

Discovery Fe26

ARTIST BLACKSMITH'S ASSOCIATION NSW

9 February 2019 – 17 March 2019



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Metal seems a recalcitrant material, its pre-given forms intractable, its steely surfaces just that—mute, obdurate, incapable of expressivity. But metal, once heated to the appropriate temperature, becomes pliant. It can be bent and twisted, stretched and slumped, tapered and upset, spread and coiled, and subjected to myriad other operations. Its surfaces may be heavily textured, leaving behind a bombastic index of process, the readily apparent blows of the hammer a potent conveyor of meaning. Or the surface may be planished until it is smooth, apparently uninflected, a quiet poetry that whispers and intimates. The *Discovery Fe26* exhibition is, in this regard, daring and ambitious, as it has as one of its aims to make visible the expressive potentialities of the age-old and seemingly banal practice of blacksmithing. The exhibited works reveal how traditional and time-honored techniques might be deployed in a contemporary idiom and to express modern ideas.

Discovery Fe26 has another agenda as well, however, as it is occasioned by the bicentennial of John Oxley's Macquarie Inland Expedition. Taking as its point of departure, therefore, the broad theme of discovery, the exhibition asks the included artists to reflect on that idea, but also on related notions, such as encounter, exploration, unearthing, disclosure, revelation. Thus, the richly expressive qualities of steel—whether the works are thematically opaque or overt, abstract or representational—can be said to stand as powerfully compelling formal analogues to the changes wrought to the landscape and indigenous peoples by the “discovery” of Australia, a land designated as “terra nullius”—literally, no one's land—by James Cook upon his arrival to the island continent in 1770. Continuously inhabited for over 40 kiloyears,

Australia—and its inhabitants—underwent rapid transformation after colonization, from land parceled out in agrarian tracts at odds with indigenous inhabitation, to the combusive rise of industrial concerns in the 19th century. As disease against which ur-peoples had no defenses, along with frontier wars and the devastating policy of assimilation, decimated the Aboriginals, so settlements and hyper-charged manufacturing irrevocably altered the physical state of the Australian landscape.

The works in the exhibition respond to the nuanced implications of discovery—and its ramifications—in diverse ways. Some are direct, others attenuated. Some are literal, others abstract. Several pieces candidly address the fraught history of colonial activity in Australia and its impact on the Australian autochthones. Steve Gale's canoe, for instance, derives its form from native vessels described by Oxley, but takes as its material the steel from burnt-out wrecks of cars that now populate the Hastings' forests, a powerful testament to the changed verdure of the region.

“Discovery” of Australia invariably meant also the discovery of unfamiliar flora and fauna, which provide fodder for the blacksmith to interpret, as evidenced by Richard Coumbe's *Grevillea* and Will Maguire's *Roo and Wallaby* sculptures. This pairing also reinforces the formal diversity of blacksmithing as a sculptural medium. Although both works are representational, Coumbe's resides firmly within the recognizable, while Maguire stretches the limits of literalness with his animated abstracted anthropomorphisms. A striking version of this contrast might be seen by comparing Nigel Stokes and Colin Dray's submissions. One presents a literal encounter: two figures, one indigenous, one colonial, identifiable through dress and attributes, face

each other across a steel expanse, a metaphor, perhaps, for the cultural gulf between them. The other presents encounter as an abstract tale of time and materials. Iron nails representing Australia's original inhabitants march up the trunk of a weathered gum tree in linear and spiraling patterns borrowed from Aboriginal symbology. As they near the top, the iron nails—some now mangled, marred, misshapen—are interspersed with stainless steel nails, signifying new settlers, and the patterns dissolve into chaotic meandering. There are far fewer stainless steel nails than iron ones, a reference to the chasmal temporal gulf between Australia's indigenous populations and the continent's later arrivals. The visibly damaged iron nails and the disordered patterns also speak to the rapid and irrevocable disruption settlement brought with it to land, people, and belief. Don Gabriel's *Ball and Anchor* too addresses the issue of encounter, privilege, and agency. Through the symbolic juxtaposition of anchor, ball and chain, and rainbow serpent, Gabriel's piece complicates the habitual binary of indigenous and immigrant via reference to the scores of prisoners, their volition voided, who were disgorged from British ships onto the shores of the southern continent.

Other works in the exhibition also deploy indigenous imagery. Dray reimagines the *coolamon*, a shallow vessel traditionally used by Aboriginal women to carry water, “bush tucker,” and even babies, as an aesthetically sleek object of textured steel and copper, a contrast to both the original material of wood or tree bark and later substitutes in the form of colonial cast-offs, including discarded flour tins, metal buckets, and even hubcaps. Matthew Mewburn's piece combines the sinuosity of the Hastings River with the Aboriginal symbol for humans into an abstract amalgamation, while Craig Drew's

totemic *Oxley's Trek* takes as its point of departure the *larrakitj*, or Aboriginal memorial poles. The use of an indigenous aesthetic and symbology can be perilous terrain to negotiate, as it raises questions about cultural appropriation versus cultural exchange, the politics of identity, and whether heritage might grant one the right to use certain imagery or preclude it.

There are many other works that warrant analysis and scrutiny along these lines and which might be profitably contrasted as the aforementioned ones have been. That is both the strength and the challenge of *Discovery Fe26*. An exhibition with such forthrightly provocative ambitions is not an easy one for its artists and its organizers—the range of potential topics so broad, the diversity of visual response so extensive, as to diffuse, even disavow, cohesion. Nor is such an exhibition easy for its viewers, who must inevitably confront their own assumptions about Australia's “discovery,” preconceptions about history, privilege, displacement, loss, change, and their own place within that spectrum. Australia's history of industrial smithing surely weighs heavily too on the minds of those who take up work at the anvil now as these artists ask their viewers to confront preconceived notions about their chosen medium and they hammer home bit by bit in the public's mind that forging can be aesthetically heterogeneous but richly, lavishly, complexly expressive.

Dr. M. Kjellman-Chapin

Artist Blacksmith's Association NSW

The Artist Blacksmith's Association NSW (ABANSW) was formed in Wauchope over 25 years ago. It now represents over 130 Australian and international artists and aims to preserve, promote and develop the unique skills of Artistic Blacksmiths. The Contemporary Blacksmith journal is produced by the Association to showcase the work of artist members.

We welcome you to Discovery Fe26 and hope that you enjoy your exploration.



ARTIST BLACKSMITH'S ASSOCIATION NSW INC.

About Discovery Fe26

Blacksmithing has long been considered a utilitarian trade, the working of metals to meet everyday needs. Artist Blacksmiths however have discovered the beauty that can be wrought from steel by utilising ancient forging techniques. The material has remarkable sculptural qualities, being plastic like clay while hot, yet rapidly cooling and setting into a tough and resilient structure. The process can be repeated almost infinitely until the artist is satisfied with their work.

Inspired by 2018 being 200 years since the first major European inland exploration led by John Oxley. In so doing, his party were the first Europeans to discover the local peoples and their environment. In return these people discovered Europeans and their ways.

Discovery has positive and negative aspects, the ramifications of this have spread through 200 years and unavoidably persist in our modern society, regionally and nationally. The artists explore the various aspects of discovery through metal sculpture.

Don Gabriel, *Movement*



On View Dates

GLASSHOUSE REGIONAL GALLERY

9 February - 17 March 2019

Cnr Clarence & Hay Streets,
Port Macquarie NSW 2444



CASSEGRAIN WINES

20 March - 17 July 2019

764 Fernbank Creek Road,
Port Macquarie, NSW 2444



NEXUS GALLERY BELLINGEN

21 July - 6 August 2019

1 Doepel Street,
Bellingen NSW 2454.



ROBERTO GIORDANI

He was born in Cesena, Italy on 1 June 1967

Son of a blacksmith craftsman, he spent his childhood in his father's workshop, internalizing, perhaps unconsciously or perhaps just for fun, the charm of fire and incandescent iron.

Today Roberto lives in an old farmhouse located in a beautiful place on the hills of Romagna and experiments with new techniques in his studio.

In January 2014 he founded the International Academy "ARTS FACTORY".

His artistic research, and experimentation in making sculpture in recent years have led him to use different materials in addition to metal, such as stone, wood, raku ceramics, and plastic.

His works are exhibited in, United States, England, Spain, Czech Republic, Belgium, Sweden, Morocco, Germany and various Italian cities.

Works

Decomporsi

We are literally killing off our sea life with what we as a nation dump in the sea. *Decomporsi* shows



the majesty and elegance of the shark, yet its body is decaying, and sloughing, and suffering and falling apart and dying. Having discovered this fact, will we take any notice and act/react... only time will tell.

Roberto Giordani, *Decomporsi*. Installed at Cassegrain Wines, Port Macquarie

SVEN BAUER

German artist Sven Bauer works in steel, looking for dynamic and fragility in that usually heavy and rigid material. With a background as a blacksmith he knows about the attributes of his medium and transforms the metal to delicate three-dimensional sculptures.

Reflecting everyday experience and interactions we all experience, he builds up his work to complex ensembles with fine linework in a clear structure.



Sven Bauer, *Chances*

Work

Chances: Sketches a short moment, a conglomerate of crossroad decisions. Possibilities which come up, be taken, changed, discarded and build up on each other. A little instant which looks simple at first, but is more complex as you look closer.

LYLE BRITAIN

After many career paths in metal fabrication and engineering, a chance meeting with the Artist Blacksmiths' Association of NSW members opened the door for Britain to pursue a lifelong interest in the art of blacksmithing. Within the group he found great inspiration, sharing of knowledge and fellowship. He has worked with wood and fused and slumped glass and began exploring the combination of these three mediums – all formed with natural elements of the earth.

A special note of thanks to Colin Dray and Eoin Mc Swan for guidance in the creation of the *Tree and the Shield*.

Work

Tree and Shield: The forged metal tree is symbolic of strength and longevity... the shield being a passport which provides a right of way and protection through boundaries or countries.

The piece shows the forged tree using the shield to protect itself for future generations.



Lyle Britain *Tree and Shield*

RICHARD COUMBE

Richard has been shaping hot metal on the Mid North Coast, for over 30 years and has shown in many exhibitions; locally and in Sydney and Brisbane, with many works scattered over Australia & overseas. His work has been published in Craft Arts magazine

He works on the anvil of his great grandfather, whose own grandfather was a blacksmith in Cornwall. From his small rural workshop, the straight steel as bought, is reworked to create functional yet graceful forms in this wondrous material.

Work

Grevillea robusta.

My focus for this sculptural work revolves around the notion of historic appraisal and discovery being informed by the organic forms of the flora of the Australian landscape – namely the *Grevillea* genus.

The small dried pods of *Grevillea robusta* present exciting possibilities and it is this small organic form that has elicited my sculptural response for this exhibition.

COLIN DRAY

Colin was born and raised in Wiradjuri country in the Central West of NSW. Growing up on a sheep/wheat property, it was evident to him that Aboriginal people had once occupied and flourished in this district.

Colin has continued as an active and enthusiastic member of the Artist Blacksmiths' Association of NSW by encouraging international smiths to visit and teach masterclasses in Australia.

Works

Terra Naillius (Nail Tree)

Represents the immense timespan of continuous Aboriginal occupation of the Australian landmass before first contact with Europeans in the 18th century.

Coolamon (front cover)

The coolamon is a shallow vessel with curved sides traditionally used by Aboriginal women to carry water, fruits, nuts and to cradle babies. The forged elements may represent a river bed, or perhaps collected fruits and harvested grain. Maybe a message stick to give right of passage through neighbouring tribal land.



Colin Dray *Terra naillius*

CRAIG DREW

Craig Drew started his own business, Two Gates Forging Company. A Churchill Fellowship recipient in 1996 opened up opportunities to study blacksmithing in the USA across a number of schools and with individual master blacksmiths.

Now it is a passion and hobby that has taken him to international competitions with fellow blacksmiths, including the ABANSW team which won silver in Stia, Italy at the Blacksmithing World Championships in 2017.

Work

Oxley's Trek is a structure symbolic of a scar tree that is relevant to the Kamilaroi Nation. The motifs that adorn the structure are Aboriginal markings that may have been on trees, rocks and scratched in the earth, along the path that John Oxley may have taken when exploring North West NSW, making his way to the coast.

The 16 points at the top of the structure represent the points of the compass.



Craig Drew *Oxley's Trek 1*

DON GABRIEL

Don retired from a career as an industrial blacksmith and has set up his workshop outside Nabic where he is exploring the artistic potential of the metal he has wrought all his life.

Works

Flowers: A sculptural exploration of still life with vase using real and imagined flowers.

Dreamtime: Is an interpretation of the rainbow serpent passing through an Australian landscape rich with indigenous motifs.



Don Gabriel *Dreamtime*

Welcome: This sculpture invites the viewer into its arms, welcoming you to its place, its country.

Movement (page 4): An exploration of the jointing and surface texturing of steel; a dynamic sculpture capturing movement, perpetually frozen.

Ball and Anchor: Europeans arrived in 1788 and dropped anchor in Australia. The anchor pierces the rainbow serpent, the colonists are trapped here, against their will, by ball and chain. All are tethered to this ancient land.

STEVE GALE

Currently Gale is drawing inspiration from nature, be it plants, animals or humans, and translating their natural grace into steel.

Whilst nature supplies the inspiration, he overlays and embeds emotion; a frustrated fist punching through heavy steel plate, a desolate and bleak tree resonates for the victims of the Pappinbarra fires.

The current challenge is to capture the beauty in nature, whilst integrating his expression.

Works

Steal Canoe? and *Stone Axes?*
(2 related works)

The steel canoe and axes are inspired by, and symbolic of the first contact of explorer John Oxley's party and the local peoples. The original form of the items has been faithfully retained, however the white mans' steel found dumped in the forest has been juxtaposed for the bark and stone that served the needs of the people for millennia.



Steve Gale *Steal Canoe?*

JENNIFER MADSEN

Jennifer has followed a creative path since 1988 and has participated in various solo, group exhibitions and facilitation of public art installation. Her creative background was the foundation for working with people from a broad range of life experiences. In her role as a trainer and arts instructor she has used the creative process of art making to assist and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

She has always had an interest in working with metal from etching, casing and silversmithing. Recently she studied Metal Fabrication Blacksmithing, Ultimo TAFE NSW.

Work

Arrival is a piece that includes steel, brass, resin and stone. Forged pieces of steel penetrate the layers of stone and resin to house a small world of mysterious objects which are revealed by the viewer's own interpretation, imagination and discovery and appear as if they are part of an archaeological discovery



Jennifer Madsen *Arrival* (detail)

WILL MAGUIRE

Will is a sculptor based in the Hunter wine country out of Branxton, NSW. He initially trained as an industrial blacksmith and boiler maker before travelling and working overseas. Will was an artist in residence at the Penland School of Crafts in the USA, he was an invited mastersmith designing and leading the creation of a large permanent Peace memorial in Ypres Belgium in 2016, he exhibited at Sculpture By The Sea in 2014 and has completed numerous private commissions and public artworks.

Works

Branch bench: Contemporary bench design balancing natural materials and forms with clear reference to human intervention.

Beam Wallaby & Old Beam Wallaby (page 16), *Beam Roo (dominant) & Beam Roo (turning)* (page 15), 2018, an interpretation of Australia's most recognisable marsupials.

Contrary Man type 4 (2018, 5 piece, page 15): Inspired by primitive WW1 caltrops.



Will Maguire *Beam wallaby*



Eoin McSwan, *Dream Weaver*

EOIN MCSWAN

McSwan has worked in the metal industry all his working life.

Over the last few years he has turned to the artistic side of metalwork. Mainly doing wall art, garden sculptures and decorative commissions.

Work

Dream Weaver: Woven flat & round metal sections. To resemble a woven basket.

Work

People are Tidal

The concept stems from two themes, firstly the visual of the winding Hastings River at the mouth and secondly the indigenous symbol for people is a horseshoe shape and the idea of repeating symbol one inside the other represents a person carrying their ancestors in the formation of their character.

MATT MEWBURN

Matthew Mewburn has been a full time blacksmith for over 6 years. Matt was initially drawn to blacksmithing and toolmaking because of challenge and urgency of working with hot metal and loves the endless possibility that comes with forging. As the founder of Eveleigh Works, Australia's largest blacksmithing school, he is the custodian of one of the largest collections of Victorian blacksmithing equipment in the world.

DOUG MOSELEY

As an accomplished artist blacksmith, Moseley has developed a passionate relationship with metal. Through this relationship, he has broadened his artistic scope to include traditional and modern art works.



Doug Moseley, *Fire, Fuel and Connections*

Work

Fire, Fuel and Connections is designed as a series of traditional connections that a blacksmith would use. The intersecting pieces show how one piece is reshaped to accommodate the other, leading to a permanent fusion done in the heat of the fire then connected after cooling to be left linked for the life of the piece.

This to me is a symbol of mankind's link to all that he faces both internally and externally. Our connection to the universe the earth and our fellow man.

WILLIE RENNISON

Willie Rennison is a practicing artist blacksmith from the Northern Rivers.

He employs his skills of woodworking and blacksmithing to create multimedia works that explore the nature that surrounds his home in the temperate rain forest of Northern NSW. Inspired by the work of the craftspeople of the Art Nouveau movement, his work frees metal from its static nature, persuading it to curl and undulate like the living forms of plants and animals.

Work

Circle of Rays invites us on a journey into the largely uncharted depths of the ocean to meet the mysterious animals that dwell there. The circling manta rays are caught at a moment of discovery in their own instinctive life cycle as they dance in the shallows to attract a mate.



Willie Rennison, *Circle of Rays*



WAYNE SAUNDERS

A full time blacksmith since 2003, Wayne is known for his versatility & the ability to think outside the box. He is highly regarded for his teaching (which now makes up a large percentage of his business), as well as the numerous blacksmithing tools, knives and axes he creates that all have his own unique style. These are coveted by collectors and practical users alike.

Work

Wheel of Nature Dragonfly

A blend of old & newer recycled items mixed with the skill and texture of hand-forged components to re-create nature.

Wayne Saunders, *Wheel of Nature Dragonfly* (detail)

PHIL SPARK

Spark first saw a blacksmith work as a child in England and kept it in mind. The first professional metalwork he did was building custom bicycle frames in the 1980s. From this he slowly moved to decorative forging. In 2002 he moved into the workshop at the Lithgow State Mine Museum in which he makes mainly architectural work but also sculptural pieces of which History Avenue in Lithgow is a good example.

Work

How "I" Beams are grown: I am interested in taking standard structural steel forms and using the hammer to stretch and grow them. This is a visual joke of course but the nature motif is very strong in the decorative forging tradition and there is a lovely irony in the masses of leaves, flowers and other natural/organic forms made from steel, one of the most man made and inorganic materials. *How I Beams are grown* is an experimental piece, bigger than previous work but smaller than work to come.



Phil Spark, *How "I" Beams are grown*



NIGEL STOKES

Born in Chesterfield, England, Nigel had an upbringing focused on the practical utility of steel. Moving to Australia inspired Nigel to shift his skills into the artistic realm. His Phoenix Forge has arisen from the ashes of the 1970s and will continue to grow and create.

Work

First Meeting: smooth curved lines of the Indigenous tribesman and the hard straight lines of the soldier.

What were the feelings at that first meeting? Was it fear, wonder, shock, amazement or did they really even have any thoughts and feelings?

As you view the "first meeting" it is up to you to consider and make up your own mind what they were thinking. Remember that it is impossible for the mind of today to understand how the mind of 200 years ago worked.

Nigel Stokes, *First Meeting*

JOHN WOOD

Wood's work is a response to his regional and rural environment designing large-scale works that have sense of place, belonging and soulful purpose reflecting his rural roots.

Shape and form, juxtaposing organic and geometric lines, are prominent in Wood's work. His sculptures reference the co-existence of built and natural environments, influenced by the American abstract sculptor Albert Paley and the beauty of England's finest artist blacksmith Brian Russell.

Wood has won several large scale public art commissions for City and Shire collections along with numerous private commissions.

Work

South Land is perhaps a romantic response to the theme of Discovery. Stories of faraway lands, meeting and joining of massively differing cultures and the discoveries this brought. A respect and understanding to people and place.



John Wood, *South Land*

LIST OF WORKS

All works are in mm

SVEN BAUER

Chances, 2018, steel, 100x100x700

LYLE BRITTAIN

Tree and Shield, 2018, glass, steel and stone, 1700hx900w

RICHARD COUMBE

Grevillea robusta, 500hx600wx200l

COLIN DRAY

Coolamon, 2018, rusted steel, recycled copper and bronze, 100 x 300 x 450

Terra Naillius (Nail Tree), 2400hx1000wx1000l



Don Gabriel, *Flowers*

CRAIG DREW

Oxley's Trek, 2018, steel, 2000hx500dia

DON GABRIEL

Flowers, 2018, steel, 300hx260lx160w

Welcome, 2018, 650hx430wx600l

Dreamtime, 2018, 160hx360wx300l

Movement, 2018, 300hx200wx200l

Ball & Anchor, 2018, 450hx600wx600l

STEVE GALE

Steal Canoe?, 2018, steel and copper recovered from burnt out dumped car wrecks, 200hx340wx2050l

Stone Axes?, steel from towbars of abandoned car wrecks, 20x150x100

JENNIFER MADSEN

Arrival, 2018, steel, stone, resin mixed medium, 800hx400x400

WILL MAGUIRE

Branch Bench, 2018, timber and steel, 1700x2100x450

Beam Wallaby & Old Beam Wallaby,

Beam Roo (dominant) & Beam Roo (turning), 2018

Contrary Man type 4 (2018, 5 pieces), 1160hx1110wx700l

EOIN MCSWAN

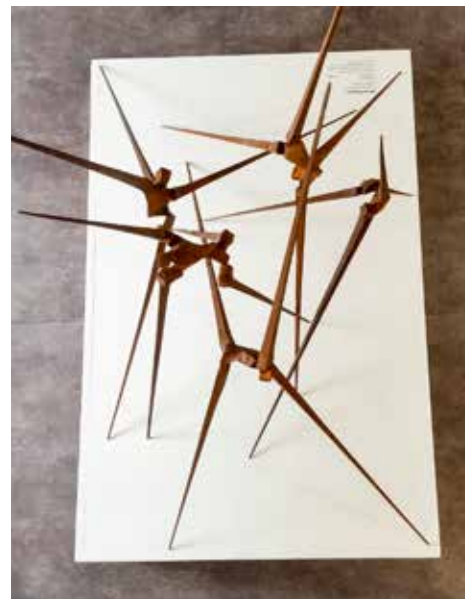
Dream Weaver, 2018, steel, 400x400x50

MATT MEWBURN

People are tidal

DOUG MOSELEY

Fire Fuel and Connections, 2018, steel, 450dia



WAYNE SAUNDERS

Wheel of Nature Dragonfly, 1200dia

PHIL SPARK

How I Beams are grown, 2018, steel, 660hx380wx200d

NIGEL STOKES

First Meeting, 2018, steel and timber, 700hx400wx300d

WILLIE RENNISON

Circle of Rays, 2017, 825dia

JOHN WOOD

South Land, 2018, Corten steel galvanised, 620hx430wx300d

Will Maguire, *Contrary Man Type 4*

MEET A BLACKSMITH Resident Artists

Sunday 24 February, Sunday 3 March,
Sunday 10 March

Join one of our blacksmith resident artists in the Glasshouse Regional Gallery space as part of the Discovery Fe26 exhibition.

Free event, no bookings required.

GLASSHOUSE REGIONAL GALLERY

Cnr Clarence & Hay Streets,
Port Macquarie NSW 2444

02 6581 8888
glasshouse.org.au



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Will Maguire, *Beam Roo Turning*

ORGANISING COMMITTEE:

Steve Gale, Jennifer Madsen, Wayne Saunders, Ingvar Masson



Will Maguire, *Old Beam Wallaby*

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