

**GREG JOHNS**

*landings*



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GREG JOHNS

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COVER:  
AT THE CENTRE (THERE IS NOTHING) DETAIL, 2009  
IRONSTONE  
130 X 130 X 70 CM

PATTERN III, 2009  
CORTEN STEEL  
350 X 350 X 270 CM  
PRIVATE COLLECTION,  
BUNGENDORE, NSW



Imagine that images of all Greg Johns' work were to be presented in a dissolve sequence, earliest to latest work. A series of horizontal forms, first triangular then linear, whipping like a loose fire hose with wave energy gradually picking themselves up off the ground alternately spinning and spiraling or coalescing into circles which break and reform. Spiral nebulae rotate before collapsing into twinned vertical spirals, which shiver with kinetic energy. Squares suddenly morph into circles. A visored figure emerges slender and insistent as a dagger. It dives, swoops or hovers like a ministering angel. Outstretched arms boil with activity; muscles ripple like a shaken carpet and flames lick at the edges; a single animated form writhes and thrashes like a creature at war within itself. Then a slow exhalation as the figure slides to the ground ripening like the swollen belly of a Boab tree. Tendrils sprout from the arms and take root in stony ground. Seed pods rear upwards to become the rampant prow of a boat run aground, then a salt-laden land surfer skimming away from the coast lured by a spinning mandalic sun.

Of course in real life such things don't happen. Viewers of any of the artist's solo exhibitions will undoubtedly look from one work to another and note if anything the diversity of forms. Thus in this exhibition one encounters figurative forms alongside non-representational forms such as asymmetrical circles and wave-like fugal forms. Those more familiar with Johns' work will recognise that some, less figurative forms, initially emerged in the early 1980s.

This raises the question of why the artist would choose to exhibit recently created work within a context of ideas formulated much earlier. The artist has once remarked that he sees his solo exhibitions "as a challenging time, when recently investigated conceptual/visual material is revealed for the first time and ongoing developments are refined and further evaluated. I like the notion of travelling backwards and forwards (and sometimes sideways) in the continuing development of my sculpture."

The key point here is that Johns' practice or creative journey is not based on some linear trajectory which tends to leave previous or earlier work in its wake. His work has always been based on enduring ideas that for Johns are capable of being re-visited and re-explored. Central to this ideas base has remained the idea of everything being interconnected. He has stated that, "Holistic notions are clearly a central paradigm at the heart of my sculpture. It is an area of philosophical investigation which does not view the world solely in a mechanistic, random fashion...It presents a paradigm where interconnectedness, patterning, symbolism, timelessness, the unfolding of subtler and more complex systems, questions of spirit as well as physical systems and randomness all exist in an integrated manner."

In the process of what the artist describes as his "investigations", Johns has developed sculptural forms and motifs that are visual metaphors for his belief that everything in the cosmos from sub-atomic particles to individual lives, entire human societies and cosmic galaxies are interconnected. By the early 1990s related investigations had become reflexively embedded in his practice as an operating principle of art based on nature's governing systems. In broad terms, he sees these systems as change, interconnection and complexity.

What makes this process particularly interesting is that over the last decade his work has become more 'inland-centric', motivated to a significant degree by the artist's purchase of and sculptural engagement with a rainshadow rural property at Palmer, east of Adelaide. Here in this bare-boned environment sculptural forms developed years earlier from deliberations on particle theory and archetypal spirit shapes representing the presence of humanity in Australia, both past and present, sit side by side, as they do in this exhibition.

The Yin Yang dynamics of *Pattern 11* reflect pattern-based investigations of the mid 1980s which give expression to the idea of meaning being found in a chain of events rather than in random, individual occurrences. As one walks around this work it also manifests in its constantly unfolding and 'flip-flopping' viewpoints the idea of infinite change within a closed system. Similar perspectives can be applied to *Guardian Figure* with its referencing of a fugal melodic theme subject to constant imitation and overlay and even to the more asymmetrical, *Wavering Circle*. The journey to the outer reaches of what is possible or imaginable is extended in *Beyond the Flatlanders (Woven/Interwoven)* in which the artist's most faithful of companions, the fractal Y-form unit, is entrusted with the task of creating what can be best described as 'worm-holes' in notional space. Such works represent a key disposition in Johns' practice, to explore the unexplorable, that speculative zone that defines artists and scientists in a common quest to understand the nature of existence. And when scientific logic as a tool of enquiry is not sufficient there is always poetic insight as seen in the cosmic dancing of the artist's magnificent *Whirling Mandala* visually boosted by the constantly writhing linear pathway created by the interlinked Y-units.

In fact the circular mandalic form can be taken as the ideal metaphor to approach and appreciate Johns' work. It can be entered at any point and run in either direction and it signposts the polarities in the artist's work which create a sense of dialogue between the particular and the general. The artist's sustained focus on the figure into the 1990s corresponded with a gathering interest in the Australian landscape. What we see in a number of recent works included in this exhibition is an evolution of ideas that can be traced to the authoritative *Floating Figure* and similar figurative works of the 1990s which embody cross-cultural traditions of archetypal spirit figures as well as an affirmation of wave particle principles underlying appearances.

The tendril-like extremities of *Horizon Figure* and the 'piled-rock character of *Mentor (The Old Mob)* are indicators of trends which emerged in Johns' investigations within the last decade in which questions about relationship with place and the Australian inland in particular were emerging. The 'rocks' in *Mentor* are inspired by ridge escarpments observed while travelling inland. The drooping extremities of *Shedding Figure* reference the appearance and action of bark stripping from a tree. Most recently this idea of being defined by real, local events and environments has taken a biographical twist in *Monument to Mulga Bill and Neighbour*, in which Johns reflects on the lessons of his own grandfather's (William Johns) 1911 extraordinary encounter with an Aboriginal man (known as Neighbour and also recorded as Mallyalewga and Aya-i-gal).

Herein lies the uniqueness, authenticity and poetry of Johns' sculptural work; its ability to evoke infinity while acknowledging the here, the now and the personal.

John Neylon 2010

John Neylon is an Adelaide-based independent arts writer and curator. He is the author of *Horizon, Greg Johns Sculptures 1977 – 2002 (Macmillan 2002)*, the curator of *Patterns of Thought, a survey exhibition of Greg Johns' work, McClelland Gallery + Sculpture Park, Victoria, 2006/2007*, and is currently writing a new book on the artist to be published by Australian Art Resources.



HORIZON FIGURE, 2009  
CORTEN STEEL  
350 X 600 X 150 CM  
SCULPTURE BY THE SEA,  
AARHUS, DENMARK





MENTOR (THE OLD MOB), 2010  
CORTEN STEEL  
240 X 89 X 9 CM



LIGHTNING FIGURE, 2010  
CORTEN STEEL  
240 X 36 X 34 CM





MONUMENT TO MULGA BILL & NEIGHBOUR, 2010  
CORTEN STEEL  
195 X 80 X 50 CM



HORIZON FIGURE 1, 2009  
CORTEN STEEL, IRONSTONE  
210 X 422 X 20 CM





MENTOR (THE OLD MOB), 2008–2009  
CORTEN STEEL,  
99 PIECES ASSEMBLED BY HAND  
240 X 115 X 57 CM



AT THE CENTRE (THERE IS NOTHING), 2009  
IRONSTONE  
130 X 130 X 70 CM  
TOP: FRONT VIEW  
BELOW: SIDE VIEW





RETURNING FIGURE  
2010  
MILD STEEL  
69 X 4.5 X 6 CM

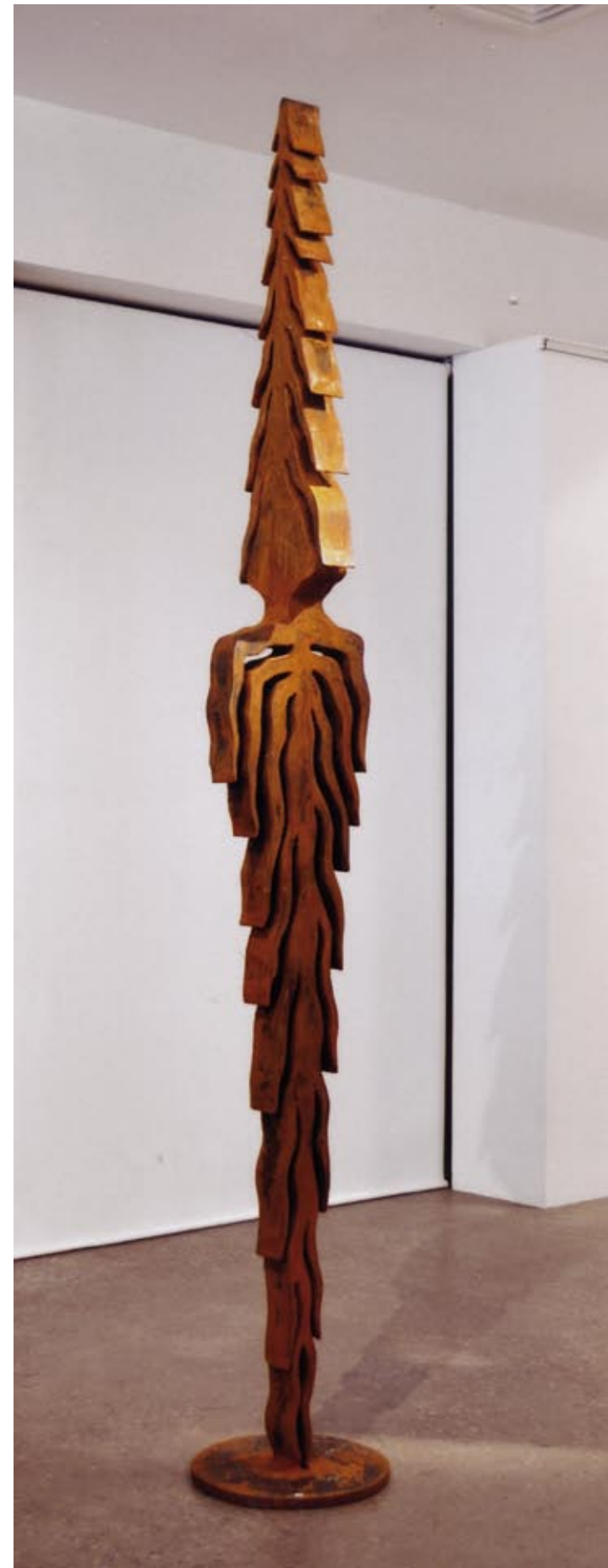


HORIZON FIGURE  
2010  
CORTEN STEEL  
114 X 24 X 144 CM





EMERGING-MERGING FIGURE  
2009  
CORTEN STEEL  
117 X 96 X 40 CM

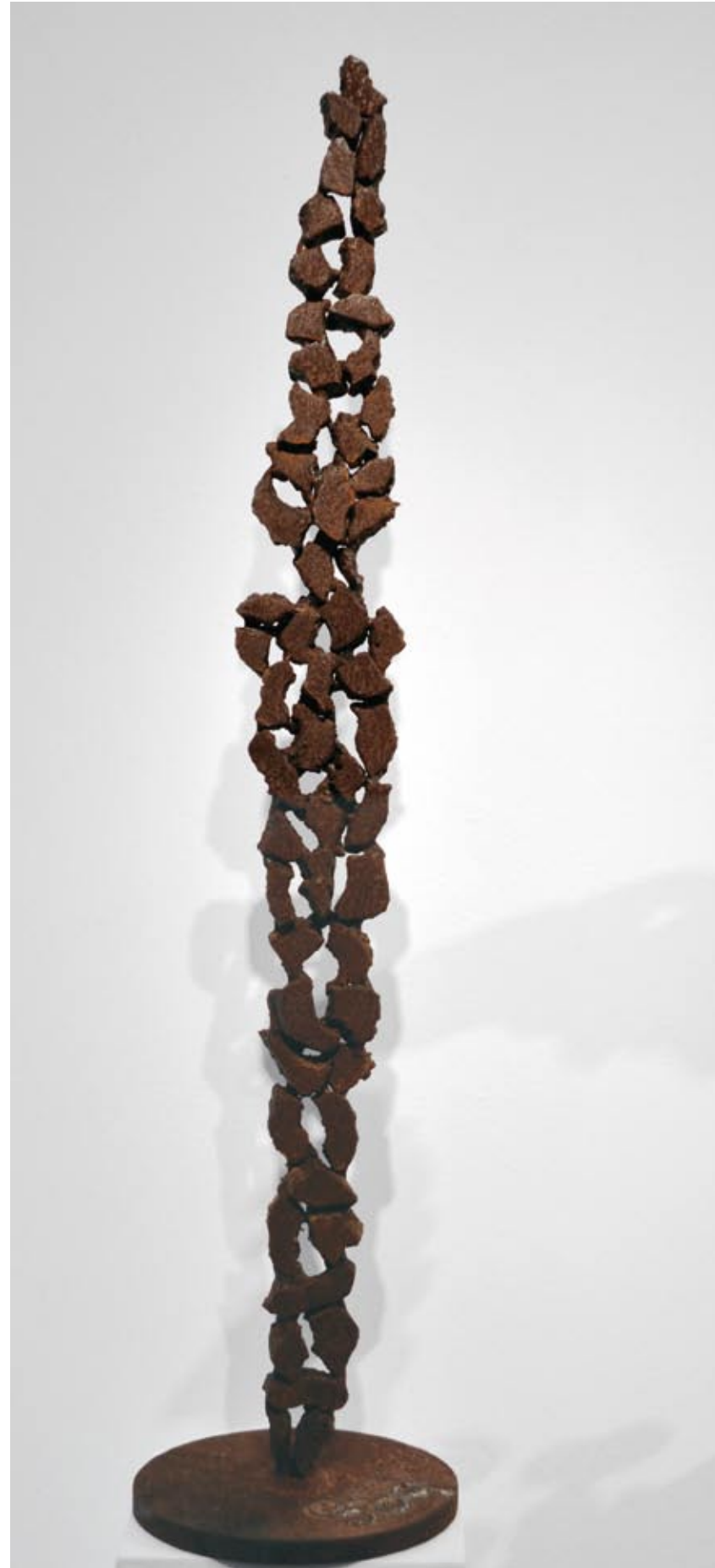


SHEDDING FIGURE  
2009-2010  
CORTEN STEEL  
225 X 37 X 38 CM





DRY COUNTRY MANDALA, 2010  
MILD STEEL  
45 X 65 X 9.5 CM  
TOP: FRONT VIEW  
BELOW: SIDE VIEW



MENTOR (THE OLD MOB MAQUETTE), 2009  
MILD STEEL  
75 X 6.5 X 9 CM





WOVEN-INTERWOVEN  
(BEYOND THE FLATLANDERS), 2009  
MILD STEEL  
60 X 150 X 86 CM



WAVERING CIRCLE, 2005-2009  
CORTEN STEEL  
150 X 140 X 60 CM



RECENT COMMISSIONS



GUARDIAN FIGURE, 1979  
CORTEN STEEL  
210 X 150 X 150 CM  
INSTALLED 2009,  
PRIVATE COLLECTION, ENGLAND



FLOATING FIGURE, 2003  
CORTEN STEEL  
HEIGHT: 4M  
INSTALLED 2009,  
NEWMAN, PILBARA REGION,  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA





RETURNING FIGURE, 2005  
CORTEN & STAINLESS STEEL  
600 X 35 X 75 CM  
INSTALLED 2008  
ONE OF 13 PUBLIC WORKS IN IBIZA, SPAIN



WAVERING CIRCLE, 2008  
CORTEN STEEL  
400 X 350 X 350 CM  
PRIVATE COLLECTION, VICTORIA  
IMAGE TAKEN AFTER VICTORIAN  
BUSHFIRES, FEBRUARY 2009  
PHOTOGRAPH: KARL VON MOLLER



## BIOGRAPHY

Greg Johns was born in Adelaide in 1953. He trained at the South Australian School of Art from 1975-78, graduating with a Diploma of Fine Arts and has worked full-time as a sculptor since 1978.

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 Landings, Australian Art Resources & Axia Modern Art, Melbourne  
BMG Gallery, Adelaide
- 2008 Australian Art Resources, Melbourne
- 2007 Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra, 30 Year Retrospective  
Australian Art Resources, Sydney
- 2006 Adelaide Festival Exhibition  
Australian Art Resources, Melbourne
- 2006 Thirty year Retrospective at McClelland Museum, Victoria  
BMG Gallery, Adelaide
- 2005 Australian Art Resources, Sydney
- 2004 Australian Art Resources, Melbourne  
Aptos Cruz Gallery, Adelaide
- 2003 Australian Art Resources, Sydney  
Gomboc Gallery, Western Australia.  
BMG Gallery, Adelaide
- 2002 Australian Art Resources, Melbourne  
Aptos Cruz Gallery, Adelaide
- 2001 A Small Sculpture Garden – Opening of a sculpture garden at the artist's studio with permanent and changing pieces  
Robert Steele Gallery, New York  
Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney  
BMG Gallery, Adelaide
- 2000 Aptos Cruz Gallery, Adelaide,  
25 Year Retrospective  
Australian Art Resources, Melbourne
- 1999 Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney
- 1998 Greenaway Gallery, Adelaide
- 1997 Robert Steele Gallery, New York

- 1996 Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney  
Greenaway Gallery, Adelaide
- 1995 Anima Gallery at the Australian High Commission, Singapore
- 1994 Solander Gallery, Canberra  
Meridian Gallery, Melbourne, Survey Exhibition, 1976-1994  
Carrick Hill Sculpture Park S.A. Survey Exhibition, 1978-1991
- 1993 Greenaway Gallery, Adelaide
- 1992 Bonython – Meadmore Gallery, Adelaide – Festival Exhibition, 3 large outdoor sculptures  
Bridge Street Gallery, Sydney
- 1991 Bonython – Meadmore Gallery, Adelaide, Survey Exhibition
- 1987 Bonython – Meadmore Gallery, Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney
- 1983 Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney, Bonython Gallery, Adelaide
- 1981 Roundspace Gallery, Adelaide
- 1980 Bonython Gallery, Adelaide
- 1978 Solander Gallery, Canberra, Survey -91 Exhibition, 1978-1991

## SELECTED ARTS PRIZES / COMPETITIONS

- 2010 Artscape, Byron Bay, NSW  
Sculpture By The Sea, Cottesloe, WA  
Australian Masters, Solander Gallery, Canberra
- 2009 Mt Gambier Limestone Sculpture Symposium  
Sculpture By The Sea, Aarhus, Denmark  
Sculpture By The Sea, Cottesloe, WA
- 2008 Contempora, Docklands, Victoria  
Sculpture By The Sea, Cottesloe, WA  
Distinguished Invited Artist,  
Sculpture By the Sea, Sydney
- 2005 Finalist Kajima Sculpture Competition, Tokyo, Japan  
Selected finalist for McClelland Sculpture Survey & Award, Langwarrin, Victoria  
Invited Australian artist for Pocheon Sculpture Symposium, Korea  
Palmer Sculpture Landscape, nominated for 2 S.A. Great Awards in the Arts and Environmental areas
- 2004 Waterhouse Prize for Sculpture (Natural History Award)  
Helen Lempriere Sculpture Prize Finalist  
Selected Sculptor, local sculpture for entry to Shanghai Art Fair
- 2003 Selected finalist for McClelland Sculpture Survey & Award, Langwarrin, Victoria
- 2001 Stonnington Landscaping Award, Melbourne Joint award for sculpture "Origin" and to Landscape Architects for Surrounding Landscape  
National Finalist, Woollahra Sculpture Prize for small sculpture
- 2000 Award of Merit, Collaborative with TECTVS Architects for renovation of Dawson home

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

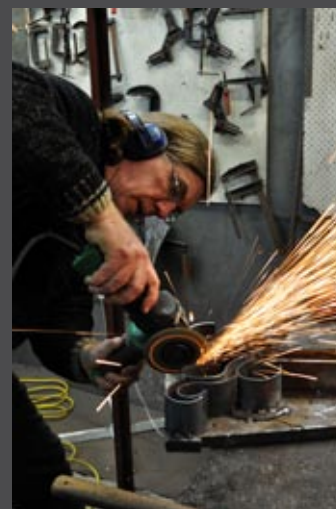
Greg Johns has participated in over 200 group exhibitions in Australia, USA, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

## MAJOR COMMISSIONS

Greg Johns has received numerous important public and private commissions nationally and internationally. Selected public commissions include: *Guardian Figure*, Central Green, Singapore, 1995; *Origin*, Chadstone Shopping Centre, Melbourne, 1999; *Fractal Mandala*, Riverbank, Adelaide, 2001; *Excavator*, Waterways Commission, Melbourne, 2002; *Forgotten-Remembered Figures*, Ibiza, Spain, 2004-05; *Pattern III*, Sculpture Park, Pocheon, Korea 2005; *Returning Column*, Palmerston North, New Zealand, 2006-07; *Fractal Mandala*, Hampton Group, Cammeray Square, Sydney, 2006-08; *Swirling Mandala*, Spotlight Collection, South Melbourne, Victoria, 2007; *50 Sculptural Gates*, Docklands, Melbourne, 2009; FKP Foyer Commission, Queen Street, Melbourne, 2010.

## COLLECTIONS

Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, England  
Amnesty International, Australia  
Abteiberg Museum, Germany  
Royal Meridian Hotel, Bahrain  
Tulloch Collection, England  
Cohn Collection, New York  
Fuchs Collection, USA  
Fraser Collection, France  
Mattern Collection, Connecticut, USA  
Wing Tai Collection, Singapore  
Maeda Environmental Art Co. Collection, Japan  
Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park, Hamilton, Ohio, USA  
Australian National University  
Art Gallery of SA  
Glennelg Council, SA  
Carrick Hill Sculpture Park, SA - State Collection  
Whyalla Arts Council, SA  
Artbank Collection  
Benalla Art Gallery, Victoria  
Commonwealth Bank Collection, Adelaide  
Adelaide University Collection  
St. Vincent's Hospital Collection, Sydney  
Holmes a Court Collection  
Sculpture Park 1988, Gallery 460, NSW  
Mt. Lofty Botanical Gardens Collection, SA  
Pembroke School, Adelaide  
City of Brisbane Council  
Manchester Unity-Hibernian Collection, Adelaide  
Tasmanian University Collection, Hobart  
Port Pirie Council Collection, SA  
Wyatt Benevolent Trust Collection, Adelaide  
S.A.N.T.O.S. Collection, Adelaide  
Olivet House Collection, Adelaide  
Myer Collection, Melbourne  
Gandel Collection, Melbourne  
Kym Bonython Collection, Adelaide  
Faulding Collection, Adelaide, USA, England  
Knutson Collection, USA and Australia  
Waite Institute Collection, SA  
Diana Laidlaw, Honourable Minister for the Arts Collection, Adelaide  
Best Collection, Jersey, Channel Islands  
Banks Collection, Melbourne  
Spivakowsky Collection, Melbourne  
City of Port Adelaide, Enfield  
Kidd Collection, Adelaide  
Tweddell Collection, Adelaide  
Nicholas Collection, NSW  
O'Connor Collection, USA  
Cousins Collection, NSW  
Chadstone Shopping Centre, Victoria  
Thyer Collection, Adelaide  
Caff Collection, England  
Ziegler Collection, Melbourne  
Adler Collection, Adelaide  
Bankers Trust Collection,  
Maritime Trade Towers, Sydney  
Riverbank Collection, Adelaide  
City of Marion Collection  
Arts SA Collection  
TAB Collection, Sydney  
33 York Street, Sydney Collection  
Guilford Bell & Graham Fischer Architects  
BT Funds Management  
Watergardens, Victoria  
Mistletoe Winery, NSW  
Shoreman Park Collection  
Maroondah City Council  
Deutsche Asset Management  
HSBC  
Bluescope Steel Limited  
Probuild  
Mullins Collection  
Australian National University  
330 Collins Street, Melbourne  
Palmer Environmental/Sculptural Landscape – 10 Major works  
Lord Harwood Collection, England  
Crown Casino, Southbank, Melbourne  
Crown Casino Hotel, Melbourne  
Clarke Collection, England  
Barry Somerstein Collection, Florida, USA  
Neil Collection, Victoria  
Pocheon City Collection, Korea  
Diario Ibiza Collection, Spain  
Caton Collection, NSW  
Philip Adams Collection  
Fresh Water Collection, Southbank, Melbourne  
Poole Shopping Centre, Poole, England  
Cross Collection, Adelaide  
Armitage Collection, Adelaide  
Fraid Collection, Melbourne  
FKP Collection, Melbourne  
Docklands Collection, Melbourne  
Private Collections in Australia, New Zealand, USA, England and Singapore.





1010 High Street  
Armadale Victoria  
3143 Australia

T +61 3 9500 1144  
E [art@axiamodernart.com.au](mailto:art@axiamodernart.com.au)

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