AS AN ARTIST I CLASS THIS PAPER AS PART OF MY WORK,
AS I WOULD A SCULPTURE, AND, AS SUCH
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CONNIE COLLEEN
February 1985.

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For

KEVIN AVERETT
JAN BROWN
RON ROBERTSON-SWANN

who shared with me
their love
of sculpture.
CONNEE COLLEEN'S

Report on

How

ONE FLEW OVER THE KOOKABURRA'S NEST

or

POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

at

THE CANBERRA SCHOOL OF ART,

CANBERRA. A.C.T. AUSTRALIA

SCULPTURE - ART HISTORY


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*N.B. Sections 1-6 are in BOOK A
Section 7 is in BOOK B*
Section 1: THE NEST
Sir Winston Churchill's final speech to the British Parliament was only seven words

With the gallery quiet and tense and leaning in their seats, this great grand bulldog of the British Empire - cane between his legs, two hands clasped on top, jaw protruding, looking at that auspicious crowd, said the first three words of his last sermon

'NEVER GIVE UP.'

Then he paused, looked again, and said the last four words:

'NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP.'

Section 1: THE NEST - INTRODUCTION

I am at present enrolled in Post Graduate Study at The Canberra School of Art (C.S.A.). The course currently is of 12 months duration from February till March (of the following year) - 12 months of uninterrupted study with full access to the school seven days per week. For me it is generally six days a week. I am an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (a Mormon) and I respect the Sabbath day (Sunday) as a day of rest.

My report, basically, is about the preceding 12 months - but not only of that year, for it would be impossible and inconsistent to report on only one year of my life. This report will cover various parts of various years, thus revealing the influences and logic inherent in my mode of expression and choice of subject matter.

I have attended the Canberra School of Art for seven years - of official and unofficial enrolment.

In Section 2: IN THE NEST, I will write about some of my Images, thoughts and feelings which have occurred and recurred throughout my life and which are heavily imprinted on my mind, before I came to the C.S.A. and which constitute my present impetus and direction in art. It does not begin with my birth, for the influences of my mother and her life are too strong. Nor does it begin with my mother's life, for even she was influenced in her way of thinking, by her predecessors.

I traced my past to find myself to understand my thought processes. And I found it. It was all there, steeped in my Australian ancestry. Lives moulded by floods and fire and drought, physical and spiritual hardship; toughness interlocked with a strange love of beauty of thought - poetry, music and drawing.

I am the sixth generation to be born on Australian soil and the seventh generation that has lived continuously on Australian soil. The imprint of the past was a strong unknown force that influenced my life. "Those who do not remember the past are compelled to relive it."4

Obtaining knowledge was difficult, sifting through it, with enough wisdom to unravel the truth. Believing the truth was often unnerving and depressing - sometimes worse than remaining in ignorance; but applying it to my life - having the faith to change - this was daunting. I almost gave up on many occasions, yet I never gave up on any occasion. When I failed I tried again - again and again.

In Section 3: PARENTAL FEEDING, I will discuss some of the teachers who gave generously of their time and knowledge, who made the effort to reach out and stimulate my mind and help me progress - teachers of the Canberra School of Art as well as at other institutions and teachers of my own religious faith.

I wish to acknowledge the following who were all teachers by example. Elder Kevin Averett, Pres. Richard Bartlett, Erna Bollard, Jessie Cameron, Glenn Cragg, Ricci Cragg, Lyle Cullen, Tanya Eccleston, Carl Erickson, Dr. Gillespie, Elder Larry Freeman, Brother Garside, Elffie Gilles, Dr. Ian Trethewey, Troy Overton, Sylvia Kleinert, Mitch Owens, Patriarch J.F. Parton, Doug and Meg Rackham, Stephen Rackham, Evelyn Romney, David and Sue Smith, and extra thanks for the support given me by my ten year old son, Owen, who has spent most of his life at the C.S.A.

Special thanks to the Director of C.S.A., Udo Sellbach, a man with a vision, who has provided opportunities which I have used, enabling me to find myself by working outside C.S.A. at a Nursing Home, Forbes House.

I was fortunate in finding an obliging matron in Matron Marie Edwards at Forbes House. To Forbes House, a Smith Family Project in Queanbeyan, I would like to extend my thanks to all the wonderful staff - the manager, Mr. Buckland, and especially the residents and patients for being themselves and sharing their time with me.

I will also mention some of the psychological barriers that I had to overcome and put behind me. "The Swann" (Ron Robertson Swann) has been my main source of help in this regard, helping me to adjust and cope with the world. Not forgetting that great lady of C.S.A., affectionately known as "Granny Brown" (Jan Brown) - a guiding hand in the technical and aesthetic aspects of my work - a great friend and an example of determination and tenacity, which I endeavour to follow.
The Library staff, Administration staff, the staff at the 'Cafe' and Union, and many other staff and students, too numerable to mention - thanks!

To Trish Bridges and Peter Haynes, for wading through this paper, editing it, for proof-reading, and for encouragement and advice - heartfelt thanks.

Section 4: VIEW FROM THE NEST. This is basically straight quotations from an 'artist's diary'. This artist, being also a single Mum, there are often the bits of ordinary life which I have left in, including a letter to America. It is about slow progress, slow solution, boring and monotonous, repetition of daily life, the mundane, and work, and on occasions, a delightful breakthrough - progress and achievement during my time at C.S.A.

I applied to attend C.S.A. in 1978 and was rejected. I began to "moonlight" on lectures, voiced my opinion, used the library and generally attended C.S.A. unofficially - more often than the genuine enrolled students.

During the year, 1978, I also attended Narrabundah College and completed my 5th and 6th Form Higher School Certificate in Art (I had gained an H.S.C. Matriculation in other subjects from Seaforth Technical College in 1971). Half way through 1978 I did enrol in two classes at C.S.A. at night - sculpture and drawing. I "moonlighted" in a painting class, again as an unenrolled student.

Finally accepted at C.S.A. in 1979, I completed my Diploma in 1982, transferring to the Degree Course in 1983 and completing Post Graduate study in March 1985.

As well as the practical and visual work, I attended Art History classes throughout my time at C.S.A. In 1984, I received permission from the Academic Board to attend Art History classes with Peter Haynes.

Section 5: LEARNING TO FLY is a discourse on my practical work, technicalities involved and the work itself.

My 'contract' of work for this year was based around the technical and aesthetic differences in two materials - terra cotta and bronze, involving experiments with four life-size figures. I did not diversify my interests by trying to study figures at various stages of the life cycle. All of my work this year was concentrated on the aged, at the end of the life cycle.

I have fulfilled my contract by presenting four life-size figures:

1. "Mary Amelia - Waiting" (104.5x55.64cm.) - Bronze.
2. "Dos" (140x51x40cm.) - Ciment Fondu
3. "John John" (153x54.5x61cm.) - Ciment Fondu
4. "Brownie" (136x87x85cm.) - Ciment Fondu.

It was not feasible to experiment in clay because of the stance and emaciated bodies of the old people. It would have placed structural considerations before choice of pose. This idea I abandoned after consultation with my supervisors, Jan Brown and Ron Robertson-Swann. In lieu of terracotta experiments I tried working in direct wax at a reduced scale. The results of these efforts are fifteen small sculptures in Bronze.

In addition to these I also completed a portrait head "Thistleroot" (47x27x28cm.) in Ciment Fondu, and "Man in Hat" (64x32x34cm.) in Bronze, and "Time" (50x36x34cm.), also in Bronze.

In Section 6: OUT OF THE NEST, I'll try and show the unique structure of the School, which enabled me to work directly with my models at a nursing home, amongst old people in their surroundings.

With cooperation, support and backup from the School my work has increased aesthetically, technically and in quantity and quality, during the two and a half years since 1982 when I first tentatively suggested the idea and obtained permission from the School to work at Forbes House. I will also discuss my future direction which I intend to follow.

Section 7: FOOD SOURCES details:
1. List of my work and measurements, and photographs
2. Family Album - Ceramic Shell Casting, etc.
3. Recipes and formulae.
5. List of Illustrations.
Section 2: IN THE NEST
... down the flickering glades
Ghastfully glaring, huge-dry mouldered gums
Stood 'mid their living kin as banked throughout
With eating fire-expelling arrowy jets
Of blue tipped, intermitting, gaseous flame
Boles, branches, all! like vivid ghosts of trees. 5

Judith Wright writes

Harper was more than a mere translator of English poetic technique and attitudes into new terms. He was the first to assert the independence, the specialness of the Australian ... in thought and feeling. 6

Excerpts from my Journal

... I went with mother in 1950 to see Sarah in North Dubbo (Central Western N.S.W.). Sarah was my mother's grandmother. Mother was researching family history. I was nine years old, or maybe ten. I was very small for my age.

I couldn't get over the fact that there was someone older than me, yet smaller. She was 91 years old or thereabouts.

She had shrunk, she was so small and fragile. A tiny, tiny lady in black with a big apron and white-grey hair.

She put on the kettle and stoked the fire for a cup of tea for mother. I hated tea, so I had a biscuit and milk.

(How I wished now that I had stayed to listen, but I went exploring.) The old clay brick pits were at the bottom of the garden. It was a warm sunny day, but not hot (Autumn?) It must have rained recently because there were puddles of water in the driveway and puddles at the bottom of the pits.

There was only a strand of wire along the back fence. I thought how easy it would be to go through it and fall into the pits. I climbed through. Red and yellow clay - beautiful and frightening, it took my breath away. It was such a long way down; I quickly moved and straddled the wire, back through the thistles and grass to the old pigeon loft and safety.

I think the pigeons and I were alike. We were both left to our own devices. They lived and flew, they were never locked up. I wished I was that free.

I can remember walking through the house - everything was dark - dark furniture, drapes, blinds, everything was drawn or covered. But it was comforting. I wished I could have stayed. It has a certain stillness - time stood still there. There was no harm or hurt to befall - only calm.

Mother and Sarah had moved to the front verandah to take a photo and warm themselves in the late afternoon sun. There was another cup of tea before we left in the afternoon.

The kitchen was getting shadowy and the wood chips ignited, crackled and spurted, struggling into flame to bring the kettle to the boil. The flickering fire danced all over the dull kitchen and brought it to light and life.

Sarah's face became magic. She was like an old witch, but a nice one, weaving her spells over the cauldron.

I liked the old black stove, instead of the modern enamel stoves - the gaudy greens and creams. I liked the black pots, the black tops, saucepans and chimney. It was all black - black the lot! Even the walls, black with smoke. Warm flickers of light from the fire reflecting on white faces. So warm and inviting you could sink into corners of the room and be unobserved. There was privacy there in the blackness.

I didn't communicate much (that I remember) but I noted the tubby carved legs on the table and the straight-backed chairs. Everything was fascinating. How I wanted to belong to this odd world of the past.

Sarah died shortly after that.

Thirty years later I would question mother about that day spent with Sarah. Mother had kept notes, but very brief. She said Sarah's mind was so bright, alert and quick, it was impossible to keep up with her, so the notes were very brief.

Sarah looked after herself and two bachelor sons, doing everything for herself, right up until she died. She came to Australia on the last sailing ship that sailed around the Cape; she spoke of working for Cobb & Co., in Orange; she named everything that happened and existed in Dubbo in the 1880's - there wasn't much there. Her husband's family had had a farm in Rosehill, as it was called in the first three years of settlement, before it was renamed Parramatta.

In 1983 I traced our family genealogy back and "found" the farm and our
original ancestors who came with the second fleet as convicts, in 1790. They had a farm at Rosehill.

I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - our common name is Mormons. I am proud to be a Mormon. I was converted when I was 28 years old - 15 years ago; I adhere to the principles that are part of being a Mormon - it is a way of life.

Our ancestors are very important to us; we are urged to write down our personal histories, family histories, study the history and genealogy or our families, study the history of our country and compile a journal for our posterity.

Although I was always interested in the past and influenced by my mother it was the Church which encouraged me to do something. It was also the environment at Art School with the oft heard saying "What are you on about?"

Well, in the early years at Art School I wasn't entirely sure. I knew I wanted to do figurative sculpture, but I also enjoyed making welded works, and in my first semester, playing with cubes and minimizing them, fascinated me. I suppose it was imagery from my journal such as the one I've just recounted from Sarah that helped me find direction in art. (I have also chosen to live in a very old home - Australian style verandahs and wood fires.) And streams of subconsciousness which I find easy to write about and analyse.

My father was a wheat merchant. In March 1944 my mother's mother was very ill. The temperature at Dubbo (N.S.W.) was between 110°F and 115°F. Dubbo Nan (for that is what we called her) got worse in this heat and mother asked my father to take her back to Sydney.

It was during W.W.II, all the Americans were on leave and accommodation was impossible to find. The men who worked for Dad went on a drunken "binge" because he was away, the wheat stacks weren't covered and rain ruined the stacks.

Dad was too ashamed to tell anyone that he was helping his mother-in-law, who had had a nervous breakdown. Mental Illness was hidden in those days.

I think that happened twice - the wheat stacks got wet because of Nana's illness. Dad could have explained, but he was too proud.

In 1951 when I was visiting Sarah I had spent two years in a C.W.A. girls' hostel - provoking remembrances of the freedom of pigeons, privacy, darkness, warmth of a kitchen fire. One does not ever go to the kitchen when one is one of 30 girls in a hostel. Everything was cream and clean, bare and uncluttered.
Each girl had a locker for belongings and one in a row of beds in a dormitory divided by partitions. There was no privacy or intimacy.

My sister and I had been placed in the hostel in 1949 when my parents went bankrupt; subsequently my father moved to Sydney where he had obtained employment. My mother, however, had suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized in the country. Her illness would be recurring from this time and would also influence my artistic drive to create 'spirituality' - the existence of the spirit.

Eventually, in 1952, Dad found accommodation in Sydney, but it consisted of only one room with use of common facilities. I was then 12. From 12 to 17 years of age (until I took up nursing training), I shared this bedroom with my parents, on a bed in the corner - not the greatest way to learn about life.

The room had cracks, it was an old terrace house, No.14. (Last time I was in Sydney it was still standing yet all around the other terrace houses had been demolished - it looked lonely and odd.) I used to make pictures out of the cracks in the wall - it had nothing to do with creativity or artistry. It was fantasy - a means of escape from the drudgery in which I lived, and the increasing obsession that I was manifesting my mother's illness.

My mother when she was young, drew beautiful portraits - very sensitive and exquisite. Later she loved to listen to Parliament and read the latest news, but never mixed with her own peer group.

At school in Sydney in the 1950's, the teachers sent me to art classes when I misbehaved. They forced me to work on a mural and put me on a committee to help illustrate a magazine. There was a young girl, Nina, who at 14 years old, wanted to do all these things and even entered a painting in the Archibald competition each year. I was terrified and believed myself insane when I did things that were different to the activities of others.

I can remember going out to the Gladesville Hospital for the Insane when I was about 12 years. Huge fences of sandstone bricks and old grey buildings. It was quite awesome going through thick doors, each one being opened and locked - not unlike the hostel I'd been in, except that here they had bars on the windows - thick iron bars.

The bright, happy, high-spirited Nan that I knew, dyed hair and clothed in the latest fashions, was now a cowering, fragile figure with huge, hollow, scared and paranoid eyes peering out of a sunken face.
We lived on the fringe of a suburb called Beaconsfield, one block away from Botany Road and the swaying, noisy trams. A few blocks of terrace houses in the middle of an industrial area. Rows of working class terrace houses, a post office, paper shop, butcher, chemist, and, of course, the Pub, central to all and focal point of all life.

Four doors up from us lived a lady, bed-ridden and crippled with rheumatoid arthritis. I went and talked with her every day. Her bed was near the window so she could see everyone. She had a pet galah to keep her company. Her hands and body were twisted, gnarled and distorted, but from that worn and pain-ridden body came a lot of love and warmth. Inside, the room was dark and cluttered, but inviting.

A lot of old people in the district were real characters who had lived a lot and lived it hard, not unlike the people I have sculpted from Forbes House.

The house in which we had a room, was rented by a man called Thomas. He had been in the army and during W.W.II just as he was about to board ship in Greece, the Germans overtook the troops who were then taken to a concentration camp, surrounded by barbed wire. He attempted an escape and was shot in the back. He lost a kidney due to a "botch" experimental job in a German hospital, and as a result was consigned to a life rarely free of pain and ill-health. Nevertheless, he was a good raconteur and I was fascinated by his exploits and tales of experiences. He had been assigned to work on a farm in Austria as a prisoner, and it amazed him that he was permitted to eat with the family, but visitors ate by themselves.

Because of the war, Thomas had been separated from his family, and on returning to Australia, his drinking served to broaden the gap. He used to get up to some outrageous escapades, and if he didn't return home, he was probably in gaol overnight. When he was drunk, and just before closing time at the Pub, he'd sing "The Red Flag", the communist anthem. It never failed to cause a ruckus. Most times he managed to escape before the police arrived.

It wasn't a good environment for my Dad - someone to drink with. Once extended drinking hours came in, matters worsened. Many's the night mother and I "cleared out" through the window, walked the streets and sat in gutters till we were sure father was asleep. I begged my mother to leave but she always asserted "Never get divorced" (that seemed to be the worst thing anyone could do.) The amazing thing was that in the morning we arose as if nothing untoward
had happened. I kissed father and mother calmly and went to school. It confounds me that I had the strength to continue under the circumstances. So violence was something one tolerated and turned the other cheek to. By this time I was being dominated by a boy I had met when I was 15. I stayed with him until I was 28 and joined the Mormon Church. There, with the support of the Bishop and Patriarch, with considerable trepidation I disobeyed my mother and got divorced.

Two years later I embarked on a second marriage, with similar problems of intimidation and pervasive jealousy, ending in a second divorce.

I realize at this time, that, eight years ago after my second divorce, 'I was the problem', and that I had to assume responsibility for overcoming my doubts, fears and insecurity.

Within the Mormon Church I avoided leaders because I felt threatened (yet there was no one now to punish me). I also avoided lecturers at Art School - I actually felt physical pain. I reasoned it out in my own mind before I had read any books on psychology that the threat of punishment was the cause of my dilemma.

Eventually, I confided in Ron Robertson-Swann in my second year at Art School, everything in my past. We were on a camping trip at Nowra with all the sculpture students. I travelled with him back to Sydney. I talked - he listened. You can say a lot in 12 hours, so I told him of my early life, how I became involved with the Mormons and the importance and relevance of their beliefs to me. Ron said that he couldn't believe in religion as he was an Atheist, but he said "I believe that you believe". He warned that it would be hard to change, even though I had confronted my problems, but he promised to help me as much as he could.

Ron Robertson-Swann started teaching at the Art School mid-1978, so we have been together all this time. I never spoke to him much after this early conversation, but every time I progressed he would urge me a step further, by rekindling something I had said and helping me to face up to it. When it came to writing this paper, Ron considered that most students did not know what their art was about, but that I did, and that I should state what I knew.

My interest in "preserving" the memory of spirit of old people obviously links up with my mother who is 73, yet throughout my life, I realize that I have been suppressed by her severe depression and her heavy dependence on me,
emotionally and physically.

Mother went into a nursing home in September 1983. Since then, during the past 17 months, I have begun to live without the fear of killing someone because I did something or said something that offended and hurt them.

Over the years I developed a mental telepathy with my mother. If I felt she was ill I would just go to her.

This form of empathy was not new to me. On Friday 27th November 1965 I had planned to take father's washing and ironing to his flat. As the evening grew late the feeling constantly plagued me that I should go to him immediately. At 11.30 p.m. the police came and informed me that he was dead.

I did everything that was required, identified him at the morgue, arranged the funeral, cooked for all the relatives. But after his death I was inconsolable and filled with remorse that at the time he most needed my help, I had ignored the unspoken entreaty.

By this time I had accumulated considerable negative energy so my recourse was to convert it to positive creativity. I retrieved all the left-over cans of paint from the shed (I'd painted nursery murals for my two small sons) and a piece of masonite. I painted a symbolic painting and from this point I changed. The painting hung in the lounge room for some years, but I refused to explain it to anyone for fear of ridicule. When, in 1969, I was studying Mormon doctrine, I found the answers to the painting. I destroyed the painting in 1973, just before leaving for Hawaii with my second husband. I vowed that 'that' person who created things was the cause of unhappiness.

As a student at Brigham Young University, Hawaii Campus Laie between 1973-74, I was given clay and allowed to attend art classes. I did well but it caused tension at home. I solved the problem by not being able to make anything and returned to Australia in October 1974.

Consequently when I was rejected on my first application to Art School, it was because I was honest - I didn't know if I could do anything. All I wanted was to put myself in an environment where I could free myself from the suppression of psychological barriers and externalize, via the artistic media, those things that were deeply embedded in my heart.

It took me until June 1982, four years at Art School and eight years after I had sculpted a head in Hawaii, before I could use my creative instincts without fear and pain. Since then I have progressed, especially this last year.
February 1984 was the first time in my life that I was happy, really happy, on my birthday.

Because mother's depression and guilt manifested itself around the time of my birth, I was affected by it. But my sculptures are not about my mother, but my mother is old and is facing similar problems of the aged and infirm, and this is what they are about.

Another facet in my struggle for identity emerged at my birth. My father did not come to the hospital for three days after I was born in 1941. He wanted a boy, George. He called me little George. I didn't have a real name. An Irish nurse called me a "wee Colleen" (small girl) and so the name Colleen has stuck with me. Throughout my childhood and youth I wanted to be a boy and acted as a boy. At 28 I could play billiards, surf, ride a motor bike and wrestle. Through the Mormon Church and experiences at Art School I am starting to find myself. I am "Connee Colleen".
4. Amy Wallace - Forbes House, born (1887 - )
Section 3: PARENTAL FEEDING.
A person is only half successful who overcomes trials but fails to share his new wisdom and strength with others. 7

During my first semester at C.S.A. we made cubes (4", 8", 12"). There were 13 students and we each made three cubes and then worked as a group on group exercises (see Section 7) with 39 cubes. Like Cézanne and also sculptors such as Ann Triffith and David Smith, who used the cube in their work, we used the cubes to create, because it is a basic form found everywhere around us.

Unencumbered by technique and materials, these cubes could be quickly moved and varied to create many of the "illusions" in art. By arranging size in different orders, movement towards or from a corner was produced. We stacked, hung, scattered, crowded and tilted cubes in various formats to "see" the affects. We used all the cubes and then "took away" until we arrived at the minimal amount of cubes that still held strong images. The minimal amount seemed to make a stronger statement and had a more striking effect than a mass of cubes.

Eventually we sought new surroundings and, packing all our little boxes, we set out into the environment near the beautiful Lake Burley-Griffin, in Canberra. Here we reiterated many of the exercises we had performed at the school indoors. The problems of sculpture were all too clear. In most instances the environment dominated and made insignificant work that had been successfully produced indoors.

Concepts had to be changed to challenge the environment, to make a statement within a new context. It was a new challenge which we faced - space was a major concern.

These problems affect all types of sculpture and it was a fascinating period of learning by application and participation.

Up to this stage the cubes were all white. Upon returning to our workshop everyone proceeded to paint their 'own' cubes in any colour that they preferred.

There was no correlation on choice of colour and when we again began to work with coloured cubes chaos reigned. Cube size was not now the only factor. Colour enlarged or shrank and often distorted the shapes and sizes of the cubes. It was difficult and disturbing working with colour, full of frustration, every preconceived 'work' envisaged in the white cubes failed when reproduced in the "new" coloured cubes.

These early experiments with Jan Brown and Vlase Nicoleski still influence my work. I see the human form as a series of cubes of various sizes and by placement of size and distance I know I can create movement to or from, or turning, or stabilizing the form. The studies with cubes in the environment helped me view work 'in the round', and consider the influences of space on a three-dimensional object.

I try also to see through my 'figures' as if they are 'metal lines' and to envisage the links and turns, which will help impart the 'life force' or 'aura' from my figurative sculpture. In this regard, talking to Ron and working in metal during my early years has been an asset.

Discussions on the 'negative planes in space' which linked 'positive' metal planes in metal abstract sculpture forced me to "see" the figure more clearly. It is easier to read a line following through in metal sculpture than in figurative work yet these lines that direct our eyes are present in all sculpture once we are taught to see.

At the same time I was required to draw 'life studies' with Jan Brown. The time lapse between what I understood quickly in my mind and what I could apply technically in practical work, drawing and sculpture was an ever-widening gulf.

It was a time of great personal conflict of feelings of inadequacy, ineptness and frustration, compounded by huge psychological demands. At the first sign of anger or abuse by other students I wanted to run. I hated anyone to get between me and the door - escape. So drawing classes sometimes were full of fear, my own irrational fears. Often I didn't worry about drawing - I would just pray that I could stay and not run away. Eventually, as is the case, if a problem is confronted and fears found groundless, than the problem is removed logically. Time is a wonderful healer.

Art History, I really enjoyed and I studied the Australian painter, William Dobell. Dobell to me was an enigma. I had first seen Dobell's painting when I moved to the city with my mother in the 1950's when visits to the Sydney Domain and the Art Gallery were a regular Sunday feature, and an
escape from poverty. Mother was always eloquent and well-spoken, her vocabulary immense. She was always the lady - everything that I would reject because of irrational fears and then later seek to re-establish in myself and drop the "ocker*" image (and am still trying!)

In contrast with outings with mother where the odd occasions when I went with Thomas, first for a swim in the old Domain baths and then on to the Domain. This was fun! We'd always end up at the Salvation Army Group. There we'd find the tiny wizened lady "Sister Green" trying to shout, above the drunks who gathered around her, about the Lord. No one wanted words, just songs. She always gave in, got out the tambourine and sang. She could belt out a tune like a Negro blues singer and I loved to join in!

Sister Green never tired and was an exuberant bundle of vitality - so ancient and fragile, and yet so alive.

Generally, however, I was with mother, in hat, dress and gloves, acting like a lady so she wouldn't be offended or upset, and we would visit the Domain. Mother was an advocate of Freedom of Speech, and so I became used to interjection, interruption and participation in all concerned as everyone spoke their views. (I think I have often acted at the Art School like a speaker or interjector from the Sydney Domain.)

Next stop - the Art Gallery. Sculpture high on pedestals was too distant in parks, even in the Gallery it was too remote, on pedestals or in glass cases. Sculpture said nothing about Australia or the Australians that I loved.

In Dobell's portrait of the grand old Australian Dame Mary Gilmore (1959) he elongates the neck and disproportions the figure as he had painted previously in 1944 with Joshua Smith. Dame Mary appears as enthroned royalty - not European royalty or aristocracy. Those elegant white gloves do not hide slender hands, they are not the hands of an English Dame with servants. These white gloves fit snugly, cloaking gnarled large worker's hands, hands that helped mould a country.

Dame Mary was a prolific writer and social worker, who fought for the underprivileged. She also smoked a pipe. There is no pipe in this portrait yet Dobell has incorporated her nicotine-stained hair.

He has succeeded in creating her indomitable spirit. Her tiny head on that sloping body appears as a beacon on a lighthouse; her two jewels of eyes burn from within. I can almost see her thinking these words from her book, More Recollections, 1935:

Sometimes when a half remembrance comes of the legendary stories of the past, told to my father by the blacks as he sat by their fires among the elders of the tribe, me in his arms and too small to be noticed or counted among them, the same feeling sweeps over me, and I see with their eyes and feel with their feelings ... only the spirit and the things of the spirit remain.  

I do not know the stories that Dame Mary heard from the Aborigines but I do remember the story "Truganini" (one of the last survivors of the Tasmanian Aborigines) which told

We were camped close to Partridge Island when I was a little girl, when a vessel came to anchor without our knowledge of it. A boat came ashore and some of the men attacked our camp. We all ran away but one of the men caught my mother and stabbed her to death with a knife.

My father grieved much about her death and used to make a fire at night by himself, when my mother would come to him.  

There is a 'human condition' which many artists have encapsulated. A common human condition of feeling and spirit. 'Spirit' as mentioned by an ancient Aborigine as her primitive father sought comfort and consolation, after the savage death of his wife by a civilized white man. - the 'spirit' as mentioned by Dame Mary Gilmore that gave her the empathy to relate to the Aborigines and "feel with their feelings".

I looked for a piece of artwork that would traverse the centuries of time and convey a similar feeling of Spirit, and found it in 2nd semester 1980 (see photo-copy). I enjoyed this piece especially as it has qualities that are not normally associated with 'primitive' man. It is a figure made in Greek Neolithic times, in a position of contemplation; serene and in solitude. The artist has succeeded in creating this feeling of rest by a series of "v" incisions which are also inversions. These inversions pull the eye to the

6. "Seated Figure Carved on a Flat Pebble" (0.04x0.033m.) (Photocopy) No.M132 from Magoula Karamourlar in the Folos Museum. Theocharis, Demetrios R., Neolithic Greece, 1973, p.30.
base where the bulk of the body rests, and the incisions take you up and around the figure again. It is a small figure, only 0.04m. x 0.033m. in diameter, engraved in a pebble. There are three deeper incisions to give the body the impression of bulk. There are three "notches" to define the breaks in the body, at the buttocks, the neck, and top of the head.

When looking at the "V" design, a rhythm of three is again basic to an overall unity of the piece. It certainly is not a mother goddess or a fertility fetish. Its sex is indeterminate, and details are absent from this piece. It is a conceptual interpretation of human form and mood and is contemporary with ideas and work of this period.

Our civilization is built on the contributions of countless numbers of unidentifiable souls. The historic period has made us more conscious of individuals and impregnates their names in our minds so that we begin to believe that contributions during the historic phase are more relevant than at other times.

Manning Clark, the Australian Historian, when he first contemplated writing about "men and women facing up to the problems of being human beings in Australia", began to devour all the sources about the nature of man. That meant reading again and again and again all those remarks about human beings ... in the Old Testament especially Genesis, Job, Ecclesiastes and the Psalms; Shakespeare, Dickens, Tolstoi, Chekhov, Dostoievsky, Henry Lawson, Joseph Furphy, Henry Handel Richardson, Martin Boyd and Patrick White. 11

When these authors are investigated it is found that they encompass many nationalities, many landscapes, many cultures and many languages, but only one human condition. We are born, we live, we die.

Elder Richard L. Evans affirmed

Life offers two precious gifts
One is time, the other freedom of choice,
the freedom to buy with your time what
you will ...
Yours is the freedom to choose. 12


12. Film text: Man's Search for Happiness, Salt Lake City, Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964, p.4.
I had planned to socialize a lot and these things I did not achieve or waste energy on. As I learn more my capacity to use the time effectively increases. Time is wasted on irrational fears.
Section 4: THE VIEW FROM THE NEST
President Herbert J. Grant, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints often said (Conference Report, April 1901, p.63)

That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do so is increased.13

1982

18th September - Saturday
Mother was very talkative on the train trip to Sydney, about the early days with her family. An interesting side-light was the backyards that verged on the railway line. Apparently one man very attached to his wife, had a life-sized sculpture made of her after her death. Every day he dressed 'her' according to the weather report - coats in winter, brolly for rain, summer dress in summer. It was around Burwood in Sydney. Mother's father related many unusual tales of Sydney in the 1920's.

22nd September - Wednesday
Assessment. Chipping away at Jos' head, Ron remarked, "You've come a long way, baby. You're making decisions - that's what I always wanted you to do."

19th October - Tuesday
Today I experienced Joy in the New Zealand Temple. After 13 years I made this commitment.

12th November - Friday
It's 2 a.m., having scones and jam and cream with the night staff nurses at Forbes House. I've been casting heads in plaster next door in the paddock. The sister asked me if I was afraid being out in the paddock at midnight. I think I'd scare anyone to death - I was covered in plaster. Any prowler would think he was insane. It's too hot to do it in the day - the sun dries the clay.

END 1982

1982 ASSESSMENT - DIPLOMA SATISFACTORY!

LETTER TO AMERICA 1983

Wednesday 26th January 1983 - Australia Day

Dear -

In our old 1960 blue V.W., Mother, Owen and I left Queanbeyan, destination Junee N.S.W.

Gradually as we travelled and the day grew hotter, it was evident that the dryness was increasing. Even before we reached Cootamundra all the creeks were dry. Sandy hollows dotted the canyon slopes, tufts of grass in the hollows, absorbing the last bit of moisture.

Occasionally there were water holes, perhaps fed from an underground spring, but these were full of green scum and were uninviting. At one such hole we saw, as we crossed the small bridge over the creek, a farmer with his tractor filling cans of water, hopefully not for drinking.

We also noticed that no ploughing had been done, and we were in the centre of wheat belt country. The ground was rock hard and it would need rain to soften the soil so it could be ploughed.

The country looked more barren than I had ever seen it.

The philosophy of the Aborigine is such that they believe that they are owned by the land. Europeans, with their desire to obtain possessions, believe that in purchasing with money they own the land.

Whilst an affinity with land is not unique to Australia Henry Thoreau said "Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads" there is something about Australia's uniqueness that binds you to it.

In Hawaii I missed the land. We were counselled by Church Leaders that of all Nationalities (and the College took all cultures from around the Pacific) Australians couldn't settle.

When Dorothea McKellar wrote "I love a sunburnt country", she was writing of an ethereal spiritual beauty because the reality to a visitor to Australia would be a view of desolation. The country was sunburnt. The grey gums and ghost gums faded into the surroundings; the country was in tones of greys and

browns; there was something forlorn about it.

As we travelled we could sense the silence outside; the stillness as the few cattle and sheep that had not been sold shuffled across brown earth. Puffs of dust kicked up with each step; heads hung down longing for grass that did not exist in the worn down paddocks.

One paddock we passed had the appearance of being covered with scattered rocks, but this was not so. The "rocks" were paddies of cow dung, and the cows who had changed every last bit of dry stubble to the dung, clung together under a withered old gum - a gum that had survived many droughts and hopefully would survive this one, its withered, gnarled branches offering a little shade to the cud-chewers, who waited to be hand fed.

The dung was baked hard by the sun. It reminded me of the volcanic rock in Hawaii. Not one glade of grass. White men have carved into Australia, eating it and moving on so that all the country

... wears man's smudge and shares
man's smell; the soil is bare now,
nor can foot feel, being shod. 17

The landscape at this time of year is dry. I can accept dryness but this was barrenness. There was an eeriness that was not just caused by the absence of the physical properties of grass, it was more than that - it was the spiritual sadness of the land and animals.

We only passed one flock of sheep on the way down. They had been released on to a lane, to graze because the paddocks were burnt brown earth with cracks of dryness etching the landscape.

Occasionally bright red earth eroded by the wind would protrude from the faded brown dust. One should have felt concern, but it was a delight to see a bright colour after the tonelessness of the area.

As we continued we occasionally came across huge paddocks of yellow stubble from old wheat paddocks, precious fodder for the farmer. For me, precious colour to lighten the landscape. On the hills in these old wheat paddocks can be seen the concentric circles in brown earth, the furrows made by the harvester years ago, giving movement and energy to the bright yellow stubble. It was reminis-

cent of a van Gogh painting - the swirls - and he loved yellow. I took much pleasure from it as I drove by. I felt warm and contented inside. Hopkins also said,

And for all this nature is never spent

It was evident that the majority of the stock had been sold and only a select few (did they appreciate it?) had been kept for breeding when the drought ended.

At this time of the year a lot of the land is covered in Patterson's Curse; it grows to about three foot six in height - a green thistle with a purple flower on top - we never saw one plant.

According to the farmers I spoke to, this is supposed to be a ten year drought, and they have been hand-feeding for five years now, on and off. So this must be the peak of the drought. I cannot ever remember the land like this. It is one of the anomalies of our society that our population is city-based and so we don't suffer as the country folk do, and so city dwellers tend to whinge and whine and waste water.

I grew up in the bush. It has done me good to go back to the land to see and breathe the red dust and to stand and talk about the weather, because it is a real concern and not just to make social chit-chat, as in the city.

I took a book with me on Rembrandt and in it a pupil of Rembrandt's, Hoogstraten, said to his brother who wanted to go to Italy

You will find so many beautiful things in your own country that your life will be too short to understand and express them. However beautiful Italy may be, it will avail you nothing if you are incapable of expressing the nature you have around you.

That quotation touched a chord in my heart. You see, many years ago as I struggled with Art School, and I wanted to travel, yet I knew I had to stay here with Owen so his father could see his son grow and establish a strong bond with him, I came across a quote of Dogen's, the second Zen master

If you want to obtain a certain thing, you must first be a certain man. Once you become a certain man obtaining that certain thing won't be a concern of yours anymore.21

That quote helped me understand that I was not going to become the person I wanted to be, an artist, by going to Europe and seeing all the great works of art. And although I didn't think I could get myself to make art, I began to make myself into a "certain man".

As I start my fourth and final year I realize that I have almost become a certain man. I have to prove it this year by producing work that is at least 300% better than any I have done previously.

Unlike you I do not sit for exams. No one can tell me what I should do. To pass I have to produce (objects) sculptures - and as the semester progresses I must show improvement in aesthetic and conceptual aspects as well as in technique. I have to be objective, analyse my work, and my reasons for doing it, and how it works as a work of art. I am assessed either as Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory, there is no grading as you would understand it.

It is really difficult and relies on personal confidence and self esteem (and for me, being secure). I work by how I "feel" in my heart, but when I am finished I have to justify my work in an abstract language, often to Atheists, so validity is not always justifiable because of a spiritual feeling I have had.

It is really odd that now I am at this point I am not sure if I need to go away to Europe. Time will tell. Perhaps it's nostalgia from going to Junee and talking to so many "bushies", and going into great-great-great-grandfather's home that he built over 100 years ago. His name was Charles Blatch; looking down the well that six generations of my ancestors had looked down; re-reading Hopkin's poem

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod.22

My mother was born in a room on this property, Spring Hill, in 1912. They left in 1918 after a long drought. It is ironic that we were here

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visiting in the middle of another drought, 65 years later.
Acres and acres of dirt and dust.
And here I was treading the same earth and going in the same door.
I managed to obtain an old timber fire surround from an old fireplace
- no monetary value - but great sentimental value.

END 1983

1983 DEGREE

ASSESSMENT - P1 PASSED

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1984

21st February - Tuesday
Mary Amelia Culshaw, from Forbes House, died 18th February - funeral
today, 3 p.m.

20th March
Armature for Dorothy welded, "Dos" at C.S.A. Drew old Tom at Forbes
House - wrecked it.

21st March

23rd March
Jack Newland, Forbes House, died. Welded frame for sculpture of Dorothy
("Dos") again - needed changing at C.S.A.

6th April - Friday
Added arms to "Dos". Progress slow; new Matron "difficult". My own
doctor visits Forbes House and calls me Australia's Rodin! Went and
collected the new matron's vacuum cleaner to try and keep her happy.

11th April - Wednesday
Finished armature; welded for John Smith ("John John"). Watered "Dos").
13th April - Friday

Worked on sculpture of "John John" all day at Forbes House. Dorothy is still not well. Wet down clay sculpture "Dos" but can't work with Dorothy.

6th May - Sunday

Called in to Forbes House at 5 p.m. to help dress "John John" for bed. He is very weak. If I don't call in he has a really bad day. I am too emotionally involved. He means a lot to me.

7th May - Monday

Jan Brown came out to Forbes House. Gave me a good crit and some positive advice to work on. Alterations need to be done.

8th May - Tuesday

Invested small and large "Man in Hat" of John Smith ready for traditional bronze casting at C.S.A. Made a mistake with the mix but I didn't give up - finished it. Called in to Forbes House, took John a beer and vacuumed his room 'n put him to bed.

9th May - Wednesday

At school 9 a.m.
1. George and Alex turned over head for me; it is already too heavy (trad. casting).
2. Put on runners and funnel, also mounts (down a bit in wax), holes for bolts. Poured mould into wax, scored edge.
3. Built up neck - filled with ludo mix, and wired reinforcement, both large and small sculptures.
4. Seived a 20 gallon can of ludo for tomorrow.
5. Showered and home at 10 p.m. Owen staying with his Dad overnight. John Smith was asleep when I called in at Forbes House so I left a note for him when he wakes.

16th May - Wednesday

Cast both sculptures in Silicone Bronze - "Man 'n Hat", dug out small "Man 'n Hat". It is an excellent cast. Everyone went to dinner to celebrate. I went and sat with John John - he is very ill, 8 p.m. till 10 p.m.
27th June - Wednesday
Worked six hours on "John John" clay at Forbes House outside. John is ill in Queanbeyan Hospital. Thanksgiving dinner today at Forbes House. I dressed up as Santa Claus, pillows to disguise me, and went over to John John in hospital and stood in the doorway. "Gerday Connee", he said. "John John, I'm in disguise", rushing over to him and throwing my arms around him, "How do you know it's me?"
"Connee I know, I can feel when you come near my room", and the old gnarled hands reached up and touched my home-made beard and he said, "Romney wool, Connee, bit greasy, not a good quality wool."
Senility? or lack of stimulus - give an old wool classer some sheep's wool, be it in the form of a Santa Claus beard, and a mind comes to life.

28th June - Thursday
Still having problems with Dos' arm. The 'feeling' is getting better. At first I thought the length was wrong. Now I think it is just static. I need to bring it to life!

29th June - Friday
Church. At Forbes House. I forgot - can't start till lunchtime. Very windy working outside on the clay of "John John". It is starting to come together. But I want it to move and it won't! Where do I go to now?
Went in and fed "Brownie" her tea - measured her for a sculpture. George called in and talked about moulds - he was helpful. Flat battery again! Rotten car!

13th July - Friday
"John John" died tonight 9 p.m.

4th August - Saturday
Took courage (it is August), finally altered hip as Ron suggested when he came, on sculpture of "John John". Didn't want to as I know what will happen - inside "stuffing" burns out as soon as I re-weld the armature.
No equipment at Forbes House - took ages to do. Hope the clay doesn't collapse in chest now the foam has burnt out.
20th August - Monday

Work on sculpture "John John's" hip - still a long way to go.
Waxing "Mary Amelia" all week.

1st-2nd September

Casting "Dos" at Forbes House.

22nd September - Saturday

Sydney Temple opens. The Dedication is very spiritual.

22nd October - Monday

I have been very discouraged and have found it hard to make decisions in a positive manner. The wax is getting me down. Working on "John John" depresses me. It's the first time anyone's died before I completed the sculpture. I'm getting nowhere. I am conscious of being very, very lonely, and nothing appears to satisfy that loneliness except a visit to the Temple in Sydney.

3rd November - Saturday

Had to scrape back the ceramic shell on the body and box of "Mary Amelia" - the wax had broken and was moving on the iron support rods. As it takes hours to dry, I must start from scratch after I repair the wax. I will now be behind in the process.

8th November - Thursday

Ante Dabro says my work can wait till March 1985 to be cast. He knows I need it to pass. He is the most miserable, selfish man. He will cast John's and Karl's next Monday in his own time.
2 p.m. I see Udo - I need help - after discussion with Ron and Udo, Ante will cast mine on Thursday.

12th November - Monday

Fibre glassed all day. Tanya Eccleston has been a great help - she has worked hard for weeks helping me prepare.

ONE LONG DAY

13th, 14th, 15th November

Melting out wax. In kiln by 2 p.m. Out at 9 p.m. Ante changes his mind again. We now have to fibre glass them inside and out before tomorrow morning. All the iron has to be cut out and the holes plugged. Tanya has a sleep, I work till 2 a.m. and then sleep till 4 a.m. whilst
she works. I find it hard to move. The weather has turned freezing. I light the large kiln (Len Henness made from an old cement mixer). We stand inside, giggling. It cheers us up and we keep working and finish at 7.30 a.m. Wednesday morning. Exhausted I rest till 10 a.m. in my sleeping bag at C.S.A. and then get up to go and get wet sand. Trish Bridges helps me pack it in the metal containers. The kiln is on by 4 p.m. We meet the deadline. Now I must stay up with the kiln. Tanya and I go and buy take-away Vietnamese food and have a three course meal by kiln light and relax and chat, and giggle - we're so tired! By 10 p.m. the kiln is 650°. I make our beds in the foundry sand pit. Tanya is already asleep - she didn't rest today - she was working on her own sculptures, welding. I check the kiln all night - but typical Canberra - the gas bottle outside freezes and the gas pressure drops. This will delay casting. I check it all night but it never rises. Ante put on portable gas bottles in the morning (Thursday) at 7.30 a.m. and the temperature comes up quickly to 800°. John, Karl and Len help Ante pour at 2 p.m. Disappointed as the largest piece shows moisture on the mirror - back into the kiln for a few more hours. Next time out if it shows it is dry it is the last to be poured. Each bronze piece, as it is chipped out, is a success. At 10 p.m. I am alone chipping out the last piece - the big box. I've finally got a "BIG" bronze!! With a lot of help from a lot of people. Ante Dabro is a great bronze caster. Thanks. And now to sleep.

28th November - Wednesday
John Ahearn welds up my bronze with his TIG welder at Reid Tech. It is really a good bronze, and he's a nice bloke.

17th December - Monday
The firemen are burning off a fire break at Forbes House. It's impossible to cast "John John" outside today - ash everywhere.
18th, 19th, 20th December

Casting takes a long time. High winds in Canberra. The clay is drying too quickly, the plastic won't stay down in the wind - Life wasn't meant to be easy.

26th December - Wednesday

Rang Kevin - he has the magic that makes me work hard. Now I'm sure I'll get it all done.

28th December - Friday

Worked late, took courage and finally welded the small holes in my bronzes with the oxy - OKAY!
Also welded a new armature for "Brownie" (getting up, almost falling.)
Drove home via Airport Road, to Queanbeyan. There are no highway lights and I found it hard to keep awake. I had my elbow on the door of the car and my head in my hand, leaning against the window - so tired I couldn't hold my head up. I saw the "Booze Bus** ahead. The police waved me down. I continued on, not even slowing down, nodded to them as I passed and talking to myself said, "Oh it's alright, I'm a Mormon and I don't need to stop 'cos I don't drink."
They caught up with me at Yass Road. I felt a bit sheepish as I climbed out of my "ute" to talk to them. Even Mormons have to stop! Everyone has to stop!! I explained I was an artist. He looked in the back of the truck - saw the rubbish! He believed me, told me to go home and sleep, or I'd end up in an accident. Nice cop, could've booked me.

31st December - Monday

Started sleeping at the Art School when I'm really tired. It's safer. Working 6 a.m. to midnight.

1985

4th January - Friday

Jan, Trish and Mary Pike in to help me ciment fondu "John John" - took 12 hours. Owen continues to amuse himself all day - he is a great boy!

* "Booze Bus" - police cars in Australia are called Booze Buses because they are equipped with "breathalyzers" to test the 'alcohol blood level' in car drivers.
7th January - Monday
I chipped out "John John".

10th/11th January
Trish and Jan in to help cement fondu Brownie.

14th January - Monday
I chipped out "Brownie".

17th January - Thursday
Chasing Bronze.

21st January - Monday
Bronze chasing continues and continues and continues.

28th January - Tuesday
Up at 5 a.m. for Meditation and study because Seminary* starts today. 6.30 a.m. The kids were all on time. We're studying New Testament. I wouldn't have got up at 6 a.m. to go and learn about religion five mornings a week when I was 14. They were good last year too. I enjoyed teaching the Old Testament.

Going to lunch with Trish today - she is at home this morning banging away on her typewriter on a draft of my paper.

Arrived back from shopping for folders late - found this note on C.S.A. studio door
Connee, you rat(ess)
I went lickety-spit to get this *O-#-*0 thing done pre-lunch and to drag you up to Staff Centre. And what do I find here NOT YOU!

BE HERE (order of author)
when I return *O-#*-/ at 1.30 or I'll burn you and it!!!

Lots of Love,
Trish.

C.S.A. 1.30p.m. The draft of the paper is great. Trish Bridges - I love you too!!

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* 'Seminary' - a programme in the Mormon Church of religious study for four years for youth aged 14 to 18 years, five days a week during the school year, of one hour duration. I teach in my home.
29th January - Wednesday

Owen's been to Tasmania with his Dad for two weeks. Because I'm so busy I thought he would be better cared for if he stayed with his Dad. Today I got a phone call - to tell me about his new class. I was in the C.S.A. library working on my paper. After two more phone calls, I asked him if he wanted to come home and "rough it" with me. "Yes mother, I've been away too long!" That was special! I'm still a mum!!

30th January - Thursday

Attended George Scow's funeral 2 p.m. today at Queanbeyan Catholic Church - he was 78. I shall miss him. He was a good neighbour. Who now will lean over the fence (as I'm renovating my home) and give me good tips for building?

As more and more of my neighbours die the old homes are sold, new neighbours (younger) move in and sometimes the old homes are demolished to make way for the "latest".

The character of the street is changing. Ten years ago an old man of 90 arrived every Sunday in his horse and sulky to visit Mrs. Collverwell across the road. He died a few years back and so did Mrs. Collverwell and her daughter Kath died. Pop Coppin on the corner opposite died and Stan Halliday next door also died, plus many others in the street. It's an old area.

To a lot of people I owe a lot. THANKS.

A sculptor achieves nothing by himself - he is dependant on other people's help and talents.

John Donne

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent - a part of the maine. If a clod bee washed away by the sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontonic were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

John Donne

9. The sculpture in the Art Gallery of N.S.W. said nothing to me about Australia or Australians. (Illustration from Art Gallery of N.S.W. Picture Book, Trustees of the Art Gallery of N.S.W., p.21.)
10. (Top) "The Australians". My grandfather, 'Pop', far right, after killing and dressing a sheep for their tucker. He loved to play "two up" (gambling) and recite Australian poetry. He knew most of Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson's verses. He was a good singer. The shearing teams travelled from station to station. No women, only "mateship". Real men - their love turned to the arts, September 1928.

(Bottom) "Back o' Bourke". A record load of wool from the sheep station "Brindinyabba" to Bourke, a distance of 108 miles. 'Pop' has his hands on his hips, October 1928.
I wait for thee at the outer gate
My love, mine only;
Wherefore tarriest thou so late
While I am lonely?

Thou shalt seek my side with a footstep swift;
In thee implanted
Is the love of Art and the greatest gift
That God has granted.

And the world's concerns with its rights and wrongs
Shall seem but small things -
Poet or painter, or singer of songs,
Thine art is all things.

For the wine of life is a woman's love
To keep beside thee;
But the love of Art is a thing above -
A star to guide thee.

As the years go by with thy love of Art
All undiminished,
Thou shalt end thy days with a quiet heart -
Thy work is finished.

So the painter fashions a picture strong
That fadeth never,
And the singer singeth a wondrous song
That lives for ever. 24

24. Patterson, A.B., Art, 1924, p.141-2
After "Mary Amelia's" death I wrote this letter to her daughter, Cora Masters.


Dear Mrs. Masters,

When I first met Mary she had her hair in a bun, but when I started work on the model in clay Mary had had her hair cut. She told me she preferred a bun, so that is how I did it. At this time she refused to have her hair cut again, and began pinning it in a bun.

She was a pleasure to work with!!

I intended, originally, to portray her greeting me. She would reach up with her left hand, smile and, eyes sparkling, would make some amusing comment as I entered the room.

However when we worked together and she was most obliging as well as amusing, she would often forget I was there and I could observe her, separate to my presence. She would tidy herself, which I have tried to capture, with her left hand, and she was constantly coughing and lifting her right hand.

I did not capture a laughing "Mary Amelia", you may be disappointed; but I feel I have captured the strength and spirit and warmth of "Mary Amelia".

One cannot (I feel) help but be drawn to the sculpture (as one was to Mary) and "feel" the warmth that emanates from the sculpture, and have deep feelings of empathy to someone, experiencing a declining physical body, yet still retaining strength of spirit.

I do not know why she told me her name was "Amelia", I cannot think of her as "Mary Mimi" - she will always be "Mary Amelia" to me (as I have added "Connee" to my name it is easy for me to accept it). Perhaps it was a name that gave her pleasure. She never refuted it, and I constantly called her that - not just Mary, but always "Mary Amelia".
The photographs being 2D do not capture "Mary Amelia" in the round, but give a slight indication of her position. They are yours to keep.

Yours faithfully,

Connee Colleen

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.25

DOROTHY NOONE - A LIVING LEGEND (140x51x40cm.) (1902- )

CIMENT FONDU

The sculpture "Dos" captures the 'pathos' of this beautifully natured lady. "Dos" is her nickname. She was a nursing sister at the Queanbeyan Hospital most of her life. She was everything a nurse should be, kind, devoted, sweet-natured, full of empathy and love, able to be loved as well as to share love.

Dorothy never had children, although she married and lived on a farm outside Queanbeyan. Her constant visitors are her sisters and her sisters' children. These nieces speak with true affection of this 'Aunt' who was so good and loving to them and of her capacity to reach others. They visit twice a week to give back that which she so freely gave.

"Dos", after two and a half years of visits, accepts me as part of the family. "Dos" is family to me also. She will reach up and hug me and say, "Ww-where you b-bin, w-what y-you aubbin u-up t-to?" and laugh.

"Dos" has memories too!

"Ww-when I w-was a g-girl, I-I used t-to s-stt-tutter. Th-the k-kids w-would l-laugh a-at m-me, and I-I w-would c-cry - b-but I-I d-don't c-cry a-any more!"

At 86 years of age, the hurt and deep suffering it caused are still there, a soul still feeling the taunts of a peer group a long, long time ago.

No, "Dos" - time solves a lot of things - you don't have to cry any more!

John had an old thin blanket on top of his bed. It didn't look as if it had too much warmth in it, but he assured me it had. When he spoke of 'that' blanket he 'glowed' and looked warm. His life was in that blanket.

John had been a State ward. He had two sets of foster parents - one lot until he was 12, then another set until he was 18. He would not divulge this aspect of his life - it was something he was bitter about and wanted to forget.

At 18 years of age they gave him that blanket, and he and the blanket shared their lives together; travelling a thousand miles in a sulky all over western N.S.W. during the depression.

John eventually married and had three children. The youngest child, Kathy, was devoted to him right up till the end, and also Kathy's children. John was very proud of them.

John's wife died when Kathy was four years old. Embittered by his own experiences, he vowed his children would never be put into a home and never have a step-mother. He never married again and remained resolute all his life, bringing up his children the best he could with the help of his mother-in-law. John didn't look for female company. He was a wool classer and worked amongst men in the bush. He loved his mates.

He lived a life of his choosing, loved his beer and his smokes and had his own 'corner' in the Queanbeyan Hotel.

I'm satisfied that I've captured the determination and resolute will of John Smith.

When I look at the sculpture "John John" I remember Judith Wright's words from her poem "South of My Days"

South of my day's circle, part of my blood's country ...
clean, lean, hungry country ...

O cold the black-frost night. The walls
draw in to the warmth
and the old roof cracks its joints. Hardly
to be believed that summer
will turn up again some day in a wave of rambler roses
thrust its hot face in her to tell another yarn -
a story old Dan can spin into a blanket
against the winter.
Seventy years of stories he clutches round his bones.
Seventy summers are hived in him like old honey.

THE MAN "THISTLE ROOT" (47x27x28cm)
CIMENT FONDU
HAROLD GIBBS (1894- )

"Thistle root" was Harold's nickname up in the "high country". He used to dig thistle roots and poison them to kill the rabbits.

He served Australia in two World Wars. He was a top shearer, having a top tally - shearing sheep in a day with the small comb.

He married Kathlene O'Connor. Kathlene, who is in her late 80s, visits him at Forbes House. Kathlene's painting of "The Nurses" (1928) hangs in the Art Gallery of N.S.W. She didn't paint after that as she was busy raising their eight children in the bush. She says, "Harold's head (the sculpture) can't go outside under the trees." She won't have the birds "pooping" on him.

Harold was a great horseman. The poem "The Man from Snowy River" describes Harold's escapades. Many's the time a mate saw him go over the edge of a mountain - taking a short cut - the mate went the long way, sure he'd never see him again, only to find him sitting at home with the billy on the boil having a cuppa tea.

At dusk a great deep "Hellooo" echoes through Forbes House and Harold is in the 'High Country' with his memories. If I'm working in another part of the nursing home I stop what I'm doing and go down and ask, "What's the matter, mate?"

"Oh, it's you, me girl, I just wanted to see if anyone was around."

Memories - as the stockmen worked by themselves in the high country, at dusk they would call "hellooo" and from each valley different voices would echo back "hellooo". Loneliness broken by mateship; each mate separated by miles, yet each mate bound by the spirit, in his love for the land and his job.

* 'High country' - Snowy Mountains and Brindabellas, out of Canberra.
* 'Mateship' - bond of companionship.
There was movement at the station, for
the word had passed around
That the colt from old Regret had got away,
And had joined the wild bush horses...

Then fast the forsemen followed, where the
gorges deep and black
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,...

... And upward, ever upward, the wild horses
held their way,
Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew wide.

... When they reached the mountain's summit even
Clancy took a pull -
It well might make the boldest hold their breath;

... But the man from Snowy River let
the pony have his head,
And he swung his stockwhip round and
gave a cheer,
And he raced him down the mountain like a
torrent down its bed,
While the others stood and watched in very fear ...

27. Paterson, A.B. poem "The Man from Snowy River" in The Man from Snowy River (and other
verses), Cornstalk Publishing Co., Sydney, 1924.

"BROWNIE" (136x87x85cm)
CIMENT FONDU
AILEEN BROWN (1895-)

When I first went to Forbes House, Brownie could walk, she fascinated
me because of her strong face, and also she would go to sleep and look as if
she were dead. I have a lot of drawings of Brownie.

Brownie has deteriorated and she can only sit out of bed now during the
mornings.

She has always had a restless energy, her right hand always reaching
out to hold you. She calls "Mum Mum" constantly. Her daughter is devoted and
arrives daily to feed her.

Most of the patients have regular visitors and are well attended by their
families, the image of a neglected aged group may also be a city image.
Queanbeyan, being country, is still family-orientated amongst that age group,
and are well cared for.

I've tried to capture the will of the country woman, strong shoulders,
working hands, working face, even clumsy feet. (Brownie sits pigeon-toed.)
I have made her stand, pigeon-toed. I think she would try to stand, if she didn't have a restrainer to hold her down, and she would also fall.

The sculpture "Brownie" does not evoke immediate empathy as do "John John", "Dos" or "Mary Amelia", yet I feel Brownie is also truth from a different aspect - a trapped spirit wanting release. Unable to do anything physical she is literally going to fall. It is not a passive sculpture.

I feel I've said in "Brownie" and captured the 'something' that makes us want to forget old age and ignore it, to lock it behind doors and forget about it. Pretend it's not there - maybe it will go away!

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I must acknowledge the use of a book on Jacob Epstein. I started using this book as a source of "visual techniques in clay modelling". Epstein's use of clay was and still is a marvellous teaching tool. The book is well documented, covering almost all of Epstein's work in photographs, in chronological order - the good, the bad, the beautiful and the ugly. It is a must if you want to do figurative work. It is 90% portraiture, but portraiture is the place to start. If you can capture 'life' in a head study then the rest of the body will be easy.

I had tried several figurative works during my early years at C.S.A. (life size - nude studies). Too much - too soon! Failure - they were so bad I never cast them. I failed two semesters and then deferred a semester. I came back to School in 1982 determined to overcome and succeed in figurative sculpture.

I started with a portrait of a friend, Brother Henry Steer. It took me all of first semester to achieve one portrait of an elderly man. I completed this in June 1982. That was worth casting and had a good crit.

During August, September and October I completed two more heads - a total of three for the year.

I suddenly went to the New Zealand Temple - I loved it. I made commitments to my faith and on my return, in three weeks completed another three heads and passed my diploma. I find the temple peaceful and can meditate there and I believe I receive inspiration.

It took me all of 1983 before I finally completed one life-sized figure. After the 1982 portraits I went to two half-figures "Woman 'n Cat" (plaster) and "Foetal Woman" (ciment fondu), and then worked towards the full figure.

I am satisfied with my work this year. I have gained in confidence and my technical and aesthetic abilities have increased. I feel I needed this year to give me a strong basis as an artist, to stand firm. The use of the School's facilities have been excellent.

I attended Peter Morley's "Traditional Bronze Casting Techniques" Seminar during April/May 1984 and really enjoyed it. It was Peter who explained that if I cut pieces of wax in thin strips and put them in warm water the wax would soften and I could model the same as clay. It worked - it was as simple as that.

Working in direct wax saved a lot of time (no middle casting in plaster of the clay). It also has its limitations, for figurative work - size. My small waxes were solid and are now cast in solid bronze. Clay is better for larger pieces but for tiny pieces the wax holds its shape better as you're working in your hands. If you make a medium size sculpture in wax you could make a silicon mould of it and then take a "hollow wax" cast from the silicon for casting in bronze.

I cast most things in ciment fondu because of its permanency and because it is not as fragile as plaster. Plaster would have presented difficulties in casting for "John John's" hands and stick or "Brownie's" outstretched arms. It would have cracked during chipping out and although repairable, would still have cracked easily.

From six heads cast in plaster two years ago to my present output for 1984, I think this is a gigantic leap in a qualitative and quantitative output.

Bronze work is also very time consuming. I wanted to start on a large relief I have in mind, but time does not permit because of the technical work involved in chasing and finishing the bronze work. But I will do this upon completion of this course. I see it as a culmination of my work at Forbes House and look forward to experimenting with relief work. I have done a little relief work but not of the quality that I am satisfied with - I have still a long way to go.

The Ceramic Shell Bronze Casting, the Traditional Bronze Casting and Ciment Fondu casting processes are recorded in the "Family Album" in Section 7, Appendix 2, along with recipes and other related matters.
GENEALOGY

ELIZABETH MORRIS (convict)
Born England
Arr. Ship 'Mary Ann'
2nd Fleet, 1790
"Our First Aussie"

WILLIAM KENTWELL (convict)
Born England
Arr. Ship 'Admiral Banington'
1791

MARIA KENTWELL
(1st Generation 'Aust.-born'), 1806
Windsor, N.S.W.

JOHN WOOD (convict)
Born England
Arr. Ship 'Ocean', 1816 (age 21)

ELIZA WOOD
(2nd Generation 'Aust.-born'), 1833
Baulkham Hills, N.S.W.

CHARLES CLARK (free settler)
Born Scotland
Arr. Ship 'Glen Huntly', 1840

JOHN NICHOLAS CLARK
(3rd Generation 'Aust.-born'), 1856
Baulkham Hills, N.S.W.

SAKAH ANN GRENFELL (free settler)
Born England
Arr. Ship 'Ninevah', 1877

ALBERT JAMES CLARK
(4th Gen. 'Aust.-born'), 1889
Dubbo, N.S.W.

ELSIE ALICE BLATCH
(5th Gen. 'Aust.-born'), 1894
Junee, N.S.W.

JESSIE MAY CLARK
(5th Gen. 'Aust.-born'), 1912
Junee, N.S.W.

GEORGE CAMERON
(4th Gen. 'Aust.-born'), 1904
Dubbo, N.S.W.

ME
Connee Colleen
(7th Gen. to live on Aust. soil)
(6th Gen. 'Aust.-born'), 23/2/1941
Dubbo, N.S.W.

After the War - Paddocks of Planes. Near Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., 1947, last family holiday. A friend, Aunt Ethle (Dad's sister), my father - George Cameron. (Mother took the photograph.)
Section 6: OUT OF THE NEST

If we lock ourselves in a prison of failure and self-pity, we are the only jailers ... we have the only key to our freedom. 29

Throughout my time at C.S.A. Jan Brown and Ron Robertson-Swann have been invaluable in developing my abilities to "see". When I have not agreed with them I have been very outspoken. It says a lot that we have remained friends over this long period and it is something that has never been static. It is constantly expanding. It is important to me to be able to quote another opinion on these two artists who influenced me so much.

On Ron, Maureen Gilchrist wrote

His work, like Caro's, is elegant, eloquent, airy, buoyant; imbued with English discretion and poise.

It is still an art of first principles resolutely enunciated: trim, simple shapes and fundamental forms. The stark, bland surfaces of metal plates. the sharp slice of sheet of steel. the basic cones. criso discs and smoothly polished rods and bars.

... Robertson-Swann's sculpture is not an art of machismo thrust, ram and armoured ambition. There is a delicacy and perky wit as well as plainness and brute bluntness. These qualities, among others, distinguish him from the average run of modernistic heavy metal men.

(Refer also to a photograph of the sculpture "Baldachin", 1975-76 [90x152x73cm.], Australian National Gallery). 30

To me Ron's work is figurative. I relate to his work on a human level, and respond with emotion as I would to another human.

Regarding Jan Brown, Donald Brook wrote in *The Canberra Times*, 18/9/64

Jan Brown has an ambivalent attitude to birds; her eye is alternately kindly and derisive. It is above all an unsentimental organ, and one can easily picture her with head cocked contemplating the usual visual cliches of animal sculpture in the mock-solemn way of a very wily bird indeed.

Her magpies are wonderfully well observed.

and again in the same paper on 21/10/66, under the title "The Look of Good Sculpture", he wrote

... her acutely observed animals and birds, ... one might summarise its formal virtues by pointing out the strong structural qualities, the firm cross-sections and the sensitive and flexible drawing that varies vigorously from region to region of the work, never deteriorating into slack formula following.31

If you wandered in the park behind the Archbishop's house near Lake Burley Griffin you will find a mother kangaroo and her joey near a pond about to drink. You will reach out to touch them and feel their fur - although bronze they have a life force in them and movement which makes them appear "real".

In regard to our work, we work in different styles, and that I feel has helped in communication, although perhaps we try to express a common feeling. Their advice, when given to me, I have been able to accept as there has never been any emphasis on a "style" of modelling to adapt. Ron and Jan have both given me objective crit sessions, unbiased and yet honest. Ron and Jan can both quickly point out something that is wrong, but then leave me to solve the problem (if I agree with them). I have learned to be very independent and resourceful since working away from the School.

I shall continue working with the old people in Forbes House until I can afford to go to America. I have a strong desire to study the Mexican people and have applied to the University of New Mexico. Their reply has been positive and they have full casting facilities for bronze and other facilities which would serve my interests.

I intend to continue working in a figurative style and want to study other cultures and identify their uniqueness and the stresses that their environment puts on them. "Rodin used to draw comparisons between the modelling of a body and that of the landscape."32

Mexico has a large lower class and it is amongst these poorer people that I will establish my interest.


I now would also like to practice and incorporate more drapery into my sculptures, and Mexico with its shawls, etc., should be suitable for me.

I need to go away to see afresh. I do not want to end up with an Australian cliche. I will do a study tour in Europe before my return to Australia. I need to see the past in art to look ahead to what I can do and be. As I found myself in looking back at my ancestors I will better understand my work through the European art heritage.

I have grown past hate and bitterness
I see the world as one;
Yet, though I can no longer hate,
My son is still my son.

All men at God's round table sit
And all men must be fed;
But this loaf in my hand -
This loaf is my son's Bread.33

I intend to come back to Australia and do an Aboriginal Series, working in the Northern Territory with them, in familiar surroundings to "feel", as Mary Gilmore said, "as they feel."34 But these intentions are only alive in me in spirit and I must conclude with what I have done, the work that exists now.

If we could live without the sentences between us, remove the barricading speech, we may communicate a living whole.35

My aim as an artist is to "communicate a living whole", to create a work of art, a piece of sculpture, that will not only occupy space, but a sculpture which will project its own 'aura'; a sculpture which will draw the viewer into an emotional exchange, that removes the barriers of speech and lays bare the 'common human condition' which are basic to mankind irrespective of his culture or class.

I have a deep affinity with Rembrandt's paintings, and believe that I am relating in a similar manner. Rembrandt made excellent use of the face and hands. He made portraits of his father and mother, but these portraits are not 'personal' to us, they traverse the centuries, we can find a common link without meeting the subject.

I also depict the hands expressively, with the face to animate the sculpture. I try, by using some exaggeration, to present a visual discourse between the relationship of these two aspects within the figure.

I am able to go into the community and "find" a person who epitomizes what I desire to express. My sculptures are about individuals and they are portraits, but they also capture a uniqueness of the Australian identity as well as conditions common to all mankind.

The content is paramount to me, I re-present (not represent) my model to correspond with my emotions and emotional reaction.

Emotion ... is what 'makes imagery effective' (Hillman 1960: p.179) since it is experienced as a dynamic force or motive power rather than simply as a 'state' of being, it can be regarded as the dynamic connection between subject and object; it is a 'flow of relation' (p.149, 153) between the two.36

I deny that I may be distorting or caricaturing my 'models'. I am trying to capture an inherent inner beauty and spirituality which I feel the elderly people possess, and feel free to express this in my own fashion and not to any preconceived theory or effect.

Matisse said, during his lectures and demonstrations at the Académie Matisse (a school run by Matisse in Paris from 1908-11), "forget all your theories, all your ideas before the subject..... All things have their decided physical character - for instance a square or a rectangle. But an undecided, indefinite form can express neither one. Therefore exaggerate according to the definite character for expression."37

I have always loved the elongated figures of El Greco, especially "St. Martin and the Beggar" and "Coronation of the Virgin"38 and I appreciate the innovations within art, unlike Plato (457, Laws 11:656) who praised Egyptian Art as an instrument for preserving culture ((314:40) because "no painter or artist is allowed to innovate ... or to leave the traditional forms and invent new ones."39

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Rodin's work appealed to me but when I first saw the "Old Courtesan", I

was fascinated by its uniqueness. There are beautiful reproductions in this book on Rodin.\footnote{40} They show the side and back view, the imploring hand that is spread out as if to ward off the impending end. Full of pathos - a rare model of an elderly person, nude. Rodin said "that which one commonly calls ugliness in nature, may in art become a great beauty."\footnote{41}

Rodin observed his models intimately as they moved naturally around him whilst he worked. When a movement interested him he asked the model to take the pose while he quickly modelled it in clay.\footnote{42}

I was aware of this long before I went to Forbes House. Because of the nature of their age, the old people can never pose for me. So in that sense I am restricted when modelling, and at the same time it opens up avenues for discovery. Age has made their gestures and attitudes repetitive and I am benefited by being able to observe and select that which interests me and know that it will be repeated regularly for me to study and model.

Over this period at Forbes House death has occurred after I had completed a sculpture, many times. I felt no permanent loss, probably because I was satisfied that I had already captured their spirituality or essence of what they were in a different permanent form.

In June this year I was working on a sculpture, "John John". John Smith, the model, died before I completed the sculpture. I experienced a loss of creativity and a break in my work pattern. I found it difficult to finish the work or start a new one.

I would later use "Old Tom" as a model to finish "John John’s" legs and slippers, but I missed the intimacy I shared with "John John", listening to him chatter away about the Great Depression and his life in the bush.

It is this intimacy I try also to capture so that the viewer will also experience a similar one to oneness.

Old age is a time of great deterioration of many of many of the body's physical properties, and these I do not hide, still, I insist that they are more factual than caricatured in my work and only enhance and make one aware of the increased power and inner strength of spirit which those who are close to death convey.

\footnote{40}{Goldscheider, L. (ed.) 1979, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.30-31.}
\footnote{41}{Goldscheider, L. (ed.) 1979, \textit{op.cit.}, p.15.}
\footnote{42}{Goldscheider, L. (ed.) 1979, \textit{op.cit.}, p.16.}
The 'spirit' is difficult to explain. Perhaps I can take the liberty of quoting Jan Brown.* Just before Christmas she related how frustrating it was, she could feel her body deteriorating - yet inside she felt the same as ever, still wanting to do everything she'd always done - her body was changing and just couldn't keep up. She said she felt trapped inside a body that was aging and she could do nothing about it.

My Christian beliefs explain but cannot prove what I mean. I believe that the spirit enters the body when we are born and it leaves us at death. At the resurrection both body and spirit will be reunited.

Every piece of art must exist in its own right, emanating its own uniqueness on various levels of meaning to many different people. All great works of art touch on 'human conditions' that are "common" to all mankind in all periods of time. The "language" (or mass) used may vary visually but some meaning of 'content' carries across time from Neolithic figures to today's abstract or figurative work.

It is the final confrontation between art object and viewer that finally decides what is a work of art and how successful the work is and not anything I may write. In my opinion this final reaction will decide if I have been a successful artist - if I can communicate a

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living whole ...
but I only write,
not knowing a beginning or an end
I only write
to make simplicity an order
courtesy a return
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* Jan Brown is an Australian Sculptor and C.S.A. Senior Lecturer.