



MEDIA RELEASE

A BOY'S OWN STORY

CHRISTMAS AT THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION 2019|20

30 September 2019 - 4 February 2020

By tradition, our annual exhibition is based on our benefactor, ***William Johnston's own craft-related skills, in which he was encouraged to make things at an early age. Johnston, the son of a bootmaker, was a competent knitter, and was taught basic sewing and tailoring skills, as well as upholstery, all of which led him into an early career in soft furnishings.***

For our 2019 exhibition we will *mix-it-up* again, do a mind shift and invite *male* artists and creatives to make works for *A BOY'S OWN STORY*.

The intention of *A BOY'S OWN STORY* is constructed on a too often repeated assumption, both internally and externally, 'that men *did not* and *do not* have any manual skills in knitting and sewing.' In fact, many men had these skills which have been traditionally and customarily acceptable throughout time. Likewise, we are also seeking out 'female' artists who are working in traditionally demarcated crafts and trades.

We will maintain our collaborations with makers, inviting, supporting and encouraging them to create ***new works based on old objects***. We encourage challenges to traditional making, thinking and practice through contemporary responses to the Collection, along with more traditional responses that reflect historical techniques, materials and making.

Inspired by the Collection, a gift from William Johnston to the people of Victoria, our annual Christmas / Summer exhibition responds to traditional ways of making through contemporary makers' thinking and practices.

In order to explore new contemporary practices and ideas, we envisage that this project will provide creative opportunities for new works to be showcased in a remarkable public venue.

Featuring work by Douglas McManus, Trevor Smith, Troy Emery, Noel Button, Chris O'Brien, Lucas Grogan, Steve Campbell-Wright, Stephen Gallagher, Terry Williams, along with David Collyer, his father A. Keith Collyer (1917-1983) and grandfather Archibald Collyer (1883-1939).

With thanks to [Arts Project Australia](#).

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ABOUT THE ARTIST(S)



Douglas McManus

proposal for *galows chandelier*, 2019

rubber printed suits, laser engraved microfibre, resin coated voile
courtesy of the artist

Douglas McManus

Douglas McManus lives and works in Melbourne. In 2012–13 his work was included in the exhibition *Love Lace* for the Powerhouse Museum International Lace Award. In 2012 he won the inaugural Burnie Wearable Paper Art Competition, *Paper on Skin*, and exhibited as part of *Interwoven* during Melbourne Spring Fashion Week. In 2011 McManus's garments featured in the exhibition *ManStyle: Men + Fashion* at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. His textile works are represented in state and regional gallery collections around Australia.



Trevor Smith

The Baker 2017

Crochet tea cosy | Wool, wadding, polystyrene, wire | 30 cm high
from the *Around the World and Beyond* series, 2017 -
courtesy of the artist

Trevor Smith

Trevor Smith grew up on a farm and was taught to crochet by his mother, a skill which has since become a passion, after he graduated from quilting and patchwork. He told the ABC in an interview he did a Diploma of Visual Arts at Warrnambool Institute some 30 years ago, majoring in sculpture, and believes that training may have helped, but he builds up his sculptures from scratch and admits to being poor at sewing.

Trevor Smith is based in Portland, Victoria, and is locally known for his crochet teapots. In 2009, after a break of about 25 years Trevor returned to crochet when he participated in *The Big Hole Yarn* a Regional Arts Victoria project at the local swimming hole in Panmure, east of Warrnambool. He contributed some site-specific pieces to the project. Later that year he created a pop-up exhibition in the window of Portland Lifeline Op Shop for the inaugural *Upwelling Festival* in Portland. And so, his obsession with crochet was revived.

Trevor picked up crochet early on, and has spent decades perfecting and experimenting with its virtually limit-less applications. He predominantly uses pure wool and incorporates foam rubber, polystyrene, foamcor and wire to create his base forms.



Troy Emery

Untitled (the tailor and his goat), 2019

Oil on canvas

courtesy of the artist

after a Derby porcelain factory (est. circa 1748), Derby
figure group (the tailor and his wife) pair, England, 1825
The Johnston Collection (A0774-1989, Foundation Collection)

Troy Emery

Troy Emery is an artist based in Melbourne and has an art practice encompassing sculpture, painting, drawing, and embroidery. Physically, through his use of unexpected materials, Troy tries to obscure recognisable forms, while conceptually, he works to provoke ideas about our historical relationship with animals, underpinned by our assumed position of authority in the natural world.

In 2014, Troy was the recipient of an Australia Arts Council residency in Tokyo and travelled to Japan in 2015 for a 3-month research trip to look at Japanese animal mascots. In the same year Troy undertook two artist residences. The first was in Hill End, NSW through the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, and the second was at The Australian Tapestry Workshop in Melbourne, VIC.

David Collyer

Three generations of the Collyer family will contribute to the exhibition, David Collyer, his father A. Keith Collyer (1917-1983) and grandfather Archibald Collyer (1883-1939).

A lifelong interest in working with threads seems to have been bred into David Collyer, a Ballarat knitter and lace maker. David's grandfather Archibald Collyer (1883-1939) both knotted and crocheted in fact as a young expectant father serving with the army in Queensland he knitted a layette for the coming baby, sending it home to his surprised wife who did not know her husband could knit. David's father A. Keith (1918-1983) followed in his father's footsteps as a knitter and David still has work by both.

However, it was his mother who taught the boy David the skill of knitting. Instead of the usual scarf for teddy or a favourite doll, David and his sisters were set to creating tiny garments, much more interesting, challenging and ultimately satisfying as this involved increasing and decreasing to shape the garment. David still has the first tiny cardigan he made, even incorporating a band of fair isle, which as he explained was not successful as he used garter stitch, not knowing that fair isle needs to be executed in stocking stitch. David still knits most of the jumpers he wears, many in complicated Aran.



David Collyer

untitled (doiley), not dated

handmade bobbin lace

courtesy of the artist



Chris pictured with one of his works for the exhibition, image courtesy of The Johnston Collection

Chris O'Brien

Chris is a multi-disciplinary artist who works in painting, printmaking, and sculpture and is primarily concerned with representing domestic dwellings in various states of decrepitude. He has also been a studio artist at Arts Project Australia since 2002 and presented his solo exhibition at Arts Project Australia in 2007. He has been involved in numerous collaborations and group exhibitions including at Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne Art Fair, Melbourne (2006, 2008 & 2010) and in the Pearls of Arts Project Australia: The Stuart Purves Collection National touring exhibition (2007-2009).



Lucas Grogan
detail from *untitled (tomb of the unknown craftsman)*, 2019
blue n gold embroidered quilt
courtesy of the artist

Lucas Grogan

Lucas Grogan's work spans multiple disciplines including quilts, murals and painting. He draws on aboriginal Australian crafts as inspiration in his paintings and drawings. His ornate works include bright colours, complicated patterns, and words. Grogan exhibits throughout Australia and internationally and has been collected by National Gallery of Australia, Wesfarmers and Deutsche Bank.



David Pearce
Necklace, 2018

David Pearce

David Pearce is an Australian textile designer and artist, living and working on Wurundjeri Land. He works with knitted and woven forms using natural fibres including wool and paper. He engages in almost all aspects of the production, from spinning the yarn to hand knitting and handweaving.

David applies these traditional textile construction techniques to clothing, accessories and jewellery. He explores the dichotomy between the ornamentation and function of these textile forms and the inherent warmth and protection imbued within them. David is self-taught and has studied the Diploma of Textile Design and

courtesy of the artist

"This hand spun, hand knitted and handwoven necklace is made in Victoria, Australia from merino wool fleece grown on Wathaurong Land and processed and constructed on Wurundjeri Land. The necklace is a protective talisman for the wearer and a form of communication, borrowing from sign language. While it presents a limited vocabulary, the sentiment is clear.

Image coming soon.

Development at RMIT (2006-2009).

Stephen Gallagher

Stephen was born in Maryborough, Queensland; lives and works in Melbourne. He completed a Bachelor Fine Arts with Honours in 1999, and in 2001 completed his Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies, both at Deakin University. Gallagher was the recipient of the Australian Craft Council's Emerging Artist mentorship in 2000, and Embroiderers Guild of Victoria's Ethel Oates Scholarship in 2001. He completed a residency at Bundaberg Arts Centre in 2003, facilitated by the Australia Council. Recent exhibitions include Love Lace, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 2011-13; Treasure Room Australia, Galerie Handwerk, Munich, 2010; and Dreams of Arcadia, Jam Factory, Adelaide, 2010.

Terry Williams

Terry Williams' career spans three decades and reflects a diverse exploration of materials and techniques. He is best known for his soft sculpture; a technique popularised in the 1960s by artists such as Claes Oldenburg and Yayoi Kusama. Terry Williams has worked in the Arts Project Australia studio since 1989. His solo exhibitions include White Columns, New York (2015) and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne (2016). Group exhibitions include Everyday imagining: new perspectives on Outsider art, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (2014); The Soft Knife, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre (2014); Melbourne Art Fair, Melbourne (1995 – 2014); Renegades: Outsider Art, National touring exhibition (2013 – 14); and The Museum of Everything, MONA (2017).

Image coming soon.



Image courtesy of The Age, <https://bit.ly/2z1ahnl>

Noel Button

Noel Button is a former maths and science teacher, who now owns a nursery in Launceston. Noel's love of baking began at a young age after watching his mother bake. She regularly won CWA competitions and instilled a love of baking with her son.

"When I was going through high school it used to be that the boys didn't do cooking or home economics, but go straight through to metal work," says Noel. "I would have loved to have studied cooking and gone on to be a chef."

Noel Button is legend of show cookery – he is regular exhibitor and award winner at the Royal Melbourne Show which he first entered in the 1990s. As a younger man, he won the Tasmanian Giant Cooking Competition multiple times. He makes chutneys, marmalades, jams, as well as lamingtons, plum puddings, fruit cake, shortbread, marble cake, chocolate cake, orange cake and other treats. His chutneys, marmalades, jams will be on display at The Johnston Collection.

ABOUT THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION

The Johnston Collection is a place where people meet art and artists.

The Johnston Collection is an exhibition-house of visual art and design centred in an historic Melbourne townhouse. A gift to the people of Victoria by William Robert Johnston (1911-1986) it is administered as an independent not-for-profit museum by the WR Johnston Trust.

Since 1990, The Johnston Collection has provided visitors, from near and far, with transformative exhibition and learning experiences to discover, experience and engage with artists, objects and ideas through dynamic temporary programs based on its permanent collection. As a multi award-winning and critically acclaimed museum, The Johnston Collection invites creatives from the broader visual arts and design communities to re-interpret the Collection, offering special tours, study days and lectures throughout the year, that share stories and inspire communities.

ABOUT WILLIAM JOHNSTON

William Robert Johnston (1911-1986) was a 20th century collector and antique dealer who amassed an extraordinary collection of Georgian, Regency, and Louis XV furniture, paintings, ceramics and *objet d'art* over his lifetime.

Johnston was born in Lilydale, Victoria in 1911, the only child of Robert Alexander Johnston, a boot-maker and Louise Friedrichs, a maid. Around the age of eight, William was given a Minton cup by his grandmother, Mary Theresa Friedrichs which became the first piece of his collection and provided inspiration for a career in antiques. After an early career in window merchandising in Melbourne, Johnston relocated to London to begin a fulltime business dealing in antiques. He purchased *Fairhall* in 1952 with money made from the sale of antiques brought back from England. Originally named *Cadzow*, built in 1860 and extended ten years later, Johnston renamed it *Fairhall* and remodelled it in order to create the appearance of a late 18th century Georgian-style townhouse.

In 1972, Johnston returned to live part-time in Melbourne, gathering his collection of Georgian, Regency and Louis XV fine and decorative arts into *Fairhall* and other properties he owned in the area. At the same time, he opened Kent Antiques in High St, Armadale.

Johnston's house, collection and estate were bequeathed to the people of Victoria after his death in 1986 'as a place of historical and educational interest,' now administered as an independent not-for-profit public museum by The WR Johnston Trust. *Fairhall* was converted into an exhibition-house with a garden designed in the English manner. The Trust also acquires new works for the permanent collection, which comprises over 1400 items.