

A VERDANT HEART



HAWKESBURY REGIONAL GALLERY

SEBASTIAN DI MAURO, DAVID HAINES, ALEXANDER MCKENZIE, ELAINE MUSGRAVE, TOM MOORE, PAUL OGIER,
LEO ROBBA, HILDA TOWNSEND, ROBYN STACEY, ANGELA VALAMANESH, SHONA WILSON





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'...green fingers are the extension of a verdant heart' – Montague Russel Page

The Hawkesbury is a wonderful place for gardens. It saved the struggling colony of New South Wales from starvation, and for more than 200 years was an important food producer. Today, market gardening is still a significant industry, and home gardens, whether as income-earners or places for rest and recreation, are as popular as ever. The exhibition *A Verdant Heart* explores the multitudinous facets of the garden and its creative and artistic aspects.

'Nothing is more the child of art than a garden.' – Sir Walter Scott

Gardens have been an inspiration for artists for millennia, as well as artworks in their own right. The relationship between art and gardens is ongoing and inevitable. The romantic garden inspires nostalgia and romantic thoughts; the formal garden inspires focus on form and line; the sustainable garden on the well-being of the planet, and the acknowledgment of place.

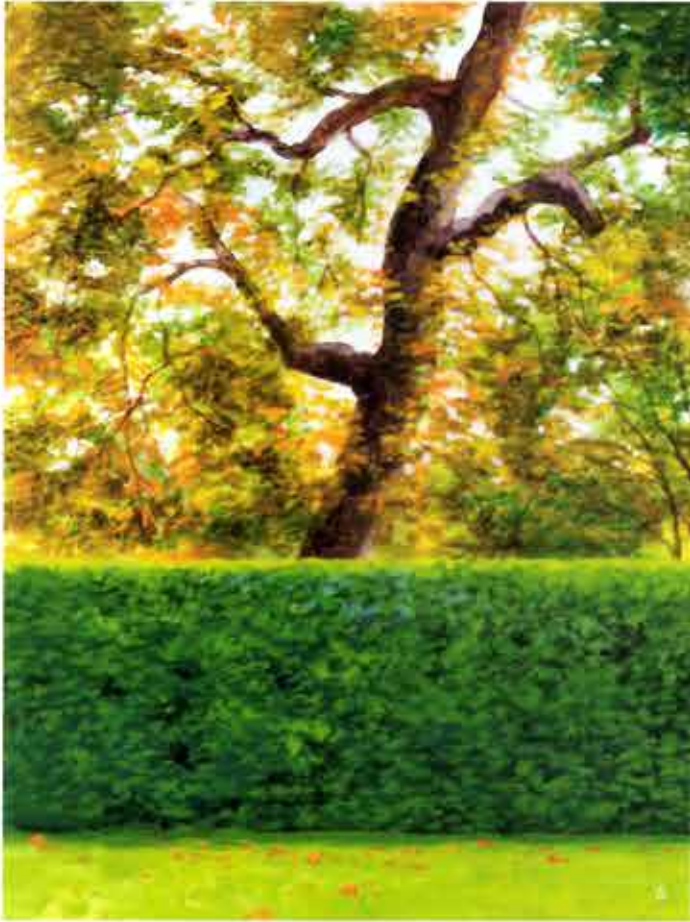
'In my garden there is a large place for sentiment. My garden of flowers is also my garden of thoughts and dreams. The thoughts grow as freely as the flowers, and the dreams are as beautiful.' – Abram L. Urban

Gardens are like art in their geography as well. A Chinese garden varies wildly from an English cottage garden, which is different from a succulent garden. All have their own beauty, and all celebrate the living, growing diversity of life. They are also fascinating in the way gardeners aim to tame the natural world even when they are trying to copy it. 'Wild' parts of gardens are often opportunities to explore particular plant species and specimens. Grand English gardens from the 17th and 18th century were opportunities to grow plants from the new world, like Dicksonia (tree ferns) in amongst the traditional oak trees. Similarly, the Rhododendron forests from China have been transported with great success everywhere from the mountains of Scotland to the Blue Mountains in NSW. So happily the wild inhabit the tamed, ready to seize control if given a chance.

'Nature abhors a garden.' – Michael Pollan

The artworks in this exhibition cover a broad range of media and subject matter including botanical drawing, traditional still lifes, landscape paintings,





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sculptural and glass installations, and paintings from artists with disabilities from the Secret Garden. This group of artists sat and painted, and for them it was the details and the activities of that specific garden that were explored, not its place within the landscape. Alexander McKenzie on the other hand, views the garden as a detail in a darkly atmospheric place.

'I never had any other desire so strong, and so like to covetousness, as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and a large Garden.' – Abraham Cowley

There is also humour in gardens, an aspect delightfully explored by Tom Moore's glass creatures and Sebastian di Mauro's astroturf sculptures.

'Gardens are a form of autobiography.' – Sydney Eddison

'Half the interest of a garden is the constant exercise of the imagination.' – Mrs. C.W. Earle

There is something peaceful and positive about being in a garden that has been lovingly tended, whether by the passionate owner, or a team of staff in a public garden. Our own gardens develop particular personalities. While a gardener might be more a curator than an artist, deciding what to plant where, there is a certain sense of being able to create a constantly growing and changing artwork. There is always death and decay in a garden, as well as growth and life. A garden changes with the seasons, the weather, the influx of insects and birds. There is always something new, something inspiring and something surprising in a garden, as in art.

'Gardening is cheaper than therapy and you get tomatoes.' – author unknown.

KATHLEEN VON WITT
Director – Hawkesbury Regional Gallery





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9 December 2011 – 5 February 2012

- Cover: Sebastian di Mauro
Surge 2003
acrylic & polystyrene
60 x 120 x 120 cm
courtesy the artist &
Jan Manton Gallery, Brisbane
1. Alexander McKenzie
By grand design 2010
oil on linen
183 x 183 cm
courtesy the artist & Martin
Browne Contemporary, Sydney
2. Robyn Stacey
Rogue and the Cumberland Plain (detail) 2010
type c print edition of 1 + 1 AP
214.5 x 360 cm
courtesy the artist & Stills Gallery,
Sydney
3. Elaine Muirgrave
760pea 2010
watercolour on paper
38 x 23 cm
courtesy the artist
4. David Haines
The phantom leaved 11 (violet) 2010
pigment print on archival staining paper
26.5 x 18 cm
courtesy the artist & GREENSPACE,
Sydney
5. Angela Valamannar
Natural History #E (detail) 2008
unglazed ceramic
3 parts, 49 x 105 x 7.5 cm
courtesy the artist & Greenaway
Gallery, Adelaide
6. Leo Robes
Oak and hedge Kensington Garden 2011
acrylic on canvas
30 x 20 cm
courtesy the artist & King Street
Gallery on William, Sydney
7. Tom Moore
Drum medium 2011
blown & solid glass
61 x 32 x 14 cm
courtesy the artist
photo Grant Hancock
8. Shona Wilson
Gathering no. 5 2008
feathers, wings, ferns & seed pods
85 x 95 x 7 cm
courtesy the artist & King Street
Gallery on William, Sydney
9. Paul Oger
from the series *Goodye to you
Arboretum (Scenic Hill)* 2008
archival carbon pigment on rag paper
34.5 x 45 cm
courtesy the artist

Acknowledgements

The Hawkesbury Regional wishes to thank each of the artists who have contributed work to the exhibition. We are also grateful to gallerists Martin Browne Contemporary, Stills Gallery, King Street Gallery on William, BREENSPACE, Jan Manton Gallery, dianne tanzer gallery + projects and Helen Gory Galerie who have facilitated artwork loans, and to Orange Regional Gallery and the private owners who have generously lent us work for *A Verdant Heart*.

HAWKESBURY REGIONAL GALLERY

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Weekdays 10am - 4pm
(closed Tuesdays & public holidays)
Weekends 10am - 3pm

Free entry, all welcome

Director: Kathleen von Witt
Curator: Diana Robson
Marketing & Audience Development: Prue Charlton
Volunteer Coordinator: Rebecca Turnbull
Education & Public Programs: Adrienne Richards
Installation Team: Ruth Maittlen, Taryn Leahy,
Jason Abbott, Elissa Blair and Lisa Sullivan
Volunteers & Members

Catalogue design: DPM Creative Group



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