

REVEAL



REVEAL

19 MAR - 19 APR 2020

A peek at our City's Treasures; past, present and future.

We've pulled back the curtain and opened the doors to reveal the City's treasures for you to see. Join us on opening night and discover the changing identity of your City expressed by our historical, civic and contemporary art collections.

We'll be debuting new works to the collection, including a Mirka Mora which has been on loan to the Heide Museum of Modern Art, a photograph by Leilani Fuimaono, a painting by Sue Anderson, and a new collaborative work created by Jessie Deane and community members. We'll have our Michael Cooks juxtaposed with our Wyndham landscapes in an exhibition that will have something for everyone.

Meet us there and we'll show you around!

Wyndham City acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which Wyndham Art Gallery stands and we pay our respects to their elders, past and present.

Wyndham Art Gallery
Great Art. Deep West.

Image (Cover) : Anne Scott Wilson - *Altona*

Image (Left) : Michael Cook - *Giant Birds*



REVEALING REVEAL

Curator's Note by Dr. Megan Evans

From Gaye Bonham's classical representation of the Werribee Mansion *Morning Light* rendered in watercolour, to the photograph *Giant Birds* from Michael Cook's Invasion series, REVEAL will proudly display the diverse and exciting Visual Art collection of Wyndham City Council.

The vaults of the art storeroom are bare as we highlight works that haven't been seen for quite some time. Some works that may

Image (Left): Mirka Mora - *Young devil with Rabbit*

Image (Right): Robert Chirnside Portrait

be familiar are juxtaposed with works less seen, providing a new context for viewing.

Kylie Stillman's work *Remains* was collected when she was still a local artist. It's a compilation of trashy SVU or Sweet Valley University novels about love and heartbreak, used as a canvas for her beautiful image of a leaf that has been cut, page by page, into the facing pages of the books. They can only be seen when left in a pile, as they would be if remaindered in a bookstore. The irony of the work is not lost on the viewer, that the out of date and seriously rubbishy text has been printed on the paper made from trees whose carved leaf is what 'remains'. Kylie is a well-known and collectable artist that adds to the value of our collection.

Ricardo Pereya is an emerging local artist whose work has a similar poignancy to it. A head carved from Tasmanian Huon pine, sits on a carved limestone base. The title is *Head full of memories resting on a memory foam pillow*. The eyes are shut, could they





be remembering when the Huon pines of Tasmania were plentiful.

Spargo Creek and *Gumtrees* are skilfully rendered in oils by Hugh Guthrie. These large paintings are what were once called 'chocolate box paintings' however now in the age of retro when everything old is new again you can see these kinds of painting in the very best and coolest coffee bars in town. These works along with *Near Beechworth* by John Falzon are a beautiful testament to the history of the Australian Impressionist painters who painted the landscapes around Eltham and the Yarra Valley.

Fiona Hall is one of Australia's best-known artists. She represented Australia with *Wrong Way Time* at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015. Her work *Cross Purposes* represents the intersection between Britain and Australia since colonisation. The work is a lithographic print of an Australian ten-pound note crossed with an English note of the same denomination. There is a leaf

Image (Left): Camille Hannah- *Lux Aeterna*

Image (Right): Helen Pallikaros - *Daughters of Mourning*
(centre panel of triptych)



from a coolabah tree across the Australian note and an oak leaf across the English one. Both leaves are connected to the identity of the countries of origin. The notes have been crossed and interwoven to indicate the crossroads we were at in 2003, when the work was made, and we were looking at becoming a republic.

Crossroads by Rover Thomas shows a different perspective. Rover Thomas was born in the Great Sandy Desert in 1926. He is one of the well-known early painters from the desert region and was known for his connection to the East Kimberley School which he is credited with starting. This work is part of the *Crossroads millennium portfolio of Australian Aboriginal artists 1997-99* which includes 11 other prints.¹ Wyndham owns a set of these and they can be seen around council venues. Thomas's print shows an aerial view which is a common way that artists of his genre view the landscape.

Alternatively, the European way of seeing the landscape is as though through a lens. In painting it is called the picture plane which goes back to the invention of perspective in which the horizon line holds a point that all lines recede to. *Civic Centre Werribee* by Les Young is a good example of this technique. This beautiful little painting depicts the early iteration of the Wyndham Council building and allows us to see the architectural changes as our community has grown. To a lesser degree the use of perspective can be seen in *Red Cliffs Werribee South* by Gaye Bonham. The famous red cliffs recede in size as the Werribee river curves away into the distance. These paintings show the more conventional side of our collection and are a valuable reminder of an earlier era when Werribee was the centre of Wyndham and the identity was shaped by a more agricultural impression. These include Will Carrington's *Leaning Gum* and *Quiet Countryside* that depict trees like the beautiful river red gums that populate the Werribee river. Janet Baird's *Platypus* is a reminder of the population that lives in the river and can be seen in increasing numbers today.



Image: Steve Walker - Saw

As the population of Wyndham has grown our identity is also changing to include a broader community that welcomes the expressions of new arrivals to Wyndham from across the globe. We have the fifth largest community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of any Victorian Council. Michael Cook's large-scale photographs are part of our more recent contemporary art collection that speak to the untold histories of our country. Purchased from his larger collection titled *Invasion* Michael brings a humorous touch to a challenging history. Huge sulphur crested cockatoos in *Giant Birds* terrify commuters emerging from an underground in a very British cityscape and possums fly in on alien like ships in *UFO Possums*, with destruction in mind. These photographs invite us to question the 'settlement' stories that are at the foundation of non-Aboriginal Australian culture.

Humour is also used in Sal Cooper's video *ART vs SPORT* where the artist is seen playing badminton on the sea-shore as the water level rises, seemingly unaware of her increasingly impossible situation. This idea is echoed in Penelope Davies beautiful sculptures of jellyfish made from latex, created in moulds of various household implements. These works hang as a quiet reminder of the encroaching warming of the oceans and the consequent environmental disasters this will bring.

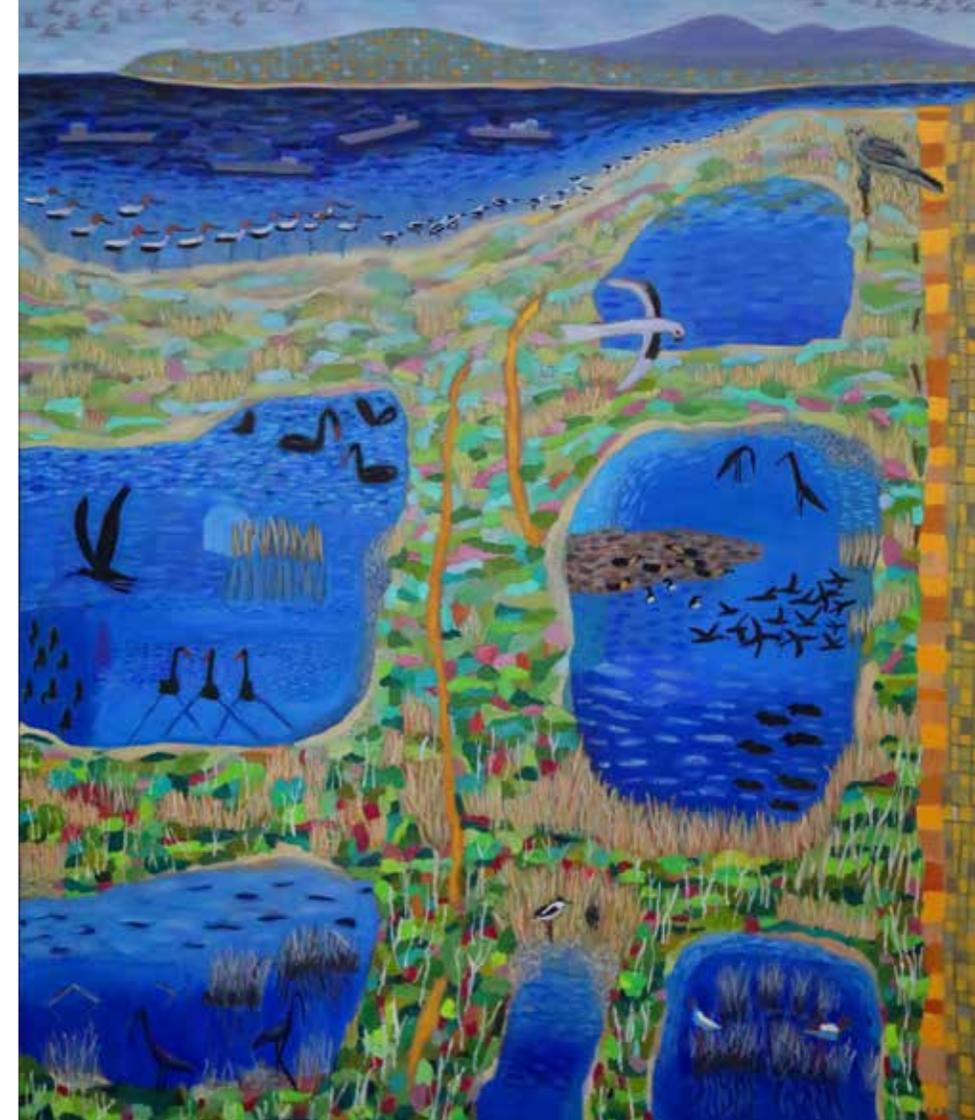
Robert Chirnside's photograph harks back to the early days of colonisation and echoes the men who once were leaders in this region. Women have increasingly made space for themselves in government roles. Kathy Vafiadis pays homage to one of them in her work, *Portrait of Joanne Ryan, MP* for the seat of Lalor that encompasses Wyndham. Joanne was influential in the community protests against the toxic dump being sited in Werribee in 1996 and successfully led the "No Toxic Dump" campaign which Kathy was a passionate campaigner for.

Altona is represented in a sensitive work by Anne Scott Wilson. A large-scale photographic print is part of a series of works Anne did in 2012 that began in an exhibition at the Wyndham Art Gallery titled *EXPERIMENT*. Anne and Meryn Trevathan were commissioned to make work without a brief or

expectations from the curator. This gave these two already accomplished artists the rare opportunity to prioritise experimentation through an exhibition. Scott Wilson took a series of photographs using a pin hole in a digital camera, combining old and new photographic techniques. The beautiful atmospheric prints she produced were a combination of happy accidents and clever manipulation of light and her work went on to explore these considerations as a result of this opportunity. She generously donated some of the smaller work to our council collection.

Experimentation can also be seen in the work of Shuklay Tahpo and Mu Naw Poe who created *Trees with Flowers in this free country* and *Looking for my white brother* from a

Image: Sue Anderson - Bird Habitat Western Treatment Plant





series of workshops with experienced tapestry artist Sarah Lindsay in 2015. She showed these women how to do traditional tapestry using unravelled jumpers found in opportunity shops. From these humble materials they created these colourful marvels that now form part of our collection.

Aubrey Comben's stunning black and white photographs of people and places in Werribee South came about after many hours building relationships with local fishermen and gardeners. Aubrey's family name can be seen on street signs around Wyndham and in the history books of the area. His great grandfather used to drive a fruit and veggie cart around Werribee in the very early days of European occupation. Sue Anderson is his mother and although her family roots don't go so far back, as a long-time resident of Point Cook, she has a deep love of the area. Her work *Bird Habitat Western Treatment*

Image (Left): Fiona Hall - *Cross Purpose*

Image (Right): Hugh Guthrie - *Gumtrees*





Image - Rosemarie Reber - *Oopsee Daisee Series*



Plant shows a lyrical representation of the ponds at the WTP which have been the source of shame for some in the past, due to their being part of the sewage farm. They are now better known as a site for 'twitchers' from around the world as people travel to bird watch in the area. Sue's paintings of the encroachment of the city and the suburbs towards her family home and studio in Point Cook documents in art the changes to the landscape she has seen over a thirty-year period which is evident in her other painting *Rosellas*.

Our collection of small sculptures is growing with the addition of several talented local artists.

Clive Gono who is a senior sculptor originally from Zimbabwe has a work in the collection titled *Bonding Relationships* showing two limestone heads bound together with something like a gordion knot. Jonathan Mendez Baute has two works both of which are created with deft, yet untrained hands. Jonathan has had no formal training which is belied by the realism and fine detail he produces in his sculpture *Still*. A non-gender specific human character sits astride a rhinoceros in a pose that is unreadable giving it a

Image: Julian Cornish - *Mountain Ash*

curious air that the viewer can project their own meaning onto. *Daughters of Mourning Triptych* by Helen Pallikaros is another work which can be read in many ways. On show is one of a triptych. The model is covered in white ochre and her face is almost covered by long red hair. Is it a beard or a wig? What does it mean? Art that leaves an open interpretation for the viewer is both exciting and intimidating for the novice viewer.

Many people think that there is a definite meaning behind works of art and in some cases, there are, however in many cases artists don't know themselves what their work is actually about until long after they make the work. It can be a personal revelation for them to look back and understand what they have made. Audiences should feel free to make whatever they like of a work of art. There are no fixed interpretations and any response is valid. Not understanding this is something that sometimes limits people from participating in the world of visual art and being reluctant to enter a gallery. Ask yourself the question, 'What do I think this is about?' rather than 'Do I like it?' It is a much

Image: Kylie Stillman - *The Remains*





more useful question and allows for an interaction with the art and the artist that goes beyond a quick judgement, opening up thinking, providing what art does best, has one think new thoughts!

Wyndham City Council's collection is broader than the works in REVEAL so look out for old and new works in community centres around Wyndham and at the Civic Centre when you visit. Feel free to take some selfies in front of your favourite pieces.

¹ <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/82550/>

Image (Left): Kat Jarra Butler - *Ngamurru*
Image (Right): wāni - *Welcome to Country* (video still)





CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

How the odd objects we've collected reflect on us.

**Curator's Note by
Caroline Esbenschade**

Part of Wyndham's extensive Visual Arts Collection is its civic collection, a variety of objects acquired from a variety of means. Some are historical, some gifts, and others have just found a home with us over the years.

Most of the pieces are from overseas – including those exchanged through the Sister City Project. This program creates a formal relationship between local governments for an ongoing exchange of people, ideas and resources to encourage cultural, economic and educational outcomes. Wyndham has long standing relationships with Chiryu, Japan; Costa Mesa, California and most recently Changzhou, China

Image (Left): Silk Scarf

Image (Right): Gaye Bonham - *Morning Light*





of whom they regularly correspond with.¹

What's first to grab your attention for most of the objects isn't them themselves, but what they come in. Many come in gorgeous packaging. Wooden boxes or ones finished in brocade fabrics that feature hinged lids, fastenings, and jewel hued satin linings. The containers are objects d'art themselves. When they're all laid out a sense of superiority over Pandora herself arises - she only had one box to snoop in!

One piece especially is elevated from being a souvenir by its packaging. Peeking out at us over the red velvet rim of the coffer it's nestled in, a wooden elephant gains allure from the luxury of the container and being partially obscured from view. Presented bare on a plinth it wouldn't be nearly as enticing. Snug in their cases, the objects become hidden treasures, even if they are a bit odd. Each box you open, you have no

Image: Jonathan Mendez-Baute - Still

idea what you're going to get. In one a scarf or dress, another a teacup, scroll, or a glass paperweight in the shape of an oil lamp.

The scarves and fabric are a pragmatic gift choice. They're unlikely to break in transit but conversely more cumbersome items become more curious in comparison. The large decorative silk ball, or *Goten-mari* (also called a *Temari*) is a perfect example. This folk craft originated as a practical way to recycle old *kimonos*² into a child's toy. However, the utilitarian aspect fell by the wayside with the introduction of rubber and eventually what was a practical solution became a decorative art form. Today *Goten-mari* are given as gifts to symbolise loyalty and friendship. Obviously, ours was a gift to convey a desire for a lot loyalty and a strong friendship.^{3,4}

This assortment of objects, so varied and presented as one, recalls the beginning of all modern-day collections and museums - the 'cabinet of curiosities'. '*Wunderkammern*' – literally cabinets of wonders; were rooms or actual cabinets assembled by the elite to house collections of natural and man-made objects. The individuals accumulating the objects hoped that their collection would deepen their understanding of the

Image: Elephant Wood Carving





world, especially through contemplating the relationships between the objects that arose through their presentation – what we now call curating.⁵

Collecting as a behaviour taps into the nucleus accumbens, the brain's pleasure centre. The anticipation is what originally fuels the urge to gather but then secondary motivators kick in. Such as creating a sense of order, as an intellectual practice, or in our city's case - to feel a connection temporally. Collecting allows Wyndham an avenue to connect to the past while simultaneously building a legacy.^{6,7}

Presented alongside our Contemporary and Historical art collections, the Civic collection is more than just odd mementos we've amassed as a community. It's the sentimental facet of our collective personality. Through this collection we display our connection to our roots, to our community, and our desire for international relationships. It presents our priorities for now and the future, that we want global and local connections on an interpersonal level – not just through strategies and KPIs.⁸

As our history and story as a city changes, our collection will reflect that. Our Visual Art Collection, comprised of our historical, civic and contemporary collections; reveals our aims, priorities, and our aspirations. What do our odd, civic

Image (Left): Porcelain tea cup with gold details

Image (Right): Aubrey Comben - *Dugga 4*



objects say about us? They say that we appreciate friendship, multi-culturalism, history... and fancy boxes.¹⁰

¹<https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/about-council/your-council/sister-city-project>

²The kimono is a traditional Japanese garment, and the national dress of Japan.

³<http://www.pref.yamagata.jp/ou/shokokanko/110010/kogei-hin-en/cate11-07.html>

⁴<https://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/temari>

⁵<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/approaches-to-art-history/understanding-museums/a/a-brief-history-of-the-art-museum-edit>

⁶<https://www.kcpinternational.com/2012/09/temari/>

⁷<https://www.mdmag.com/physicians-money-digest/columns/my-money-md/04-2016/the-psychology-of-collecting>

⁸<https://www.mdmag.com/physicians-money-digest/columns/my-money-md/03-2016/why-we-collect>

⁹KPIs, or Key Performance Indicators is a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively a company is achieving key business objectives. Organizations use KPIs to evaluate their success at reaching targets.

¹⁰Fancy box appreciation may not be reflective of the community or city's viewpoint but rather a personal notion of the author.

Image(left): Pierre Mukeba- *Neglected Beauty*

Image (Right): Various boxes and gifts of the civic collection



Go Deeper:

A series of experiences that offer a deeper insight into the exhibition and creative practices.



Curators In Conversation

REVEAL

Join us in the gallery for a guided tour and an open discussion between co-curators Dr. Megan Evans and Caroline Esbshade about the exhibition, the work in our collection, and our vision for the future of our city's cultural life as expressed through the visual arts.

They'll be joined by Christine Menegazzo, long time resident and art lover, who will moderate and offer up her own knowledge of Wyndham's history.

THU 02 APR 2020
6:00pm - 8:00pm

Sunday Salon

Learn a variety of techniques and experiment with watercolours at Wyndham Art Gallery in this relaxed, open to all experiences workshop.

Feeling inspired after visiting the REVEAL Wyndham Art Gallery? Why not join local artist Xiang Li for a watercolour workshop in the gallery where you can embrace Wyndham City's art collection through your own creations. Led by Xiang Li, a watercolour and oil painter who specialises in landscapes and abstraction, this workshop is designed to impart the nuances of watercolour painting.

Light snacks and all materials provided, Children 12 years and older are welcome.
Bookings are essential \$10

SUN 29 MAR
1:00pm - 4:00pm

wyndhamarts.eventbrite.com

Image: Wim Kortland - Port Phillip





#deepwest
wyndham.vic.gov.au/arts

wyndhamcity