A PLACE FOR ART

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG ART COLLECTION
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Bert Flugelman

*Lawrence Hargrave Memorial*

1988-1989

stainless steel

14 m (H)

Commissioned by the Friends of the University of Wollongong, to celebrate the Australian Bicentenary, 1988
I’m very pleased to introduce and support this publication which celebrates the University of Wollongong Art Collection. Students, staff and visitors to our campuses all have some experience of the range of works which make up the Art Collection. The priority given to making art accessible in a variety of settings means this institution is truly rich in cultural capital.

Art at our University is valued on a number of levels; this can be reflected in the unique aesthetic of each piece or perhaps the relationship between the work and its environment. Bert Flugelman’s towering steel sculpture on the Illawarra escarpment is an eye-catching icon that almost demands attention. By contrast, Ann Thomson’s Solar Boat and Elisabeth Cummings’ Bush Rocks After the Rain speak to me in a different way. I’m a long time fan of Thomson’s vigorous and colourful works which give me a sense of her deep connection with nature, while Cummings’ absorbing paintings always take me on a journey and make me ask questions about her inspiration.

Our reaction to art is often intensely personal and sometimes our relationship with a particular work is difficult to explain. Art is a way of enhancing our sensibilities and each acquisition, whether it is a large and dynamic sculpture or a story-telling Indigenous work on paper, adds to the cultural capital that we are building. In an institution with such a strong national and international reputation, and an incredibly diverse population, the artworks the University acquires are more than simply financial investments. They are a valuable and valued element of the unique, multi-layered experience offered to those who may, even briefly, connect with our campuses.

Jillian Broadbent AO
CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
Guy Warren
One Morning Early
2000
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
167 x 295 cm
Purchased 2001
My first encounter with the University of Wollongong Art Collection was during a tour of the main campus as part of the selection process for the position of Vice-Chancellor. As I entered the Vice-Chancellor’s Unit in Building 36 Guy Warren’s large landscape, One Morning Early, was a striking sight at the top of the stairs.

This rich and complex painting feels like a view deep into the temperate rainforests of southern New South Wales. If you stop long enough you find, beyond the stylised fronds and tree trunks, a group of figures: camouflaged, ghostly outlines deeply integrated into the work. This picture stretches the boundaries of Australian romantic landscapes and the way we normally place people in the frame.

Is this painting’s position at the top of the stairs a moment of accidental curation or a stroke of genius? Whatever the answer, we know that universities are, first and foremost, about people and the way they interact with place. This picture captures a core aspect of the University of Wollongong: bright, complex and vibrant. That it was painted by one of our colleagues and a champion of the Creative Arts is an added bonus.

Art has long been valued at our campuses and today its role is diversifying alongside the nature and locations of this lively institution. The construction of new facilities shows an increasing understanding of how creativity and design can be integrated within the built environment to offer a unique experience for students, staff and visitors. This extension of the original vision for the Art Collection represents an opportunity for development and further ensures its unique connection to the University’s evolution.

This publication documents and celebrates the distinctive role of the University of Wollongong Art Collection. Within these pages is a glimpse of the scope and significance of this rich gathering of works which I know is widely enjoyed and I hope will continue to grow.

Paul Wellings
VICE-CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
Emily Kame Kngwarreye
*Untitled*

C. 1990

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

127 x 152 cm

Purchased 1993
The University of Wollongong Art Collection represents a rich tradition of diversity and, most importantly, accessibility. While other Australian institutions might have more valuable collections, I’d suggest none make works so available for viewing. Paintings, sculpture and artefacts are all integral to our University culture which is represented on the walls and grounds of our campuses.

For this we owe a large debt of gratitude to those who over the years have supported and promoted the growth of this marvellous resource. Former Vice-Chancellor, Ken McKinnon, had the vision to see the value of an Art Collection which is connected to the University. As well past curator, John Eveleigh, started the process of acquiring works which formed a strong artistic foundation, while former director, Guy Warren, continued this process to deliver on the original vision. Today we see the current curatorial staff using their expertise to ensure the Art Collection continues to develop and stay vibrant.

Many of the pieces on display can become personal favourites, with their own importance for each individual. To me, the Emily Kngwarreye work in my former office is a wonderful painting. I feel privileged to have had an example of work by such a significant artist as a backdrop for my day. Throughout this publication others will tell their story about how art fits into their University experience, exemplifying the uniqueness of this wonderful shared asset.

Gerard Sutton AO
VICE-CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
1995-2011
Elisabeth Cummings
*Bush Rocks After the Rain*
1998
Oil on canvas
112 x 112 cm
Purchased 1998
Guy Warren
UOW ART COLLECTION DIRECTOR
1992 - 2005

The University of Wollongong Art Collection, which John Eveleigh founded, focussed mainly on interesting works by graduating students. Later we were able to expand on this focus and acquired works by established Australian artists, including extensive holdings of works by Indigenous artists. The Art Collection also benefited from generous gifts: for example, Douglas Kagi donated an important collection of prints by British artists of international reputation.

The idea of accessibility to art was, and still is, absolutely predominant. From the very beginning the works were to be seen around the University. Regardless of the faculty or campus where students were studying, they could see art on the walls and in the grounds. Some people didn’t like what was put up but that was fine, so long as they noticed and reacted. Indeed, many people became very attached to the works in their space and objected strongly to any subsequent change.

Art has the power to make us fascinated and curious, angry and delighted, and to make us think – all useful elements in a university environment.
May Barrie

*Viva Solaris*

c. 1976

angaston marble

180 x 38 x 38 cm

Purchased 1977