

LAPSED, MISSING AND WORKING SCULPTORS



This catalogue was produced to coincide with the exhibition *Missing, Lapsed and Working Sculptors* held at the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, 3 Vimy Lane, Parap, NT.
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Front cover: Franck Gohier
A holiday in Cambodia - Khmer feet, 2021 (detail)

Back cover: Robert Mariotti
Forget me not, 2021 (detail)

Opposite: Bill Davies
Untitled, 2021 (detail)

note: all measurements given as height x width x depth (cm)

This project is generously supported by Dr Prash P

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LAPSED, MISSING AND WORKING SCULPTORS

Geoff Sharples

Former Lecturer in Sculpture, Northern Territory University (now Charles Darwin University)

It is interesting how exhibitions are created. For years, I would bump into one of my ex-students, Roberto Mariotti at the Hibiscus Shopping Centre. Every time, he would ask me when I was organising a sculpture exhibition. After showing at the Covid-19 exhibition *Pandamonia* organised by Rita Macarounas and supported by Luke Gosling at the Darwin Entertainment Centre in July 2020, I thought that now is the time to organise this sculpture exhibition. So, lots of telephone calls and emails created the names for this exhibition and I should let you know that there are many of my ex-students exhibiting. That was the easy part. The biggest problem was finding a site to hold the exhibition – and it was big. Luckily, Petrit Abazi, Director of the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art said yes to my proposal with offering an opening in October. Hopefully this exhibition will excite you and give you great pleasure.

Petrit Abazi

In June 1997, the Northern Territory University (now CDU) announced it was axing the Ceramics and Sculpture Departments. This was the result of extensive federal funding cuts to tertiary institutions across Australia. Consequently Geoff Sharples, lecturer in Sculpture, for more than twenty years, was made redundant and the only bronze and aluminium foundry in the NT was turned off and packed away. In 2016, the NCCA was denied ongoing federal funding for the first time in twenty-seven years, threatening the viability of the gallery. Disappointingly, history has demonstrated that funding for the Arts is a partisan issue. It doesn't have to be that way. However, budget cuts, redundancies and course closures are always looming threats under certain governments. Nevertheless, artists and arts workers will continue to advocate and fight for the importance of culture within our society and for its contribution to our own well-being. Artists and art workers will continue to make art.

When he was lecturing at NTU, Geoff Sharples would curate the annual Contemporary Sculpture exhibition. In *Lapsed, Missing and Working Sculptors* he has once again invited his former students to showcase the depth and breadth of their sculptural art practice through their production of new work. To paraphrase Jake from *The Blues Brothers*, he has put the band back together. This catalogue and exhibition celebrate their triumphant return.

DENNIS BEZZANT

Dennis Bezzant studied Visual Arts at NTU 1995-2000. A decade later, he received a Diploma in Transpersonal Art Therapy from the Phoenix Institute of Australia. He has worked extensively on international projects including: a 2003 Asialink Arts Residency, Davao, Philippines; and between 2003-9 he taught photography and drawing in Parana, Brazil. More recently, as an art therapist, Bezzant has assisted clients to explore and enhance wellbeing by way of creative art activities for the Top End Mental Health Consumer Organisation. He also facilitated therapeutic art programs for Council of Aboriginal Alcohol Services; worked as an art therapist for Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation; and since 2019 he has been delivering figure-drawing workshops for Sekolah Seni in Sarawak, Malaysia.

'Strung-out and Wired - urban survivors', resulted from confluent interests of mine in both Western sculptural practices and the observation of the natural sculptured beauty of the Top End, shaped by annual monsoonal rains, the cool air-flow and brittle fragility of the dry, coupled with the warp and weft, ebb and flow of the 'fire season'. Add to this fragility, a myriad of creaturely forms of life that burrow, carve and weave their ideal galleries of pattern, like artisans with chisel and blade, and you have a work of art still in process, a living sculpture of unfinished business. The Top End gives life to one of the NT's most iconic and venerated creatures, its image cast into gold as shown on Australia's \$2 coin. This image, of course, is that of a frill neck lizard (Chlamydosaurus Kingii), or, as it is known in the Larrakia language of the greater Darwin region, 'datlawá'. Although 'frillies' are adaptable to urban environs, increased building developments, along with the necessary take up of land around them, has diminished their numbers considerably, and yet frillies continue to survive, albeit 'strung-out and wired' between our tarred roads and concrete, our towering 'edifice of progress' - locked in, locked out, locked up and locked down, as we somehow look to 'move forward'. I used industrial materials, string and wire, which ideally suit the resilience of both the form and character of this creature. The string as a meandering knot, weaves a thick, skin-like stratum over a wire armature, bringing a certain physicality to the sculptured form.

'The two remaining sculptures are more in line with 17th and 18th century sculptural traditions, yet another story...'

- Dennis Bezzant



1.
Strung out and Wired - urban survivors, 2021
wire, string, steel rod and found eroded timber
200 x 200 cm (variable)

2.
Boy with wire and ball of string, 2021
wire and string
111 x 30 x 30 cm

3.
Girl with her dog and umbrella, 2021
wire and string
90 x 55 x 50 cm

BILL DAVIES

Bill Davies arrived in Darwin in 1991 with plans of moving on to Western Australia. 30 years later he is still here with no plans of leaving. *"I've had both good & bad experiences here", he said, "but the place grows on you. I guess this will end up being my resting place"*.

He has operated his own sign writing business since arriving in Darwin and received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from Charles Darwin University in 2001. Since his first solo show *Origami* at NCCA (then, 24 HR Art) in 2002, Davies has exhibited steadily both in solo and group exhibitions. He has been a finalist in a number of art awards, including the Wyndham Estate Art Award, the Broken Hill Outback Art Prize and the 2012 International Cricket Art Prize that toured across several Australian states. In 2002 he was part of a group exhibition held in Denpasar, Bali.

In 2014, Davies was commissioned to design and paint the forty year commemoration mural in the Cyclone Tracy exhibition space at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. Two years later, he was commissioned to create an art work for the ceiling above the walk way to the car park at Casuarina Square which is over fifty square metres in size. He used both his artistic and sign writing skills to create these works. His work is held in the Artbank Collection, the Charles Darwin University Art Collection and in a number of private collections around Australia.

'One could say subject matter of common experience is needed as a starting point for a work of art. For me, that starting point is the first mark expressed on the surface of the ground. There is no preconceived plan other than to mark the paper. I examine the creation of space, colour and surface - the way these aspects relate to each other.

From this moment the work is allowed to develop through the layering of ink and paint using ropes, brooms, mops and sticks. This is both performative and process driven; chance and accident play a large part in the mark making and the formation of the construction. There is nothing precious in the gestural expression, for the paper becomes torn and frayed in the process. Traditionally the exhibition space for painting and drawing has been the vertical. I am attempting to debase this notion by extending into the three dimensional.'

- Bill Davies

4.
Untitled, 2021
Water-based inks and oxide on Canson Dessin paper
250 x 660 x 40 cm



JUDITH DURNFORD

Judith Durnford has expressed a love for drawing which she studied in Japan and at Montpellier in France in the early 1990s. She has also said that *'weaving is lines in space'*. Fibre or thread make it possible to push the lines in drawing into a third dimension. Back in Australia, Durnford undertook an Associate Diploma in Fine Arts at the then Northern Territory University in 1996-97, majoring in sculpture. The influences on Durnford's subsequent art practice and the works it produced were many - and some unexpected.

Firstly, Durnford has always been interested in life and death and the passage of time. There are the obvious metaphors drawn from nature: life is like a web, a tapestry, woven patterns, cross-hatching. These triggered a focus on weaving. But more than this, in the materials she used and the objects created Durnford wanted to emphasise a spiritual presence in nature unspoilt by human presence. Initially this was reinforced through her by her meeting an Algerian Muslim for whom the human image could not be depicted in art. So her work omits or simply implies a human presence without creating human forms.

'Durnford has always been concerned about the waste that humans create. Consequently, much of her work involves recycling which, in turn, favours three-dimensional avenues of expression [...] In 2002 Durnford won the *Sculpture in the Park* exhibition in Darwin with Flower Beds consisting of painted wire bed frames carrying dozens of artificial flowers, each one made by the artist from recycled fabrics.'¹

'I like to work with woven materials, using nature, recycling it. The mesh came from my garden. I've shredded some of my bank documents and the envelopes which they came in. They are patterned for privacy and shredding is an act that extends that. I then bound them together with a sewing machine. It's meticulous. The work that I often do is very repetitive. Basically, this work is about privacy. I've called this a 'blanket' because privacy is like a barrier or a blanket protecting us like the envelopes protect their contents. But we don't really have any privacy. And hence the blanket has a lot of holes just as the shape of an 'X' repeated. It's all very fragile and it is literally held together by a thread.'

- Judith Durnford

1. Daena Murray, *Hot Springs: The Northern Territory and Contemporary Australian Artists*, MacMillan, Melbourne, 2012, p. 210



5.

Blanket of privacy, 2021

Shredded recycled envelopes and personal documents, recycled plastic garden mesh, cotton thread, acrylic paint

172 x 80 x 35 cm (variable)

LIA NGAREE GILL

Lia Ngaree Gill has lived in the Darwin region for nearly fifty-eight years and considers herself “very lucky that much of my childhood was spent in our wonderful Bush.” Her main passions are her family and the environment. She commenced studying Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Northern Territory University in 1989, graduating in 1994. She later went on to study a Certificate in Horticulture at NTU. She has exhibited works in numerous group shows at the NTU Gallery, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, NCCA (then, 24HR Art), the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art and a solo show at Darwin Visual Arts in 2016.

‘I am very involved in environmental issues such as the battle to stop fracking and am a founding member of two Permaculture community gardens. For several years now I have facilitated Permaculture/gardening classes and workshops and I also advise on and design Permaculture gardens. My main artistic output in the last few years has been in garden design using Permaculture principles and facilitating garden-based art workshops using permaculture principles.

‘A wise woman once said to me in regard to the environmental problems we are facing that, “the situation we are in, and the consequences of inaction are so dire that we can’t afford to be pessimistic.” So, while my art is predominantly based on a concern for the waste and degradation we are leaving in our wake, it is also generally bright, decorative and fun, due in part to the fact that my daughter Ellen (her existence is one of my reasons to be optimistic) has helped me with putting together some works and critiqued others.’

- Lia Gill



9.
Untitled, 2021
found objects
58 x 50 x 20 cm

6.
The Eyes Have It, 2021 (4)
bamboo, wool, feathers and shell
20 x 30 cm; 37 x 53 cm (variable dimensions)



7.
Vertical Garden 1, 2021
plastic grass and found objects
30 x 30 x 3 cm



8.
Beware, the flowers bite, 2021
Plastic flowers, plant ball, skull heads, found ceramics
60 x 35 x 35 cm
(variable)



FRANCK GOHIER

Born in St Nazaire, France, in 1968, Franck Gohier lives and works in Darwin. A printmaker, painter and sculptor, 'his work presents an inherent and ongoing exploration of his environment and experiences. Stylistically, Gohier makes use of imagery and motifs from both the media and popular culture, while thematically exploring issues of social, cultural and political significance. Throughout his work, Gohier further takes into account various aspects of the community, environment and histories that surround him.'

In 2018, Wendy Garden curated the major retrospective 'Franck Gohier: a thousand miles from everywhere' at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. Gohier's work is held in a number of collection including: Artbank; Casula Powerhouse Art Centre Collection, NSW; Centre for the Study of Political Graphics Collection, Culver City, California, USA; Charles Darwin University Art Collection, Darwin; Gold Coast Art Gallery, Queensland; Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Northern Territory; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; The National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; and the National Library of Australia, Canberra among others. For this exhibition, Gohier has returned to oil painting for the first time in over twenty years.

'As a child I came across an article about Angkor Wat which captivated my initial interest in ancient civilisations. In my teenage years I gravitated to Punk music and would often play my favourite Dead Kennedys 12" EP 'A holiday in Cambodia.' Finally, as an adult I was given the opportunity to actually visit Cambodia with my partner. I was both horrified and fascinated by the level of looting and vandalism of ancient statues in every temple we visited. This was a legacy of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime of 1975-79 and the international auction houses voracious appetite for Cambodian artifacts. Even the Angkor National Museum was filled with room after room of statues of missing feet, decapitated sculptures or indeed...whole displays of broken feet carvings. We also visited APOPO where rats are trained to detect landmines around Siem Reap. Cambodia has the highest rate of mine amputees in the world with an estimated 40,000 victims. This assemblage of works is a homage and response to my...Holiday in Cambodia.'

- Franck Gohier



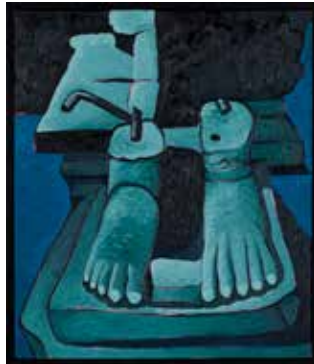
10.
A holiday in Cambodia – Khmer feet, 2021
acrylic on wood
38 x 53 x 35 cm (variable)



14.
A holiday in Cambodia – Koh Ker, 10th century Khmer Feet, 2021
oil on canvas
50.5 x 60.5 cm

11.
A holiday in Cambodia – Bakong, 9th century Khmer Feet, 2021
oil on canvas
50.5 x 60.5 cm

12.
A holiday in Cambodia – Banteay Kdei, mid-12th – 13th century Khmer Feet, 2021
oil on canvas
60.5 x 50.5 cm



13.
A holiday in Cambodia – Angkor Wat, 12th century Khmer Feet, 2021
oil on canvas
60.5 x 50.5 cm



CALLUM HICKEY

Born in London in 1969, Callum Hickey studied Fine Art at the North Adelaide School of Art (1992-3), before moving to Darwin and receiving a Diploma Northern Territory University (Charles Darwin University) in the same field in 1995-1998. Hickey is an artist, actor, filmmaker, puppet maker, puppeteer and prop maker. The many iterations of his 'Incredible Singing Dolls puppet show' toured Europe and Australia for nine years.

Since 2008, he has been performing incarnations of the *Pish Dolls: Burger King* puppet object performance and is currently working on the construction of new show *La Barbe D'Ockham/ Ockham's Beard* with long-time collaborator Gaël Gittard. His latest short film project 'Shit Bags of Britain', is due to be released soon.

15.
Ockham's Barbe... ecue" or "La Barbe...ecue d'Ockham, 2021
found objects including mirrors, microwave
45 x 25 x 67 cm



'Ockham's Razor' is a centuries' old philosophical tool. 'Ockham's Beard' is a less well-known tool. Sometimes nothing makes sense and sometimes it hurts.

16.
ICEBERG, 2020
digitised 16mm colour film
7:32 minutes



Filed in the first week of London's lockdown on 16mm film with longtime film maker Louis Benassi and help from Lilly Jacob. Lockdown is present but it's not about lockdown. Something is coming. And somehow it is just very funny.

In memory of Louis 1961-2020

JENGIS ISDIANTO

Born in 1965 in Malang in East Java Indonesia, Jengis Isdianto arrived in Darwin in 1993. Shortly thereafter, he studied a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the Northern Territory University (CDU) majoring in sculpture which he completed in 1997.

A regular exhibitor at Darwin Visual Arts and also at the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art (then 24HR Art), Isdianto works in painting, sculpture, wood carving and reliefs, sometimes using found materials. His work frequently references imagery relating to his years lived in Indonesia with a particular focus on the sacred status of the coconut which is used as an offering in ceremonial or spiritual settings.

'We are always throwing something away. I am always thinking about how I can recycle that stuff. Something can always be made with this junk material. The idea for these works first started with the bottles. When I looked at their shape, I began to see a human form. And I often use coconuts in my work. I played around with the objects and the idea of making a human body came about naturally.'

'The titles of these works were inspired by the life-giving power of coconuts and the life-supporting function of our mothers' breasts. As infants, we are born thirsty for maternal milk. As adults, our thirst in the tropics, is quenched by coconut milk and coconut water. Humans are always craving for love and wanting to be loved. We are always thirsty for something. We are always thirsty for love.'

- Jengis Isdiando



18.
Thirst Saviour, 2021
Recycled wine bottle,
coconuts, plaster, acrylic and
cotton
signed
41 x 14 x 21 cm (variable)

17.
Thirst Saviour, 2021
Recycled wine bottle,
coconuts, plaster, acrylic
and batik
signed
53 x 23 x 13 cm (variable)



ROBERT MARIOTTI

Robert Mariotti is a Darwin-based artist who immigrated from Italy in the early 1970s. He completed his Diploma in Fine Arts at the Northern Territory University and has held exhibitions with in the Darwin Visual Arts Association. In 2008, the NCCA staged a solo exhibition of Mariotti's work in *His Master's Voice*. Mariotti has been commissioned to produce animal sculptures for Nitmuluk National Park, Atrium Hotel and other Territory businesses.



19.
Pontifex Max
polyurethane resin
62 x 74 x 31 cm

Inspired by the 1957 war epic film, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, '*Pontifex Max*' symbolises the artist's tribute to the many prisoner of wars (POW) who built and engineered the bridge under the most testing and adverse conditions possible.

The bridge is the central piece resting amongst white clouds, embodied within a portable shrine, with an ancient Roman temple as a symbolic backdrop. The clouds represent purity and deity, with white reflecting a soldier's surrender that gave rise to their status as a POW. The POW's are seeking a form of salvation through their craftsmanship of the bridge as an "offering" to the gods, to look to the heavens for any sign of hope.

The term Pontifex means bridge-builder (pons + facere) and "maximus" (max) means "greatest". The term has been used since Roman times and presents itself as a backdrop, to ponder the rise and fall of the Roman Empire as a historical reflection point, in contrast to the Japanese Imperial Army's vision during WWII. Despite the brutality of war, difficult conditions, heat and humidity, basic tools, and lack of food, the completion of the Burma railway was an extraordinary accomplishment.

Pontifex Max presents a strange juxtaposition of human achievement amidst human brutality.

The grandeur of the tented structure symbolises the bygone days of when the circus would come to town. Representing family fun, entertainment and profitability for the organisers. Over time, perceptions of the public towards the immoral treatment of animals and dwarfism has forced this industry to 'reinvent' its survival as a generation begins to unveil the truths, and questions its ageing practices.

Deep within the structure, viewed only by a keyhole, and with the presence of an external light force, can one see a miniature replica of St Peter's Basilica. The papal enclave that rests within the city of Rome. Atop of the tented structure is a windsock typically used to indicate direction and strength of wind to pilots for their safety and success of flight.

Forget me not connects multiple views, as the church adapts to the changing winds so that followers may rise with the wind, feel its strength, and ascend above. How do generations view life through a forget me not lens?



20.

Forget me not

polyurethane resin, chicken wire mesh, cork, wool

61 x 20 x 47 cm



AENGUS MUNRO

Aengus Munro studied Fine Arts at the Northern Territory University from 1988 until 1991. As a sculptor, printmaker and technician he has developed an eye for the aesthetic through the practice of drawing on the observation of architecture and nature. His work focuses on building the practice of drawing with ink on paper and vinyl cut printmaking transferred to three dimensions using various materials including balsa wood and steel.

Aengus has exhibited widely and his work has been included in numerous exhibitions at the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art (then 24HR Art). More recently, his prints and sculptures have been exhibited at the Toowoomba Art Society, in Queensland.

'With me there are two things happening: developing the three dimensional and two dimensional to obtain images that are technically aesthetic.'

- Aengus Munro

21.
Toronto V, 2019
vinyl cut
titled to upper margin
72 x 51 cm



20



23.
Toronto VI, 2019
painted balsa wood
62 x 53 x 10 cm

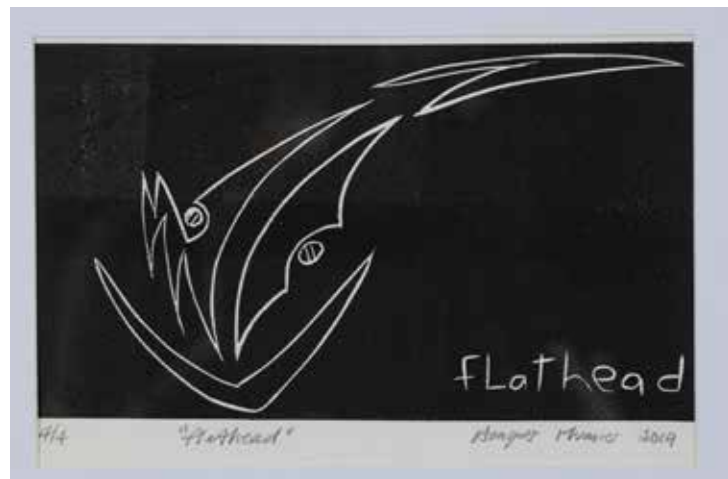


22.
Toronto, 2019
vinyl cut, 1/8
editioned, titled, signed and dated to lower margin
20 x 17 cm



24
Flathead II, 2020
mild steel
35 x 40 x 133 cm

25.
Flathead, 2019
vinyl cut, 4/4
16.5 x 24 cm
editioned, titled, signed and dated to lower margin



GEOFF SHARPLES

What does one say about making sculptures? I had this great idea or a very small thought that inspired me to pursue and create sculpture. For some unknown reason I have been obsessed with crucifixes throughout my creative life. And now the Territory is included in this obsession. I'll leave it to you, on the thoughts and ideas of the other crucifix.

- Geoff Sharples



26.
Territory Crucifix, 2021
wood, plastic and rubber
71 x 66 x 15.5 cm



27.
Was God a Woman, 2021
wood and bronze
116 x 56 x 7 cm



BILHA SMITH

A profound story-teller, Bilha Smith is a multi-disciplinary artist working in sculpture, ceramics and textiles. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1990 from the Northern Territory University (CDU), and has exhibited, tutored and performed continuously since then. Although Darwin was her base for thirty-two years, she moved to the Sunshine Coast area five years ago, and has recently exhibited at the Beerwah Library, Maleny Arts and Crafts Group, and Caloundra Chorale and Theatre Company.

'These are strange and peculiar times we are living through now. The theme "Missing" immediately conjured strong feelings and thoughts in me when Geoff Sharples rang with an invitation to exhibit.'

'Living for the past years on the sunshine coast after 32 years in Darwin - a lifetime of strong connections with the art world here - I also felt the need to explore and concentrate on the theme of 'Missing Contact' with its many levels.'

- Bilha Smith



28

Missing Contact, 2021
red Raku clay, silver foil, iron oxide, blackfiring
19 x 15 x 36 cm



29.
Hunger in the Void, 2021
white Raku clay, Raku firing
15 x 9 x 17cm



30.
If I Only Had One More Helping Hand,
2021
red Raku clay, iron oxide, blackfiring
15 x 9 x 17cm



31.
The Zoom Man, 2021
white Raku clay, Zoom photos, mirror,
putty, bisque and blackfiring
20cm (diameter) x 27cm (high)



32.
Oil Lamps (12), 2021
red Raku, glaze, kiln firing and blackfiring
8cm (diameter) x 5cm (high)

VAL STUART

Val Stuart studied Visual Arts at Northern Territory University (CDU) from 1992 until 1996. She specialises in sculpture, film and photography. Her work was included in numerous exhibitions in Darwin including the 1994 Members' show *"Drive"*- she said.¹ In 1998, Stuart moved to Perth where she followed her passion for film at the Television School, but left after the first Semester due to lack of funds and began working in a government department. 'Art feeds the soul,' she said, 'but not the kids. But government jobs kill the soul and creativity without much effort...' Stuart retired last month and is hoping to get a mobile home and have some 'Adventure before Dementia.'¹



1. Val Stuart quote in an e-mail to NCCA Director Petrit Abazi, September 2021.

33.

One in every crowd, 2021

found object including dolls
heads, assembled synthetic fabric,
glass, wood

22.5 x 17.5 x 4.5 cm

34.

In emergency, break glass, 2021

found objects paper collage,
plastic bag, dried herbs, lighter,
glass, wood

22.5 x 17.5 x 4.5 cm







