



MEDIA RELEASE

A BOY'S OWN STORY

SUMMER 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 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, Chris O'Brien, Troy Emery, Noel Button, Lucas Grogan, Steve Campbell-Wright, Edward John Scollay (1917–1985), George Compeigne Campbell (1917-2007), Kevin Smith, Tristan Brumby-Rendell, Luke Hockley, David Pearce, Trevor Smith, Terry Williams, David Collyer, along with his father A. Keith Collyer (1917-1983) and grandfather Archibald Collyer (1883-1939).

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ABOUT THE ARTIST(S)



Douglas pictured with his work *gallows 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.

Process

INTER-LACE: artist Douglas McManus in the Love Lace exhibition

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8N6IUANTas>

Acanthus cut-outs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ad4zXUU9QVk>

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, foamcore and wire to create his base forms.



Trevor pictured with a selection of his Crochet Tea Cosies
Photography by Damian Goodman

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyRzm_eW7LE

Trevor is represented by Michael Reid Sydney



Troy Emery pictured in front of his paintings.
Photography by Adam Luts

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.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOysFVj0d_0

Troy is represented by Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney



David Collyer
untitled (doiley), not dated
handmade bobbin lace
courtesy of the artist

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.

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).

Chris O'Brien Artist in Residence Talk (at ATW)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3XKt70Jop4>

Chris is represented by Arts Project Australia



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

Photo courtesy of Arts Project Australia.

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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5f1SSCzkZQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-i-t3LBIVU>



Lucas Grogan, Detail from *A Dawn Quilt*, 2019
Satin, velvet, cotton, wool and polyester
1800 x 2000 mm

Photo courtesy of artist.



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 Development at RMIT (2006-2009).

David Pearce pictured with his work **'Necklace'**, 2018
"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.

Photography by Adam Luts.



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).

Terry's work 'Untitled 1, 2, 3, 4' [coloured hessian] material, [dacron] stuffing, wool. 1020 x 700 x 480 mm

Photography by Adam Luts.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6pG5lqrUpY>

Chris is represented by Arts Project Australia



Noel Button's award-winning entries from the Royal Melbourne Show

Photography by Adam Luts.

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.

STEVE CAMPBELL-WRIGHT

Steve is a Historian and Heritage Consultant.

Currently, as Squadron Leader Steve Campbell-Wright is a Shrine Governor is to assist Trustees and Life Governors in relation to ceremonial duties at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne.

He was Anzac Day Dawn Service Coordinator for the Management of Defence resources participating in Anzac Day Dawn Services, Gallipoli in 2006, 2008 and 2011 in conjunction with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

He works with the RAAF Museum and is a steward at the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria. He makes replica embroidery embellishments, from monograms to goldwork, for the War Memorial Museum in Canberra.



Steve pictured with his works in The Johnston Collection

Photography by Adam Luts.



Edward John Scollay (1917–1985)

Woolen sweater

knitted by Edward John Scollay (1917–1985)

lent by his son, Professor Roland Scollay, Melbourne

EDWARD JOHN SCOLLAY (1917–1985)

Edward was known throughout his life as John Scollay, was studying architecture in London at the outbreak of WWII in 1939. Along with a number of his fellow architecture students, he enlisted as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 51st Highland Infantry Division of the British Army. In June 1940, soon after the evacuation at Dunkirk, he was captured along with thousands of others at Saint Valéry-en-Caux in Normandy. He spent the next five years in German prisoner of war camps.

Through the efforts of the International Red Cross, John Scollay, was able to complete his architectural studies by correspondence from Germany. After release at the end of the war, he worked briefly in London, and migrated to Australia in 1948 with his wife and two infant sons. He settled in Canberra as a government architect involved with the planning and building of the new capital. From 1962 until 1968, he led the pioneering private Canberra practice of Scollay, Bischoff and Pegrum, taking an early 'retirement' to devote his time to art. He was an accomplished painter in watercolour and oils. In 1970 he was appointed to a five-year term as Director of the national body of what was known then as the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. He returned to his painting studio in 1975.

The sweater John Scollay knitted as a prisoner of war is made with wool unravelled from the large numbers of hand-knitted socks and blankets sent throughout the war by the Red Cross. John's Irish mother had been an accomplished knitter and craftswoman, but it's not known whether he'd learnt to knit from her or from a fellow prisoner, or whether he was just resourceful and taught himself with the help of supplied materials from the Red Cross.

It's understood he made the sweater in 1942. It has remained in good condition and was occasionally worn throughout the late 1960's by John Scollay's older son, Clive, whilst a student at the Australian National University, Canberra.



George Compeigne Campbell (1917 – 2007)

Waterlily, circa 1943

needlepoint, wool on canvas.

lent by his daughter Dr Margot Yeomans & son, Grant Campbell

George Compeigne Campbell (1917-2007)

George Campbell was born in Melbourne and studied accountancy.

When WWII broke out, he enlisted in the army. He trained in Queensland then served as a lieutenant in the 20th Pioneer Regiment, Merauke Force in Dutch New Guinea. On arriving in New Guinea, they were met with a swampy landscape that hid snakes, crocodiles, enormous mosquitos and, if that wasn't enough, head-hunters. The company he led was described as '... a complex one of many parts ably led by Lieutenant Campbell. They are prepared to debate on any subject known, scrounge any moveable article, make any article for profit or loss, collectively or individually ...'

Following the war, he returned to Australia to his wife and family. After New Guinea I suspect accounting seemed a little tame, so he built holiday flats at Rosebud, on the Mornington Peninsula, and started a wrought iron business.

It's thought that the needlepoint piece was made when George had a stint in hospital during the war, where he had a preliminary diagnosis of typhus, although George later claimed he was allergic to the army. He wasn't cut any slack though and stayed in the army until the war ended.

The date of the work isn't known, and it hung in a frame in the living room for many years and was only unearthed very recently. It's likely though, to have been done after George married in January 1943 as the flower is a water lily and his bride carried waterlilies in her bouquet. His needlepoint piece was a one-off, instead he put further creative efforts into manufacturing wrought iron doors, balustrades, gates etc. and many homes around the Mornington Peninsula boasted his work – unfortunately his own home lacked a wrought iron wire door desperately wanted by his wife. As a consolation he did make her a pair of tiny silver 'bird cage' earrings with a little bird inside - history doesn't recall which she'd have preferred.



Kevin Smith pictured with one of his pieces, '**Chicken feathers / Gum leaf Shawl**

"Dreambird" Pattern by Nadita Swings
4ply wool, black and green graduation
Short row knitting

Photo courtesy The Johnston Collection.

Kevin Smith

Kevin has thirteen will have thirteen pieces on exhibition at The Johnston Collection.

A math professor, Kevin's pieces are perfectly planned and executed. The works include complicated patterns based on cat paw motifs, autumn scarves, cobweb shawls, spinning, traditional yoked neck motifs and many others.



Scarf

I was given the brown and orange wool by my family. I added the blue to give it more colour. Wool bought for me by my family whilst on holidays. Moss stitch

Photo courtesy the artist.

Tristan Brumby-Rendell

Tristan grew up on a wool farm in Western Victoria. "At Grade 4 at the local school, I had to knit a beanie and model them at school assembly. My Mum and Grandma knitted most of mine. It was a strange teal but I told myself it was gumnut green."

"I started knitting again in my mid 20's when my friends started getting married. Most asked for honeymoon money in lieu of gifts, so I would hide cash inside misshapen beanies. I figured it was better than a toaster."



Luke pictured in front of his shirts on display from the 'Love me till I fall apart.'

Photography by Adam Luts.

Luke Hockley

I am an artist and activist. I write, sew and perform.

"I want the things I make to be a catalyst for positive change in the world. I want to inspire people to believe they can create the kind of world they want to live in."

"**Love me till I fall apart** is a loosely defined project where I hand make or repair clothing as a response to two important issues. The first is the significant, and largely ignored, negative impact that our clothing habits upon our natural world and the people trapped in the 'clothing machine'. The second is a personal meditation on my experiences of being a "man" and enjoying sewing in a world that is rapidly, but inconsistently, re-evaluating its expectations of gender. "

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.