

**MEDIA  
RELEASE**

November 11, 2016

**TARRAWARRA  
MUSEUM  
OF ART**

# ***The Sculpture of Bronwyn Oliver***

**19 November 2016 – 5 February 2017**

**Curated by Julie Ewington**



Sonia Payes *Bronwyn Oliver* 2006  
C-type photograph, edition of 10, 127 x 127 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

'My work is about structure and order. It is a pursuit of a kind of logic: a formal, sculptural logic and poetic logic. It is a conceptual and physical process of building and taking away at the same time. I set out to strip the ideas and associations down to (physically and metaphorically) just the bones, exposing the life still held inside.'

Bronwyn Oliver quoted in Hannah Fink, 'Strange things: on Bronwyn Oliver', in *Burnt Ground*, (ed. Ivor Indyk), *Heat 4. New series*, Newcastle: Giramondo Publishing Co, 2002, pp. 177-187.

The first comprehensive survey of the work of renowned Australian sculptor Bronwyn Oliver will be held at TarraWarra Museum of Art, 19 November 2016- 5 February 2017.

*The Sculpture of Bronwyn Oliver* will present over 50 sculptures drawn from public and private Australian collections, from the mid-1980s to the artist's final solo exhibition in 2006. It will reveal Oliver as the most significant sculptor of her generation. At a time when many artists were turning to installation, video and other ephemeral art forms, Oliver resolutely pursued making inventive and substantial works in metal, which became her signature material.

Guest curator, Julie Ewington, describes Oliver as one of the most exciting and rewarding sculptors to work in Australia in the last decades of the twentieth century.

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“Oliver developed an original, distinctive and enduring vocabulary that expressed her fascination with the inner life and language of form and the strict but beguiling demands of her chosen materials.

“Above all, she brought an almost poetic brevity and decision to her sculpture. Many works suggest aspects of the natural world and its metaphorical potential, and some of the most successful public works are located in gardens. Yet Oliver always tenaciously followed the logic of her material, making works such as *Eyrie* or *Eddy* that evoke associations with shelter or natural movement or, as with *Curlicue*, conjure human mark-making with deliberate panache.

TarraWarra Director, Victoria Lynn, described the exhibition as a testament to the short but poignant contribution made by Oliver to Australian sculpture – a vision that remains exceptional in the history of Australian contemporary art.

“Oliver’s unique and labour-intensive approach involved joining threads of copper wire to create what appear to be woven forms that allow light to pass through their surface and cast shadows on the walls and floors. Her works resonate with the force of archetypes, and their green and brown patinas suggest an enduring presence that remains as relevant now as when they were first created. Some appear to be rescued from an archaeological past, while others resemble the quintessential forms found in nature: spirals, spheres, rings and loops,” Ms Lynn said.

Oliver was renowned for sensitive and inventive sculptures placed in the public domain, and she worked closely with clients, stakeholders and architects in their installation. This exhibition will include maquettes of some of Oliver’s much-loved public works, accompanied by working documents and images. Exhibition curator Julie Ewington said the exhibition, located within the museum building in TarraWarra’s magnificent grounds, will be the perfect setting for appreciating Oliver’s work.

Since Oliver’s untimely death 10 years ago at the age of 47, sculpture has become increasingly popular with broad audiences. *Bronwyn Oliver* will bring Oliver’s great achievements in sculpture to new and expanded audiences.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an illuminating monograph written by Hannah Fink, to be published by Piper Press, Sydney. In addition guest curator Julie Ewington will author an exhibition brochure and a comprehensive suite of interpretative texts.

Curator Julie Ewington is an eminent writer, curator and broadcaster, who has played a central role in contemporary Australian art, as former Head of Australian Art at the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, and in curatorial positions at Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, and Canberra School of Art Gallery.

### ENDS

#### For further media information, please contact:

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**TarraWarra Museum of Art**, T +61 (0)3 5957 3100

311 Healesville-Yarra Glen Road, Healesville, Victoria, Australia, Melway ref: 277 B2

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am to 5pm

Open all public holidays except Christmas day

**Exhibition Admission: 19 November 2016 – 5 February 2017**

Adults: \$12.00, Seniors: \$10.00 Pensioners, Students: \$8.00 (children 12 and under free)

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### BRONWYN OLIVER, 1959–2006

Bronwyn Oliver was one of the outstanding Australian artists of her generation, and perhaps its leading sculptor. Originally working in cane and paper, by 1988 Oliver began working in metal, especially copper, and in the next two decades achieved a distinctive and enduring body of work. As writer Hannah Fink memorably observed in 2006, 'Bronwyn Oliver had that rarest of all skills: she knew how to create beauty.'

Raised near Inverell in country New South Wales, in 1959, Bronwyn Oliver first studied sculpture in Sydney at Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education from 1977–80. She said of her arrival at the College sculpture department, 'I knew straight away I was in the right place'. After gaining the NSW Travelling Art Scholarship, Oliver completed a Masters' degree in London at the Chelsea School of Arts in 1982–3. The recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, in 1988 Oliver was artist-in-residence in the French coastal city of Brest, where she studied Celtic metalworking; in 1994 she won the prestigious Moët & Chandon Award, which allowed her to spend a year living and working in France.

Oliver emerged in the 1980s at the same time as an international resurgence of contemporary sculpture. In response to the Conceptual and Minimal art of the prior decade, artists returned to the fabrication of sculptural form. Having attained a Masters of Sculpture at Chelsea School of Art in 1982–83, Oliver was witness to the nascent years of this celebration of form in British art, where it was known as 'New British Sculpture'.

Between 1986, with her first solo show at Sydney's Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, and her death in 2006, Oliver presented 19 solo exhibitions, including a number at Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne; in 2005–6, McClelland Gallery, at Langwarrin in Victoria, presented a selected survey of her work; and from 1983 onwards Oliver participated in numerous group exhibitions in Australia and internationally, including in Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, New Zealand, Korea and China (her final solo exhibition was posthumous). At the same time, she undertook many commissions where she worked closely with clients and stakeholders, and for 19 years taught art to primary school students at Sydney's Cranbrook School.

Prodigiously hardworking, Oliver was renowned for devising exquisite sculptures for the public domain, installed in locations as various as the Royal Botanic Gardens, the Hilton Hotel and Quay Restaurant in inner-city Sydney, and on the Kensington campus of the University of New South Wales. Other noted public works are in the Queen Street Mall, Brisbane, Hyatt Hotel, Adelaide and Orange Regional Gallery in regional NSW. Her work is also held in most major Australian public collections, and in numerous important public and private collections in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Europe and the USA.

The Estate of Bronwyn Oliver is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

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### JULIE EWINGTON, CURATOR

Julie Ewington is a curator, writer and broadcaster living and working in Sydney. A specialist on contemporary art, from 1997 and 2014 she worked at the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, as the Head of Australian Art, and as a member of the curatorial team for the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art.

Recent projects include writing catalogue essays and journal articles, reviewing Australian and international exhibitions for magazines including *The Monthly*, *Artforum*, *Art Monthly* and *eyeline*, and lecturing on all aspects of contemporary art.

Julie Ewington is the author of major monographs on Fiona Hall (2005) and Del Kathryn Barton (2011), and in 2014 was the recipient of the Australia Council's Visual Arts Award for service to contemporary art.

### MAJOR EXHIBITION PARTNER



### THE BOOK

The book, ***Bronwyn Oliver: Strange Things*** written by Hannah Fink and published by Piper Press will be available for sale at TarraWarra Museum of Art and all good bookstores, \$49.95, ISBN 9780975190159, 256 pages, 235 x 280mm, hardback

The author Hannah Fink is a former editor of *Art and Australia* and a founding editor of *Art AsiaPacific*. She has written for numerous publications, including *Meanjin*, *Siglo*, *Australian Humanities Review*, *Artlink*, *Heat*, and *Art Monthly*. Her work has been included in the *Best Australia Essays* (Black Inc, 1999).

She is the co-editor, with Hetti Perkins, of *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius* (winner of Best Book 2000 Art Association of Australia & New Zealand) and, with Dinah Dysart, of *Asian Women Artists*.

She has recently guest-edited an issue of *Southerly* journal on music, to be published in October 2016 and is currently editing a book, with Steven Miller, of the collected writings of Emeritus Director Daniel Thomas AM, and completing a major critical biography of Rosalie Gascoigne.

This book is the first major study of Bronwyn Oliver's life and work.

### PUBLIC PROGRAM

#### Julie Ewington discusses *The Sculpture of Bronwyn Oliver*, 2pm, Saturday 26 November

Join guest curator Julie Ewington for a special discussion on *The Sculpture of Bronwyn Oliver*. Enjoy the unique opportunity of viewing, and learning about Oliver's exquisite works in this much-awaited exhibition.

Booking essential: \$20 Adult, \$15 Concession and TarraWarra Museum of Art members

Book here: <http://www.twma.com.au/events/julieewingtonbronwynoliver/>

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