



Maddison Bygrave

Maddison Bygrave is a Darug woman from New South Wales

At the heart of my design is a sense of belonging and place. My current focus has been on the impact of human existence on our oceans, through archaeological research of marine life, Aboriginal culture and the importance of sustainability to reduce our ecological footprint. The declination of sea grass ecosystems due to increased cyclones, the declination of fish due to a change in salinity levels, the negative impact of barrages, the detrimental effects of dredging, and the impact of mass fisheries, are all environmental factors that I consider when making this body of work. A marine ecosystem is made up of small ocean matter that many people see as insignificant, but it is critical to help this environment thrive. My pieces encourage the wearer to be aware about the impact they can have on the ocean. I have explored the ocean's landscape through my work and how it can be changed dramatically by human interaction. We have the power to make this a positive or negative one.

Kristina Gittin

Lives and works in Peachester, Queensland

From an initial fascination purely with the aesthetic qualities of PET and an excess of it in my own surroundings due to an unsettled time at home, it has become an ongoing and infinite journey to work with discarded plastic and feature it in more enduring forms. My interest lies mainly in the final destination in the natural environment of the tiny pieces that plastic breaks down to and the creatures it affects. This leads me into the realm of the "unseen" and the twisting pathways that carry plastic on its journey and the creatures it touches. With these pieces I aim to both elevate the plastic to a more desired status as opposed to an expendable item and start a conversation about our use and the choices we make as individuals or communities regarding the outcomes of our actions.

Mia Wells

Lives and works on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland

My practice reflects the strong connection I feel towards coastal environments. In these pieces I have worked with two meaningful materials, rare and ordinary, collected from beaches on the Sunshine Coast. Motifs I find are mimicked in forms and connections. By choosing to represent my connection with the environment I have a duty to reject practices that harm it. I create with recycled and upcycled materials and work in a way that minimises waste at every stage.

Mia Wells,
Straight, 2017, Black coral, recycled sterling silver, copper, upcycled pearl and bead. *Bend*, 2017, Black coral, recycled sterling silver, copper, upcycled pearl and bead. *Fragment*, 2017, Black coral, recycled sterling silver, copper, upcycled pearl and bead. *Repair*, 2017, Driftwood, upcycled pearls, recycled sterling silver. *Regrow*, 2017, Driftwood, upcycled beads, recycled sterling silver. Courtesy of the artist.

List of Works

All works courtesy of the artist.

Maddison Bygrave

- Dead coral earrings*, 2018, recycled and sterling silver
- Dead coral ring*, 2018, recycled and sterling silver
- Dead coral pin*, 2018, recycled and sterling silver
- Shell fragment earrings*, 2018, recycled and sterling silver
- Square shell earrings*, 2018, recycled sterling silver and ethically sourced Madagascar sapphires
- Stingray brooch*, 2018, recycled sterling silver and repurposed pearl
- Horseshoe crab brooch*, 2018, recycled sterling silver and repurposed pearl
- Three shell landscape brooch*, 2018, recycled sterling silver and ethically sourced Madagascar sapphires
- Oyster brooch*, 2018, recycled sterling silver, ethically sourced Madagascar sapphire
- Broken oyster earrings*, 2018, recycled sterling silver and repurposed pearls
- Rectangular broken oyster earrings*, 2018, recycled and sterling silver
- Circular Pearl ring*, 2018, recycled sterling silver, repurposed pearl
- Curved Pearl shell earrings*, 2018, recycled sterling silver and repurposed pearls
- Lines ring*, 2018, recycled and sterling silver
- Lines pendant*, 2018, recycled and sterling silver
- Fish earrings*, 2018, recycled and sterling silver

Kristina Gittins

- Less Plastic....More Fish 1*, 2018, sterling silver, plastic and linen cord
- Less Plastic....More Fish 2*, 2018, sterling silver, plastic and linen cord
- Plastic Ocean*, Ring, 2018, sterling Silver, plastic and resin
- Plastic Ocean*, Ring, 2019, sterling silver, plastic and resin
- Corals Eat Plastic*, Ring, 2019, sterling silver, brass, copper resin and plastic
- Corals eat Plastic*, Pendant, 2018, sterling silver, mild steel mesh, plastic, sterling silver chain and brass
- Corals eat Plastic*, Neckpiece, 2018, brass, mild steel mesh, oxidised sterling silver chain and plastic
- Corals eat Plastic*, Pendant, 2018, sterling silver, mild steel mesh, silk cord and plastic
- Corals eat Plastic*, Pendant, 2018, brass, mild steel mesh, sterling silver and silk cord
- Oysters eat Plastic*, Brooch, 2019, sterling silver, copper and plastic
- Less Plastic More Fish*, Cufflinks, 2019, sterling silver
- Plastic Ocean*, Earrings, 2018, sterling silver and plastic
- Corals eat Plastic*, Crocheted Brooch, 2019, plastic and sterling silver

Less Plastic.... More Fish, Fishbone Earrings, 2018, sterling silver and plastic

Mia Wells

- Straight*, 2017, Black coral, recycled sterling silver, copper, upcycled pearl and bead
- Bend*, 2017, Black coral, recycled sterling silver, copper, upcycled pearl and bead
- Fragment*, 2017, Black coral, recycled sterling silver, copper, upcycled pearl and bead
- Repair*, 2017, Driftwood, upcycled pearls, recycled sterling silver
- Regrow*, 2017, Driftwood, upcycled beads, recycled sterling silver

Gallery Director: Niomi Sands | Administration Officer: Avron Thompson | Gallery Development Officers: Rochelle Summerfield & Sarah Nash | Exhibition & Collection Assistant: Darren Frelander | Gallery Assistance: Maggie McDade, Cass Samms, Jane Taylor-Love, James Bowles-Leeson and Melaine Dougherty | Catalogue Design: Marie Taylor

Sense of place: Maddison Bygrave, Kristina Gittin, and Mia Wells
 Curated by Dr Elizabeth Shaw
 23 May to 14 July 2019

Text Copyright: Niomi Sands, Dr Elizabeth Shaw, Maddison Bygrave, Kristina Gittin and Mia Wells | Image Copyright: Maddison Bygrave, Kristina Gittins, and Mia Wells | © Grafton Regional Gallery. This publication has copyright. Apart from fair dealing for purposes of research, study or otherwise permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without permission. Enquiries should be made to Grafton Regional Gallery.

The Grafton Regional Gallery would like to especially thank Dr Elizabeth Shaw for curating such a sublime exhibition and Maddison Bygrave, Kristina Gittins, Mia Wells for share their beguiling works. Special thanks to the Grafton Regional Gallery Team, Volunteers, Friends of Grafton Gallery and the Gallery Foundation for their hard work in making this exhibition possible.

The Grafton Regional Gallery is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW. The Grafton Regional Gallery is a cultural facility of Clarence Valley Council.

GRAFTON REGIONAL GALLERY

158 Fitzroy Street GRAFTON NSW 2460
 02 6642 3177

www.graftongallery.com.au



Grafton Regional Gallery

Sense of Place

Maddison Bygrave, Kristina Gittins, Mia Wells

Curated by Dr Elizabeth Shaw



23 May – 14 July 2019

Introduction

It is with great pleasure that the Grafton Regional Gallery presents *Sense of Place* curated by Dr Elizabeth Shaw and featuring recent work by Maddison Bygrave, Kristina Gittins and Mia Wells.

This insightful exhibition explores the important role jewellery plays in our lives to reflect our identity, ideas and stories. In *Sense of Place* Maddison Bygrave, Kristina Gittins and Mia Wells draw inspiration from the Australian coastal environment and invite us to consider our relationship with nature through form and materials. Their work draws attention to the fragility of our environment and our responsibility to protect our precious world.

I would like to sincerely thank Dr Elizabeth Shaw for curating such a sublime exhibition and her poetic words in the essay that provide a deeper understanding of each artists practice. I would like to especially thank Maddison Bygrave, Kristina Gittins and Mia Wells for sharing their magnificent works.

Niomi Sands

Gallery Director

Cover: **Maddison Bygrave**, *Ocean Landscape Series*, 2019, sterling silver, sapphire and pearl, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

This page: **Kristina Gittins**, *Less Plastic...More Fish 1*, 2018, sterling silver, plastic and linen cord. Courtesy of the artist.

Sense of Place

As a portable artform jewellery frequently takes on the role of representing something, someone or place that we hold dear. The works in *Sense of Place* continue this tradition. They are quietly evocative, they suggest a place without specificity, but it is a place we all know. "Place refers to an environment that becomes a reference point and source for identification for people who live in or near it, and it is charged with emotion and memory." When translated into jewellery the relationship to place can be made visible and can be carried far from its origin. The particular place that the works in this exhibition refer to is the coastline of Australia.

An aerial view of Australia reveals how the population clings to the edges of this big island that we inhabit. As award winning nature author Harry Sadler has noted "More than 80% of the population lives near the coast. The sea and the coast are embedded deep in our national psyche." It is not without reason that images of the coastline feature heavily in official marketing promotions of Australia to the world.

The exhibiting artists' motivations are far removed from creating an idealised view for marketing purposes, rather theirs is a response to the lived relationship to a place they consider precious. Mia Wells, Maddison Bygrave and Kristina Gittins approach their works in quite different ways, yet there is a common thread between the ideas they are exploring. They share a respect for the ocean and coastal environments and their works emphasise the preciousness of this place that is part of the greater Australian Identity.

Kristina Gittins' concern about the impact of plastic waste on the environment in general became focussed on the ocean and in turn marine life. Widely shared images and scientific reports have made it hard to ignore the information that plastic waste has made it into the ocean in vast quantities. Professor Andrew Holmes, polymer chemist and emeritus professor at the University of Melbourne noted in 2017 that "The plastic waste in the oceans is disastrous for marine and bird life, and the human race has to avoid disposal of this waste in a way that enables it to enter drains, rivers, and eventually the ocean". Gittins uses waste plastic that would otherwise be likely destined for landfill. Through careful handling and treatment plastic becomes an important

detail in her works, echoing the ubiquitous nature of plastic.

Maddison Bygrave has been inspired by the insights archaeologists have gained from ancient shell jewellery and artworks. The distance that shells have been found from their origins can be evidence of migration or trade. For example archaeologist Kim Akerman notes that "pearl shell artefacts from North Western Australia are... the most far-flung of exchange items that traverse the traditional trade routes". While "pearl shell is found along more or less the entire length of the coast of tropical Australia, it appears that it is only the shell from the northwest that is held in high esteem continentally." It is the knowledge of the important information a shell can hold that has led Bygrave to develop an approach to work with impressions from shells she finds so she can return the actual shells back to the site where she found them. This is striking dedication when you consider how many collected shells languish on window sills, in boxes, pot plants and landfill, collected and then forgotten. Bygrave's works are softly finished, the impression of the shell

becomes a tactile memory prompt, these are pieces that are destined to be worn and cherished.

For Mia Wells walking along the coast line is a reflective activity, it is where she finds her inspiration through observation and consideration. Her necklaces are in turn a record of her perambulations, resembling a drawing of the path followed with the individual elements suggestive of beach finds. Wells has used a combination of recycled and upcycled materials, some conventionally valuable (such as sterling silver) and others valued more for what they represent (for example driftwood), in the works they hold equal importance and value. These are bold works that have an unmistakable connection to the beach.

For all of the artists, while sterling silver is their

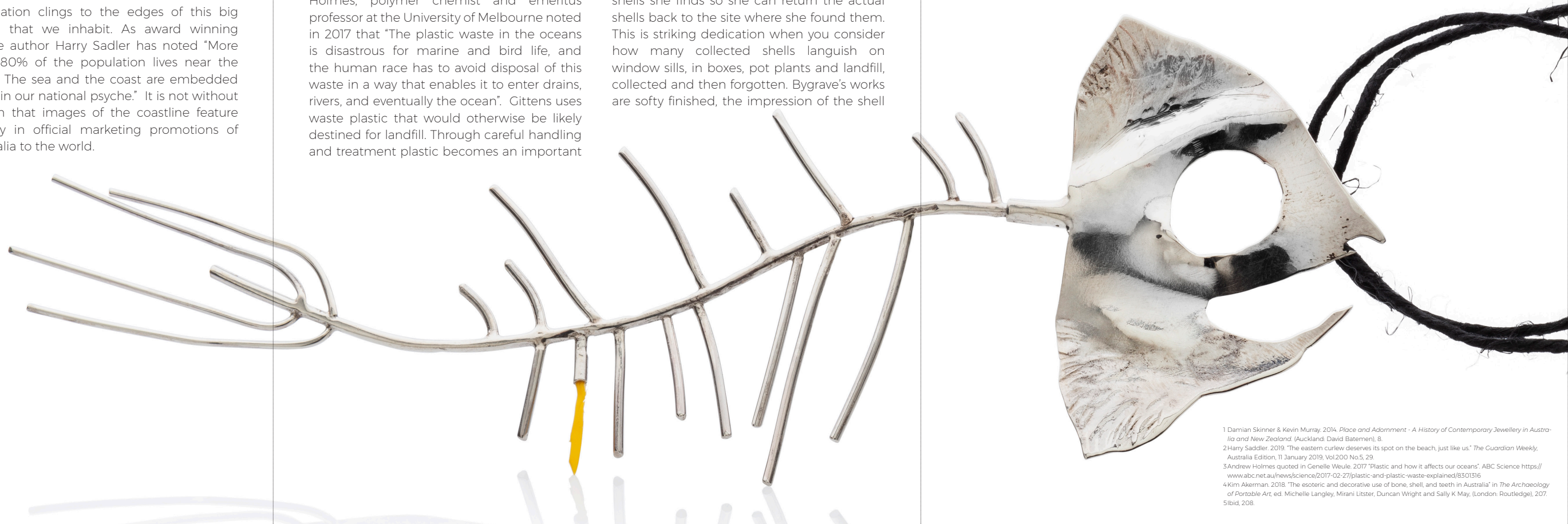
starting medium of choice, they are open to the values and meanings other materials can bring to their works. All share a concern about the responsible use of materials and this is manifested in their choice to prioritise the use of recycled sterling silver, and the reuse and repurposing of materials. There is time and consideration required to hand make a piece of jewellery. Gittins, Wells and Bygrave have independently decided to focus their attention on capturing the essence and acknowledging the importance of the place that is so important to Australian identity, the place that Australians hold dear.

Dr Elizabeth Shaw

Convenor of Jewellery and Small Objects

Senior Lecturer

Queensland College of Art Griffith University



1 Damian Skinner & Kevin Murray, 2014, *Place and Adornment - A History of Contemporary Jewellery in Australia and New Zealand*. (Auckland: David Bateman), 8.
2 Harry Saddler, 2019, "The eastern curlew deserves its spot on the beach, just like us," *The Guardian Weekly*, Australia Edition, 11 January 2019, Vol.200 No.5, 29.
3 Andrew Holmes quoted in Genelle Weule, 2017 "Plastic and how it affects our oceans", ABC Science <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-02-27/plastic-and-plastic-waste-explained/8301316>
4 Kim Akerman, 2018, "The esoteric and decorative use of bone, shell, and teeth in Australia" in *The Archaeology of Portable Art*, ed. Michelle Langley, Mirani Litster, Duncan Wright and Sally K May, (London: Routledge), 207.
5 Ibid, 208.