

MUNDARING  
ARTS CENTRE

# SAFE KEEPING

SHIRE OF MUNDARING ACQUISITION EXHIBITION

27 MAR - 30 MAY 2021

# FORWARD

The annual Shire of Mundaring Art Acquisition Exhibition celebrates the role of the Shire's Art Collection as a record and resource for our community. *Safe Keeping* showcases work by artists who live, work or have a strong connection to the Shire of Mundaring, exploring local histories, relationships, and landscapes to provide an opportunity for us to collectively reflect on the challenging year that has passed.

A forced retreat from public space saw many artists experiment creatively with time spent in home studios. While others found the disruptions provoked re-evaluation or re-orientation of their practices and lives. These works provide a snapshot of this global moment from a local perspective living and working on Whadjuk Boodjar.

Following research into markings left by early settler tradespeople within hidden spaces of heritage houses; Amanda Alderson sees connections between the unknowns of a new colony, and current experiences of rapidly changing plans, restrictions and expectations. In her collection of precious wearable shields, Amanda asks: *How do you protect yourself from the unknown?* From her home studio, she has built a personal psychic infrastructure responding to everyday challenges she faces. These small tokens are heavy with meaning and potential in contrast to the vast, ever-renewing 'unknowns' they are designed to counter.

Ric Burkitt completed this painting while navigating the challenges of teaching graphic design online due to international border restrictions and local lockdowns. Spending time 'on call' lingering near his computer in case students required consultation, Ric set himself formal challenges to approach this work within small allocations of time. Working in a purely abstract fashion, he manufactured intentional disruptions challenging each stage of composition, working through periods of deep dissatisfaction until reaching a resolution. *The Borderline* of completion or ruin echoes personal challenges faced amidst demanding, isolated work circumstances managed during this last year.

Having worked from native flora as the stimulus for her rigorous papercut forms, these multi-panel works kept changing on Sarah Thornton-Smith as she made them across 2020. Highlighting connection despite separation, the arbitrary nature of boundaries and revaluation; these works resonate through process rather than representation. Sarah's use of modular framing, subtle colour palettes and cuts which have been left unfolded, allude to plans lost to changes in circumstance and possibilities yet to be revealed.

Iain Dean's works are drawn from a series exhibited at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery for the exhibition *The Long Kiss Goodbye* cut short by lockdowns in March 2020. They are a response to art history, to art practice and to personal conflicts thrown up by

creative life. Reading the titles of these works *Post-COVID*, they feel like premonitions of emotional upheaval and self-evaluations spurred by shifts in 2020. How do we process lost trajectories, dwindling purpose, reduced networks and unclear futures? Iain builds an emotional space around these works through untethered graphic symbols, evocative brushstrokes and purposeful colour palette. They feel both melancholy and light-hearted, capturing the ambivalence of internal crises.

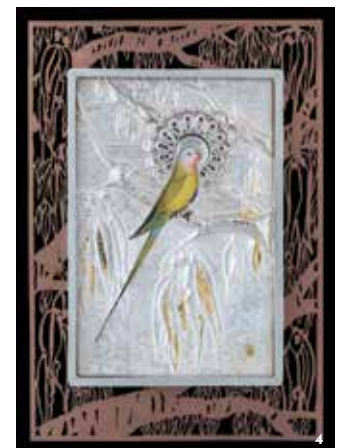
A passionate photographer for over 40 years, Philippa O'Brien draws on an extensive archive she has fastidiously collected from the John Forrest National Park. Photographs of local flora are overlaid with text from a Noongar language dictionary published in 1842. These large-scale digital prints play with erasure and loss due to colonial influence on Indigenous cultures. Alluding to the strata of histories that may be visible or unnoticed in our local area, and the potential for re-learning, Philippa's works are hopeful and invested in futures to come.

During the 2021 Wooroloo Bushfire, Bethamy Linton's property near Gidgegannup was evacuated and defended by firefighters. This fire felt like a bookend when paired with those in NSW and QLD that began in 2020. Reflecting on her proximity to damaged ecosystems Bethamy exhibits a series from 2018 depicting native bird species whose habitats are threatened. Illustrations drawn from a book published in 1978 by Peter Slater are treated like religious icons. Drawing on her family legacy of silversmithing, Bethamy has built up layers of preciousness surrounding these fragile paper birds. Crowned and encrusted with fine metals and jewels Bethamy advocates for their protection and preservation.

Since 1986, the Shire of Mundaring's acquisition of works for their Art Collection by local artists has built a treasury reflecting the values and concerns of this community. Cataloguing and preserving these artworks highlights the importance of local storytelling in strengthening communities, understanding our histories and thinking about what our futures might hold.

Looking around this exhibition there is a contrast between vast, large scale works and small detailed items - each with layers to get lost in. This feels emblematic of oscillations over the last 12 months, as our awareness has been drawn to big complex issues, while intimate personal circumstances have been just as involved. Maybe in sharing these complexities we can find a way through them together.

Melissa McGrath  
MAC Inc. Curator



## BIOGRAPHIES

AMANDA ALDERSON is a curator and artist, focussing on contemporary arts and cultural heritage. She works in diverse visual arts media (when time permits) creating and sharing through storytelling and meaning making. Amanda studied sculpture at the School of Art, Curtin University of Technology and interdisciplinary studies at the Western Australian School of Art, Design and Media, and has exhibited at the Biennale of Electronic Arts, Perth 2002 (BEAP02), John Curtin Gallery, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), Bandung Gallery, Indonesia, Ellenbrook Arts, Gomboc Sculpture Gallery, the Moores Contemporary Arts Building, Mundaring Arts Centre, Nyisztor Studio and the Bakery Artrage Arts Complex. She has worked in the WA visual arts industry for over 20 years, in positions at the John Curtin Gallery, SymbioticA, International Art Space (IASKA), the Biennale of Electronic Arts and Goddard de Fiddes Gallery. She is currently the Curator at the City of Wanneroo Art Gallery.

IAIN DEAN'S multidisciplinary practice spans painting, drawing, sculpture, and ceramics. With each, he plays with the tactile nature of materials in works that are often abstract and playful. Colour, texture, and form are important elements recently explored in his painted landscapes both real and imagined. His work is held in private and public collections in Australia. Iain has exhibited internationally in Denmark, Sweden, Paris, and New York, and extensively across Australia. He has been selected as a finalist for the 2015 Adelaide Perry Drawing Prize, Sydney NSW, in 2014 he was the winner of the Black Swan National Portrait Prize, Perth WA and in 2013 was selected as a finalist in the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize. In 2019 he undertook a mentorship with Melbourne-based painter and printmaker Brent Harris which was supported by the Australia Council for the Arts professional development grant.

Nestled in her studio in the Perth hills, surrounded by the unique West Australian landscape that inspires much of her work, BETHAMY LINTON offers bespoke handmade pieces to adorn the body or the table for commission and exhibition. A fourth-generation West Australian silversmith, Bethamy's interest in jewellery and metal object design began as a child during hours spent in the Linton family workshops with her grandfather, father, and uncle. At 16 Bethamy started formally working with her father making silver flatware and restoring antiques, later seeking an apprenticeship in fine jewellery. More recently, she has studied art, jewellery, and object design both formally and informally. Bethamy is also an accomplished and qualified teacher, who takes great pride in sharing the skills and techniques she has developed through her 25 years as a practicing silver and gold smith to students from beginners to those of advanced skill level.

PHILIPPA O'BRIEN is an artist and writer. Her work is in many collections including the Art Gallery of Western Australia, University of Western Australia, Janet Holmes á Court and Kerry Stokes collections. She has also worked extensively as a designer for theatre, ballet, and opera. Philippa has made large scale works in public spaces such as Kings Park, The Family Court, Mindarie Harbour, and the new town of Ellenbrook, where she has been a member of the design team, and has contributed significantly to the cultural development of Perth's eastern region. She has been a member of the Visual Arts Board of The Australia Council and is currently working on a book about WA colonial art. Philippa works from her Darlington studio focusing on printmaking, photography and painting in addition to many other research and public art projects.

RIC BURKITT is an artist, ex-graphic designer and part-time trainer (in graphic design and visual arts) at a private, international tertiary college. Primarily a painter, Ric works in a variety of styles and mediums from his studio in Stoneville. His current body of work explores the potential of abstract composition – through colour, line, shape, and texture - to make emotional connections with the viewer. He also paints representations of the nearby landscape, and figure studies, in both oils and acrylics. In 2018, he won the Ellenbrook Art Award for Painting, and in 2019 held a solo exhibition (*/INTERLUDE/*) at Juniper Galleries in Darlington. He is a member of the Mundaring Hills Open Studios group, and regularly participates in group shows around Perth.

SARAH THORNTON-SMITH is an artist and designer with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from Curtin University. When she arrived from Singapore in her teens, Sarah was struck by the quality of the light in Western Australia, which provided a contrast to her formative experience of light bound by tropical lushness. Her art practice gives her opportunities to explore the myriad of attributes of colour in the compositions and constructions she creates. Delicate and ephemeral, her works echo the intimacy of the processes she engages with, and the temporary nature of her feelings through which memory is created. Influenced by rhythmic beats of music, words or ideas, Sarah's works often stem from direct observations of nature via photographic documentation and field study illustrations. Sarah has exhibited extensively across Australia and has work held in the Kerry Stokes Art collection and many private collections.

## IMAGES

Cover: Sarah Thornton-Smith, *Dis/Connected Series 1*, 2020, gouache on paper.

1. Amanda Alderson, *Shield: protect* (work in progress), 2019 - 2020, brass, titanium, 925 silver, hemp, wool, wood, ceramic and glass beads, glass eye, wax, copper, enamel.
2. Iain Dean, *Down and out in bad ideas*, 2020, oil on canvas.
3. Bethamy Linton, *Western Whip Bird (icon), Rare and Vanishing Australian Birds series*, 2018, hand cut titanium, fine and sterling silver, tourmaline, black and white diamonds and gold leaf, giclee print on archival paper, original image by Peter Slater reproduced with permission of the artist.
4. Bethamy Linton, *Princess Parrot (icon), Rare and Vanishing Australian Birds series*, 2018, hand cut titanium, fine and sterling silver, ruby, garnet, diamonds and gold leaf, giclee print on archival paper, original image by Peter Slater reproduced with permission of the artist.
5. Sarah Thornton-Smith, *60 Degrees Inside*, 2020, gouache on paper.
6. Ric Burkitt, *The Borderline*, 2020, acrylic on canvas.
7. Philippa O'Brien, *Language of the land* (detail), 2021, digital print.



7190 GREAT EASTERN HIGHWAY MUNDARING WA 6073

T: 08 9295 3991 | [INFO@MUNDARINGARTSCENTRE.COM.AU](mailto:INFO@MUNDARINGARTSCENTRE.COM.AU)

OPEN TUE - FRI 10AM - 5PM, SAT - SUN 11AM - 3PM | CLOSED PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

[MUNDARINGARTSCENTRE.COM.AU](http://MUNDARINGARTSCENTRE.COM.AU)



Mundaring Arts Centre respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we operate, the Whadjuk people, as well as other First Australians connected with this land. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present.