

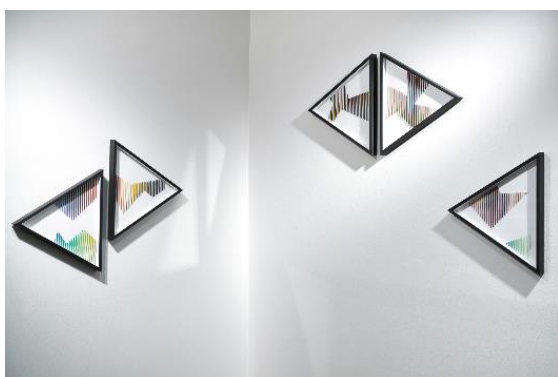
Charting local histories, relationships, and landscapes, the 2021 Shire of Mundaring Acquisition Exhibition, *Safe Keeping* on display at Mundaring Arts Centre until 30 May, provides an opportunity to reflect collectively on the challenging year that has passed.

A forced retreat from public spaces and refocussing on local community networks throughout the last year allowed many artists to experiment and reflect creatively through time spent in home studios. The works in *Safe Keeping* provide a snapshot of this global moment, from the perspective of local artists Amanda Alderson, Iain Dean, Bethamy Linton, Philippa O'Brien, Ric Burkitt and Sarah Thornton-Smith.

Safe Keeping also celebrates the role of the Shire's art collection as a record and resource for the Mundaring community reflecting the importance of arts and culture in strengthening communities. Established in 1985, the Shire of Mundaring Art Collection is a unique and richly varied body of artworks and the continued acquisition of work by artists with a significant connection to the region demonstrates the strong links between Mundaring Arts Centre and the community.

This annual exhibition is the primary source of new acquisitions for the Shire's art collection, and this year it is strengthened by the acquisition of work by Amanda Alderson, Bethamy Linton, Philippa O'Brien and Sarah Thornton-Smith. Their work joins a diverse array of paintings, works on paper, photography, textiles and sculpture in the collection and will sit alongside work by renowned artists such as Robert Juniper, David Gregson and Guy Grey Smith.

Shire of Mundaring President John Daw said the Shire had a long-standing tradition of investing in the arts. "This year, more than ever, we are cognisant of the impact COVID-19 has had on artists and the arts sector as a whole," he said. "We are pleased to partner with Mundaring Arts Centre to showcase local talent and I hope all community members have a chance to experience, and learn from, this fascinating exhibition before the end of May."



Sarah Thornton-Smith, *60 Degrees Inside*, 2020, gouache on paper, 47 x 47 x 4 cm each. Photograph by Rebecca Mansell.

The work of Bethamy Linton, a fourth-generation silversmith with a longstanding family ties to the hills area, brings great significance and many layers of history to the collection. Her work *Western Whip Bird (icon)*, from the *Rare and Vanishing Australian Birds series*, 2018, displays exquisite artisanship, drawing on traditional religious decorative arts, whilst mourning the loss of natural habitats and bird life across generations.

Spurred by challenges faced personally and by communities more broadly across 2020, Sarah Thornton-Smith's work, *60 Degrees Inside*, 2020, illustrates the difficulties of maintaining connection and intention in the face of disruptions, with a genuine willingness to embrace imperfections and keep moving forward.



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, 10 x 10 cm, 61 x 34.5 cm framed. Photograph by Rebecca Mansell.



A collection of shields arranged as if in an armoury, ready for battle, Amanda Alderson's work *shield: protect (brass, titanium)*, 2019-2021, highlights the ways in which women use clothing and jewellery as protection in public and professional settings. Cr Amy Collins who made up the selection panel alongside Mundaring Arts Centre Inc. Chair Jenny Kerr, Director Jenny Haynes and Curator Melissa McGrath observed that "this work is unlike any currently held in the Shire's Art Collection, and it caused a reflection on 2021 as a landmark women's year".

Amanda Alderson, *shield: protect (brass, titanium)* (detail), 2019-2021, brass, titanium, sterling silver, hemp, wool, wood, ceramic and glass beads, glass eye, wax, 64 x 124 cm. Photograph by Rebecca Mansell.

Philippa O'Brien's work *Language of the Land 1*, 2021, joins four paintings created by the artist in the late 1980's and early 1990's in the Shire of Mundaring Art Collection. O'Brien is a senior artist who has made a long and deep contribution to the cultural development of the Shire of Mundaring, Mundaring Arts Centre and the Perth's eastern region more broadly. Part of a suit of large prints of photographs taken by O'Brien in John Forrest National Park and layered with words from a Noongar language dictionary published in 1842, *Language of the Land 1* speaks of erasures of both local culture and the natural environment. The acquisition of this example of O'Brien's current practice in digital media and cultural research adds great value to the Shire of Mundaring Art Collection in its desires for the future to provide reclamation, autonomy and celebration for First Nations people.



Philippa O'Brien, *Language of the Land 1*, 2021, digital print on Canson paper, 111.5 x 157 cm. Photograph by Rebecca Mansell.

Alderson, Linton, O'Brien and Thornton-Smith will be joined by Ric Burkitt, Iain Dean and Curator Melissa McGrath on Saturday 15 May for an afternoon of artist talks and to share insights into the ways that the global shifts in 2020 impacted their lives, creative practices and communities. *Safe Keeping* is on display until 30 May.

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Mundaring Arts Centre | Tuesday – Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday & Sunday 11am-3pm
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