crafted *Untitled*, 2017, in one corner of the gallery could easily be

mistaken for the debris it is based upon. James Angus’s *Soccerball Dropped from 35,000 Feet*, 1999, enacts the force of weight of another kind: gravity itself.

Materials hold history and convey much more than formal qualities of shape and colour, as is evident in the repurposed welded steel elements of Marcus Shanahan’s *Echo Deco*, 1982, in contrast to the delicacy of Slee’s tissue paper folds and the elasticity of Louise Paramor’s paper and cardboard *Black Snake*, 2000, both of which have the potential for continual movement and re-composition.

One of a number of *Low Sculptures* made by the artist, Stuart Ringolt’s *Electric Arrow*, 2008, brings two unlikely elements together in a potentially dangerous transfer of energy, reminding us of the agency of sculpture and its role in connecting us to each other and with the world.

Charlotte Day, Director, MUMA



Celebrating
60 Years
Monash University
Collection

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Emily Floyd

Born 1972, Melbourne, where she lives and works.

Important Emerging Artist 2004

medium density fibreboard (296 letters)
edition 22/35
Purchased 2005

Emily Floyd is known for her text-based sculptures, installations and prints that engage with typography, design and language. As a tongue-in-cheek reflection on the experience of starting out as an artist, she appropriated one of the art world's clichéd phrases for her contribution to the annual Gertrude Editions program, following the studio residency at Gertrude Contemporary she undertook from 2000 to 2002. Just as the residency itself is sometimes seen as a marker of success for early career Australian artists, *Important Emerging Artist* pokes fun at the hype of the art industry while directing attention to the systems and associated language that assign value to artists and their works. Another of Floyd's works, the outdoor sculpture *This Place Will Always Be Open*, 2012, is located opposite MUMA on the elevated concourse.

Nongirrŋa Marawili

Maḏarrpa people
Born c.1938, Darrpirra, NT; lives and works at Yirrkala and Wandawuy, NT.

Baratjala 2018

2 works: earth pigments on hollowed tree trunks
Both purchased 2019

Larrakitj, or hollow log coffins, were formerly used by Yolŋu people of north-east Arnhem Land to contain bones. Erected as memorials to the deceased for up to a decade after a person's death, the poles are no longer used in ritual mortuary practice but continue to be made by artists such as Nongirrŋa Marawili for painting. She draws from the 'miny'tji' (the Yolŋu word for art, referring to sacred designs) of their clans and family members. Her *Baratjala* works are named for the area of coastline and a place of knowledge held by her clan, the Maḏarrpa people. Her motifs refer both to the rocks and sea spray of her Country as well as to the Lightning Snake Mundukul, who spits out an electric 'curse' in the form of lightning. These larrakitj depict yukuwa bound in yarn and feathered flowers—a cultural tradition that relates to Yirritja moiety ceremonies.

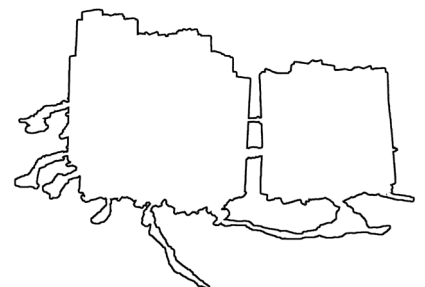
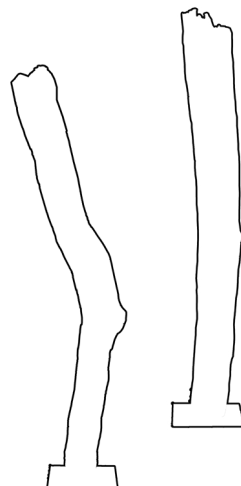
Simone Slee

Born 1965, Horsham, Vic.; lives and works in Melbourne.

Fold II 1996

acid-free tissue paper and cotton
Donated by private donor 1997

Made the year after Simone Slee completed her studies in sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1995, *Fold II* is an early expression of her interest in failure and vulnerability. It tests the question 'How can a sculpture stand up?' without fear of it doing so. The work is constructed as a series of modules, each containing seven units of concertina-folded tissue paper stitched together with thread. These are stood on end, abutting each other so as to appear as a solid overall system. It is part of the intention of the work—and in the nature of its fragile material—that while on display it may sometimes suffer fatigue and collapse.



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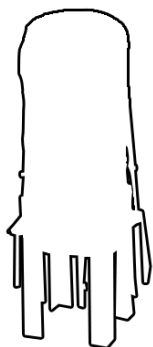
Tony Trembath

Born 1946, Sale, Vic.; lives and works
in Melbourne.

**Untitled—Covered Load of
Woodtex 1977**

canvas, rope, Woodtex and
galvanised mild steel
Gift of the artist 1995

Tony Trembath's sculpture has its roots in Dada objects, perhaps in particular Man Ray's *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse*, 1920, in which a sewing machine is obscured under an army blanket tied up with string. Here, Trembath has not quite covered a stack of Woodtex panels—an acoustic absorber and transmission loss barrier made of wood fibre compression bound with cement. Like his contemporaries making formal compositions in welded steel, he is also using an industrial material, but one with damping rather than monumental potential. *Untitled—Covered Load of Woodtex* also celebrates the aesthetics of labour, with its taut canvas and neatly tied off ropes.



Kathy Temin

Born 1968, Sydney; lives and works
in Melbourne.

My House 2004–05

wood, paint, Perspex, felt, synthetic
fur, polystyrene, foam core board,
bubble wrap, printed matter, 2 LCD
screens, 2 DVDs, 2 wooden benches,
2 clusters of trees made from steel,
wood, synthetic fur and synthetic
filling

Donated through the Australian
Government's Cultural Gifts Program
by Kathy Temin, 2012
Commissioned for the exhibition
NEW05 by the Australian Centre for
Contemporary Art, 2005

My House can be seen as Kathy Temin's self-curated survey exhibition in miniature, inserted into a recreation of the early 1970s home she occupied at the time of its making. Certain rooms are given over entirely to the artist's projects: *My Kylie Collection*, 2001, is an obsessive shrine to the Australian pop star that was originally installed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. *Pet Corner*, 1998, is a performance project that was staged at MoMA PS1, New York, for which Temin recruited non-union actors to perform as a pair of mating koalas despite never having seen a koala in person. Alongside Temin's own miniature works are loose replicas of those by artists she admires: Howard Arkley, Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, Robert Indiana, Claes Oldenberg, Frank Stella and Andy Warhol, as well as architect Berthold Lubetkin's modernist Penguin Pool at the London Zoo.



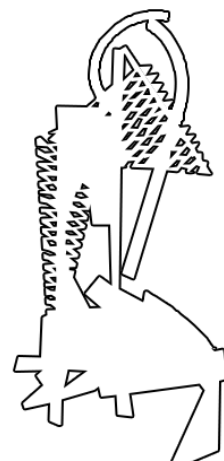
Marcus Shanahan

Born 1947; died 2008 in Cooma,
NSW.

Echo Deco 1982

welded steel
Purchased 1982

While the strictest concept of formalism dictates that an artwork be concerned only with its physical and sensory properties and not with anything outside of itself, formalist sculptors very often made use of discarded industrial materials, which inevitably carry traces of their former purpose. In calling his sculpture *Echo Deco*, Marcus Shanahan is explicit in the work's relationship both to the past and to design. If Art Deco celebrated the machine age at the beginning of the early twentieth century, Shanahan was working with its detritus as the end of the century drew near. While formalist in its character, *Echo Deco* has its ear to design currents of the 1980s, such as the jaunty shapes of the Milan-based Memphis Group. Indeed, the contrast between the sculpture's solid steel planes and the steel mesh recalls the typically Memphis combination of block colours against a fine pattern.



Malu Gurruwiwi

Galpu and Djapu peoples
Born 1942, Milingimbi Island, NT;
died 2020.

**Banumbirr—Morning Star Poles
2007–08**

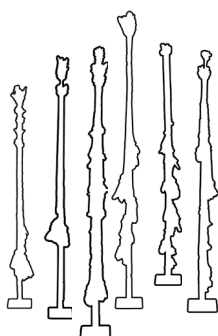
natural earth pigment on wood with
bush string and feathers
Purchased 2009

**Banumbirr—Morning Star Pole
2010**

natural earth pigment on wood with
bush string and feathers
Purchased 2011

Malu Gurruwiwi was a passionate advocate for the maintenance of Yolŋu culture and the custodian of the Banumbirr (or Morning Star) ceremony. He created many Banumbirr poles throughout his life, altering their content to be appropriate for non-Indigenous audiences. Of the poles' significance, he said:

The Banumbirr pole has always been sacred and was created by the Dhuwa clans and presented to the family of an elder who has passed away. They were made from a wooden pole called ngaraka and painted with the four colours of ochres representing the clan's designs. Feathers at the top of the pole represented the Morning Star, and feathered bunches tied by hand-spun bush string and native bees wax represent each of the clans and their link to the Banumbirr.



Aleks Danko

Born 1950, Adelaide; lives and works
in Melbourne.

**The Danko 1971 Concept of
Sculpture. SCULPTURE as Being
the Elusive Object HA! 1971**

wood, steel, engraved trafelite and
canvas
Purchased with the assistance of
the Visual Arts Board of the Australia
Council, 1988

Conceptual art came to prominence in the 1960s as a practice in which ideas and actions take precedence over the making of objects. It originated in part in the 'readymade', the designation of found objects as artworks that Marcel Duchamp named in the 1910s. The humour inherent in Duchamp's strategy has given license to Aleks Danko to exercise his own wry observations on the turn towards conceptual art in Australia. In *The Danko 1971 Concept of Sculpture. SCULPTURE as Being the Elusive Object HA!*, he plays out the disappearance of the object from art by wrapping it, labelling it and putting it on a trolley—a 'post-object' ready for shipping elsewhere.



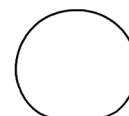
James Angus

Born 1970, Perth; lives and works in
Berkeley, CA, United States.

**Soccerball Dropped from 35,000
Feet 1999**

plaster
Purchased 2000

In the 1990s, James Angus pursued sculptural forms that created new versions of the physical world—art that looked, as he said, 'like it had been borrowed from real life, and that . . . might slip back at some point'. At the end of the decade, he began to work with computer-aided design to create hypothetical constructions, manipulating space as though it were soft and borderless. To realise *Soccerball Dropped from 35,000 Feet*, he made a three-dimensional scan of a ball to obtain a digital simulation that he could then subject to theoretical velocity and force in virtual space. The sculpture freezes the ball at the moment of its impact with the earth after it has been dropped from the cruising altitude of a passenger jet.



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Peter Cripps

Born 1948, Melbourne, where he lives and works.

Field Theory 1996

mirrors and synthetic polymer paint on wood
Purchased 1997

Peter Cripps began his career in the 1970s, a period in which minimalism and conceptualism were challenging the preceding forms of sculptural practice. The encounter between an object and its audience within the museum is at the centre of Cripps's installations, literally so in the case of *Field Theory*. As MUMA's former director Max Delany has noted:

Periscope-like structures alter the plane of the floor. They do not address themselves to the plane of the walls, which is the privileged domain of painting. Rather, the ground on which we stand is rendered problematic. The ground that has traditionally lent itself to the support of sculpture. And the audience.

Stuart Ringholt

Born 1971, Perth; lives and works in Melbourne.

Electric Arrow 2008

arrow and electrical fitting
Purchased 2009

For his 2008 exhibition *Low Sculpture* at Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, Stuart Ringholt fashioned unlikely combinations of ordinary objects. The works were effectively collages in three-dimensions: drink cans with spray can tops, a dart with its tip replaced by a paintbrush or several configurations of arrows plugged into power points, such as *Electric Arrow*. Ringholt's juxtapositions are humorous but also uncomfortable. Many of his projects deliberately provoke discomfort by transgressing socially accepted norms or by triggering the viewer's sense of their own vulnerability. *Electric Arrow* toys with one's trust in artworks not being physically harmful.

Geoff Kleem

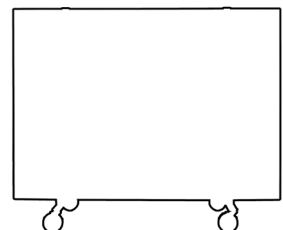
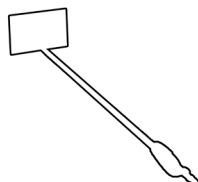
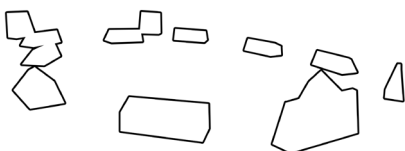
Born 1953, Young, NSW; lives and works in Sydney.

Three Minutes Ago 1998

synthetic polymer paint on wood, steel and wheels
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Rosemary Laing, 2012

Treating Minimalism as a point of departure, Geoff Kleem's work from the 1990s is characterised by seemingly industrial and utilitarian objects. These works relate to the artist's earlier photographs of industrial spaces, often spray-painted so as to resemble minimal monochromes in the finished image. *Three Minutes Ago* is a monochrome painting in sculptural form, mounted on factory-made wheels. Many of Kleem's works of the time were presented in this fashion, as he explained:

The addition of wheels implies a sense of utility or usefulness, reinforcing the notion that these works may be merely stalled as they pass either physically or conceptually between sites or states. The objects are carefully considered so they look logical, functional, banal—I like the implication of an underlying sense of logic to the pieces that they may have had or have some function.



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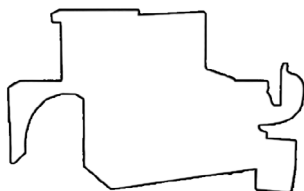
Ron Robertson-Swann

Born 1941, Sydney, where he lives and works.

Byzantium 1974

oxidised and varnished steel
Purchased 1974

Ron Robertson-Swann lived in London between 1962 and 1967, where he studied sculpture under Anthony Caro and Phillip King at St Martin's School of Art. At the time, St Martin's was at the forefront of the move towards abstract, formal and monochrome sculpture and assemblage, usually made of steel. The step motif in *Byzantium*, which appears in a number of Robertson-Swann's works, is both an abstract intersection of planes, consistent with the concerns of formalist sculpture, and an inevitable allusion to architecture. The title makes it specific to classical architecture—Byzantium (now Istanbul) was an ancient Greek city—and acknowledges the roots of western sculpture in Classical antiquity.



Nicholas Mangan

Born 1979, Geelong, Vic.; lives and works in Melbourne.

Colony 2005

axe, shovel and hammer handles; stained dowel, western red cedar, found teak forks and spoons, elk hair, nylon hair and jute
Purchased 2005

Nicholas Mangan has a longstanding interest in cycles of production and consumption, particularly in the Pacific region. *Colony* repurposes several categories of tools: handles of axes, shovels and hammers, and the teak forks and spoons popular as mid-twentieth-century tourist souvenirs catering to a Western taste for loosely amalgamated Pacific cultures. The former grouping implies destruction, extraction and construction. The latter, consumption. Sourced from thrift stores and opportunity shops, these items are transformed as if by social insects, so that the sculpture's title evokes both the name given to an insect community and the processes of lopsided exchange that characterise developed nations' consumption of resources, commodities and cultures.



Louise Paramor

Born 1964, Sydney; lives and works in Melbourne.

Black Snake 2000

paper, cardboard and adhesive
Purchased 2002

In 2000, Louise Paramor undertook an Australia Council residency at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, where she produced a number of large-scale, honeycomb paper sculptures that were shown in a series of exhibitions titled *Lustgarten*, including at the baroque Schloss Pillnitz, Dresden, and the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne. *Lustgarten* refers generally to a pleasure garden designed for public leisure and more specifically to a Berlin park dating back to the seventeenth century. For these sculptures, Paramor adopted a folding technique regularly used for festive decorations and exploited its sculptural potential. Supple and serpentine, *Black Snake* privileges playfulness and the ornamental over solidity and the monumental.



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Louise Weaver

Born 1966, Mansfield, Vic.; lives and works in Melbourne.

Much Deeping (Column with Growth) 2011

Japanese twentieth-century *tokonoma* bamboo pole, foam, fibreglass, epoxy resin, carbon fibre, wool, Lurex, metallic polyester and steel
Purchased by the Faculty of Science 2013

Louise Weaver is well known for the colourful, crochet-skinned sculptures of animals that she began making in the 1990s, underpinned by themes of change, adaptation, hybridity, artificiality and the natural world. *Much Deeping (Column with Growth)* repurposes a bamboo pole that was cultivated for use in a *tokonoma* (a formal alcove traditional to Japanese homes) and modified as it grew by the application of tight wires. In Weaver's hands, the repressed formation of the bamboo is given release in the slick black growth that has appeared, like an emanation from the subconscious. Its form recalls the distorted dolls of the twentieth-century German surrealist Hans Bellmer, and points to the strong influence of surrealism in Weaver's work.



Matt Hinkley

Born 1976, Narrandera, NSW; lives and works in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Untitled 2017

polyurethane resin and pigment
Purchased 2017

Matt Hinkley works at a minute scale, making resin objects that can easily go unnoticed. This untitled work constituted his entire solo exhibition at Sutton Gallery, Melbourne, in 2017 and could be considered as one of the artist's major works to date. Its components were made by casting both natural and fabricated objects that Hinkley collected on bike rides through rural areas of the Netherlands, where he lives. *Untitled* is permeated by the tension between chance and intention. The casting process involves fidelity to the original and installing the work also requires close adherence to documentation based on the chance piles of the objects on Hinkley's work table. The impression, however, is that these items, having been collected at random, have since been discarded and swept into the corner.



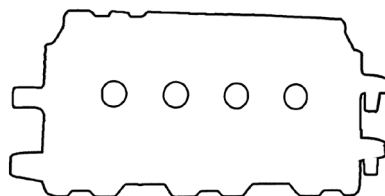
Jan Nelson

Born 1955, Melbourne, where she lives and works.

Defiance 2013

Forton and paint
Purchased 2020

Best known for her bright, photorealist paintings, Jan Nelson presented an exhibition in 2013 of just three sculptures at Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, titling it *Strange Days* after the 1967 album by The Doors. The sculptures combined symbols of 1960s counterculture with the more recent paraphernalia of the Occupy protests and environmental activism. *Defiance* is based on her photographs of an isolated water barrier in the Occupy Melbourne protesters' camp in Melbourne's City Square in 2011. Disconnected from its neighbours in the police barricade and rendered ineffective, it represented for Nelson how power can only be achieved when individuals join together. Nelson cast it in colourless polymer-modified gypsum, drained of its high-vis orange and retaining only its tag, 'Venom', reconstructed with street artist Sirum 1, as its expression of defiance.



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Inge King

Born 1915, Berlin, Germany; died
2016 in Melbourne.

Threshold 1983–84

painted steel

Purchased by Caulfield Campus 1988

After studying in Berlin and then
Glasgow in the tumultuous wartime
1930s and 1940s, Inge King
emigrated to Australia in 1951, where
she established her reputation as one
of the key exponents of modernist
sculpture. In the 1970s, King began
to receive commissions for the large-
scale public artworks for which she is
best known.

Threshold is one of a number of
works from the 1980s that combine
a sense of monumentality with a
calligraphic element. It is dominated
by a framing device that, counter to
the expectation that a sculpture be
seen from all angles, preferences
the view from one side to the other
through this aperture.

Related Programs

Exhibition Walkthroughs

Join us on three Saturdays during
the exhibition for informal exhibition
walkthroughs with participating
artists: **24 July, 21 August and 18
September, 3–5pm.**

MAKING SPACE

The education program MAKING
SPACE explores creative practice
and thinking in response to the works
on display in the three iterations of
the *Connecting the World through
Sculpture*. During the exhibition,
workshops will be led by artists
Donna Blackall, Tracey Lamb, Nabilah
Nordin, Vipoo Srivilasa and Meredith
Turnbull.

Monash University Museum of Art

Ground Floor, Building F
Monash University
Caulfield Campus
900 Dandenong Road
Caulfield East VIC 3145
Australia
+61 3 9905 4217
muma@monash.edu
monash.edu/muma

Opening Hours

Tue–Fri: 10am–5pm
Sat: 12–5pm
Closed Sun
Mon by appointment
Entry is always free

We acknowledge and pay respect to
the Traditional Owners and Elders—
past, present and emerging—of the
lands on which Monash University
operates. We acknowledge Aboriginal
connection to material and creative
practice on these lands for more than
60,000 years.

