



# telopea

Editor : Irene Manion

Issue 6 July 2022

---



## EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the sixth issue of *Telopea*. Local and world events such as Covid and floods have continued impacting our lives well beyond mid year. Who would have believed that the third East Coast Low event in NSW would bring even worse flooding in Sydney than was experienced in the first two events.

Our feature article in this issue and in the upcoming exhibition of the Society of Arts and Crafts is a focus on RETHINKING, REUSING and RECYCLING. see page 27.

Nichola Bryan is both a crusader and an artist, who goes well beyond the everyday is her crusade to make people aware of how single use plastics are pervasive in our environment. By incorporating found plastics from her environment into artworks she is able to grab our attention and our immediate response to the environment.

Two additional articles by new members to CraftNSW Brett Smout ceramicist and Brian Dawson woodworker show us their studio practices and walk us through their processes of creating these wonderful

handcrafted unique pieces. These artists both have had years of experience in their respective fields and the years of understanding of their materials combined with an incredible technical proficiency, enables them to translate their creative responses in innovative ways.

Finally, in response to our overall theme of rethinking, recycling and remaking, a selection of video links to artists who do precisely that has been offered on page 12.

Finally, member Liz Gemmell has a practice that redesigns used garments using complex patterns in unique individualised creations. She gives us some insight into her creative process.

Hope you enjoy this issue as the world keeps reminding us that we need to take care of our precious resources and not waste them, and do all we can to slow down the effects of climate change.

Ed.

---

### Cover image:

Brian Dawson, "GOURD TRIO"  
Three gourds made of recycled Oregon (Douglas fir)

### Opposite:

*The Lollipop Ladies*

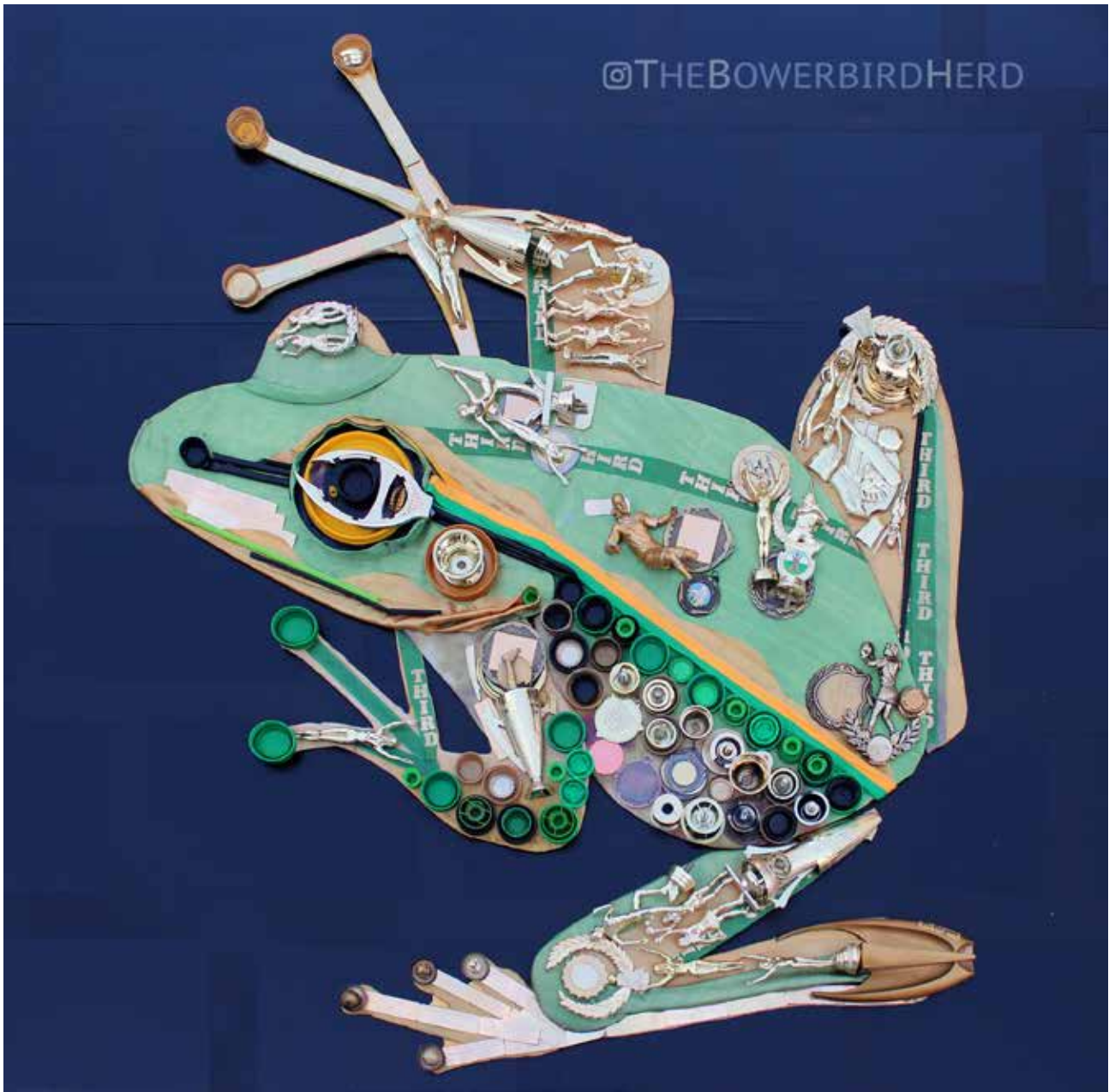
This cute kid doesn't get to enjoy chupa chups too often because his (maybe slightly crazy) environment loving mum refuses to buy them for him. When he does get his sugar craving little fingers on one at a birthday party, I ask him to make sure he puts his stick in the bin. Because we find HUNDREDS of these pesky suckers on the ground in playgrounds and in our beautiful Sydney waterways.

We need to change to bio-degradable sticks now. Read more about this on pages 10 and 11.

**THE BOWERBIRD HERD**  
**NICHOLA BRYAN**



The crusade for a cleaner  
environment for our children



*Our Little Champion - The Green and Golden Bell Frog, commissioned by Sydney Olympic Park, featured unwanted trophies and sports ribbons donated by locals, street banners from the park, and littered plastic lids and straws.*

# NICHOLA BRYAN

## THE BOWERBIRD HERD

***Nichola Bryan acts on her convictions in a way that attracts our admiration. She not only inspires us to work towards her goals with her, but makes us reflect on our own daily behaviours and how any small changes we make can bring about big improvements.***

### **1. Please describe your artistic process and describe some of the recent work you have exhibited in various exhibition spaces.**

I describe myself as a sustainable artist, an environmental artist and an assemblage artist.

I collect materials, often littered in playgrounds, bush tracks or the riverbanks of the Parramatta River in Sydney near my home. These are then cleaned, chopped up, manipulated and arranged to create assemblages, usually glued to backgrounds such as corflute signage, old screen prints or canvases. Conceptually, the creative process for me often starts with a specific waste category which I want to feature and raise awareness of, or a specific animal species deserving attention. My intention is to engage and inspire audiences about the possibilities of using pre-loved materials to make low-impact sustainable art. Whilst educating about environmental issues, sustainable practises and ecology.

Other materials are sourced from members of my local community. For example, using donated plastic plant pots and plant tags I created the series 'Our Disappearing Garden Birds' for the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney's Foundation and Friends exhibition TRANSFORMATION: Art in the

Recycle in Dec 2021. This series featured three beloved Australian birds once regular visitors to backyards but now much less often seen.

*Our Little Champion - The Green and Golden Bell Frog,* commissioned by

Sydney Olympic Park, featured unwanted trophies and sports ribbons donated by locals, street banners from the park, and littered plastic lids and straws. This work was exhibited at several Sydney Olympic Park venues to celebrate Biodiversity Month in September 2020, coinciding with the 20yr anniversary of the Sydney Olympic Games where the nation had cheered on their sports champions donning green and gold. The piece celebrated the extensive work undertaken at Sydney Olympic Park to protect and expand frog habitats and populations, particularly that of the endangered Green and Golden Bell Frog, endemic to the east coast of Australia.



*Sing, Maggie* exhibited in the 2020 Art From Trash exhibition by The Bower was a magpie work made honouring my dad, who passed away of Alzheimer's Disease in August of that year. Magpies have terrific memories for faces. Dad loved to sing and he loved his Maggies. I have always been amused by cable-tie spoked helmets worn by people in magpie-swooping season so it felt fitting to use those to create a magpie together with a bicycle tire. The work featured black cable ties left on the ground after the covid playground closure

©THEBOWERBIRDHERD



©THEBOWERBIRDHERD

Top left: *Sing Maggie*,  
Top right: *Happy Underground in Isoilsation*  
Below: *Ms Ruby of Ryde - Chook*

©THEBOWERBIRDHERD



signs had been removed, and parts of the white medical gown I had worn when kissing Dad goodbye for the last time.

**2. You are committed to recycling materials and making the public aware of the detrimental effects on the environment of single use plastic products. How did this interest and focus come about?**

I have had a love of the natural environment and of art, equally, forever and my parents were very environmentally conscious. In 2003 I completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours at COFA focusing on Printmaking and Photography. My art photography was always of the close up details many might not notice. And of the bush, of bark and patterns in nature. Sitting at home in 2017, now a mother of very young children, I watched the ABC's first season of *The War on Waste*. I was shocked and saddened by the global waste problem highlighted in that program but equally inspired to promote sustainable practises within my community, particularly among the young families I now saw regularly.

Around that same time, at the age of two and a half my twin boys became quite obsessed with collecting gum nuts in all shapes and sizes. Then one day they spotted hundreds of bottle tops buried in the dirt at a picnic spot and began digging them up. Quickly, their collections grew to include plastic lids, soy fish, bread tags, nerf bullets, balls, and numerous other things commonly dropped in playgrounds. Combs and hair clips aplenty - they refused to wear pants that did not have pockets for their treasures! They had buckets and tub loads of this stuff assembled on our back deck. It became all too much, so in late 2019 I sorted and threw most of it away, but during that process I began to feel that some of those

items were worthy of further appreciation... perhaps of another life.

The artist in me reemerged as did the teacher. I decided to celebrate the boys' collecting and explored with them the environmental aspects of what they were doing. We began taking intentional litter-picking outings in our street and local bush track. And as for play and creativity, we made gumnut artworks and sparkly rivers of bottle tops down the backyard path. I began making simple animal artworks using various collections, publishing them on Instagram and Facebook pages under @The Bowerbird Herd. Through my art, I had found a fun way to inspire others with simple and achievable ideas for more sustainable living. For example, my quick early works included a lion using my used ribbon collection, encouraging others to save and re-use gift wrapping items. I made a worm using egg cartons to promote composting. A chook was made of easter egg foil wrappers with messaging around how to recycle foil. A cross-eyed owl - 'The Wasted Scholar' was made for fun using wine bottle corks and bottle top lids right when Covid was impacting us in Australia and everyone was suddenly talking about home schooling and how much more wine they were consuming as a result! On the owl's torn-up newspaper wing, a headline read 'Don't Panic!' Finally I must mention the City Of Ryde's annual *Sustainable Waste 2 Art Prize* which I took the children to in 2019. We were all very inspired. Following this I entered and exhibited works in 2020 and 2021.

**3. How have your background experiences in marketing and teaching influenced your current work?**

Upon completing my BFA I worked in graphic design, briefly, then



Above: Paulette the Party Pony  
Right: Paulette the Party Pony detail  
Below: The Wasted Scholar - owl  
Bottom left: The Price we Pay - Hunted to Extinction,  
Northern White Rhino





product marketing for 8yrs promoting DVDs and video games. Many of these products were aimed at children and teenagers - Barbie movies on DVD, for example. I enjoyed the creative challenge of marketing products to children in exciting, eye-catching ways, but the consumerism behind it all didn't sit so well with me. I was regularly investigating cheap little trinkets to include as gifts with purchase attached to the DVDs.

I left marketing in 2011 to undertake a Bachelor of Secondary Teaching (Visual Arts, Photography) and discovered that this was absolutely the career for me. I loved it and found myself working at a wonderful public high school in SW Sydney up until the birth of my boys.

It is no accident that my current works, typically colourful and playful pieces, are designed specifically to educate and inspire children and young families. These are the people I am surrounded by and these are the creative, imaginative young minds who love to use anything and everything to create. The majority of my followers are caregivers of young children, teachers, bird lovers, environmental artists and activists. I am creating my animals (the bower-herd) with the intention of publishing a book of upcycled animals. Additionally, I now run sustainable art workshops and presentations to primary and secondary aged children and adults, teaching in schools casually whilst raising my three young boys. My desires to teach, create art and inspire others in sustainable practices have all come together beautifully.

**4. Which piece of your work most accurately exemplifies what you are currently striving to achieve in your work?**

*Paulette the Party Pony* is a flamboyant and unique unicorn with a colourful

rainbow mane made of single use birthday party plastics and balloons. Paulette's skin is a polka-dot plastic table cloth, intercepted on its way to a playground bin. Paulette's metallic blue background is made from a repurposed mylar balloon which was originally a large number 5 passed on by a friend.

Paulette immediately draws audiences of all ages in for a closer inspection then delights with surprisingly familiar inclusions. Typical party-bag fillers such as tiny ball-mazes, glow-sticks, party-poppers, a small water pistol that probably never really worked, and the plastic party bag it all came in are featured in Paulette's mane. Also included are a lollipop, plastic plate and cutlery, a soy-fish, plastic gift-ribbon, a party hat and several broken pass-the-parcel prizes. Children are encouraged to try and spot the 5 tiny unicorns hidden within Paulette which include a unicorn ring and a unicorn bouncy ball, both found dropped in playgrounds.

This work provides the perfect platform to engage children and their parents in a conversation about single use plastics and



©THEBOWERBIRDHERD

how, together, we can be more mindful of what we use, and what we do with it after first use.

### 5. **How do you go about sourcing suitable materials?**

I have substantial collections of the waste types that are typically littered in playgrounds such as straws, bread tags, whipper snipper cord, lollipop sticks, bottle tops. I also participate in riverbank cleanups both solo and in groups and have collected a few specific categories of litter from the river – tooth brushes for example! Once I begin to notice a recurrent litter item I then consider what animal I could



depict that would relate to that litter item. I might make a simple grasshopper from the whipper snipper cord collection for example and ask people to hop to action by picking up their cord. I once made a mallard duck artwork using bread tags and bread bags, reminding people not to feed bread to ducks and educating about plastic bread tag recycling options in Australia. Through my work I have met other collectors.

One of my boys, Mr O, gifted his twin

brother Mr P with a P plate for Christmas when they were three. Mr P was overjoyed! This led to a competitive hunt between the pair for more P plates! We scavenged up and down our busy street over several weeks and ended up with about six P-plates (and a few L-plates, though younger brother Mr L was not yet born so those plates may not have been as valued). These became the inspiration for my road waste ring-tail possum work 'Wrong Way, Go Back'. And P is for Possum, of course.

### 6. **You play a much broader role in creating public awareness of how waste needs to be considered in every aspect of our lives.**

I am particularly proud of the 1.7m tall lollipop (See page 3) developed collaboratively with local councillor and environmental advocate Kellie Darley in 2020-21. We made 'Lolli-POP it in the Bin' using littered lollipop sticks that were collected during community litter cleanups of the Parramatta River at Ermington which Kellie passionately organised and lead. This work was featured at the Sustainable Waste 2 Art Prize held in the City Of Ryde in December 2021. The Lollipop Ladies, as we called ourselves, also appeared at the Ryde Sustainability Festival in 2021 and the Parramatta Riverside Scavenge in 2022 to raise awareness of the littered lollipop issue. At these events we engaged and spoke meaningfully with hundreds of local families, educating them about littered lollipop sticks, a small but significant and overlooked litter item.

I have developed a wonderful working relationship with Sydney Olympic Park's Education team and have run sustainable art workshops for their annual Youth Eco Summit for the past few

years. Likewise, I have run sustainable art workshops for The Bower Parramatta, an organisation well known for their re-use ethos. I am increasingly being contacted by Sydney libraries and schools to run talks and workshops. Sustainability is a cross-curriculum priority in the Australian curriculum and so this is being practised and celebrated within schools in a variety of ways including artmaking. I'm thrilled to be a part of this!

Instagram and Facebook:

@TheBowerbirdHerd

Web: [www.thebowerbirdherd.wixsite.com/home](http://www.thebowerbirdherd.wixsite.com/home)

Email: [thebowerbirdherd@gmail.com](mailto:thebowerbirdherd@gmail.com)



@THEBOWERBIRDHERD



Above: *The Wrong Way - Go Back - Ringtail Possum* detail.  
Top right: *Our Disappearing Garden Birds - The Gang Gang Cockatoo*  
Lower right: *Our Disappearing Garden Birds - The Fairy Wren*  
Opposite page left: *Don't Feed the Ducks*  
All images courtesy of the Bowerbirdherd.

# Artists from around the world recycle all kinds of materials in their art/craft work.

Enjoy watching these video links

Ptolemy Elrington: Hubcaps

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwIM6nslh28&t=4s>



Yuken Teruya

<https://vimeo.com/408511211>



Su Blackwell book artist and the emerging genre of book art.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PM\\_2lnlB54&t=8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PM_2lnlB54&t=8s)



A contemporary take on the ancient art of Kintsugi

Just scroll down the page to find the video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEJ23t940UY&t=2s>



# Brett Smout

## Ceramics



Brett Smout, Vase

35cm high porcelain vase, fired at 1210 degrees centigrade, decorated with resist of cracked clay from a sand-mine in Bungendore, NSW. Computer designed form, 3D printing of the resist stencil, glazed then fired in a reducing atmosphere. Cloud-coloured with tiny copper red specks and blush migrated from a nearby piece. Glossy surface, smooth to the touch. Water-tight.

Image credit: Brett Smout

# BRETT SMOUT

## PORCELAIN FORMS

### **1. How long have you been working in this medium and what opportunities, qualifications, circumstances, and/or choices enabled you to start working in this area?**

Well to be frank I began making ceramics when my parents were despairing that I would ever do anything when I was at high school. They paid for me to go to a night class in 1972 and I loved it! I had great teachers and found the medium, the forming processes and the firing completely engaging. And I was captivated by the extraordinary way the firing transforms the objects, with every kiln opening being a revelation. I made and fired pots in the basement of my parents' house, and in a communal diesel-fired kiln at the school, and sold them at markets and shops before and after a year of formal training at Otago Polytechnic, under master ceramist Neil Grant. I began teaching ceramics and ran a teaching studio on the premises of a kiln-building company.

### **2. Had you worked in other media prior to this? If so, how did this influence your current work?**

I started screen-printing when I was about 10 years old, with a fold-down table, a couple of wooden screens and stencils I cut from paper. I printed one-off designs and also multiple tee-shirts for my brother's football team. I'd never thought about it until you asked, but the influence can be seen in the pieces where I use stencils to layer under-glazes and glazes to create images and patterns on the surfaces of vases.

### **3. Your technique of porcelain slip casting is quite an complicated**

### **process. What is involved in the making of each piece?**

It starts with the design of a model or prototype that is about 15% larger than the desired piece, because clay shrinks during drying, and again during firing. I make some models by hand from rigid foam, and some I design by computer and print the basic shape on a 3D printer. I coat the model in auto putty, hand-sand it smooth and repeat until it is a finished prototype. Next I make a plaster mould around the model. I draw lines where the pieces of a plaster mould should separate and set the prototype up to make the first pour of plaster. That involves enclosing the model within boundaries of wood sheeting, with clay built up to the separation lines, creating a reservoir for the liquid plaster that will form the first segment of the mould. I mix plaster with water and pour it over the model, and when the plaster has hardened, I repeat the process for as many segments as are required by the shape. When the mould has dried, the actual slip casting can begin. Liquid clay (slip) is poured into the hollow plaster mould, left for 10-20 minutes, and poured out again. The plaster absorbs water from the slip leaving a 2 to 3 mm skin of clay adhering to the inner walls of the mould. That is the cast - which is then trimmed and smoothed and sometimes altered in preparation for firing, decorating, and firing again.

### **4. Which piece most accurately exemplifies what you are currently striving to achieve in your work?**

I think I would choose a recent porcelain vase, fired at 1210 degrees centigrade. It's 35cm high, decorated with a stencil I made from a photo of cracked clay at a sand-mine in Bungendore, NSW. After decades of firing at around 1300 degrees, I completed a PhD where



Glaze test tiles  
 Brett inspecting a glazed test-tile among more than a hundred different test-tiles on shelves  
 Image credit: D Barkla



Brett Smout, Vase. 22cm high by 22cm wide. Mid-fire porcelain. Decorated with image of bubbles from a fountain in Central Park, Sydney.



Brett Smout, Vase. 10cm high by 10cm wide. Mid-fire porcelain t

I explored reducing the firing temperature using waste materials - including the Bungendore tailings. That led me to commit to firing some work at lower temperatures. It's a challenge to develop depth and subtleties in the surface of the pots at lower temperatures. I've been putting much more effort into designing decoration that is interesting in its precision but still open to any elements of flow or transformation by kiln effects. I want to make pieces that clearly use 21st century techniques but still benefit from the technical gains of past centuries. This piece (see page 13) is a good example of these efforts at integration: Computer designed form, digital photography, 3D printing of the stencil, glazed then fired in a reducing atmosphere, which gifted it with a blush and tiny copper red specks migrated from a nearby piece.

**5. Sourcing materials is an integral part of your process. How do you go about sourcing suitable materials?**

Lots of materials can be bought from the ceramics suppliers in Sydney, but sometimes it's exciting or necessary to search out less common materials. So I've visited sites around NSW and collected by-products of manufacturing processes for use in glazes: mine tailings, sugar cane ash, perlite fines, rock dust, corncob mash and recycled glass. I've beach-combed for pumice and written away for samples of silicon carbide dust, tylose gum, and stannic chloride. I have mail-order supplies of resin, silver nitrate and bismuth nitrate. I got a call from a very nervous parcel-post owner about that lot. Maybe there is such a thing as too much experimentation.

**6. Explain the role of 'concept' vs 'skill' in the production of your work.**

My current work is aligned with formalism and the marriage of aesthetic and function. The broad concept is to develop an integrated body of work that will fulfil the 19th century Arts and Craft ideals of utility and beauty in a 21st century manner. I have begun to spend much more time on upfront design of forms that will interrelate and support different decorative treatments. That has required adding skills in computer assisted design, and skills in using various 2D image transformation tools. I've learned to operate 2D and 3D printers, bringing the results into the clay studio as tools for making individual pieces. I'm exploring how a single form can be transformed by different decorating choices and firing methods. There is pattern and symbol rather than narrative or commentary, with the pieces having geometrically defined curves, and layered surface effects that benefit from controlled preparation combined with the effects of the fire. I have three different kilns that I use as decorating tools, including a brick kiln I built after using software to design how the bricks should be cut and laid. Each kiln requires different skills in placement of pieces to make the most of the glazes, vapours, atmosphere, and thermodynamics.

**7. What advice would you give to someone who might be interested in beginning a career working in your medium?**

I think I would recommend some reading, some experiences, some copying and some self-directed learning. The reading might be books like "Finding one's way with clay" (to inspire self-directed learning) or "The Ceramic Process" (for a technical reference). The experiences could be classes or even an apprenticeship, visits to studios



and galleries, and of course making and reflecting and keeping records. It's a very individual journey, with some people liking lots of companionship and dialogue with others in the field, and some preferring a more introverted approach. If its to be a full-on career, then a degree of financial planning is needed, and it's worth seeking some mentorship from someone who has pursued a successful career in the medium.

<https://www.brettsmout.com/>

Brettsm\_art@hotmail.com

<https://www.instagram.com/ceramic.ocean/>



Brett Smout, Sunspiral. 7.5cm high by 16cm wide. Glazed with a translucent yellow glaze blending to white at the rim, this bowl is mid-fire porcelain fired in an electric kiln. I fire on sunny days to make use of our solar panels. All images courtesy of Brett Smout unless otherwise accredited.



*Wavy Cabinet* Figured jarrah top. Recycled jarrah frame and sides. Doors Recycled jarrah, cypress, mango and camphor laurel

*Learning the basics of woodwork is all about straight lines. It's taken me some time to move away from that.*

*Brian Dawson*

# BRIAN DAWSON

## JOURNEYS IN WOOD

I have been working with wood for about 30 years.

I guess the urge to 'make stuff' started as a teenager. I made model aeroplanes, crystal sets and radios, fixed bicycles Unlike many school children my school did not "do "woodwork and I found Latin an unsatisfactory substitute. My father was useless at any kind of handwork, so I had no early interest or education in the craft, however, I was excited and involved in photography and had a darkroom to develop and print my work. Photography has continued to be a lifelong passion and a few years ago I had a one-man exhibition.

Converting a 150 year old house in London to flats and being an owner builder in Sydney enabled me to teach myself

several trades. I had theoretical knowledge as a chartered quantity surveyor, which helped.

Timber was what attracted me most and when I had, at last, my own workshop I really started working with wood I joined the Woodworkers Association of NSW and became chairman, a post I held for 3 years. This was an excellent way to learn, help others and enjoy the camaraderie of likeminded people Later, I attended Sturt School for Wood and under the tutelage of Toby Muir Wilson, my skills lifted. His influence is with me still and I have since then completed a master craftsman course at his workshop in Tasmania.

My love of nature and the environment



coupled with my long experience in photography, has helped me to see the beauty and infinite variations of the natural world. There are no straight lines! Learning the basics of woodwork is all about straight lines. It's taken me some time to move away from that.

Learning to use hand and machine tools is an essential part of working with wood. Without basic skills, no advancement can be had. So once the basic skills are learned then starts the fun bit. I no longer get satisfaction from the traditional rectilinear forms. I lean toward artistic rather than craft orientation and am continuously experimenting and exploring. I have hardly finished one project when I am already excited about the next. I seldom do one project at a time. Right now, whilst finishing my 'gourds', I am already planning and sketching the next project.

Curves, colours, layers, laminates, aluminium dots, copper dots, ovals, shells, Perspex. I have experimented with them all.

I'm not sure if I'm actually striving for anything, except exploring more and going forward. My 'current' piece in a year's time may be quite different.

Currently, my example of which piece most reflects where my practice is at is my gourd series. Elegant and sinuous, organic and sweet to touch. Showing beautiful, curved grain. Made of recycled Oregon (Douglas fir).

Contrary to many of my contemporaries, I obtain wood first and then find a way to use it. Most woodworkers identify a project and then get the wood.

I pick up whenever and wherever I see something special. I have bought

wood from Western Australia through to Tasmania on my travels as well as picking up throw-outs in the street. I have far too much timber in my under-house store!

In order to realise a concept, skill must first be learned.

Malcolm Gladwell's contention that 10,000 hours of effort is required to master a skill has some truth in it with woodwork as with many other activities.

For me, conceptualisation seems to arise with greater frequency the more I work with wood. New ideas keep coming.

My advice to anyone wishing to work with wood is simple. Just do it! Find like-minded people, join a woodwork forum or club and research/read as much as you can about the craft. Take lessons and don't be afraid to ask.

Writing this has caused me to reflect on how my love for wood evolved from craft to creativity and how playing is an integral and necessary part of my evolution. I see a parallel with my main career (I've had a few). I was a professional facilitator for 35 years and during that time the whole process gradually evolved from work to play so that they became one. So it is with wood. As I continue on my path I feel more and more freedom to play and express myself with less inhibitions, to not follow the conservative 'craft' route. There are so many paths to explore, and I don't want to stop.

"Designing and making and risk taking are all part of the same thing. Creativity is fundamentally a high-risk activity. It demands that we destroy as much as we create. Having to specify things way out ahead is too safe a way of going about it."



*Chaotic Cutting/Serving Board*, Many timbers including recycled oak, recycled jarrah, Queen ebony, jarrah, camphor laurel

*As I continue on my path I feel more and more freedom to play and express myself with less inhibitions, - to not follow the conservative 'craft' route.*



Left: Dimpled Box, Huon pine, recycled jarrah handle

Top right: Lumpy Oval Container  
Huon pine, jarrah, red gum, myrtle

Top far right: Rolling Pin  
Recycled jarrah, recycled oak, cypress

Below: Interlocking Coffee Tables,  
Recycled jarrah, aluminium nails

Bottom right: 3 Dove's Tails  
Recycled jarrah, aluminium nails

All images courtesy of Brian Dawson







Above and rop right: Liz Gemmell City shirt made from recycled materials.  
Photographer: Liz Gemmell



# LIZ GEMMELL

## RETHINKING, REUSING RECYCLED FABRICS

This garment started off as all white with pink facings and trim. I started with a patchwork design that filled all one front and this design gave me the idea to do a city buildings theme for the back. Woven check fabric is hard to find in fabric shops so all the pieces came from men's check shirts bought from charity shops and the choice is large. No inspiration came to me for the other front straight away. I finished all the machine stitching and trimming and a design of patchwork strips started to form. I do a lot of hand finishing which I find very restful and gives me the time to visualise designs.

Not all the garments in charity shops are second hand, ie, worn prior to their donation. Some garments come straight from a factory where there are flaws such as button holes on the wrong side, flaws in stitching or flaws in the weave. These garments are destined for disposal and the tonnage of dumped clothing is becoming massive. If rethinking, re-using and recycling helps to extend the life of a garment or any other item, it is worth the effort.



Above left: *Denim Coat* with dark side facing out. hanging on the left and *Denim Jacket* hanging on the right.

Abpve right: *Denim Coat* with lighter side facing out.



Liz Gemmell *Check Jacket*  
Images courtesy Irene Manion

*Denim Coat* (page 25 bottom two images). This coat was made from unpicked jeans with a lot of experimentation in seaming so slits appeared. Piecing the denim is a slow process and it allowed me to revise my concept of how to use the dark or pale side of the denim fabric. The garment itself is of a simple design which allows the piecing to be dominant.

The *Check Jacket* (left) was an experiment in garment design in using 4 sleeves to facilitate being able to wear it upside down. It was a delight to mix and match all the check fabrics sourced from mens' shirts. One pair of sleeves were turned into pockets when worn upside down.

Liz Gemmell  
lizgemmell356@gmail.com

CRAFTNSW

Exhibition Invitation

**Handcrafted**  
**- rethink, reuse,**  
**recycle**

7TH - 19TH OCTOBER

**BALMAIN WATCH HOUSE**

179 Darling Street, Balmain NSW

**OPEN DAYS:** TBA





---

The Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW trading as craftnsw

Founded 1906

Incorporated 1929

ABN: 55 000 022 195

Patron: Professor The Honourable Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO

Ambassador: Claudia Chan Shaw



<https://www.artsandcraftsnsw.com.au/>



[facebook.com/craftnsw/](https://facebook.com/craftnsw/)



<https://www.instagram.com/craftnsw/>



[gallery@artsandcraftsnsw](mailto:gallery@artsandcraftsnsw)